Dear Professor Creed:

I regret to inform you that my office has received verbal as well as written complaints from students and former students charging you with flagrant racial and sexual harrassment. Their charges include allegations of crude, offensive, racist and sexist language both inside and outside of the classroom, of frequent use of racial slurs, and of unprovoked and unwanted kissing and physical grabbing. It is also alleged that you have been sexually intimate with at least one Busiris student, and have engaged in behavior that might be construed s l favors. Dean Hauptm ıations, and we are co preliminary consultatic ıe president of the fac ness of the charges.

# HARÁSSMENT
## A NOVEL OF IDEAS

I am sure y ıt, authored by Affirma ł 1984, and circulated to all employees in November of 1984. It states very clearly, "racial and sexual harassment in any form will not be tolerated at Busiris Technical University." Its provisions are congruent with the Code of Faculty Ethics published in the Busiris Faculty Handbook, and a legal part of your contract. The handbook states that in dealing with students, faculty shall "pursue a grading policy which respects students' integrity and human rights as well as providing a true and honest evaluation of classroom performance." The Policy on Racial and Sexual Harrassment further states that "repeated and flagrant harassment may result in dismissal from the university." The Faculty Handbook allows termination of a tenured appointment for "gross violation of the Code of Ethics." The testimony of these students suggests you have repeatedly disregarded their integrity as individuals, that your language reflects extreme racial and gender prejudice, and that you have awarded grades which might be construed as reflecting racial and gender biases. Regretfully, therefore, I conclude that Busiris Technical University must terminate immediately and for due cause your faculty appointment.

Motions for your dismissal will be made to the Board of Trustees immediately upon the further pro forma consultation with the Faculty Association President and the Faculty Review Committee and the Committee on Tenure, Promotion and Dismissal, as described in the Faculty Handbook. I shall recommend immediate dismissal for cause. Please be advised that should dismissal proceedings extend beyond the February 15 deadline stipulated in the Faculty Handbook for notification of non-renewal or tenured appointments, you will have forfeited, by virtue of your actions and this notification, all claim to a 1985-86 appointment, and to a 1985-96 salary. Be also advised that your rights to private and public hearings are outlined in the Faculty Handbook, chapter 4, section 11.

I am convinced that the Committee on Tenure, Promotion and Dismissal, and the Busiris Board of Trustees, will uphold my decision in this matter. I am also aware of your long service at the university as a teacher, a scholar, and a Buck Booster. Therefore, as a means of avoiding further pain and embarrassment to yourself, the students, and Busiris Technical University, I hav . Should I receive written notificat nday, February 11, 1985, the Univers . It will make you a lump-sum payment equal to the balance of your 1984-85 contract salary, and sustain fringe benefits, including medical insurance on yourself and your family, through the end of the contract year.

**Andrew Tucker, Ph. D.**

I hope you understand that this procedure is as painful to the University as it is to you, and I take this action only after the most soul-searching and thoughtful deliberation.

With Sincere Regrets and best Wishes,

Berthold Reich, III

Vice President for Academic Affairs

Busiris Technical University

# Harássment

A Novel of Ideas

**Andrew Tucker, Ph. D.**

*For Daisy*
*Now everything's been returned which was owed.*

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This book is a work of fiction. Because its subject is a significant social issue, and because it is set in American academia where faculty, administrators, and even students tend toward categories and thus to stereotypes, some episodes and characters may appear to resemble actual persons or historical events. If the shoe fits, try it on. However, any resemblance to persons living or dead, or events historical, is coincidental.

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# Author's Preface

Long before his unfortunate and highly publicized death, John Charles Creed (Jack to his close friends, Chas to a few colleagues, Charles to the general public) requested that I destroy certain of his papers in the event "anything unusual" happened to him. At the time, I was unsure what "anything unusual" meant, and Jack did not elaborate. Ultra-theatrical when it suited his purpose, Jack was known upon occasion to exaggerate, so I did not pursue the matter. Rather, I told him I was his man in all things—never, of course, expecting to find myself in the awkward position to which events brought me. And I would not have remembered the episode had not Jack himself repeated his request, two decades later, on the eve of his death: obviously this was a matter of some importance to him.

Still, I hesitated. A literary man myself, I was sensitive to the value of unpublished papers and aware of Jack's stature as the winner of a Pulitzer Prize, propelled by his trial and murder to renewed public attention and acclaim. I was also aware of potential legal problems, given some of the revelations of this book. In some future lawsuit, I feared, I might be accused of having knowingly destroyed important evidence before the fact. So I agonized and temporize . . . but finally, after completing this manuscript, I destroyed all of his private papers—not only the journal which he kept from his first year at Busiris until the day before his death, but also a couple of short stories and his untitled academic novel-in-progress, a fictive successor to *Age of Faith*, *Age of Folly*, and *Songs of the North Country*. Jack always preached the importance of not letting lawyers and accountants run your life. His wishes were clear, and in fulfilling my promise to a dead man, I claim at least one good deed before I too leave the scene.

Readers who suspect something funny going on can think whatever they want. They will, however, have to content themselves with public papers, and with this study, trusting the instincts and

integrity of a trained scholar and an old friend to set the confused record straight. I have always prided myself in the integrity of my work. As Jack would have said, my papers are in order.

In fact, Jack's concern over his journal seemed to me largely unfounded when, in the weeks following his funeral, I read through the manila file folders which constituted his "Red Files." The journal was mostly a tedious chronology, more in the style of Byrd than Pepys, of the Creed quotidian: luncheons and conferences with students and colleagues; manuscripts written, submitted, accepted or rejected; excursions with the children; scholarly conferences, readings, and promotional tours. Unlike Henry David Thoreau, John Charles Creed did not mine poetry and prose from his journal. It contained, posterity will be surprised to learn, little critical theory, little social commentary, and little opinion on affairs cultural or political—which, in light of the charged and passionate nature of his writings, I myself found not a little disappointing, although not entirely out of keeping with the Jack Creed I had been privileged to know. His public would have been rather disappointed in just how ordinary an individual Jack really was, a reticent and, as the seventies ground on to the eighties and then the nineties, an alienated man. The journal showed, more than anything, a man with his feet on the ground. I do not believe that Rose Marié would have raised any eyebrow at its contents.

As for the novel-in-progress, it was not a strong book.

"Andrew," Jack said one afternoon not long after *Age of Faith* had crept onto the *New York Times* list of best sellers, "I want to ask you a favor."

We were sitting in my office at Busiris, concocting some get-rich-quick scheme that would allow us, in Jack's invariable conclusion to such fantasies, to "tell this place to kiss our ass." The year was 1977, and Charles Creed, on his way to the Pulitzer, had achieved the status of cult hero on campus. But life at Busiris had soured, and he was ready for escape. The fantasy then, I believe, was movie rights to *Age of Faith*, a dream which seemed particularly within reach.

Though ironically amused at finding himself suddenly a marketed commodity, Jack was ebullient.

“That drillin’ in the wall is me, Tucker, busting out of here,” he effused. “There is going to be one very fat royalty check out of all this, followed by a series of fat royalty checks, and lucrative speaking engagements, and then another book, and then a third. I owe this place not a goddamn kiss-my-ass, and I am gone.”

Then he turned suddenly somber. Taking me to his office, he drew out the bottom drawer of his file cabinet to reveal several manila file folders filled with what I took to be manuscripts, perhaps three hundred pages each, all labeled with red tabs. I recall smiling to myself, remembering his observation that Hemingway had left the best of all insurance policies, unpublished words by a famous writer.

“These,” Jack said, “are the Red Files. If anything unusual happens to me, you know, if I am killed or incapacitated, I want you to beat your ass in here first thing and grab these files and burn them. I don’t want Rose Marié or anyone else rummaging through them, eh?”

He closed that drawer and drew open the drawer above it. “These remain. They are papers. A few unpublished things you can maybe see into print, some notes, rough drafts. Do some heavy scholarshit. Get yourself a job at a real college.”

Then he laughed the great laugh that all who knew him associated with John Charles Creed, professor and author.

I nodded. We returned to my office, and not a word more was said about the Red Files until the week before his trial. Whether Jack later made the same request of someone at Novum State, I don’t know. I doubt it, for the Red Files, two decades extended, were there in his office when I arrived, with Kelly, his second wife, one day after the funeral. A Midwestern gal wiser than her years, and remarkably composed under the circumstances, Kelly acted with characteristic Middle American directness: “I’m going over to administration to fill out insurance forms. You straighten up his office. He trusted you as

his only true friend. I will be gone for at least an hour." Doubly directed, as it were, I quickly discovered the files, packed them into a couple of boxes which I sealed with duct tape and carried directly to the trunk of my car. The file containing the novel-in-progress bore a red tab. In another drawer I found several manuscripts which did not bear red tabs; papers pertinent to previously published books; and several articles, each dated and sealed. These materials, along with hard copies of everything on his computer, are presently in the Special Collections Department of Novum State University Library. All material for the authorized Bob Dylan biography on which he was working, including outlines and rough drafts of two chapters, I returned to Dylan's people. I have no idea at this point who, if anyone, has been authorized to complete the work, or what use that person might make of Creed's drafts.

Having said this, let me admit that the journal was invaluable in refreshing my own memory of our relationship and of Creed's years at Busiris, in illuminating some obscure details of his career, and in tracing his career at Novum State, a life I had known only through letters, telephone calls, and all too infrequent visits. The novel I found useful in preparing this book; I have relied on it as a somewhat fictionalized account of Creed's relationship with Busiris Technical University and certain individuals during the 1970s.

Beyond the journal, sections of the novel, *Age of Faith*, an occasional Op Ed or critical essay, his infamous "The Teacher as Nigger" and his even more infamous "Women's Lib: the Conservative Revolution," I have based this narrative on my own recollections of our experiences together and the collective testimony of Charles Creed's former friends, colleagues, and students. I was present throughout his sexual harassment trial, which is a matter of public record, but during those weeks I conversed privately and at length with Jack, Marcus DeLotta, Kelly Creed, Jenny May Creed, and Jack's colleagues at Novum State. In the process I inevitably saw confidential documents, depositions, and affidavits which will remain confidential. Charles—always distrustful of lawyers, including his old friend Marcus DeLotta—sought my advice on a number of

matters . . . my advice, I believe, more than others'. So readers may presume, in later chapters as well as earlier, a body of evidence now sealed, and a company of witnesses, many of whom have already left town. Thus the matter lies, and thus I hope it will lie.

I wish especially to thank Rose Marié Creed, Kelly Creed, Timm and Jenny Creed, Dr. Jenine Lundquist, Dr. Ernest Hauptmann, Dr. Louis Feracca, Mr. Roger Holmes, Dr. Lloyd Cowley, Dr. Linda Tholen, Dr. Paul Lesinski, Dr. Ed Haley, Mr. Paul Popowski, Ms. Carolyn Baer, Dr. Marcus DeLotta, Mr. Kenneth Jennings, Ms. Lynette Taylor, Ms. Maggie Armstrong, Mr. Martin Miller, Ms. Marianne Redford, Dr. Jeremy Jones, Dr. Ken Sunderland, Dr. Ben Allan Browne, and Dr. Percy Thompson. I am most grateful for their hours of thoughtful conversation, for offering in every case their fullest insights. Perceptions of John Charles Creed being varied, as would be expected of such a multi-faceted personality, I have been sometimes unable to reconcile conflicting testimony, even with the aid of the court record and Charles' journals and papers. In every case I believe that those with whom I spoke recounted the story as best they understood it. Every individual who knew Charles will find some reason to quarrel with this book; I only hope they understand I too speak the truth as best I perceive it.

I would especially like to thank Dr. Lily Lee Martin for her assistance and for permission to publish this work in its present form. She is indeed a remarkable woman, and I was pleased to renew our acquaintance after so many years. A presence, now as always, enters the room upon her shoulder, and is gone from the room on her departure.

What Jack would say to this history, I do not know. A colorful crusader for all causes he considered worthy, Jack also loved privacy, and therefore mystery, and therefore confusion. His reputation for power and, frankly, for scandal always amused him, but he encouraged the myths and legends, and in specific cases I knew him intentionally to throw out false scents and rumors as "something to set their tongues wagging" or as "another item for my

FBI files." Charles associated mystery with fame, which, for all his apparent humility, he craved. That, I suspect, is one reason he wanted the Red Files destroyed, and one reason he might object to a biography which clarifies the record and violates the spirit of my promise to maintain confusion.

On the other hand, Jack could never have foreseen the circumstances of his death, the brief carnival of newspaper coverage, the enormous public interest in the death of "a Pulitzer-Prize-winner who nearly dismantled a whole university and took on single-handedly the entire women's movement." I believe he would have wanted the last word.

I believe Jack would have understood the need for this book, and my motivation in writing it. I believe he would have trusted my telling of his tale. I hope that others are equally understanding, equally trusting.

In any event, the festival is over, and Charles Creed is his posterity. Those who remain will, inevitably, carry on . . . but without John Charles Creed, that dark figure standing in the doorway, that increasingly remote and always mysterious shadow.

—College of St. Thomas
St. Paul, Minnesota
August 2002

# Part I

# Chapter 1
# **The Land of the Dead**

I walked into Busiris Technical University in the fall of 1971, direct from graduate school, all green and golden and filled with the idealism of the sixties. I came a curious mixture of innocence and experience, having lived through eight years of revolution in higher education, aware of its failures (in graduate school I had spun a composition class around Paul Goodman's books *Growing Up Absurd* and *Compulsory Miseducation*), and confident that its broken promises could be redeemed. Confident, in fact, that redemption was at hand. I arrived enthusiastic about a system of post-secondary education that appeared ready to render life in these United States more decent, more humane, more enlightened, more open to worthy persons of previously disenfranchised classes, and generally more relevant to the real world than what I had known growing up in the fifties and early sixties.

In a word, I believed.

We all believed in those days: Jack, I, Lou Feracca, Marcus DeLotta, Ben Allan Browne, even, in their own weird way, Ted Jones, Virgil Cutter and Victoria Nation. In many respects this story is the history of lost faith, for only in the context of our great expectations for liberal arts education can the rage of a Charles Creed or my own ironic cynicism be understood. Jack's story is the story of our entire generation, which refused to move mentally from the liberating sixties into the boring '70s, or the ideological '80s, preferring alienation to accommodation.

As Camille Paglia has observed, "Sixties radicals rarely went on to graduate school; if they did, they often dropped out. If they made it through, they had trouble getting a job and keeping it." Those who managed promotion and tenure did so only by learning to keep the lip buttoned. Some of those who managed promotion and tenure

later opted out of an increasingly lost cause encrusted with meaningless “professional activities,” codes of cultural correctness, and midget-minded colleagues. “This is fucking hopeless,” observes Crash Davis in the movie *Bull Durham*. “Fuck this fucking game. I fucking quit.”

“Let the silence of our leaving be our only reply,” Charles suggested in 1985, paraphrasing Phil Ochs, one of his favorite lost causes.

Still, an attempt was made. There was a moment in the late 1960s and early 1970s. What became of that moment is the subject of this book.

Busiris Technical University was admittedly not the optimal environment for educational reconstruction, but, being less than ideal, it offered a legitimate test case. Berkeley, Harvard, Northwestern—they’re easy. Brilliant faculty, brilliant students. Huge endowments, long and illustrious traditions. How can you go wrong? So what can you do with Illinois Normal Tech? With Ma Frickert’s Finishing School for Young Ladies? There’s the real test case. For all its faults, B. T. U. is just your average private American college. There are better, and there are worse. All valid experiments require a representative sample.

Even in the summer of 1971, driving a rented U-haul across the long miles of I-80—Oakland to Salt Lake City, Cheyenne, Omaha, Davenport—I understood that Busiris would be a far cry from the vision of my ideal first job which had sustained me through the four-year grind of a Stanford Ph. D. My ideal was a large, multi-cultured, generously funded state institution kinetic with the clamorous passion of colliding ideas. Ivy League, S. E. C., Big Ten, P. A. C. Ten. Busiris just wasn’t that kind of school. It was closer to my alternative vision: a less affluent but pastoral liberal arts college, green with ivy-covered cloisters and brown with tweedy sweaters. In my mind’s eye I recalled picturesque Old Main, Victorian elegant with its high arched windows, red bricks, neo-Gothic chapel (later used as a lecture hall, by my day the admissions office), and soaring clock

tower. At the opposite side of the Busiris Quad sat old Busiris Hall, its gray stone facade battlemented along the roof line, three arched cathedral-like doors below a mock rose window, magnificent oak trees shading two wings—recent additions—on the north and south sides. Busiris Hall and Old Main were buildings worthy of Northwestern, Washington University in St. Louis, Knox or Illinois Wesleyan.

But Busiris wasn't that kind of a place either. Busiris' grandeur was a botched and mottled beauty. Dwarfing Busiris Hall and the oaks rose the incongruous green and yellow monstrosity of Radio Busiris, an erector set tower bristling with aerials, antennae, cables and dishes. Clearly visible on the far side of campus lay the half-cleared steel rubble of the old field house (soon to become a parking lot), nothing more than a large Quonset hut airplane hangar bought cheap after World War II. In it had played the fabled basketball teams of Busiris' dynasty years, the teams that raised popular support and funding for the new field house, nearly completed in 1971 on what had been the main campus parking facility. The new field house was a basic block of gray bricks and windows, bigger but not necessarily better, with none of the Quonset hut's character . . . or home court advantage.

The campus was bounded on one side by Washington Avenue, with its tacky frat rat bars and cafes, and the tackier Brady's Buck Bonanza, a college clothing and supplies shop that specialized in Busiris monogrammed merchandise and fronted, for an undetermined length of time around 1976, for a call girl operation employing Busiris coeds and run by the B. T. U. chief of security. The other three sides were an angular C of three- and four-story dormitories, cheap tan brick with sliding windows set in black metal frames, classic fifties style, monuments to that golden moment when President Martin Stoddard converted World War II veterans' benefits into Busiris' first and only real period of sustained growth. By 1971 the buildings looked archaic and shabby.

As did the tan brick Busiris Student Center. And the tan brick Busiris Buckstore.

“Mark-down Tech,” Jack used to call the school. “Everything done on the cheap. What clothing manufacturers call a second: designer material but crooked seams or misaligned buttonholes. Kids who can’t make Purdue, Northwestern, or the University of Illinois, but are rich enough to afford four years’ play at a private college. They come to Busiris. A university that’s a second, filled with faculty and students who are also seconds. The sooner we admit that, the sooner we’ll be in a position to do something about it. Assuming that anyone wants to do something about it.”

Busiris had a good technical component in those days and a still-powerful basketball team. For their daddy’s bucks, kids got engineering and basketball, fraternities and sororities. Parties began on Thursday afternoon, continued through Monday night chapter meeting. On Tuesday everyone had a hangover. Thursday afternoon everyone was off buying new cocktail dresses and kegs of beer. On Wednesday you could teach. Maybe. One semester Lou Feracca finagled a one-course reduction for something or another, then scheduled his three remaining classes to meet Wednesday only. 9:00-12:00, 1:00-4:00, and 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Wednesday was the only day kids showed up, he claimed, so why not him?

What brought me to Riverton was the fact that Busiris was a job at a time when the market for English teachers was just beginning that long slide into desperation from which it has never recovered. I am no longer ashamed to admit (although for many years I was) that I had no other offer in 1971. 1971 was a bad year for beginning English teachers, and things went downhill from there. I was lucky to land four interviews and one firm job offer. Those without a Stanford Ph. D. had fewer options than I. Busiris promised a paycheck and a couple of years to build my vita, polish my teaching skills, collect the references and glowing student evaluations that would bring a real job at a more prestigious institution.

In an odd way Busiris was a good place in the early seventies. Behind the times as always, Busiris had in 1971 only just arrived at its moment of expansion. While other schools were cutting programs and faculty, Busiris set out to build a College of Liberal Arts as strong as its College of Technology and Engineering. Becoming “the Northwestern of Downstate Illinois” (the phrase echoed and reechoed through the corridors of Busiris Hall and Old Main) meant offering a full smorgasbord of courses in Far Eastern history, Chinese and Russian language, Mexican and African culture . . . as well as the full range of British, American, and comparative literature courses. The English Department, which for eight decades had contented itself with producing semi-literate engineers, seized the moment to hire a trio of linguists, two Miltonists, a Chaucerian, another (published) Shakespearean, professors of classics, mediaeval, dramatic and non-dramatic Renaissance literature, two creative writers, and a handful of comparative literature people. Charles Creed was one of three recent Ph. D.’s in American Literature. I was to be the man in Victorian prose. The credentials of most of these new people shamed the credentials of the senior faculty who had hired them: Cornell, Penn, Northwestern, Stanford, the Iowa Famous Writers School of Famous Writers.

If Busiris was not quite first rate in 1971, it had a shot at becoming first rate by summer of 1981 . . . even sooner if administration could be persuaded to hire a few more hotshots from Big Ten or Ivy League schools.

Jack said it best: it was an age of faith, an age of folly.

Thus it was that with a profound hope for the future, and a profound ignorance of those economic realities which would shape American higher education in the seventies, I arrived with my wife in Riverton, Illinois, on the banks of the Illinois River, in what William Gass none too affectionately describes as “the heart of the heart of the country.”

Charles, though younger, had preceded me by a year. I had met him briefly during my interview at the school, and hung on him, on

Lou Feracca, and on Jeremy “Ted” Jones most of my hopes for the future of the English Department at Tech.

In a private moment during my interview, the three drew me aside.

Jones made the pitch: “This is admittedly an odd place and a long way from respectability. You’re a smart person. You can see for yourself what it’s like. However, while it lacks enough consciousness to remedy its ignorance, Busiris is conscious enough to sense its deficiencies. And to feel apologetic and a little insecure.”

“It is therefore dangerous to itself and others, including you,” Feracca added.

Jack elaborated: “Mediocrity fears excellence and seeks mainly to surround itself with more mediocrity. Actually, mediocrity favors a mediocrity that is just a little more mediocre than itself, so that it can appear borderline excellent in comparison. Understand that basic principal, and you’ll understand how all bureaucracies turn inevitably to shit, why good people leave, why assholes stay. Why the assholes end up, finally, in control of everything, including your future.”

“Professor Creed is being just a trifle bitter,” Jones told me.

“We lost a very dedicated and excellent teacher this year,” Jack said.

“We lost . . . a good, competent teacher.” Jones gave Creed a long look.

Jack went silent.

“Busiris is just like any other institution in that regard,” Jones insisted. “People come and people go. We try to keep the good ones and wave the bad ones farewell. Sometimes we lose a good one. Progress is always intermittent. One step backward for two steps forward. That’s the art of politics.

“Hell, even I give only even money that Busiris survives to 1980, but we kick the assholes good every chance we get, and we terrorize

the timid when an important vote comes up, and progress is being made. You would be progress. We could use you. Some other good people are coming this year, a man from Penn State, a fellow from Cornell, a very attractive young lady from Emporia State in Kansas. Dr. Creed here was hired last year from Kent State. Five years ago I'd go home at night thinking, 'My God, am I here all alone?' but today, something is clearly happening . . . even if I don't always know what it is."

Feracca nodded in agreement.

Jack shrugged his shoulders. "Besides, if you're any good, you won't be around here longer than three years," he added.

This scene I had kept locked in my heart through the late spring and early summer as I finished my dissertation, cleared the final hurdles of written and oral defenses, gathered in mid-August our modest belongings for the trek across the Great Divide, and weathered in late August the humiliating experience of apartment-hunting in a middle-brow, Middle American city where an assistant professorship at the local college was neither lucrative nor prestigious. The college was no help at all, and Creed, Feracca and Jones were out of town. After three days in The Kickapoo Court Motor Inn, Linda and I settled for a two-bedroom second-floor walk-up eight blocks from campus, just beyond the student district, for $275 a month, over a third of what would be my take-home pay.

"Everyone has to start somewhere," Linda said.

"It's only temporary," I promised.

"I'll get a job," she said. "McDonald's is always hiring."

If our apartment was disappointing, my office assignment was not. I was pleased to learn that Creed and Tucker would be sharing an office on the top floor, south wing of Busiris Hall, in the very shadow of Radio Busiris. To either side, Virgil Cutter and Lucy Kramer, a pair of old gargoyles. But Lou Feracca and another new hire were just down the hall, and Ted Jones would be around the corner.

My desk had been occupied during 1970-71 by Marcus DeLotta . . . whose abrupt departure Jack had alluded to in my interview. Nobody was talking about DeLotta in the fall of 1971. Everyone was talking about the occupant of the other desk in the office.

“Professor Creed is a man of great energy,” Chairman Percy Thompson told me, handing me keys to office and building. “He has already published one article, and a version of his dissertation has been accepted by *Studies in American Transcendentalism*. There is talk of a book. He will be chairman of this department one day in the not too distant future, and some day a dean or vice president.”

I asked about office supplies.

“See Vi, our secretary, about supplies: stapler, scissors, ruler, tape dispenser.”

I asked about letterhead stationery.

“Envelopes and stationery I keep locked in my office. An envelope is not merely an envelope, Professor Tucker, but a postage stamp as well. In a department our size, costs can get out of control very quickly. How many envelopes did you say you wanted?”

Twelve sheets of Busiris Technical University letterhead and twelve matching Busiris Technical University business envelopes in my hand, I opened the door to office 313.

Jack had finished his stint in summer school shortly before my arrival in Riverton and departed, with Rose Marié and Timm, to spend August with family back East. Precisely one half of the office was stripped bare: empty desk, one empty book case, bare walls, two drawers of the file cabinet pulled open to show they were empty and mine. The other half of the room was a collage of books, posters, photographs, newspaper articles and artifacts which covered the walls and even the ceiling.

Twin posters of John F. Kennedy and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. dominated one wall. On the front of his desk—greeting all

incoming students, colleagues, and administrators—Jack had taped a four-color poster of Dennis Hopper astride his *Easy Rider* motorcycle, giving the famous flying finger to the Louisiana redneck who would soon blast him to oblivion. Pasted on the wall above his chair was a red, white and blue bumper sticker which read in stars-and-stripes letters “FUCK COMMUNISM.” (“I just want the Busiris peckerwoods to know I’m on their side,” he told me later.) I noticed also a magazine photo of a stunningly beautiful black woman in an Afro, gold hoop earrings, a string of animal teeth brushing the tops of her full and bare breasts—to which Jack had added the caption, “Black Is Beautiful.”

On the side of the file cabinet Jack had pasted the infamous pages of “American Dead in Vietnam: One Week’s Toll,” rows of grainy black-and-white photos clipped from the June 27, 1969 issue of *Life* magazine.

Not until later did I notice the day-glo poster taped to the ceiling, the small framed picture of one-year-old Timm placed carefully beside his telephone, and the 1970-71 Busiris Bucks basketball schedule, with the scores of each game dutifully recorded in pencil or pen.

Jack had left *in medias res*, a stack of blue books and the carbon of his summer school grade reports on the desk beside the telephone. On my bare desk Jack had left an unwrapped bottle of New York State Gold Seal champagne with a short note:

Tucker—

Rule #1: Spend as much time as possible away from this office, away from this school, and away from this town.

Rule #2. When stuck here, treat yourself right.

I’m back for the first important vote of the first important meeting of the fall term. Keep a clean nose and watch the plain clothes.

—Jack Creed

The champagne was the highlight of my first week at Busiris.

The week before classes was filled with easy duties and innocent distractions: after three boisterous days of fraternity and sorority rush, the non-Greeks returned to beloved B.T.U. to settle again into dorms and apartments, renew old enmities, log face time in the campus quadrangle, and register for fall classes. Old Main was a great turbulence of comings and goings. Busiris Hall hummed with student-advisor conferences, filling out of schedules, brokering of courses, obtaining of special permissions and override slips. Administration kept a close watch on registration, closing classes that looked as if they would “not make,” and reassigning dispossessed faculty to lower level classes previously taught by “staff.” The more experienced students kept kind of counter-watch, quickly dropping courses reassigned to unpopular faculty, so that those sections also disappeared, necessitating yet another round of reassignments.

In this game administration hopped somewhat behind, as the black market in popular courses meant that the real demand for an upper division course could not be measured until after drop-adds were complete, which was one hour after the last student had registered. Clever upperclassmen, whose rank entitled them to early registration times, often enrolled not in the classes they wanted, but in five freshman or sophomore-level courses taught by the university’s most popular teachers. They then sold their seats to the highest bidder, and drop-added into the advanced courses necessary to complete their degree requirements . . . if those courses hadn’t been cut due to low enrollment. In such cases, a group of angry seniors would visit department chairs and deans, sometimes threatening law suits. Arrangements would have to be made, usually in the form of overloads sections of eight or ten students taught by the dispossessed professor . . . and thus administration found itself stuck with precisely the problem it had sought to eliminate in the first place.

A new and unknown professor with no returning students to drop by my office, no advisees, no rank—a small, unknown cog in a 35-member department—I remained detached from this hubbub, except for a two-hour stint in the gymnasium handing out class tickets. Isolation made me lonesome for the old days at Stanford, where I had been a relatively popular teaching assistant, closer to the ruck and rut of the biannual registration.

Especially the parade of young coeds in search of Professor Creed depressed me.

“Is Chas back yet?” one moon-faced blonde in a striped mini-dress wanted to know. (She was not the first to ask.)

“Not yet.”

“Gee, I was hoping to catch him before the semester begins. I had him last year for comp. He’s the greatest.”

“I’ve met him only once.”

“His office is the greatest too. Sometimes I like to just come here when he’s not around and read the stuff on his walls. It makes me feel all squishy inside, you know? Except the dead soldiers. They give me the creeps.”

“All part of life. Or death.”

“You don’t know when he’ll be here?”

“It’s not my turn to watch him.”

“He’s really sexy. I kind of want him. My roommate wants him, too. That’s okay with me, but I want him first.”

“Maybe you could make a little contest of it.”

“Gee, I never thought of that. What would the prize be?”

“Dr. Creed, I suppose.”

I fled to the library, rereading Emily Bronte against my Victorian novel course.

One day in particular stands out as a low-point in that first week. I spent the morning in the usual tedious workshops for new faculty, signing onto the insurance program, purchasing a sticker that would allow me to park in the as yet uncompleted parking lot, being photographed for a library ID. The ID involved also an unexplained fingerprinting, for which I gave no permission, to which I made no verbal objection. A workshop on “Busiris Rules and Procedures” stressed parking regulations, the registration process, and the need to protect grade rosters at all costs. The coordinator spent one minute with the subheading “Student-Teacher Relationships.” “Keep them cordial,” he suggested. “Busiris is a private institution that relies on student contentment and good will. And try to keep student-teacher relationships with the opposite sex.”

Even Victoria Nation laughed.

We were new to town. What did we know?

During afternoon “free time” I made the acquaintance of Basil Gilmore Wentworth, head librarian at McKinley Library for twenty-two years and the only man on campus to actually wear a camel's hair sweater. After five minutes in polite preliminaries, I found the courage to mention a few weaknesses I had noticed in the Victorian literature holdings.

Wentworth folded his glasses, put them in his pocket and frowned. “You are perfectly correct, Professor Tucker,” he assured me, “perfectly correct. I am sure McKinley Library is not what you were accustomed to at Stanford. I personally dream of a library like that at Stanford, or at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. Have you ever seen the collection at Wisconsin? My colleague, Dr. Felix Pollak, is the curator of the small press collection at Wisconsin.” His eyes clouded over. “You must meet Professor Pollak someday. A perfectly remarkable man. Escaped Austria on the eve of the Anschlusz, the breath of Nazi predators on his neck. Fled to the States without a penny. Doctor of Jurisprudence degree from the University of Vienna, perfectly useless. Unwanted here, practically a law against him… .” His voice drifted off.

“Perhaps one day Busiris will become the Wisconsin of Downstate Illinois,” I suggested.

Wentworth started at me uncomprehendingly. Then a light shone in his eyes and discretely he adjusted his hearing aid.

“Pardon me, Professor Tanner. These earphones—they buzz in your ear, and you turn them down, then you see lips moving and hear no voice. Perfectly dreadful thing, age. Dreadful.”

I repeated my hope for Busiris.

“Yes, yes,” he agreed. “I’m afraid, however, that our institution thinks more highly of its basketball team than of its library. In that regard at least, we’ve got the Badgers beat, wouldn’t you say? I believe our Bucks defeated Illinois last year as well.”

I smiled ingratiatingly.

“Well yes. More athletes here than books I’d say. Still, Mr. Tanner, you have to admit, so many books are being published these days, Busiris could not possibly keep abreast, even if we wished to. Catching up is . . . perfectly out of the question. Book prices have risen considerably. We have, as you can see, a dearth of shelf space. We manage as best we can, but until we expand our facilities. . . . This point needs to be made vociferously by you young rabbits as well as by senior faculty, who have been working on this problem for many years now.”

“I do have a checklist of materials,” I began, “both primary and secondary. . . .”

“Acquisition requisitions proceed through the department chairman. You’re in English. Now that chair would be Professor Thompson. The English department’s library acquisitions budget is $500 per annum. The actual acquisitions budget is prepared by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. A case of extreme need can be made directly with him. I’m afraid he’s a very busy man at the moment. . . .”

His voice flickered, then rekindled. “For advanced English courses,” he continued, “many faculty find it most expeditious to stock reserve shelves with their own texts. We do not permit the books to leave the library. I can assure you, Professor Tucker, these books return to their owner at the semester’s end undamaged, and usually unused.”

“My personal library is barely adequate in primary texts, and quite light on criticism,” I apologized. “I subscribe to no journals.”

“Oh, criticism,” Wentworth said dreamily. “Criticism is a truly bottomless pit. And journals—Professor Tanner, a new scholarly journal is started in America every three days. We could not possibly remain current at this library. My colleague Felix Pollak assures me that even Wisconsin can barely remain current.

“Frankly, I’m not sure that all this new criticism is of much significance. You young bucks these days are under so much pressure to publish or perish, you know, that you scarcely have time to teach. And Busiris is, after all, a teaching institution, Professor Tucker. The texts themselves will provide an experience rich enough for most of our students.”

My conversation with Basil Wentworth was followed by the first engagement of what would become an on-going battle with Busiris Buckstore manager Pamela Reese. Less than a week before the start of classes, two of my five required novels were not yet in stock. Pamela promised reluctantly to check again with her supplier, as if she were doing me some kind of favor. “Things are quite hectic now, Mr. Tucker,” she explained. “Fall fraternity and sorority rush is upon us!”

“Things will be even more hectic if those novels aren’t on the shelves when the students want to use them.”

“Professor Tucker, we do our best,” Pamela assured me. “Inevitably some things slip by. This bookstore is a very large operation.”

A good half of the large operation, I noticed, was devoted to sweatshirts, mugs, greeting cards and fraternity/sorority gear.

I noticed also that the texts for English 420-01, Seminar in Contemporary American Poetry, were *The Collected Poems* of Robert Frost, Mark Harris's short *Selected Poems of Vachel Lindsay*, Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*, and the 1962 edition of Louis Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry*. I thought I had passed through a time warp.

"Work on the books, Pamela," I said finally.

"We do try," she answered, adding in a stage whisper, "The younger ones in that English department—they can be so . . . impatient, so abrasive. What has Busiris come to? What does this mean?"

Mid-afternoon brought an orientation meeting for new English faculty—eleven of us, precisely the size of the present department of English and Philosophy at B.T.U. My only recollection of that gathering in one of the gray basement classrooms of Busiris Hall was feeling slightly jealous of Ben Allan Browne's apparent intimacy with Victoria Nation. That jealousy evaporated instantly when Victoria asked her first question: "How many comma splices does it take to flunk a freshman theme?"

The day culminated in the Ninety-third Annual Fall Convocation of University Faculty in the Busiris Hall lecture center: uncomfortable wooden seats, their backs and arms a mass of indecipherable graffiti carved by generations of bored students. Bad music badly played on an electronic organ. The tiresome ritual of introducing green-eyed recruits to gray-eyed veterans, each new member of the Busiris faculty standing as his name and credentials were read: "Miss Victoria Nation, M.A. in English Literature from Emporia State University [polite applause]. Dr. Andrew Tucker [a slight verbal spin on the *Dr.*] Ph. D. in English Literature from Stanford University [more polite applause]. . . ." An undistinguished president gave an undistinguished speech encouraging us to dare to aspire to

academic excellence, pray for the early—and peaceful—completion of the new field house and parking lot, and support the Busiris Bucks in their pursuit of a N.C.A.A. Division 1 basketball championship.

At the convocation's close I heard for the first time the alma mater:

Lift up thy voice and sing,
Young lad and lass.
Let all the mountains ring,
Brooks, trees, and grass.

Praise our alma mater dear,
Her traditions true.
Grateful sons with vision clear,
Loyal daughters too.

Ever onward, ever upward,
Busiris gold and green.
We raise thy glorious standard high
Toward pinnacles unseen.

We new ones, of course, followed text and tune on paper, mumbling along, barely able to suppress our guffaws. The old ones, including President Stoddard, sang loudly and with a reverence that was both contemptible and touching.

That night I told Linda that our stay in Illinois would probably be brief.

The high point of the fall preseason was the Chairman's Social, a coming-out party for new-comers, and better attended by the older faculty than most subsequent department meetings, despite the fact that admission was by paid ticket only.

"You mean we pay to attend the chairman's social?" Linda demanded indignantly.

"It's only ten dollars a ticket."

Her eyes flashed. “There are thirty-five members of that department. And probably thirty-five spouses or guests.” Seventy tickets, at ten dollars apiece, is close to your monthly salary. Which, I would like to point out, you have not seen and will not see until the end, not the beginning, of the month.”

“I see no way out of it.”

“The Creeds will not be there. The Creeds are not even in town.”

“We’re in town and everyone knows it. Charles is second year and published. I’m new and unpublished.”

“Percy Thompson makes three times what you make, and we pay to go to his party. Does this make sense to you?”

“I’ve asked around. Apparently all departments have similar chairman’s socials. Maybe that’s how it’s done in the Midlands. We’ll go and do our politics.”

“ ‘Our stay in Illinois will be brief.’ That’s a quote.”

“ ‘You have to start somewhere.’ That’s another quote.”

I wrote a post-dated check for twenty dollars, added a note saying we’d be honored to attend Chairman Thompson’s reception, and sealed them in one of my twelve Busiris Technical University envelopes. Which I placed directly in Chairman Thompson’s mail box, saving the department the further expense of postage.

The whole ugly scene could have been avoided had I been told earlier rather than later that our “tickets” were in fact contributions to the tax-deductible Bucks Boosters Organization, in return for which our department received two free seasons passes to home Bucks basketball games, to be offered as door prizes at the Chairman’s Social.

(I did not win the door prize.)

The gala affair was hosted by Percy and Edna Thompson at the home to which Rose Marié Creed always aspired: a white clapboard colonial, post-war, on nearly an acre of land in Knollwoods,

Riverton's most tastefully landscaped and carefully manicured neighborhood. Grandfather clock in the entrance hall, nineteenth century British landscape in elaborate gold frame over the living room fireplace, gray wall-to-wall carpet throughout. An enormous recreation room in bookshelves and knotty pine paneling. A genuine red leather sofa and six large matching chairs. On one library table, an expensive facsimile folio edition of Dr. Johnson's dictionary; on another, four volumes of the 1783 quarto edition of his *Lives of the Poets*.

The food and alcohol were both demonstrably inferior to what Linda and I had known in California, and here were people not entirely comfortable with each other. The Old Ones congregated on one side of the room, youngsters on the other. The air was full of names which were then unimportant to me, and issues I had not yet identified. Meaningless phrases ghosted around me. "Just love to move into 305, if and when Iverson finally retires." "Gave him the C, of course, or he'd never have played a day in the N.B.A." "Trustworthy and sensible—a perfect candidate for curriculum committee." "The '65 edition, not that abomination they released in '71." "It's his." "What's mine?" "Where what is?"

Linda and I clung mostly to each other, squaring off in moments of polite conversation with various unknown faces who, with the self-consciousness of perfect strangers, introduced themselves to the young Stanford Ph. D. they had interviewed and hired only a few months previous.

"And you must be . . . ?" Edna Thompson asked as her husband accepted Linda's jacket. I took him to be the venerable professor Ivorson himself, but he was not the venerable emeritus. I was introducing myself when Ted Jones broke in.

"This is Andy Tucker, part of the new Busiris," Ted Jones informed her promotionally, his left hand on my shoulder, a daiquiri in his right hand. "And his lovely wife Betty." The daiquiri shifted to his left hand, and his right hand to Linda's waist.

“Linda.”

“Linda. His lovely wife Linda. His lovely and young wife Linda. Lovely Linda and her husband Andrew. Part of the new Busiris. From Stanford, a lovely school. My degree is from Southern Illinois University, and I have yet to publish an article in a major scholarly journal, but I’m already an associate professor because I got to Busiris eight years ahead of you. Not so young, but wiser. Nearly a wily veteran. Over there is my not-so-young but wily-veteran wife, Carolyn. Come, Andrew, let me introduce you to my wife Carolyn.”

Five minutes later Ted Jones and his daiquiri had dropped Lovely Linda and me to politic elsewhere. We were set upon immediately by a part of Old Busiris, which had been eying with obvious disapproval our conversation with Jones. Virgil Cutter, Ph. D., Brown University ‘55, had achieved the rank of full professor on the strength of a nine-page article in the less-than-first-rank *The Bradley Literary Quarterly* (his distilled dissertation, published by Busiris’s chief downstate rival in mediocrity, finally, in 1966) and two three-paragraph entries in *Notes and Queries*. Cutter clearly considered himself the dean of Busiris scholars, whose blessing was important to anyone aspiring to a career at the institution.

Cutter was harrumphing his way through a chicken drumstick when he turned his attention to business of dispensing sage advice to a young admirer seeking to make his way in the profession and the University. He handed Linda the drumstick to free a hand for potato salad, and informed me that my future at the school would depend in large part on my record of professional accomplishments, including publication. He noted with some satisfaction that Professor Jones, the man with whom I had just been speaking, was as yet unpublished, and that one of the younger men, a Dr. John Credo, who was out of town at the moment, had already published an article in *Studies in American Transcendentalism*. His forced enthusiasm for Jack’s article suggested that in Cutter’s opinion Charles was an irreverent upstart, a clear threat to his ascendancy, and should I

follow his lead, I too would be considered a threat, to be dealt with accordingly.

“You must not be in a rush about getting just anything into print,” Cutter pontificated. “True scholarship takes deliberation and mature judgment. Your work must be solid. The spoken word promotes or accuses us for a moment only, but words fixed on paper condemn or exonerate us across all the vast expanses of all eternity.”

I nodded solemnly.

“Another small piece of advice, young man,” he added, reclaiming his chicken bone. “Be selective in your company. Professor Jones over there . . . a politician, not a scholar. You meet your classes regularly, honor your betters, support the Bucks, and you’ll have a long and rewarding career at this institution. As have I. That’s the best way to make your pretty little wife happy.” Cutter winked at Linda and motioned to a short, birdy woman in a gray dress and a gin-and-tonic. She walked up to him immediately when she heard him speak.

“Here’s one of those betters right now, young man. Professor Kramer, may I present you with… .”

“Tucker. Andrew Tucker. This is my wife, Linda.”

“Dr. Tucker is from Stanford, Lucy. An established school which, I am sure, produces a solid, quality product. Eh, Tucker?”

“Very solid. Very credentialed. Not yet published.”

“That will come in time,” Cutter assured me. “Now Professor Kramer has enjoyed a very rewarding career at Busiris, right Lucy?”

Lucy Kramer had taught at Busiris since receiving her Masters from Illinois Normal School in 1941: thirty years of freshman composition and introduction to literary studies. Those thirty years, however, had made her, like Cutter, a powerful player among the Busiris old guard.

“You three have a good little chat,” Cutter ordered. “I have something to discuss with Professor Thompson.”

“I have not published an article in my life,” Kramer announced as soon as Cutter had turned his back. “Virgil Cutter is an old fool. What’s more, he knows it. His research will never amount to a hill of beans. Busiris is primarily a *teaching* institution, Professor Tucker.” She poked at me with a pencil in her right hand. “We teach students here, we don’t write books. Invest your energy in teaching and committee work, not in irrelevant articles that are not read and don’t bring promotions or raises.”

Linda and I nodded.

“Another thing,” Lucy warned, poking at me again. “There are some younger members of this department, perhaps you’ve been approached by them already, who are engaged in certain radical activities . . . I’m not at liberty to divulge them. I assure you, they are serious. Many of us have given our careers to this institution and will not stand by while it is undermined by outsiders who trivialize the discipline and depreciate the coinage of American education. Perhaps some of these people have approached you already?”

I nodded negatively.

“They will. I’m sure there was none of that at Stanford, but that Berkeley… . This school would never hire anyone with a degree from Berkeley. Or Columbia. Busiris experienced great turmoil last year, Mr. Tucker, thanks mainly to that Marcus DeLotta and some of his henchmen. You have heard about him? Mr. DeLotta is now no longer with Busiris.”

Linda and I exchanged innocent glances.

“There are others both inside and outside of the department. Old Main is aware of the situation. Measures will be taken. This institution pays you to teach your classes, Mr. Tucker. Not to write silly articles or preach radical ideas to innocent Midwestern minds.”

“Stanford is about as unradical a place as you can imagine.”

“Don’t let that young Dr. Creed lead you astray, Professor Tucker. Or Ted Jones either.” Kramer gave me another poke of her pencil.

“He’s a big boy now, Professor Kramer,” Linda assured her. “He’s got a Ph. D.”

“These are treacherous times, young lady,” Kramer warned my wife. “A woman has got to give her husband all the support she can.”

I smiled pleasantly and steered Linda toward the wine.

“What a strange group of people,” Linda meditated aloud, “trying to sound your opinions and solicit your support for some departmental Armageddon that they don’t want to talk about. Your pretty little wife better get you out of here while you’re still alive.”

“We drink. We listen. We smile. At ten o’clock we depart.”

“Meanwhile, we study the books on our host’s shelves,” suggested Linda, turning her face to the wall.

“Percy has always had such reverence for the Word,” said a voice behind us. It was Edna Thompson trying to make conversation with a whiskey sour. “And for those who use it well. He believes that a few words well chosen have more force than whole armies of soldiers.”

“The written word is the only power I know that survives the moment of its generation,” the Chairman explained, joining us. He too was a whiskey sour man. “The word continues its act of wounding or healing long after the author who wrote it is dead. But as a scholar, Andrew, you appreciate that fact.”

“Percy’s specialty is the Eighteenth Century, but he is an avid reader of novels,” Edna assured me. “Especially modern American. Of course he’s no match for Ted Jones there, who’s been through most of Hemingway and all of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s books.”

“Ironic,” Thompson added, “since I’m the one from Fitzgerald’s home town. Ted is . . . well now, where is Ted from, Edna?”

“A North Country man?” Linda asked.

“I left Minnesota years ago when I went to graduate school. Never returned. Though I still have many contacts among the farmers and the lumberjacks.”

“Professor Jones owns a first edition of *The Great Gatsby*,” Edna told Linda, “but Percy owns the 1873 quarto of Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*.”

“Is Professor Jones teaching the seminar in contemporary American poetry?” I asked.

“That would be Professor Iverson,” Thompson told me. “I don’t believe you’ve met him yet. Unfortunately he could not be here tonight.”

“Professor Iverson is emeritus,” Edna explained. “He retired three years ago, but Busiris simply can’t do without him. A brilliant man, really, and quite charming. One evening we shall have you and him out for dinner.”

“Our personal library occupies four rooms of the house,” Thompson announced. “This downstairs study contained Pre-Romantic British Literature only. All other books are housed in three upstairs bedrooms. Formerly I used a Dewey Decimal system, but six years ago I converted to the Library of Congress system.

“How do you organize the books of your library?” Thompson wanted to know.

“Mostly on shelves at the moment,” I said without thinking.

“We’re still unpacking,” Linda explained.

“Professor Iverson actually organizes his by the color of their binding. Claims he knows every book he owns by the shade of its spine. Amazing fellow, simply amazing. You must meet him sometime. I understand Professor Creed arranges his books by the slant of their politics. Or used to. Had to give it up, because they all leaned too far left and fell over.”

“Percy,” Edna admonished.

“It must be the wine, darling.” Thompson chuckled engagingly. “You’ll know us all soon enough, Professor Tucker. We each have our foibles, but we are all family. Isn’t that right, Edna?”

“We like to think so. You two just enjoy yourselves here. And don’t spend all night with your nose in a book. Introduce yourselves to your younger colleagues. You young ones are the future of the institution. It’s up to you to take good care of us old ones.”

“Family,” I promised as Chairman and Mrs. Thompson drifted off.

“Percy and the Family Shark,” whispered Linda.

“Isn’t it amazing,” I asked my wife, “the extent to which Charles Creed, an untenured man younger than ourselves, has in a single year’s time impressed himself on a department of three dozen persons, including veterans of two and three decades? He’s not even here, but his presence is everywhere.”

“What amazes me,” Linda answered, “is how he gets to be perpetually absent, while the rest of us have to put up with bad food, bad wine, and the likes of Ted Jones, Virgil Cutter, and bird lady, whoever she was. In that company, Richard Nixon would be a standout.”

Inevitably we abandoned politicing our betters and fell into the younger group clustered around Ted Jones and Lou Feracca. Edna Thompson was right: these were our people and if not the future of this institution, the future of higher education. Among them we would find our friends.

“The fact of the matter is,” Ben Allan Browne was saying, “it’s a very factionalized department.”

“Every department in the country is polarized these days,” Feracca pointed out.

“From what I’ve heard,” I said, “on crucial issues the liberals tend to join with the moderates and just outvote the old guard.”

“We do,” Jones agreed. “We beat them up pretty bad on almost everything these days.”

“Except salary,” Ben Allan Browne complained. “A high school drop-out starting at the brewery or the John Deere plant has an annual income 1.8 times that of a Ph. D. ten years his senior starting at Busiris Technical University.”

“That’s because they are union and you’re not,” said a thirty-something Italian in a Kelly green sweater and a bourbon and water. “But ‘union’ is not a word you want to use around here tonight.”

“Michael Stella, lawyer per excellence,” Jones announced. “If you really did it, Michael is the guy to hire.”

“Michael Stella, the Italian Stallion,” said Stella. “Ted’s friend and Percy’s neighbor to the west. Ted here invites me to these things because he likes to talk crooks. I come because I like to drink cheap booze. And congratulate myself on going to law school when my mama wanted me to get a Ph. D.”

“That’s a joke, son,” Jones told Browne, who was not laughing.

“John Deere has a union,” Ben Allan grumbled, “and that’s why the dumbest fuck on their line earns twice what I do in a year. To start.”

“They do,” Stella told him. “I know because I am paid a handsome retainer by that union. This also I know: the first person who mentions ‘union’ tonight will be out like a leper. Spies are everywhere. Correct that: the *next* person who mentions union will be off like a prom dress. Because the first left last year.”

“Marcus DeLotta?”

“I say no more. Fellows, don’t use the word ‘union.’ Not at this party.”

“Or school,” Jones added. “You noticed that where most schools have a Student Union, Busiris has a Student Center?”

“Oh, bullshit!” Linda objected.

“Bullshit no, my lovely Linda. I am absolutely serious. These things and others you must learn, Linda Tucker, if your husband is to survive the treacherous waters of Busiris Technical University.”

“True,” said Browne. “Ask Cutter. I quote: ‘Young man, it’s a student center, not a student union. If you expect to stay with us very long, you will learn the difference.’ His exact words.”

“Shit,” Lou Feracca said. “Busiris students have fatter billfolds than Busiris teachers, and they’re not unionized. I got invited to be advisor of the Vets Club last year. Turned them down flat, of course. I thought it meant veterans, a lot of redneck flag-wavers. I told Jack Creed, and he laughed his balls off. Turns out it’s a club of students who all drive Corvettes. Goddam twenty-year-old college kids, they all drive Corvettes.”

“Tell me about this Charles Creed,” Linda was asking Carolyn Jones when the doorbell rang.

“Perhaps you will join me at the desert table,” Carolyn suggested, smiling at her husband and motioning Linda away from the men.

At that point, however, all conversation ceased. The doorbell had been rung by Victoria Nation, making her fashionably late and carefully staged arrival. “Is this where I hand in my ticket?” she inquired loudly. Then, assured all eyes were on her, she presented her hostess with a bottle of wine and her host with her brown suede jacket, which she removed to reveal bare breasts beneath the lightest of light-blue see-through blouses. Percy Thompson’s jaw dropped two feet. Edna Thompson averted her eyes. Lucy Kramer gasped audibly. Even my Linda, West Coast sophisticated, did a double-take.

It was a full thirty seconds before anyone recovered.

Jones broke the silence. “Now there’s something you would not have seen at a Busiris faculty party ten years ago.”

“Yeah: a see-through blouse you don’t want to,” said Ben Allan Browne.

“No—an English professor of who’s a piece of ass.”

“She’s no horny English prof,” Browne said. “Her dad’s a Methodist minister from Kansas. There are also, I understand, bloodlines to Carry Nation. *The* Carry Nation, as in ax-wielder.”

“Looks like a preacher’s kid in rebellion to me.”

“It’s not much of a rebellion,” Browne insisted. “What you see now is definitely not what you gonna get later. I had dinner with her Thursday, and I can tell you she’s one uptight bitch. Comes on strong, suckers you into making a move, then hits you with moral indignation. Thursday night she was braless under a white cotton blouse. Top two, count ‘em two, buttons gone. When I met her at the restaurant, I thought, ‘hot damn.’ We talked comma splices, Christ symbols, and Charles Creed all evening. The nasal whine is a real turnoff, too.”

“Charles banging her?” Jones wanted to know.

“Not in her wettest dream.”

“She got the hots for Charles?”

“Victoria has not even met Charles,” Browne continued. “She knows him strictly by reputation. He’s the biggest, strongest bull around, so of course Victoria wants into the ring with him. Swirl her tight ass as close to Charles as she can without getting gored. Show what a little pussy cat Big Bull really is. God help us all if he acts like a big, mean bull and tries to stick it to her. We’d never hear the end of it. Victoria’s a goddamn case.

“The great-aunt bashed barstools, the grand-niece cuts balls. Victoria and I drove home in separate cars, to separate apartments, to separate beds.”

Victoria spent half an hour chatting up the senior males, arms crossed tightly over her chest, even while sipping wine or nibbling little wienies in barbecue sauce. Wilting finally under their relentless ogling, she joined the junior faculty . . . where she was relentlessly ogled by the youngsters.

“Honestly, Lou,” she exclaimed, somewhere between exasperation and coquettishness; “You fellows act as if you’d never seen a pair of tits in your lives!”

“If it’s not for sale, Victoria. . . .”

“I’m not for sale, boys. However, that doesn’t mean that I can’t be had. You fellows are just going about things all wrong.”

“Are these tits for sale?” Ted Jones wanted to know.

“Does this little boy have a breast fixation?”

“The day will come,” Browne told her, “when you will be desperate for someone to pay attention to your tits.”

“You boys might be more successful if you could raise the level of your conversation to somewhere above the belt.”

“Maybe you could raise it for us,” Jones suggested. Then, quickly, “That’s a joke, ma’am, that’s a joke.”

“Oh, where is the knight who is worthy of my tits?” crooned Lou Feracca.

“Victoria wants to be loved without being anybody’s lover,” Browne said.

Victoria looked to the wives for support, but read none in their eyes. “You guys should try being female,” she said angrily. “For one week you should try being female in America. Every one of you.”

“And settle for an Emporia State M.A.?”

“Okay, so look, I don’t have a Ph. D. from Cornell,” Nation admitted. “I’ll probably never write a book. At Emporia State I received perfectly adequate preparation for what I’m doing here at

Busiris: teaching. I don't need a research Ph. D. to be a dedicated teacher. What our students need is a little more dedicated, supportive teaching and a little less irrelevant, competitive, male so-called professionalism."

"The M.A. from Emporia with the nice tits has spoken well," Ted Jones announced.

Queen Victoria was not complimented. "Stare, stare. Joke, joke. Where have guys been living the last three years? It's 1971. Grow up, Professor Jones."

"You started this thing," Michael Stella pointed out, buffering his friend. "In this case you have what is called contributory negligence"

"You can't come to a party dressed for the party, then decide you don't like it, and try to change the rules," Feracca told Nation.

"All the squares go home!" chanted Browne.

"Why do you guys get to decide what the party is?" Victoria wanted to know. "The party will be what I make it."

"People who dress to invite attention can't choose the direction from which it comes," I pointed out. "Besides, you're in the power position. You walk in here in that outfit and are surrounded immediately by a ring of admiring males. Then you get to choose. The party becomes what you make it. That's not a bad deal, I'd say."

Victoria softened. "You can look, Mr. Tucker, but be suave." The flicker of a smile crossed her face. Her right thumb dropped to the inside of her left elbow, revealing the lightly veiled nipple.

"Very lovely," I told her. "Maybe we could all just ignore the message and focus exclusively on the medium."

"I'll show you mine, Victoria, if you show me yours," offered Ben Allan Browne.

"She already has," said Jones.

"There you go again."

“I got $10 says those are the loveliest bosoms at this party,” Stella offered. “Anyone matching my $10 can name the competition.”

“Who gets to judge?”

“We all judge. Winning pair of bosoms takes all the cash. Who’s in?”

“Boorish, boorish, boorish.”

“You’re a cow, Victoria,” jeered Ben Allan. “Give us some milk or go home.”

Victoria Nation was left with the wives . . . who were suspicious, and thus hostile.

That evening—more because of her blouse than her bosom—Ben Allan Browne tagged Victoria with the nickname “tits,” which, to the puzzlement of everyone who knew Victoria only in her later years, stuck doggedly to her throughout the seventies and into the eighties.

“That hussy was coming on to you,” Linda hissed as soon as we entered the car.

“She was coming on to everyone. Ben Allan Browne says it’s her style: come on, back off.”

“Stay away from that woman. Her type is dangerous, especially to the men they ask for help. Trust your lovely and young wife Linda on this. Let me give you some support here. I know Nation’s type. She’s true bitch.”

“Victoria is just a little girl lost, afraid and far from Kansas, trying to put on a brave front.”

“ ‘A brave front’ this is called?”

“Hell. An M.A. from Emporia State needs all the political leverage she can manage.”

“So what did Carolyn Jones have to say about Charles Creed?”

“Not a thing. Our discussion was terminally interrupted. The unpublished Miss Nation, M.A. from Kansas, obliterated the published Dr. Creed with one flash of her left nipple. Stay away from that woman.”

# Chapter 2
# **The Afro-American Question**

In 1971, with all the manic desperation of a late arrival, Busiris was just entering its own version of the high sixties. Half a decade earlier, when free speech was shaking Berkeley and a hundred thousand persons marched through New York City streets to protest American involvement in Vietnam, Tech students were too busy with panty raids, beer bashes, and Sweetheart formals to pay much attention. 1967 issues of *The Sentinel* which survived the McKinley Library fire show Tech men in crew cuts and Madras sports shirts, Tech women in soft Angora sweaters with high collars and long sleeves, and skirts well below the knee. The Lettermen performed at Homecoming, 1968. Not, as I have mentioned, until the dawn of the seventies—when lights were going out at colleges all over the country—did Busiris take the plunge into liberal arts and build an English department which in structure, if not personnel, resembled those at other major American institutions. 1971 was the golden moment in Busiris, Illinois, full of passion, adventure, and a wheel still in spin.

Busiris is not entirely to blame for its tardiness. The Midwest generally runs behind the rest of the country, and some national trends skip downstate Illinois entirely. A common joke on campus in 1972 was, “Who is Martin Stoddard supporting in this year’s election?” The answer was Thomas E. Dewey.

So a curious feeling of deja vu would arrest me as I crossed the Busiris quad on a September afternoon in 1971. Here was at Berkeley, circa 1965: a campus alive with music, miniskirts, and dope (pot a brown-bread staple, speed common enough, LSD for special occasions). Acoustic guitar players lounged in front of B. Hall’s Gothic portals. Hand-lettered posters dotted trees and buildings in open defiance of school policy that all posters and handbills receive administrative sanction. The War in Vietnam was a debatable issue, as were Richard Nixon, R.O.T.C., and the idea of

Black Studies. The “Welcome Back” issue of *The Sentinel* featured a printed debate between representatives of the A. C. L. U. and the Young Americans for Freedom on the merits of affirmative action. Students circulated petitions demanding the Student Activities Board reconsider its refusal to book Stephen Stills and the Jefferson Starship for the 1971-72 concert series. A Student Co-Op Bookstore was challenging the Busiris Buckstore from its temporary location in a garage just off campus. (By November, Busiris University, citing the university’s need for possible future expansion, had purchased the house, and with the garage, and evicted the bookstore.)

Three candidates were running for student body president: a fraternity type named Duane Wenderoth, a refugee from the Students for a Democratic Society named Wyn Schuler, and a Busiris hippie named simply “Jimmy the Geek.”

Schuler was all that remained of the Busiris S. D. S. The year previous, haler and heartier, it had begun publishing *The Outsider,* an alternative newspaper purportedly funded by faculty sympathizers in the A. C. L. U. The first edition contained, under the headline “Please Get Out of the New Road,” a scathing critique of the Busiris record on five major points of educational reform, including minority studies and segregated student/faculty restrooms, with an equally scorching indictment of Busiris administrators. The article resulted in much heated discussion of both the points of reform and Busiris administrators . . . and in an edict prohibiting the publication of unauthorized student publications on campus property. The second issue of *The Outsider* brought a warning from President Stoddard that Tech students engaged in publication of unauthorized materials could face disciplinary action including possible expulsion. In an editorial headlined “Busiris Administration and the U. S. Constitution,” the S. D. S. explained that *The Outsider* was published off-campus and without Busiris funds, that primary distribution also took place entirely off campus, and that they certainly could not control or be held legally liable for whatever happened to their newspaper after that initial distribution. This was an evasion, of course. *The Outsiders* was indeed printed downtown, but “primary

distribution" amounted to the publisher—S. D. S.—handing 1500 bundled copies of *The Outsider* to a dozen B. T. U. students, also S. D. S. members, in an off-campus apartment. The friendlies then took their bundles on-campus, cut the wires, and scattered them in dorm lobbies, the Student Center cafeteria, the library, and academic buildings.

The S. D. S. leadership also arranged for the third—and final—issue of *The Outsider* to appear on a weekend when most of them were attending a workshop in Buffalo, New York. Renegade sons and daughters of perfectly respectable middle class parents now far beyond anyone's effective control, they returned to Riverton to find themselves permanently suspended from Tech . . . *in absentia,* without cause, without hearings, and without opportunity to appeal.

What on most other campuses would have precipitated a major crisis was in Riverton the merest popping of a small bubble. Faculty allies disappeared into the woodwork, and the dismissed students (some of Busiris' brightest) drifted north to Madison and Chicago. Marcus DeLotta—my predecessor, unofficial advisor to the group, purported author of "Get Out of the New Road," and the left wing of the Busiris political spectrum—was notified that by a unanimous vote of the department's tenured faculty his appointment would not be renewed for 1971-72. No specific reasons were given. Anxious to protect his record, DeLotta never requested any. "I thought of trying to negotiate some kind of compromise," Ted Jones once told me, "but DeLotta's position was hopeless. I figured the best I could do was salvage Charles Creed's reappointment, which I did. In Marcus' case, all I could do was abstain, and lower the number of votes against him by one."

This was in January 1971.

Heir-apparent to the leadership of the left was disheveled Aaron Finkelstein, a poor man's Marxist in the Political Science department, who was also associated with the S. D. S. and probably the author of *The Outsider's* three-part series "Their War; Your Life." Finkelstein was offed by a Young American Female for Freedom who in

February 1971 sacrificed her modesty for the good of the cause. At a private conference, scheduled in his office at her request, the woman in question ripped open her blouse and, with cries of “get your hands off me” and “rape,” bolted out the door into the crowded hallway.

Next in line after DeLotta and Finkelstein on the left edge of the Busiris political spectrum: Professor John Charles Creed, advisor to the Black Students Alliance and, let it be remembered, DeLotta’s office partner and therefore probable co-conspirator on *The Outsider*.

But Charles Creed was not Marcus DeLotta, and by the end of 1971 the Busiris S. D. S. was more rumor than reality.

While Students for a Democratic Society was a hollow shell, the Black Students Alliance was just beginning to flex its muscle. Busiris had had a substantial black population since the middle sixties, when it began importing blacks out of Chicago in ever-increasing numbers to play basketball and, because many came with state scholarships, as a kind of state subsidy to private education. In that capacity Chicago blacks have served Busiris well ever since. Many played sports. Some received degrees. All paid, or had paid for them, full tuition, fees, room and board to a school which relied on tuition, room, and board for about 87% of its operating budget.

In the early ‘70s, however, black students were a subsidy not without price. Chicago blacks transplanted to Riverton were perfectly conscious of national black militancy and vaguely embarrassed by their own timidity. Chicago radicals considered the Black Students Alliance leadership inept at best, Uncle Tom at worst, but they also realized that Busiris was too small a campus to support two black organizations. A competing group could never hope to match the B. S. A.’s funding, which was generous even in 1970. The best a competing organization could hope for was half a pot.

In the September 1970 B. S. A. elections, a cadre of Chicago activists led by one Billy Jo Allen seized control of the organization, using the slogan “Get All of It, Now” (GAIN). Allen’s first and most

controversial action as president was to invite a young, untenured, white Assistant Professor of English to replace an aging, black Full Professor of Sociology as the group's advisor. Charles' acceptance created a storm among both students and faculty. The B. S. A. lost a third of its membership and all administration support. Undaunted, the group set forth a list of demands: (1) a minimum of four black faculty appointments for academic year 1971-72, (2) an Afro-American Studies Program, to be fully operational in 1974-75 after a four-year implementation program beginning fall 1971, and (3) a Black Culture Center, to be housed in temporary quarters starting in fall, 1971, with a newly constructed facility to be available for academic year 1974-75.

These demands ran into the brick walls of Old Main. Both Allen and Creed drew sharp criticism from blacks and whites alike. The badly split organization might have followed the S. D. S. into oblivion had not 1971 provided Busiris blacks with the issue they needed to focus their energies and achieve the high visibility they sought on campus and in the state. That issue was construction of the new Stoddard Field House and Convocation Center, in which many black basketball players would spend time and talents raising funds for the University. Frustrated by administrative foot-dragging and student apathy regarding its demands, the Alliance determined to vent its anger on the issue of black representation in the unions engaged by field house contractors.

Politically the act was a stroke of genius. The unions could muster only three blacks out of 166 workers employed on the project. White middle-class academics, who would have resisted sharing faculty rest rooms or dining facilities with black colleagues, could easily show their good will by supporting student demands that white blue-collar workers give up their jobs to blacks. The lure of jobs attracted the sizable black population of Busiris "valley nigs," who had heretofore harbored thinly concealed animosity to the white institution in its midst, including "hill" or "booshie nigs." These street-wise downstate brethren of streetwise Chicago radicals leapt immediately into the fray . . . and, to the discomfort of most white

middle-class academics, onto the campus. In April 1971, fifteen members of the B. S. A. seized the president's office, using President Stoddard himself as a hostage, demanding that Busiris Tech trustees cancel their agreement with the general contractor until black membership in unions working on the project reached 10%. Unless its demands were met, the Alliance threatened to shut down gymnasium construction . . . which had begun, of course, with demolition of the old field house and excavation of a foundation in the old parking lot. Confronting moral pressure both internal and external, potential adverse publicity rivaling that of the basketball point-shaving scandals of the fifties, and the prospect of playing fourteen home dates of a 1971-72 season NCAA Division I basketball season (including games with U. C. L. A., Wisconsin, and Louisville) in the 1,400-seat Busiris Central High School Gymnasium, Busiris capitulated.

The construction workers did not. Filled with white-socked, Blue-Ribbon-Beer-drinking rednecks from the all-white communities surrounding Riverton, the unions flatly refused concessions to the young punks from Chicago and trash from Riverton South Side. In early May, with a hole dug and footings poured, construction workers walked off the job. Black students offered to scab. White workers offered scabbing black students concrete swim suits and a special river party to try them out.

The old Quonset hut lay where it had fallen.

It was Charles Creed himself who engineered the compromise which saved both sides. In return for a written agreement on the Black Studies Program and the Cultural Center, the B. S. A. agreed to drop its opposition to the field house construction. The four black faculty positions would be phased in over three years as a natural development of the Afro-American Studies Program. To placate town blacks, Administration promised to require contractors bidding on the Black Cultural Center to guarantee 25% minority workers on that project. The Quonset hut debris disappeared, the field house sprung up like a day lily, and each week of construction was hailed as a

victory by Old Main and the Alliance both. Charles appeared the very embodiment of moderation and reason, a fortunate choice indeed as B. S. A. advisor. Only Jack's old enemies held him accountable for creating the crisis he had so artfully resolved.

I heard the story of Stoddard Field House and Convocation Center twenty times during September 1971. Never was it told without due appreciation, glowing or grudging, of Charles Creed's role in transforming dream into reality.

As the first day of classes approached, I kept waiting for Jack to manifest himself in the flesh. There were notes from students and faculty taped to and slipped under the door. There were requests that I "tell him Jenny Ray and Angela Dawn, from American literature last year, said hello." One coed left a box of chocolate chip cookies with a card: "Thank-you for American Lit. last spring, the best class I ever took. Love, Laura." Memos from the department chair, the dean, the vice president—pink, green, white, tan—piled up beside the summer school examinations on his desk. I thought they might disappear in the night, testimony to a midnight raid on the office, but there they lay, accumulating, while I sat in the desk across from them, reading criticism, typing syllabi, rehearsing my opening lectures, gathering evidence toward a proper perspective on Busiris and its faculty.

Apparently Jack was serious about spending every possible moment away from the school and, if possible, out of town.

The English department's September meeting was scheduled for noon on Wednesday the 6th, the first instructional day of the semester. Although Jack's first class did not meet until 1:00, I thought he might appear that morning. He was not then in the habit of canceling the first and last weeks of each semester, nor did he then, as later, sprinkle "stop days" across the semester's syllabus. In the early seventies Jack was religious about classes, although he wasn't much for office small talk or department lounge politics. He even then detested pointless meetings.

But when I entered the office at 9:00 a.m., the pile on Jack's desk was exactly as I had left it 5:00 Tuesday afternoon. Nor had Jack appeared when I left for my 11:00—which, in violation of an unspoken compact between Busiris students and faculty, I kept the full fifty minutes of opening day. Returning at 11:50, I fully expected to see Himself at last, chatting up some coed, perhaps even attacking the heap of mail and memos. But the office was empty and the clutter on the desk undisturbed. I fussed, waiting, while voices echoed up and down the hall.

Finally footsteps and Jeremy Jones's head popped through the door. "Time for the big meeting," he announced. "Your buddy around?"

I nodded negatively. "Does Charles Creed still work here?"

"Only when legally obligated to, and sometimes not even then. Still, I can't believe he'd miss a meeting with Afro-American on the agenda. His currency is too much at stake."

I gathered clipboard and pen, slipped into my suit jacket, and walked off beside Jones.

"The big meeting?" I echoed.

"Yes and no," Jones answered. "No, in that under terms of the construction crisis compromise, English will offer Afro-American literature. That's a given, part of Charles' Afro-American Studies Program. The proposition will be debated, of course, to avoid the appearance of a department too willing to drop its pants and lie down on its back. But everybody in the room knows we'll offer the course. I've got the votes on that.

"The real issue is whether Afro-American will be a bone thrown to the mongrels at the door, something on a level with remedial composition, or a real part of the curriculum. The debate itself will be on offering the damned course, but the real test will be on counting it toward the graduation requirements of all 1.4 English majors. Debate on that motion will be very short, but that's the vote that these people will remember. It might mean hiring a specialist to teach the course,

and that might possibly mean a B L A C K person in the sanctorum of Busiris Hall, consorting with people so full of British Empire that they scarcely consider colonial literature legitimate. I think my coalition will support that motion as well, but a couple of votes are shaky.

"People in this department are terrified by the whole idea of Afro-American culture and the threat it poses to the WASP hegemony. But they're also terrified of the Black Students Alliance. All those black kids will be sitting in their required composition classes this afternoon, and next week, and next year, the smell of their rage permeating the air. The Old Ones really don't want to be called racists, although several genuinely are. A lot depends on what secret signals Old Main has given the chosen few.

"I don't mind telling you I've had to cut a few deals on this one. I could have used a little more assistance from your office partner. With all due respect to his improvisational abilities, Charles is not very adept at politics. He'll get himself in serious trouble one day, and I won't be able to save him. In the meanwhile he does us . . . well, less good than he could."

"There is only one reasonable position on Afro-American," I said. "From the moral, theoretical, and economic points of view."

"I'm not sure," Jones said thoughtfully. "Arguments could be made . . . although the thoughtful ones will probably not be made. Some are arguments I could support. To exclude something which is genuinely excellent merely because it is black, or anything else, that's racism, and racism impoverishes us all. But the qualitative condition must be allowed. If the word 'racism' ever comes to mean simply 'the exclusion of anything black' regardless of quality, then the campaign against racism becomes a crusade against standards, and the floodgates open. Virgil Cutter is right to worry about that kind of leveling. Not now, but I could see it down the road. What others think, I don't know.

“One thing I do know,” he added earnestly. “Freshman appointments are well advised to stand out of the line of fire. Vote but don’t speak. Let me take the flack for you. And for Charles, if he’s here.”

We had reached the bottom of the stair well and approached the doors to ground floor corridor of the south wing. “Sharp to your left,” Jones indicated as I opened the dull gray metal door.

Passing through the doorway, I entered what felt like the hold of an eighteenth-century slave ship, a great heap of Afro-American humanity propped against walls, seated cross-legged on the cold linoleum floor, buzzing quietly in small knots around the floor to the conference room. I saw Percy Thompson in earnest conversation with B. S. A. President Billy Jo Allen and another male in Afro, Levi’s, leather sandals, an orange and brown dashiki, and a fist carved from ebony or some other dark wood dangling from a leather lanyard around his neck. The black in the Afro and fist was intense. Thompson was obviously ruffled. Allen was cool. Other members of the department stiffly affected imperturbability, masking their nervousness with talk of Milton and Shakespeare. Ignoring the crowd, they passed through the apparently invisible students and into the conference room.

“Well,” said Jones, frozen in his tracks.

A heavy-set black woman coming in from behind elbowed him aside. “Move you ass, honkie cat,” she told him curtly. “You blockin’ up the hall.”

“Looks to me like they won’t have to wait until this afternoon to confront the Black Students Alliance and its sweaty anger,” I said, putting on my own indifference.

“Looks to me like your office partner was on campus all morning after all,” said Jones as we entered the room. “Looks to me like that’s him right over there.”

It was. Jack was sitting alone in a far corner, dressed not in the jeans which, a few years later, became virtually a uniform with him,

but in a dark blue suit not unlike something Richard Nixon would have worn. His hair was cut and groomed; his black loafers were polished. He struck me as leaner than I remembered him from my interview, and darker. He did not look like a radical, a writer, or a leader of the proletariat. What he mostly looked like was a young assistant professor of English.

He was reading Kerouac's *Desolation Angels*, and he did not glance up as the other three dozen members of the department entered the room. To the obvious consternation of Virgil Cutter and Lucy Kramer, I sat down beside Jones, a dozen seats from Jack.

"I don't really think this will affect my opinion one way or the other," announced Cutter in a stage whisper clearly directed more at those outside than his colleagues, who noisily agreed. Jones winked at me.

Chairman Thompson cleared his throat and announced that he was calling to order the September 1971 meeting of the Department of English at Busiris Technical University. Then he announced that introduction of new members would have to await a vote on a student request that this meeting be declared open to the public.

"The Chair requests a motion to that effect."

Ben Allen Browne—not Jack—so moved.

"In fairness to members of the department," Thompson announced, "I am going to rule this motion undebatable, and we will vote upon it immediately by secret ballot." A murmur of approval whispered through the room; the level of noise outside the door did not appear to increase. Small white scraps of paper passed among us.

" 'Yes' will mean an open meeting; 'no' will mean a meeting closed as usual," Thompson announced.

The ballots were counted.

"By a vote of the faculty, this meeting will not be open to the general public," the Chair of the Busiris Technical University

Department of English announced. “Will the department secretary please so inform the gentleman in the orange shirt in the hallway, and close the door upon her return.”

A murmur of approval rippled through the group. Jones winked again. Charles remained lost in Kerouac. The door to my rear slammed shut, and the atmosphere relaxed slightly.

What followed was mostly trivia. Department minutes were read and approved. I recall standing as my name and credentials were read. Jack, I believe, was actually reading *Desolation Angels*, missing no more than he had missed by ignoring the memos piled on his desk upstairs. His attention to Kerouac more than Thompson annoyed some senior members (they were not on his side anyway; he hadn’t lost a vote) as much as the black presence behind the closed door, which grew geometrically with each passing minute. Everyone knew that the important business remained unaddressed, and delay served only to remind us all that behind the door lay a reality which would sooner or later have to be confronted. Intended to curtail debate and thereby strengthen the conservative position, Thompson’s strategic delay served mainly to rattle his colleagues, as time outs called late in a close game will ice a field-goal kicker or a free-throw shooter.

Charles Creed did not make the motion to offer Afro-American literature beginning fall 1972 nor did he participate in debate which, as Jones had predicted, ran as long as time permitted.

Lucy Kramer opened for the prosecution with a red herring: “I know of nobody in the department trained in this academic specialty, and I do not see how we can possibly hire someone before 1973-74 . . . unless, of course, one of the junior members would like to vacate his post.”

Thompson: “It is the chair’s understanding that funds are available in a special administrative budget for retraining a present faculty member into Afro-American, and that some junior faculty members have already expressed interest in this field.”

“Could the field, if significant enough to merit inclusion in the Canon, be entrusted to a junior faculty member?” the M.A. from Illinois Normal wanted to know.

“One of those junior faculty has his Ph. D. and is, therefore, potentially senior faculty.”

Faces turned to Charles but were not acknowledged.

“Might not reassignment to this new field draw this person away from his own specialty and thereby weaken department offerings in that area?”

Nobody could say for sure.

Victoria Nation understood that some of the literature in question was sexual in a tasteless, vulgar, and sometimes violent manner, and therefore not suitable to many Busiris students. She mentioned the names of LeRoi Jones, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison.

“Ellison is no more sexual or violent than Shakespeare,” Ben Allen argued. “Or the Bible.”

“But Shakespeare is Shakespeare,” Lucy Kramer pointed out.

Victoria had brought with her copies of three LeRoi Jones poems and the first chapter of *Invisible Man,* which she circulated among her colleagues. “I apologize for some of this material,” she said with a gleam in her eye, “but I believe my senior colleagues should know what is represented by this course.”

Virgil Cutter voiced three concerns. “My first is how colored students would react to a white professor, since all of us are white, and whether this would create further animosities when the inevitable D’s and F’s appeared. My second concern is textbooks: what books are available to teach such courses? Do they come from reputable publishers? Have they been assembled with due scholarly deliberation, or might they not be perhaps a trifle slapdash in their methodology and mixed in the quality of their selections? My third concern is McKinley Library. Are our library holdings sufficient to support serious research and publishable scholarship in this field? Is

the department budget sufficient to permit expansion of our holdings in this area and to continue to strengthen holdings in mediaeval and Renaissance, areas where we have acknowledged weaknesses . . . *and* to underwrite the new linguistics program as well?"

On a sheet of paper I listed four books we had used at Stanford. "I don't know who published them," I whispered to Jones, "but they made for a hell of a course. Don't criticize what you can't understand."

"Hand down, mouth shut. This vote's already over. Why alienate the people who will decide on your reappointment . . . and in three years on your tenure?"

Considerable discussion on the library budget followed, the minute hand on the clock above Thompson's head grinding past the 7, the 8, the 9. Finally Jones returned discussion to the issue at hand with some comment about administrators in Old Main having an obligation to fund library purchases if it funded retooling faculty.

Then came the real concerns, the reasons which underlay the excuses voiced earlier. Might not this be just a passing fad, a diversion, Victoria Nation wanted to know, which would drain departmental energies and budgets? "Are we sure that we're not building today a program of texts, courses, and highly specialized faculty which we will be seeking to dismantle, or retrain, tomorrow?"

Could Afro-American studies be compared with eighteenth-century studies, classical literature, and Shakespeare's plays, somebody else asked. Was there any real substance to this corpus of literature? Was Afro-American truly the equivalent of Studies in Romanticism, American Realism, or American Modernism? Did not American Modernism incorporate much of Afro-American literature already: Ellison, Hughes, Baldwin, and Booker T. Washington?

Finally Virgil Cutter, who taught one of five sections of Shakespeare's tragedies offered at Busiris Tech that fall, articulated the real fear hunkering in all the old timers' minds: might not students taking a course in "this literature" (here he held up Victoria's

photocopies) rather than another departmental offering “cheat themselves out of a richer experience in one of the more traditional fields of British or American literature?”

“It’s a sophomore survey,” I whispered to Jones.

“On this one, I’m with Virgil,” Jones answered. “Today it’s a sophomore class; tomorrow it’s a minor. The day after that, a major. Then a graduate degree. Ellison is good. I’ve read him. Some of the others . . . not so good. I’ve read them too. I just plain couldn’t respect a degree in Afro-American Studies the way I respect a degree in British Literature, or a M.A. thesis on LeRoi Jones the way I could respect a thesis on Charles Dickens. And Ralph Ellison is no Will Shakespeare.”

It was nearly ten minutes before 1:00 when Thompson asked, “Is there any further discussion on the motion?” Charles continued to read, and the black presence without loomed even larger.

A secret ballot was requested and taken, and by a surprisingly wide margin the department found itself offering Afro-American literature, beginning fall 1972.

Thompson consulted his watch. “It’s nearly 1:00,” he observed; “is there any further business?”

Quickly Ted Jones moved that the new course in Afro-American literature be included among those which would meet the requirement for six hours in American literature for program 1.4 language and literature majors.

“Second,” somebody else shouted.

“Some members of the department have 1:00 classes,” Thompson observed.

“There’s a motion on the floor,” Jones said firmly. I’d like to call the question.” Others mumbled uneasily.

“Is there any debate on the motion to allow the new course in Afro-America literature to meet the department’s requirement in

American literature for 1.4 majors?" Thompson asked.

"The question has been called."

Almost without looking up from his book, Jack raised his hand.

"Assistant Professor Charles Creed."

Closing *Desolation Angels*, Jack rose to confront, almost as an afterthought, the others in the room. He spoke briefly and without passion: "We are all aware of the students outside that door, as we are all aware of the consequences of our vote on this course. A century ago, those students would have been 3/5 people, people who counted but didn't count. And we would have approved a 3/5 course, a course that counted but didn't count. It took a major war to get those students the other 2/5 of their manhood. That war was fought a century ago. It's over. The free states won."

There was no further debate. On another secret ballot, the motion passed by five votes. In his journal Jack noted, "Voted on Afro-Am. today. Good guys 20, bad guys 15. I'll probably end up teaching the fucking thing."

Thompson adjourned the meeting. Jones turned at me smiling, as if he himself had engineered the victory. "Bet on a revote next month, on some pretext or another. I know this bunch. But the first victory is a key one."

"Where'd Chas get to?" I asked.

"He's with his people," he answered. "You had lunch? The Student Center awaits us."

"I bring my own," I confessed. "Linda packs sandwiches. It saves money."

"I forgot: you're still young and poor. Stick with me, kid. You'll soon be dining in the luxury of the Busiris Student Center."

It was not, of course, baloney sandwiches, but the opportunity to corner Jack in the office that called me.

Without waiting for the elevator, I hurried up the stairs, two at a time. Jack was already in the office, humming some Dylan tune, as I walked in the door. He saw me and laughed aloud. “Little trick I learned from my Italian uncle in Jersey: in a close contest, don’t say nothin’, just flash your heat.”

I held out a hand in congratulations. “How you lasted here one month, let alone one year. . . . You come on like an East Coast heavy, which is the one thing they most fear in you.”

“It is indeed. They smile, they congratulate, and when I put the muscle on them, they vote with me. But they are terrified of everything Jack Creed represents. They hate me.

“However, they are also chickenshit. Old and young, from the phony Shakespearean to the phony classicist to the phony liberal, they are chickenshit one and all. ‘A real man is safe with a thousand of their kind, as long as he doesn’t turn his back.’ Mark Twain wrote that sentence in 1883, four days after lecturing at Busiris Technical Institute, for an honorarium of $37.25. You can look it up in Albert Bigelow Paine’s edition of Twain’s autobiography.”

Then he added, almost as an afterthought, “Besides, if I can’t have this place on my terms, I don’t want it. Who in his right mind would?”

I nodded my head.

“Look at this shit,” he said suddenly, angrily, indicating the month’s accumulation of memos, forms, notices, announcements. “Do I need this? Does anyone need this shit?” In one swipe of his arm he swept the entire pile, unexamined, into his trash can. “What’s important will come back—on the telephone. Then I can deal with whoever I’m dealing with face to face. Or voice to voice. Bullshit. All of it, bullshit.”

“I had one job offer last year, Charles, and this was it.”

“That’s Old Main Think, Tucker. And if you play their game, in their park, by their rules, you will lose every time.”

“The previous occupant of my desk, I understand, is no longer at this institution, and no longer teaching.”

“Marcus is in law school now. He’s going to make a million dollars one day, writing stuff and making arguments in front of small groups of people. The same shit that earns you $9,600 a year. If I had any brains, I’d be in law school myself.”

“I trained eight years to get to Busiris.”

“And you got the job, didn’t you? You got a job. I got a job. There’s always work for workers. Remember that, Tucker, there is always work. Especially for blue-collar types like us. The system has to employ us, so that we can buy the shit they’re selling. We quit buying, the economy collapses. Then the fat cats are jumping out windows. Can’t let that happen, can we? No sir. Study your history: there’s always work for the workers.

“And believe me, that’s all we are: blue-collar workers. All that ‘doctor this’ and ‘professor that’ don’t mean shit to a tree. We are but field niggers in the cotton fields of freshman composition, Tucker. ‘Yes, sir.’ ‘No, sir.’ ‘Yowzah.’ ” Slave laborers on Plantation Busiris.

“But Busiris needs its field niggers, because we are what makes this place run. Study your Ralph Ellison. We’re the spades in the boiler room of the paint factory. Nobody ever came to Busiris to get administrated by Herr Doktor Professor Martin Stoddard. They come here to take freshman comp. That’s us. And if Old Main don’t treat us right, we got plenty of options. We don’t need them. They need us. Got a lot of forks and knives, and they have to cut something. Do it your way, or piss on it. Always work for a worker, in one form or another. Piss on ‘em.

“Meanwhile, I am late for a 1:00. Back in ten minutes.”

He was out the door and I sat pondering my first, condensed lecture in Charles Creed’s theory of higher education in America.

# Chapter 3
# **The March Downtown**

The major political event of 1972 at Busiris was Melvin Laird's address on Wednesday, October 25 to the monthly meeting of the Riverton Downtown Businessmen's Association at the Hilton Hotel. The speech, everyone knew, was part of Richard Nixon's reelection campaign, intended to generate support for war policies in national disrepute everywhere except in the rural Midwest and South. Busiris, which had once awarded Nixon an honorary degree, was one of a handful of American campuses on which a Nixon man could safely have set foot that year. Balanced between a great Democratic machine upstate and a concentration of Republicans downstate, Illinois was considered crucial to the President's cause. An invitation was solicited, and not two weeks before the election the Secretary of Defense was dispatched to downstate Illinois to remind voters that their Republican president needed their help in keeping America and the world safe for General Motors.

What remained of the Busiris radical white left, humiliated by the S. D. S. assassinations, saw Laird's visit as something the whole wide world would be watching, and a chance to put Tech in the *New York Times*. Field House construction two years earlier had been largely the domain of the Black Students Alliance, which had politely but firmly rejected white offers of direct assistance. And frustrated whites, having read their Stokely Carmichael, kept their distance, knowing that while other colleges had canceled classes and even graduations, booted R. O. T. C. off campus, burned buildings, and even provoked police into beating and shooting students, Busiris had in the sixties done nothing worthy of national attention. With the radical moment waning and the war an all but settled issue, Laird's visit looked like one last chance for the white left to assert itself.

So confrontation was from the beginning the order of the day—confrontation and maximum publicity. Less than a week after the

Riverton *Standard-Republican* broke the news of Laird's visit, a group calling itself Students for an Impartial Hearing on the Vietnam War announced plans for a day-long teach-in at the Odeon Theater, directly across the street from the Hilton. Their announcement brought little reaction in either state or local newspapers, until the city moved to block their rental of the theater on the specious grounds that Students for an Impartial Hearing was an ad hoc group without demonstrated ability to guarantee the behavior of participants in the teach-in and financially unable to post bond against a potential riot. Radio, television, and newspapers covered the especially ugly confrontation between city officials and radical students at a city council meeting.

And the students had their publicity, if not their teach-in.

Then the Black Students Alliance, partially at Charles' request and partially to flex its own muscle, stepped in on the side of the anti-war radicals. Billy Jo Allen proclaimed (incorrectly) that since most of the deaths in Vietnam were black deaths, and since Laird and the whole Nixon crew was a bunch of "racist pigs," the struggle against the war was a black struggle even more than a white struggle. He called upon Busiris faculty, students, and administrators to support the teach-in publicly and financially. He did this merely to tweak Busiris, knowing that several Tech trustees were prominent members of the Businessmen's Association, which had invited Laird in the first place. Allen offered the Alliance to front for the whites in renting the theater.

Knowing students would receive no support from their college, City Manager William Wright offered to allow Busiris, or a registered student club like the Alliance, to rent the Odeon on the condition that Busiris accept full legal and financial responsibility for "damage to persons, property or the civil peace resulting directly or indirectly from student-sponsored activities." In effect City Council was throwing the matter back into the hands of University administrators, which was where they felt the problem belonged anyway. As expected—or conspired—Old Main refused to support its students.

With the situation at an impasse, a meeting was held off campus . . . in the apartment Jack and Rose Marié were renting on Harrison Street.

At the time, Rose Marié was in New York with Timm, visiting her folks prior to giving birth to Jennifer Lynn. Had she been in Riverton, she would have forbidden the meeting, at least at her apartment, for Rose Marié disapproved generally of Jack's radical politics and she most certainly disapproved of drugs, which circulated freely throughout the night. Wherever the meeting had been held, however, events would probably have fallen as they did. And we were safer at Jack's place than in the Alliance office, which was later revealed to have been bugged by campus security.

Concerned for my own future, Linda encouraged me to stay home and read a book. But I too was fascinated by Jack and caught up again in the romance of protest. I promised, unfaithfully, to avoid the dope and keep my mouth shut, then scurried out the back door.

The group was small, maybe twenty-five people, and racially mixed. In contrast to my experience in California, where whites and blacks collected in mutually suspicious cliques, these people seemed fully integrated and rather comfortable with each other: students and teachers, whites and blacks. I noted what I took to be three inter-racial couples and a collage of long hair, beards, Afros, jeans, sandals, miniskirts, diaphanous garments of various fabrics and designs. Seasoning everything was the sweet scent of pot, and the music of Sly and the Family Stone. A beautiful white girl, one of those mad, lost angels who had inquired after Charles during registration, sat perched on the arm of the sofa beside him, her blue-and-green paisley mini revealing a white V of panties where her crossed legs met, silent most of the evening, brushing his arm occasionally with her knee.

"Every situation," Jack was explaining when I arrived, "offers some possibilities that are pretty much a certainty to anyone who plays his cards right. There are usually further possibilities if you're

lucky, but you don't count on them. Gravy if you get them, no loss if you don't.

"And every situation precludes some things. You might want them, but you're never gonna get them, so you don't even think about them. If you try for more than a situation allows, you just fuck yourself up.

"The trick is to let your opponent think you're playing for some big damned trophy you know you're not going to get, while you secretly play for that which is within reach. This way, your opponent gets overconfident. This way, you know something he doesn't. The thing is to not fool yourself while you're fooling him. Getting caught up in your own act can fuck you up as much as playing for more than a situation offers."

"We're not going to end the war," one of the students admitted.

"Not in Riverton, Illinois" everyone agreed.

"We won't get fair publicity."

"Not in the *Standard-Republican*."

"We won't change Laird's mind, or Nixon's. Or even Stoddard's."

"Check."

"So what are we playing for? What can we reasonably hope to accomplish?"

It was Billy Jo Allen who finally suggested that the highest attainable goal was creating a confrontation with the police which might cost Nixon enough votes to lose Illinois and, possibly, a close election.

Jack agreed. The group began formulating a strategy.

"The city will tangle you up as long as possible with talk and technicalities. They'll use words to confuse you," he warned, "preventing you from formulating firm plans for a teach-in or a demonstration until it's too late to publicize your protest. Any large action will then collapse under the weight of an impossible time

frame. A small group of protesters can be dealt with quietly as individuals, not as a group. Like the S. D. S. kids. The Man always deals more severely with individuals than with an organized group, because one alone is powerless."

"You're suggesting we forget the teach-in?" asked a tall, bearded, white male.

"I'm suggesting that words are just bullshit. Have no reverence for the Word. Recognize the talk about permits and licenses for the bullshit it is, and plan something which doesn't involve permits, licenses or rentals. Focus on creating a confrontation, not a teach-in."

"We could close Busiris until they agree to rent the Odeon," Allen suggested. "We can close this school any day we want to. There's a confrontation."

Ben Allan Browne frowned. "Close Busiris and you change the issue. Not the people vs. the War, but Busiris Technical University vs. its own students. Do you want to change the issue from Vietnam to education?"

"A good enough issue for sure."

"The real issue," Jack argued, "is control. Who controls what you do? You? The government? The army, the police, city officials, university administrators, teachers? Their goal is to run your life, and petitioning only legitimatizes their authority. Of course they'd prefer not to be embarrassed, as a strict parent doesn't want to be embarrassed in church by a fidgety kid. But they'll tolerate a little embarrassment as long as they're still in control—of the country, the war, the school, your life. Playing games over rentals and permits is just requesting permission to be a little bad. It leaves them in control. Acting out of control is one possibility this situation offers."

"So what can we do?"

"Seem like there be no permit, then there be no demonstration. Or there be a whole lot of people in jail."

“On what charge?”

“Criminal trespass. Parading without a license.”

“Does that stay on your record? Can that get you blackballed from a job?”

“Wait a minute, candy-ass” Jack interrupted. “You're already running scared, and if they got you scared, they got you.

“Billy Jo, you remember the Field House thing? And that vote on Afro-American literature last year? You remember how those yahoos caved in when they saw you people packing the hallway? Gave you everything you wanted. You remember that?

“So how'd that come about?” Jack asked rhetorically. “What brought those rednecks around? Why did Boss Stoddard back you against downtown?”

“Ah dunno, Boss Creed,” Billy Jo answered in a mock Southern drawl. “Ya’all tell me why white folks bes so strange.”

Laughter.

Creed played to Allen. “He aftah yo money, boy. The Man may hate yo guts, but he love yo money.”

“I done knowd it wasn’t on account of he so enjoyed two days of our company.”

More laughter.

“No, sir,” Jack concluded. “The Alliance did not get Afro-American Studies because the Busiris Board of Directors believes in Mr. Spade.”

Some blacks shifted uneasily. Neither Billy Jo nor Charles batted an eye.

“Jack’s right,” Lou Feracca said. “This school will not let 100 students get their heads busted or jailed or anything else that will send them or their brothers and sisters flocking over to Bradley or up to Chicago Circle or Roosevelt or De Paul.”

“What this school fears more than anything is a Big Damn Mess,” Jack pointed out. “Something in all the newspapers that will make them look bad. Something that will cost them students.”

“$3,200 times 100 makes $320,000,” Ben Allen pointed out. “Times every year you stay at Busiris. A lot of cash. Collectively you are all free, white, and 21.”

“Right on.”

“Just make sure there's 100 of you,” Charles warned, “because five or ten, they will fire your ass right on out of here, same as they did to those S. D. S. kids. A Little Damn Mess, happening quietly in a corner—shit, a little damn mess is no mess at all. But 100 together, they ain't gonna touch you. Black, white, or green. I can promise you that. Your chains are buried at the bottom of the ocean.”

“And the city will not touch you either,” Ben Allen added, “because on this issue the city will do what the college tells it to do.”

“One other thing,” Jack reminded the group. “To end with 100, you start with 500. That’s the way things work on this campus.”

The students had all heard many times, in class and out, Jack’s doctrine of being by doing. “You make yourself free by acting as if you are free.” Perhaps their youth inclined them naturally toward action rather than analysis. Perhaps their lives were more focused, less fragmented by cross-purposes. Perhaps they genuinely believed. After all, it was their future even more than ours. I understood why Jack spent his time with them rather than with his colleagues.

I alone resisted. “I have not been at Busiris as long as any of you, so maybe I’m wrong. But in the year I’ve been on this campus I have not seen 500 people ready to put their careers on the line for a principle. Willing to confront not only Melvin Laird, but a platoon of Riverton cops. Not to mention a whole division of Riverton rednecks.”

“We can count on Kramer and Cutter for sure,” Lou Feracca joked.

“Charles could enlist Victoria Nation,” said Ben Allan Browne.

Jack nodded thoughtfully. “No, I don’t think there are 500 people. Not a hundred at Busiris willing to put their balls on the line and march. Maybe fifty, and most of them are students. We could list the names. And that list would not include liberals like Ted Jones. Or [this with a sharp look at Ben Allan] Victoria Nation.”

“Marcus and Aaron are gone too,” Browne noted.

“We’re an endangered species,” Lou Feracca lamented.

“Say fifty,” Jack meditated aloud. “Add to them maybe a hundred like Mr. Jones, who was snipped years ago but has a vague recollection and even an occasional urge. In the presence of fifty with balls, that hundred might discover a remembered courage of their own, and you have 150.

“Then there are the sheep. The rich kids guilty about their comfortable lives. Psych and soc majors full of pity for the world’s victims, unanalytical, but eager to support the cause of the day.”

“Easy tools to swell a progress.”

“Not very smart, but they have good hearts. They’ll march with us, partly as a lark, partly to be where it’s happening, partly to save victims of social injustice.”

“They also serve who meekly follow.”

“They’re useful today,” Charles reflected. “Tomorrow? They scare the shit out of me. Stupid people are dangerous people. By the tens and hundreds of thousands they take degrees and off they go to right the world’s wrongs. Finding little work in this field, they set about manufacturing more. I’ve seen this happening already out East: Do-Gooders Militant. Solutions in Search of Problems. ‘Could it be that you too have a problem we can help you solve? Think hard. No injustice is too small! We’d like to help you learn to help yourself.’

If colleges were smart, they would exterminate all programs in psychology, sociology, and social work before the hurricane begins.

“Anyway, they’re useful today. Use ‘em before they smother you, I always say. Hell yes, I think we can get 500 to march downtown.”

So we decided (I was a part of this too) to let administration think they had snookered us, and to decoy city officials and the police by substituting a teach-in on the University campus for the Odeon event. Student leaders would speak, and probably the Lutheran minister from the campus religious center. Marcus DeLotta and Aaron Finkelstein might be induced to make a return visit to Riverton. What had they further to lose? Jack would speak last. If 500 or more people remained at the end of his speech, figuring 1 in 3 would join a march, plants in the rear of the crowd would agitate for a march to the Hilton. Other plants would support the idea and begin movement down Washington Avenue. If fewer than 150 marchers passed Brady’s Bonanza, the non-leaders would disappear into stores and side streets and the non-march would evaporate. Movement in the direction of the Hilton would begin 45 minutes before Laird's speech, so that demonstrators would greet him at the hotel. This plan would have the additional advantage of splitting police between protesters and Laird supporters, evening up the sides until Secretary and students came together. Once students and Secretary met at the Hilton, events could unfold as they unfolded, although Jack cautioned that damage to the hotel could upset the delicate balance between the love of $3,200 per student per year in tuition and fees, and the traditional hatred of students pitched in the hearts of most politicians, police, teachers, and college administrators.

The evening’s business concluded, most of the blacks left, and with them most of the politics. Charles put a Doors album on the record machine, then settled into the sofa with a glass of white wine. The girl in the mini-dress slipped down beside him. One of the males rolled two joints, lit one, and passed it to his left.

“The head, man, the head,” inquired another.

“Hallway, left,” Charles indicated.

A lanky brunette crossed the living room on her way to the refrigerator, detouring slightly in the direction of a male she’d been eying all night. Her nipples stood erect under a tie-dyed T-shirt, and she gave him a flip of the hip as she passed. His eyes followed her briefly. Returning with a bottle of beer, she dropped to the floor beside him, her long legs stretched in my direction. With his right index finger, he traced a question mark on her thigh.

“Terri.” Her finger traced another question mark on his jeans.

“Tony.”

She nodded. His finger returned to her thigh: a question mark and then an arrow, pointing up her leg.

“Sure.”

They rose together.

“Hallway to the right,” Charles told them. “Don’t mess the sheets.”

“The time to hesitate is through,” chanted Jim Morrison. “No time to wallow in the mire.”

Lou raised his beer. “To our foe, the Secretary of Defense.”

Ben Allan raised his glass. “To President Stoddard, the wise man who invited him.”

One of the students raised his joint. “To all who are with us.”

“To Victoria Nation and Ted Jones and Percy Thompson who are not with us.”

“Who you?” a brunette in a pageboy asked me.

“This is Andy Tucker,” Jack said.

“Jack’s office partner.”

“Must be fun, sharing an office with him.”

“Salvation in a wicked world,” said Jack. “Andy keeps me sane.” His right arm reached around the waist of his young friend, who kissed him lightly on the cheek.

“To good colleagues and good students,” Jack offered. “Help those who deserve help, and kick the bastards in the balls.”

“I’m for good teachers and good students,” said my brunette. “And for good student-teacher relationships. My name’s Jodi McKinstry, but my friends call me Jodi Mac. Your name is Andy.”

“Well . . . yes. And so it is.”

“I’m a Bucks Belle,” Jodi informed me.

“A Bucks Belle?”

“A Buck Fuck.” Jodi laughed—not stupidly or nervously, a laugh like Jack’s, vaguely wicked, but healthy and full of life. “You never heard of us?”

“I’ve only been here a year.”

“Officially we’re Bucks Belles, but we just call ourselves Buck Fucks. It’s a full scholarship, including room and board. Our job is to help recruit athletes for Busiris. You know, when these high school boys come to campus for a visit, show them a good time. Most colleges have something like us, but we’re better than the girls at other colleges. Which is why Busiris gets better players.” She laughed again.

“Three of us are white, and three of us are black. We don’t mix colors, unless we really want to. I don’t mix colors anyway. You honest Injun never heard of the Bucks Belles?”

“A full scholarship?”

“It’s a pretty easy job, really. I recruit baseball and basketball only. Other sports are on their own. Good thing this school doesn’t have a football program.

“My responsibility ends the minute a guy signs a letter of intent. So I’m busy only during recruiting season, when they come for

campus visits. Except there was this one guy last year, he fell in love with me, you know, right on his first visit. Kept writing me and calling me all summer. Well, he was kind of cute, a little dumb, and I went out with him a few times in the fall. Then I had to break it off because of my other commitments. He found a new girl friend. Cute jocks have no trouble at this school."

I nodded sympathetically.

"Sometimes we do it for fun, and sometimes for money. That's what Professor Creed says. That way we're happy and rich both. That's how I look at things."

I nodded again.

Jodi Mac turned serious. "I'm quite good at what I do, Andy." She had brown Bambi eyes.

"And you're very lovely," I answered quietly.

My rejection obviously hurt Jodi Mac.

"I'm not, you know, some kind of dumb whore. I've got a 3.6 in history, and I'm in the third year of an absolutely free education. I'm smart, I'm pretty, I'm good, and I'm clean.

"Look," she stood and pirouetted, "absolutely no strings attached. Every man's dream. Not for sale, Andy. For give-away."

For one instant, I found myself indignant with Jack, with his entourage of hippies and freaks, his toy militants, his little harem. I was angry with Lou Feracca as well, with the whole scene. Okay, I was jealous. Undoubtedly I was jealous. But who could I blame except myself? I had most clearly been invited.

I heard myself declining the invitation. I was no Charles Creed, nor was I meant to be. I knew myself, and I knew my Linda. I knew even then where it would all lead, although the world was still so young in 1972.

"You are lovely," I told Jodi Mac, "and I have promises to keep. Now it's time for me to go keep them. Maybe I'll see you again

someday.”

Lou stopped me on my way out. “Whatever you think of the chick, man,” he whispered, “this is some very righteous hash.”

I kept my promises, leaving Jodi Mac, Lou, Jack, his young friend, a menagerie of others, the righteous hash, and heading for home. I left with a congested chest, thanks partly to Jodi Mac, who was indeed a lovely girl, but more, I think, to the whole scene. There had been something very right to that gathering, the easy high sixties mix of politics, sex and music I’d lost somewhere in grad school. Their ad hoc army managed a casual camaraderie I had not found elsewhere at Busiris. Half an hour I drove around Riverton, reflecting on what I’d felt at Jack’s apartment. Pulling finally into the drive, I identified it as innocence before experience. On the Coast I had already seen where these kids were moving. Jack knew as well. He’d seen it in New York, and at Kent State. Neither of us could have explained to the youngsters in that apartment where their ship was headed, but it wasn’t where they thought. The winds had already shifted. It was probably better we remained silent.

I told Linda little of what had transpired that evening, one of the few times I can recall having kept purposefully silent. I didn't see what good talk could do her. Or me.

And never again did I set eyes on Jodi Mac.

Not even the day of the march.

I have always considered October 25th, 1972 the high point of Tech’s golden sixties, the hour that the ship came in. It was the last and probably greatest act of serious protest at Busiris. Jack’s performance was spectacular.

I also identify October 25 as the beginning of serious trouble for Jack, the moment when a decision was made somewhere in the highest of lofty Old Main offices that this man, sooner or later, was history.

That day was one of the few that Charles reached the office before I did. When I arrived he was thumbing through his copy of *Walden,* the old Modern Library edition from which he had written his dissertation. Rose Marié had returned to Riverton with Timm and Jenny, but she declined participation in either the teach-in or march. Jack claimed to have seriously encouraged her to join the march, arguing that women and children would appeal to the media, but I doubt he pressed her too seriously. She was fretful and had asked him to cancel his speech or at least promise to remain on campus. I even sensed a certain anxiety in him, although he had brought his camera and a telephoto lens, and appeared to anticipate the day's events with the detachment of a reporter on assignment.

“Maybe Rose Marié and you and Linda and I could go out for dinner tonight,” I suggested. “To get her out of the house and let them know we're alive and still employed.”

“It's been only a few weeks since she had the baby,” Jack answered. “She doesn't get much sleep.” Nevertheless, he phoned, and Rose Marié thought yes, if she could get a sitter, dinner would be a welcomed escape from the house, and please be careful, you have two children to support now. Jack smiled, hung up the phone, then repeated the conversation to me. He made reservations for the smorgasbord at the Hilton’s Beefeater Room. I gathered Jane Austin materials for my British novel class.

“I canceled mine,” Charles admitted. “Told them I'd give my lecture in the quad at 11:00.”

“Eleven it is,” I told him and left, still slightly disappointed at not having been asked to speak myself.

I have always had difficulty explaining to students of the eighties and nineties the tedium which students of the sixties endured in the cause of social justice. I personally had sat for days of mind-numbing analysis at a long and tiring string of San Francisco teach-ins. Charles too had paid his dues in the ward politics of revolution, and even Busiris students, who today snooze through a 50-minute film

on Toni Morrison, would sit for hours analyzing the morality of high altitude bombing, the physics of falling dominoes, or the relative demands of guns and butter in a zero sum economic system. In retrospect, I love them all.

Jack loved them all too. “In the sixties we played hard, smoked hard, fucked hard, and studied hard,” he would tell students in his last years at Busiris, leaving the balance of his comparison unspoken.

I did not hear the opening rounds of the teach-in, but I am sure they were deadly dull. At least half a dozen students spoke, each trying to condense four centuries of American imperialism and two millennia of western barbarism into ten or fifteen minutes. Marcus DeLotta did indeed return to campus, and spoke ahead of Jack, as did the Lutheran minister. Two bands had agreed to play—one electric and the other a folk group—so that the show had begun before my 9:00.

A wooden platform had been erected on the quad side of the Student Center, with a microphone and two large speakers. Fragments of talk and music drifted through the open window of Busiris Hall behind my discussion of *Sense and Sensibility*. Occasionally a song would lift, some electrified Dylan, or a chant of “Off the War” or “Peace Now,” the righteous anger of alienated nineteen-year-olds.

We finished class early, and I approached the quadrangle around 10:45, in the middle of Marcus DeLotta’s speech, a dry, even-toned sequence of syllogisms that left little room for disagreement or passion. Marcus was a wire-rimmed glasses radical, a genuine intellectual, a man so different from Jack that I could not help wondering if the celebrated Creed-DeLotta axis wasn’t mostly a paranoid fantasy of the department elders. What was the climate of Busiris Hall 313 in, say, the winter of 1970-71? Jack said little about those days.

Then again, Jack kept whole rooms of his personality closed to even his most intimate friends. Maybe Marcus DeLotta was Jack's mirror image. No more protean individual ever existed than John Charles Creed.

The crowd grew as 10:00's let out: the converted, the skeptical, and the casual passers-by. I recognized some of my own students and some of those who had shuttled in and out of the office for the past month and a half planning this event. I did not see Jodi Mac. The group was predominantly white. Autumn was in the air, and the gravity of the coming elections, and the thick scent of Something Important About to Happen. Placards filled the quad, mostly peace symbols and "Off the War" slogans . . . and in the hands of ten to twelve counter-demonstrators, "Draft these Punks Now" and "America: Love It or Leave It."

Lou Feracca and I stood near the edge of the crowd, secure in our distance, hoping for a glimpse of Jack somewhere up front. Around 11:00 Jeremy Jones joined us, and Ben Allan Browne, and we chatted amiably.

"Beware the cameras," Jones advised. "They'll be everywhere today."

"They certainly were in Frisco. Not at Stanford, of course, they don't have a building tall enough for photographing. In town. Every time we had one of these things. We're not talking newspaper people, either. There must be a file on me somewhere this thick."

"It can't be too fat if you got hired here," Feracca answered with a glance at Jones.

"Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you," Ben Allan warned.

"Well, Charles and Marcus are the men," I said.

"Together again," Jones agreed. "You don't see me up there. Someday I intend to be dean around here."

"I'd settle for just a nice, tenured job," I said.

The folk group was concluding Phil Ochs' “White Boots Marching in a Yellow Land” when Jack and Billy Jo Allen appeared beside the platform. Jack was wearing jeans and a worn denim jacket, with a white daisy pinned to the shoulder and two buttons: a Black Power fist and “McGovern for President.” I had not seen the jacket before. I suspected it was a borrowed prop, and felt a certain animosity toward what I considered two cheap tricks: changing costume to fit the scene and enlisting the B. S. A. president introduce him.

Allen's introduction was brief, adapted from the introduction of Bob Dylan at the Concert for Bangla Desh: “I want to bring you on a friend of us all, a friend of the white man and a friend of the black man, a friend of peace and justice, Dr. Charles Creed.”

Polite applause followed, the applause of a group which has endured a long and tedious morning and now senses a summing up. Jack adjusted the microphone higher, mostly for psychological effect, and began what we all quickly recognized as a moving, heart-felt speech. In contrast to most of the others, who had spoken informally and thus incoherently, Jack had prepared his words carefully beforehand, memorizing sentences and paragraphs of a text still extant in his papers. A performance worthy of the writer he would become, this speech convinced me that Charles Creed was—or could be—a writer co-equal to Kerouac, Kesey, and Mailer.

He began with Henry Thoreau and “Civil Disobedience,” describing Thoreau's one-man battle against the government he detested and the people he loved. Then he turned to Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, recounting the story briefly for an audience which knew neither author nor novel. “The Joads were a family on the move. The 300,000 dispossessed Oakies, of which they were but a small part, were a people on the move, out of the Dustbowl into the Promised Land, out of social injustice toward a new economic and political reality. Although these people only dimly sensed where they were headed, they knew they were setting themselves in open

opposition to the authorities of their own day, the big owners and the cops those owners hired to protect themselves.

“The Oakies were an outlaw people, and thus a terror to those in control. Many Oakies died. They did what they had to do, by any means necessary. In the end justice prevailed, and the people could resume their real business of caring for families, living their lives, feeding the nation.

“Americans have always been a people on the move, a people on their way to a new Promised Land, intent on social and economic justice, not only for themselves, but for their posterity and for the world. Whatever policies their venal government pursues, Americans still seek a world that is safe for democracy. While they may be sometimes wrong-headed about what will make for democracy, their hearts are generous and their cause is justice for all. Justice is what the Joads wanted, and that's what the founders wanted when they became a people on the move and crossed the desperate ocean to confront the even more desperate continent. When Americans are on the move, you know the breath of injustice is upon their lives. And you can be assured that justice will finally prevail. By all means necessary.

“We are today a people on the move. Black people, white people, young and old, women and men. We are on the move because too much in this country offends the spirit of freedom and justice in which we all believe. We are on the move because too much of this country's future is being mortgaged to an omnipresent, cormorant war that nobody wants except the merchants of death.

“We are on the move because people are dying. Black people and white people and yellow people. People from this very town. People from this campus have died, friends and neighbors. Perhaps somebody you know has died. Perhaps you saw the list in last week's newspaper. Perhaps you recognized some of the names.”

Here Jack drew from his pocket an honor role of the city's war dead, published in the October 15 *Standard-Republican*, which, amid

the awful silence of a group which does not wish to hear what it is compelled to hear, he began to read. The names came slowly out of his mouth, rang from the bell-shaped speakers beside him, falling like great stones into the pool of perhaps 1,000 people now gathered in the quadrangle, each name rippling outward in concentric circles through 1,000 minds, bouncing off the brick walls of Old Main, echoing off stone facade of Busiris Hall, widening finally to traffic on Washington Avenue, to the Hilton Hotel.

I thought of the *Life* photos pasted on our office wall, those rows of grainy black and white faces, pages of American hope and dreams dead in Vietnam. “Take a good look at those faces,” Jack would invite visitors with a theatrical sweep of his arm; “six pages of perfectly good eighteen- and nineteen-year-old male spunk. Five more pages on the reverse sides. Eleven pages of closely compacted 100% pure American youth pissed pointlessly away defending American corporate greed ten thousand miles off our westernmost shore.”

The names rolled on, awful with the weight of death, a tremendous and growing weight, until finally Jack’s voice faltered and he stepped quickly back from the microphone, wiping his nose on the sleeve of the denim jacket, struggling to regain composure. For a good thirty seconds the only sound was traffic outside the campus.

Again I could not help feeling ambivalent. Was this a soft side of Jack I’d not yet discovered, or was this a cheap trick? I couldn’t say.

It was effective. One thousand people were ready to follow Charles Creed off the edge of the earth. “So we are a people on the move," he finally continued. "A people out of control and thus a threat to our own government. A people in search of justice, and thus a threat to our own government. A people demanding life instead of death, and thus a threat to our own government. A universal Yes against the great unthinking, universal No.

“We have them on the ropes, the merchants of death and the political stooges they have hired to protect their interests. The days of Richard Nixon and Melvin Laird are numbered, and they know it. But our work is not complete until we have built a society free from prejudice and bias, a society which recognizes the integrity and worth of each individual, a society in which power is shared by all races, sexes, and classes. Only then we can rest in peace and justice and brotherhood, on this campus, in this nation, in this world. Today is not the day to sit down. We are still a generation in motion.”

Silence was turning to commotion, and all the weight of grief was gathering into a great ball of anger, ready, eager to direct itself against some palpable manifestation of injustice. The crowd was precisely where those who planned the teach-in hoped it would be, and the voices began.

“Let's move then,” somebody to the right of the stage shouted. "To the Hilton, to the Hilton!"

“Off the war!”

“Off Laird!”

“Move to the Hilton and confront the war!”

A bullhorn appeared. “The war-mongers are gathering today for a feast of death downtown at the Hilton,” a voice announced. “No law forbids a citizen from walking downtown. If a thousand American citizens feel like walking downtown, and if they happen to be walking to the same place, and if they happen to start singing a song or two, and if the song happens to be the same song—then what can the pigs do?”

The crowd had begun to move, propelled by students near the platform. Marcus DeLotta seized the platform microphone. “I'm gonna take a walk downtown,” he said and raised his hand in the clenched fist. “Power to the people.” Those who had wavered found themselves caught in the steady wash out of the quadrangle onto Washington Avenue.

Jones looked at Browne, Feracca, and me. “Gentlemen, the moment of decision has arrived,” he said. “Unfortunately I have a 1:00 and could not possibly make it to the Hilton and back by then. Nice to be saved from having to make the choice of conscience, eh?”

“It’s a beautiful day for a walk,” said Feracca. “You with me, Andy?”

Although the inner voice of common sense and a tight job market told me to be careful, I knew I could never face Jack in the office, or at dinner, if I remained on campus. My own currency with students was also on the line.

“I'm with Lou,” I said. “And Jack.”

Jones confronted us with an intensity heretofore absent. “For shit's sake,” he said, “don't get yourself arrested. And don't let our peach fuzz anarchist up there get himself arrested. The Vietnam War will not be decided in Riverton, Illinois. Neither will the election. Apart from pumping a few egos, this march means nothing at all. There are battles coming up on this campus that do mean something, where having you guys or not having you guys will make a difference. I don't care if you play today, but make sure you Romantics are here to work tomorrow. Keep out of the papers and out of jail. How the hell am I going to get you guys tenure when you pull this stuff?”

“It’s our civic duty, Ted.”

Jones shrugged his shoulders. “Remember, J C, you’re no Jesus Christ.”

“I'll go to save Charles,” I promised.

“From his image of himself.”

“From whatever,” Jones said, and turned away.

“Something is happening, but he don’t know what it is,” Browne whispered in my ear as we watched Dr. Jeremy Theodore Jones walk away from us, down the cement walk toward the neo-Gothic

portals of ivy-covered Busiris Hall, the tall oaks arching over him, a limousine liberal without a limousine, the very picture of the fifties college professor on the fifties college campus on a fifties autumn afternoon.

“Chas was wrong. He never found the balls.”

“Just a tad bit confused.”

“Just a tad bit Ted,” Browne added.

“Well, get out of the new road if you can’t lend your hand,” sang Ben Allan. “The times, they be a-changin’.”

When we joined Jack, he was already in need of rescue. He was being accosted by a small group of counter-demonstrators, crew cut fraternity types with all the earmarks of Young Americans for Freedom. Remembering Finkelstein’s experience, I scanned the area for police, uniformed or undercover, ready to bust the main man as soon as a brawl began. Charles, however, seemed sensitive to a possible set-up and kept himself focused on the march, even while being jostled and baited.

“Commie symp,” shouted one male.

“Traitor.”

“Keep walking,” Jack whispered to Lou and me.

“You’re a fraud, Professor Creed,” taunted one kid in a Busiris letter jacket. “A coward and a fraud.”

Here Charles paused. “Eric?” he inquired, drawing away from us.

“Watch it, Jack.”

“You’re all cowards,” the young man insisted. “You sit here in your safe, comfortable job, while other people die defending the country. If American troops weren’t in Vietnam today, you’d be in Siberia. You use your free speech to undermine the very country that guarantees you free speech.”

“Well I’m guaranteed free speech,” growled Lou, “and I’m using it. So go fuck yourself, kid.”

Charles was more dispassionate. “Eric Marcuse,” he said. “The unfortunately named Eric Marcuse. Advanced comp. Am I right, Eric?”

The counter-demonstrator was reduced to his status as Jack’s student.

“I was, sir.”

“Eric the Anti-Red,” Lou cracked.

“What did you get in that class?” Jack asked.

“A minus.”

“You’re a bright fellow, Marcuse. There’s a truth to what you say. Not *the* truth but *a* truth. You’re welcome to believe it, as I’m free to believe what I believe.

“But you’re wrong if you think I’m a coward.” Charles flared slightly. “I know this redneck town, and I know Busiris Technical University. I know only too well what the speech I just gave could cost me. More than you and your daddy earn put together. When I walk downtown through those lines of FBI photographers, when I confront the Riverton police—as I will inevitably confront the Riverton cops—I put my neck and my job on the line. My job, my future, my ability to provide for my wife and my kids. Because of what I believe to be the best interests of America. So do the others here.

“I can name you students from this very school whose convictions drove them to Canada rather than participate in a war they consider immoral. They may never see their hometowns, their friends, or their families again. You might disagree with their opinions 100%, but you have to respect their courage, and mine.

“So I challenge you to match their courage. If you think America is best served by our military action in Vietnam, then I suggest you

show the same courage and integrity. Put your life where your beliefs lie. Quit hiding behind your 2-S deferment and join the military."

"To defend those people?" Marcuse indicated Creed's army of tag-alongs.

"To defend America, if that's the way you think America is best defended. Show me the courage of your convictions, Eric. America—fix it or forget it."

We left the campus at 11:15. "Think we can catch him?" Ben Allan asked as we pushed toward the front of the line.

"Laird?"

"Laird."

"You've lived longer than I. I don't even really know where the Hilton is. Jack and I are supposed to have dinner there tonight with the wives."

"A mile and a bit ahead. The road takes a bend and drops over the bluff, and there you are. Right downtown."

Reaching the front of the line, we joined Billy Jo Allen, Marcus DeLotta, the Lutheran minister, another older male whom I did not recognize, Jack and the paisley delight. "Jack was great," she said. "Wasn't he just the greatest ever?"

I did not ask about Jodi Mac.

Jack asked about numbers.

"At least 500 left campus," I told him. "Maybe closer to 700. I don't know crowds very well, but most of them followed. Except the Old Ones. And Jeremy Jones. He had a class."

" 'I'll send all the money you ask for, just don't ask me to come on along,' " quipped Jack, singing a Phil Ochs song. "Is that man a case or is he a case? How about the rest of the department, the New Ones? How about the National Tit?"

“Counting comma splices in this week's definition themes,” said Ben Allan.

“All that passion and intensity,” Jack mused loud, “expended on . . . commas and semicolons.”

“You weren’t persuasive enough, Chas,” Lou said.

“I’ll try harder next time.”

A skinny kid in sneakers, a tie-dyed shirt, and tatter-torn jeans came running up. “560 passed the Bonanza,” he reported.

“Forward it is,” said DeLotta.

Signs and banners strung out behind us in the October sun. “No more war.” “Fuck the war.” “Piece now.” “America yes / Vietnam yes / Nixon no.” “This War Bites Dick.” And the great peace signs, stylized doves that looked more like the Mercedes Benz logo. A march somewhere between autumn lark and political action.

“There are no cops,” somebody observed aloud. “No cops at all. I can't believe nobody phoned the fuzz.”

“There were television people at the rally,” Billy Jo said.

“Sometimes in the buildings, or on top of the buildings along a march,” DeLotta said. “You can sometimes see them on the buildings.”

“Like that up there.” Ben Allan pointed to the roof of the A&P towards which we were walking.

“Exactly like that up there.”

The shadows of several men could be seen on the roof, hands toward their faces.

“Now you know they didn't get themselves positioned up there with whatever they have in front of their noses within the last three minutes,” Jack mused.

Lou Feracca flashed the middle finger of his right hand in the direction of the roof. “Fuck ‘em,” he said. “Let ‘em photograph this.”

Several students did the same. Becoming aware of the photographers overhead, the long line of marchers began raising hands, as if in salute, each a fist with the middle digit extended.

“With love to Dick in D. C. ,” Lou said. “Wish you were here.”

“Zey iz eferivare,” Jack said. “Perhaps you iz vun uf zem also . . . .”

“Jones’s last words were ‘keep out of the newspapers and out of jail,’ ” I told Jack.

He chuckled. “I got a dinner date tonight with the woman. At the Hilton. Rose Marié would shit her panties if I ended up in the slammer and couldn't take her to dine at the Hilton on the very day that the Secretary of Defense of the United States of America lunched at that same Hilton.”

Focusing his own telephoto lens on the figures atop the food store he shot away. Some of the figures ducked, or turned their backs. “The photographers photographed,” he said. “Say shit up there. Assholes.”

“Ahead,” somebody said, pointing to another roof further down the street.

“This whole route is pretty much staked out,” said DeLotta. “But there are no cops.”

“Busy with Laird?”

“Or waiting up ahead, or down the alleys.”

“You would think they would want to intercept us before the Hilton,” DeLotta said. “There are enough cops in Riverton to seal off the entire downtown area if they want. Not counting whatever else they have brought in for the occasion. They obviously know what we're up to, because they're up on those stores taking pictures. For whatever reason they don't want us stopped. Yet.”

“Maybe there are more people than they expected,” suggested Jack’s woman friend.

The chanting in the rear continued. “One, two, three, four, we don't want your fucking war.”

A single police car drove up the road beside the marchers, eliciting a chorus of jeers and another round of one-fingered salutes. As it reached the front of the march, a voice announced, “Attention students. You have no parade permit. You have no permit to parade down this or any other city street. Under provisions of the city code, you could all be subject to immediate arrest, imprisonment and fine. Disperse and go home. You have no parade permit. This is an illegal demonstration, and you could all be subject to arrest, imprisonment and fine. This in turn could affect your draft deferment status. Disperse and go home.”

The student with the bullhorn responded: “I am not a parade. I am an individual American citizen walking from Busiris University to the business district of this city to listen to the Secretary of Defense so I can vote intelligently in his country's free elections. I am not a parade.”

The patrol car continued its warning: “Disperse and go home. You are all subject to arrest, fine or imprisonment. . . .”

A red Chevy from TV 13 joined the squad car. From its window protruded a camera pointed at the demonstrators.

“They don't really want a confrontation,” Jack speculated. “They’ve got our pictures. Now they would like us to go home terrorized. Mr. Secretary hears nothing, sees nothing, and we are cowed into submission by a single squad car. What we've done so far won't send messages anywhere.”

“560 arrests would send a message,” said Jack’s friend.

“That's why there ain't gonna be no 560 arrests,” Jack said. “There won't be 100 arrests. And there won't be 100 expulsions either. We got 'em by the short hairs.”

“How much further?” We were nearing the lip of the bluff.

“Maybe ten minutes.”

DeLotta thought aloud. “At this point confrontation is inevitable. They must have figured that out by now. And it will be too big to bust everybody involved. They're not going to draw the line at the front door of the Hilton. . . .” He turned to one of the students. “Run ahead and look down the bluff, see what's going on down there.”

“Slow your pace. Slow your march,” the student with the bullhorn ordered.

The crowd hesitated.

DeLotta’s scout returned. “There’s a barricade just over the crest of the hill. They’re letting traffic through, so it’s not like the road is sealed off. They got about two dozen cop cars, a bunch of vans, and a whole fuckin' army of cops. Right over the hill.”

“I figured there was no way they’d bust us anywhere near the Hilton,” DeLotta said.

“Maybe we should switch streets, just to fuck them up a little,” Allen suggested. “Jump shift over to Jefferson.”

Jack agreed. “Good idea. A quick left and a right. Might get us out of the cameras, too.”

“If they got you scared, candy-ass, they got you,” Billy Jo Allen quoted, giving Jack a punch on the arm.

“Piss on ‘em. How portable are the barricades?”

“Just saw horses.”

“Plus patrol cars. Cars can move quicker than we can,” I pointed out.

“Jefferson,” Jack said, “is route 47 from the airport. If His Honor the Secretary is not yet at the Hilton, and if they're bringing him in 47, we could at least have our confrontation where he would see it. We might ruin an otherwise pleasant Republican publicity stunt.”

“We’d have to move quickly,” Billy Jo warned, “or they will cut us off there.”

“They'll reroute Laird as soon as we move onto Jefferson,” I said.

“Maybe,” Jack decided. “If they have the street lined with party hacks, they might bring him in that way anyway. Maybe he's already there. If there are a lot of people on Jefferson the cops won’t know who to bust. And we get in trouble, we can just melt into the woodwork.”

The bullhorn clicked on.

“Forget it,” Jack ordered. “They will hear below the hill. Turn and the rest will follow. By the time the cops figure out what's up, we're on Jefferson. And pick it up.'“

Jefferson Street—Illinois 47, and the main one-way street to downtown Riverton—was, as Jack had anticipated, lined with flag-waving patriots eager to cheer the Secretary of Defense. This was no country for long haired protesters.

“Now the shit hits the fan,” Lou whispered to Jack. “And it ain’t the fuckin’ cops that worry me.”

“Looks like Mr. Secretary, if he’s coming this way, has not been through yet,” said DeLotta. “And scarcely a pig in sight.”

"With Pharaoh’s tribe of rednecks, who needs police?” I asked.

The students, walking behind the townspeople, were onto Jefferson in large numbers before they were noticed. Finally one tattooed man in his late twenties, a yellow Caterpillar Tractor cap on his head, turned around and looked squarely at DeLotta and Billy Jo Allen. “Why don't you and your fag nigger friend here take a one-way trip to Russia?”

Schooled in avoiding conflict, Marcus answered not a word. Billy Jo could not resist a verbal left hook: “Because I like fuckin’ your sister too much.”

They were at each other instantly, Caterpillar Tractor taking the first fall, pulling Billy Jo with him. Jack and Lou threw themselves on

the pair, and two other rednecks joined in. Then all was shouts and shoving, the patriots beefier than the demonstrators, but already outnumbered with more student reinforcements arriving all the time. Even Ben Allan was cocking an arm, at no one in particular. Just when it looked as if the patriots would beat a quick retreat, there appeared from the south a pair of police cars, red lights flashing.

“Here we go, brother,” shouted Jack.

“Finished before we started,” lamented Billy Jo. “Let's give it to them while we can.” His left lip was bleeding.

But the patrol cars were in no hurry, trolling in at 25 mph, coming not to disrupt a riot or to intercept demonstrators, but to escort the Secretary of Defense of the United States to his luncheon address. Subdued cheering could be heard above the noise of battle.

“It's fucking Laird!” somebody shouted. Hostilities ceased.

A great cry arose: "Laird, Laird, Laird, Laird."

Meanwhile from below the hill, wrong way on a one-way street, came a dozen Riverton squad cars. Quickly they formed a roadblock across Jefferson at the edge of the bluff. Patrolmen jumped out and rushed forward to arrest demonstrators, patriots, or both. Out of nowhere hissed a canister of tear gas, then another.

“Gas, gas!” somebody shouted. “Clear out!”

A squad car speaker barked orders: “Stay where you are. You are all under arrest. Anyone leaving the area will be charged with resisting arrest. Stay where you are. This is the police speaking. You are all under arrest.”

Townspeople and students alike fell away on all sides: through alleys, into businesses along Bootz and Jefferson, toward the black limousine and its escorts. Police pursued, and patrol cars moved to block the side streets. I recall at least two more canisters of tear gas.

Thus it happened that in a police miscommunication of galactic proportions, Melvin Laird was escorted directly toward the barricade of patrol cars at the edge of the bluff, toward the spreading tear gas, toward the squads of police attempting to arrest students, toward the demonstrators who, retreating from the police, found themselves face to face with the embodiment of national evil they had come only half expecting to confront. Briefly I caught sight of Laird in his black limo, sandwiched between the mayor of Riverton and the Republican Senator from Illinois. He seemed visibly shaken at the rising tide of protest and chaos. At least I wanted to think he was shaken, as I've always wanted to believe that what he learned in Riverton was a small factor in his decision to resign from office a month thereafter.

"It's Laird for real!" DeLotta shouted in great triumph. "Pinch yourself and squeal, pig Laird."

Jack sized the bullhorn. "There's secret service here. Get out of here before you get hurt." As if to underline his warning, three shots rang out—into the air, the *Standard-Republican* reported—and Laird's driver, laying hard on the horn, gunned the limo into reverse, backed up 50 yards, then rushed down a side street and out of sight. Riverton police charged after.

"Your jacket," Feracca yelled at Creed. "Ditch your jacket and put on my suit coat. Look like a capitalist pig, for chrissake. I have a tie and white shirt. Maybe they won't notice the tear in your jeans."

"Fuck 'em all," Jack shouted back, running to beat hell.

"Out of jail and out of the newspapers," I repeated. "Remember? And we got a dinner date tonight."

We ducked into the Fireplace Shoppe on Bootz.

"Jesus, would Rose Marié be pissed," Jack panted, accepting Lou's suit coat. "I'm looking for a set of andirons for a house-warming gift," he told the clerk. "Brass if you have them. Quite a ruckus going on out there."

The headlines in the evening Riverton *Standard-Republican* read, “Student Demonstration Cancels Laird Talk. 117 Arrested, Released.” A picture of Jack addressing the rally in the quadrangle appeared on the front page, above the caption, “Professor John Charles Creed Addresses Busiris Students Prior to Riot.” Only Marcus DeLotta, “a former member of the Busiris English Department,” was mentioned as actually participating in the riot.

In the Beefeater Room of the Hilton Hotel I raised a glass of California zinfandel “to good old American freedom. Out of jail, if not out of the newspapers. 50% ain’t bad.”

“Shit,” Charles said, looking sideways at Rose Marié. “The only thing that's going to piss them off is that the paper made me a full professor.”

# Chapter 4
# **Lily Lee**

Charles Creed's flippant comment to his wife notwithstanding, the Laird demonstration nearly finished Jack. As the actions of his men suggested, Riverton Police Chief Kenny Jennings had known every detail of the students' plans weeks in advance of the march. On the day before the demonstration he and three of his captains had met for over two hours with Busiris Security Head Carter Carruth, who had received detailed reports on the meeting in Jack's apartment and all subsequent meetings. (It was Carruth who ran the co-ed cat house until 1976, when two Black Students Alliance women infiltrated his operation and blew the whistle on it. What goes around comes around.) Old Main had instructed Chief Jennings to give the demonstrators one warning and then bust everyone. All demonstrators were to be arrested and charged, although not all were to be fined, jailed, fired or expelled. The sorting out was to take place on October 26 and 27. A list had been drawn up of persons who, if arrested, would be hit with everything the court could cook up, then purged from the university.

Charles Creed was on that list, as were Ben Allan Browne, Lou Feracca, and Billy Jo Allen. I was apparently not. When this list was drawn up, or who the stool pigeon was, I have never been able to determine. Nor can I say whether Ted Jones knew about the list, as his admonitions at the rally might, in retrospect, indicate.

What saved us all on the 25th, of course, was Marcus DeLotta's instinct for smelling trouble, the Jefferson Avenue Shift, and Jack's talent for outguessing the opposition. Jennings spent the 27th and 28th conferring with federal agents and reviewing photographs of the teach-in and march. He and Carruth met the entire afternoon of the 30th. Carruth brought instructions from Old Main; Jennings' instructions came from very high levels in Washington. Both Washington and Old Main concurred on the short-term solution:

delay. Washington wanted to avoid the appearance of unduly harsh reprisals. It figured that “the student riot” attendant on Secretary Laird’s address in Riverton had resulted in a net Republican gain among the farmers and the businessmen of downstate Illinois. President Stoddard found himself outguessed on numbers. Five hundred students and over a dozen faculty were just too many to discipline, and the sixteen actual arrests contained only one of the ring-leaders on his hit list. Even Martin Stoddard understood that you couldn’t arrest a popular white American professor or a popular black student leader for the opinions they had expressed in the quad.

Then Richard Nixon won reelection by eighteen million votes, and everyone in Washington and Old Main was feeling very, very generous. The “Riverton Riot” faded from state and local newspapers and the minds of all but a few B. T. U. students and faculty. The radical moment was clearly waning. Carter Carruth would watch and wait, and Ken Jennings too. Martin Stoddard would be prepared, and Charles Creed would not, and somewhere down the road. . . .

So Charles Creed was not fired. Not in November 1972, not by President Martin Stoddard.

What finally saved Jack, however, was a contract from Charles Scribner’s Sons for *Age of Faith, Age of Folly.* It showed up in his mailbox three weeks to the day after the march on the Hilton, rescuing him not only from the Old Main’s fiendish plot, but from a deep case of post-election blues.

Charles was offered the contract on the strength of a three-page prospectus and the first draft of what would become chapter two of the book. This material he had written late in the summer, during a one-week stay at Rose Marié’s family home on Long Island.

“The in-laws and I have achieved a state of mutual toleration,” he explained. “They’re decent people who mean well, especially by their daughter and grandson, but basically we’ve nothing to say to each other, and we all know it. Her father’s head is nothing but cars

and money. Her mother's is strictly shopping, restaurants, and television. And money. I don't give a shit about any of the five. On the other hand, I couldn't in twenty years explain to them what a college education is all about. Their precious daughter put in four years at a pretty fair liberal arts college, and their grandson, they are certain, will attend an Ivy League school. But basically they don't think about colleges. Like the rest of the world, they've never heard of Busiris. I'm a paycheck that supports their blood; they're Christmas and birthday presents that keep the kid in summer and winter clothing. I drive the loved ones east; they feed me while we're there. The grub is good and the bed comfortable. Rose Marié releases half a year's pent up gab. Timm visits the beach. The in-laws can tell their neighbors their son-in-law the college professor is visiting. I hang out with old friends, read books, maybe spend a day in the City, down in the Village . . . although I hate the goddamn place more and more, and I can really no longer tolerate even my old undergraduate friends. I can't explain West of the Appalachians to East Coast types any more than I can explain college to my in-laws.

"Usually I read books. I should have left at least some of my Afro-American preparation for the long week in Hempstead, although I can just see my mother-in-law picking up *Invisible Man* some night when the news got boring. Not to mention my father-in-law, although he hasn't looked at a book in fifteen years. But I'm an honest son-of-a-bitch, except for speed limits and income taxes: if Busiris pays me eight weeks' salary to prep English 340, I spend those eight weeks prepping English 340.

"By the time I head east, my reading is done. Bad call.

"But hold on a minute there, Bucks fans, it's a good call! I've run out of books to read, so I figure I'll write one. The in-laws are going down to the Jersey shore for a week. Irving got his buddy a tremendous deal on some cream-puff, power-blue Cadillac pussymobile, electronic everything, crushed velour interior. The guy is reciprocating with six days' use of his summer place in Margate or

Ventnor or some such hellhole. This special surprise they have saved for Rose Marié and Timm.

“ ‘Would you want to join us?’ they want to know, knowing I do not. They’re doing the correct thing by asking, because despite our differences, I am still their son-in-law, and they are correct people. What they expect me to answer, I don’t know. They never know what to expect of me, god bless them both.”

Jack reflected a moment.

“You ever been to Atlantic City, Tucker?”

I indicated I had not.

“Quite the place. Once upon a time there was a beach and it was good. The water was pure and warm, the sand was white, and the shoreline was rugged and desolate. The goodness attracted people intent on escaping the heat, filth, and smell of places like New York and Philadelphia in the summer. These people had enough dough to build nice places of their own, if not directly on the ocean, within walking distance of the water. So those people came to Jersey for the summer—wives and children for three months or four, their husbands for one week or two. And it was still good, because the beach was still lovely and these were classy people. Strictly upper class, with a few artist types mixed in.

“Inevitably the less classy followed their betters, renting a room or apartment from some local entrepreneurs. The place got a little crowded, but it was still pretty much good, a comfortable, laid back life of water and sun. You ate burgers and shakes for breakfast, lunch and dinner, swam for free at the public beach, talked to a lot of babes, played a lot of baseball, got a great tan, came home with some terrific stories. That’s the way Jersey was when I was a kid. I knew it when it was still sort of good. As a kid, Tucker, I loved Jersey. The summer after my junior year in high school I got a job down there with a little hot dog stand—Jimmy’s Ball Park Franks. Spent just about exactly what I earned, but man, the stories I could tell you about that summer! Found my first true love Under the

Boardwalk. . . . Don't get me started! I thought that summer would be the highlight of my life all my life. In some ways it still is. In some ways I'm still in love with Margate, New Jersey, 1961.

"Anyway, it didn't take long until long the real entrepreneurs figured out that summer vacationers represented a largely untapped resource, and began to devise means of separating money from people in really great quantities: restaurants, salt water taffy shops, amusement parks, souvenir and gift shops, more gift shops and even more gift shops. They built a bigger and better boardwalk. Glitzier restaurants. The vacant lots filled with summer homes, and the beaches filled up with fat mothers from south Philly and their snot-nosed little kids. The scene was a lot less good, but it was definitely The Scene. Rockaway was full of sleazebags and perverts, and radio promoted Jersey as the new place for summer fun. Somebody made a song about it, which WABC in New York and WFIL in Philadelphia played about a million times each summer.

"Then the corporations moved in, and things really started developing. They bought up summer homes on ocean-front property, leveled them, and erected in their stead multi-story hotels, motels and rental properties. They replaced the homes one and two blocks from the water with more hotels, motels and rental properties. From any place my family could afford, you couldn't see or smell the beach. Parts of it were actually fenced off by the big hotels—public beaches and "private beaches," like in Florida. Farewell to moonlight strolls on deserted sands. As for serious necking, you were more alone in Central Park than under the boardwalk, day or night.

"To fill all their motels, the corporations hyped seashore vacations even harder. More hype brought more people. More people demanded more gift shops, restaurants, bowling alleys, arcades, pizza parlors . . . all the filth and smell they left behind in the city when they escaped to the Jersey shore. Today you can't hardly find a place on the beach to spread your towel, which is okay really, because people don't go to Jersey for the sun or the water, they go there to shop and eat pizza and get picked up by the same

guys they wouldn't give the time of day to back on the Island or in South Philly. For this they pay $100 a day. After a week they go home and talk for a year about how wonderful the shore is.

"Last time I was there, we'd gone down with Rose Marié's folks, and some beer-bellied slob from Camden is lying on his beach chair, half in the water and half on the beach, eating oranges from a plastic bag at his side, tossing the peels in the ocean. His two-year-old kid has pulled his swimsuit down and is taking a leak ten feet from where Timm is wading.

"Would I care to join them for a week in Jersey, Irv wants to know.

"Well, shit. I can't hide out with my folks. They're in Trenton visiting my sister and my goddamn Armenian brother-in-law, which is someplace else I would just as soon not be. So I am honest. I tell them no thanks. Save your money on me. You do Jersey up brown, I'll stay here and guard the house. Won't eat nothing but deli sandwiches, which I will buy myself.

"Rose Marié is even grumpier than she'd been during her pregnancy. 'You never want to spend any time with my family,' she says. 'You'd rather sit alone in this house than go with us to the shore?' she accuses. 'Don't you think they can sense your contempt?' she wants to know. 'What will my dad's friends say about that? Don't you ever think about his feelings? What about my feelings? You should spend more time thinking about what makes others happy. What about your son? Don't you want to spend time with him? If you don't care about my folks, think how Timm feels. Just yesterday he came crying to me, 'I don't think daddy loves me.' How can you say you love your son the way you treat their mother and grandparents?' Rag, rag, rag.

"So I invent a book. 'I got this idea for a book I want to work on,' I tell Rose Marié. 'It's not something I can do in Riverton. Riverton is too busy. Can't do it next week at my folks' either, you know how that is. This would be the perfect opportunity: absolute peace and quiet.

You guys have a ball at the shore, I work my ideas out here. I send off a proposal to New York, get a contract, write a book. Bingo, we're rich.'

"A book is as much of a mystery to the in-laws as a college education, but money they can understand. It was the perfect scheme.

"It was only half-bullshit, really. I did have an idea. The sixties are over, Tucker, every place but Riverton. The Sixties died at Altamont and Kent State. It's time for a summing up.

"So I spent a week at the Hempstead library, and they spent a week in Margate. They end the week with a few memories and $1,000 in the red. I end the week with $2,000 check . . . just about what Busiris paid me for eight weeks of research on Afro-American literature, and you for teaching two summer school classes. Another check for two grand follows, incidentally, upon completion of an acceptable manuscript. All in all, a very successful summer, I'd say."

News of the contract touched off endless analysis of the relationship between *Age of Faith* and Jack's behavior throughout the academic year, especially during the Laird visit. Was Jack absorbed by his own historical characters? Did *Age of Faith* create the crisis from which *Age of Faith* (temporarily) rescued its author? What would have become of Jack's career at Busiris had he imagined, that summer of 1972, not *Act of Faith*, but *Song of the North Country*? Or a coffee table edition of some passages from Thoreau? My own belief is that John Charles Creed was in 1973 the same crazy son-of-a-bitch he always had been, and always would be. Jack was a polestar. His character changed very little over the years.

I found myself in half a dozen analyses of Charles Creed. Then one afternoon Ted Jones ended a conversation with something like, "Shows what can happen when you get odd notions and write a book." The unspoken conclusion, I realized, was: "Be more like me.

Do nothing." Jack would have said it aloud. I did not. But I abandoned thereafter such broad and random speculations.

Charles announced his triumph at the November department meeting. He requested that we wish him well, and further requested further that we share in his good fortune by partaking of the six bottles of New York Gold Seal champagne on ice in a cooler in his office, which he would be opening after the meeting's conclusion. Percy Thompson coughed. Virgil Cutter's jaw dropped three inches. Lucy Kramer wished Charles "publishing success to match his teaching success," then reminded him that the Busiris Code of Conduct forbad consumption of alcohol on University property. "Faculty should not set a bad example for the students," she warned. "As Geoffrey Chaucer says, 'If gold rusts, what will iron do?' "

Back in the office, Jack fumed and railed. "I'm living in Lilliputia, surrounded by midget minds full of half-inch ideas. A footnote here, a query there. A good twelve-inch idea would crack their skulls. They think they'll build their monument half an inch at a time. A hundred and fifty little doggie turd ideas making nothing but a big pile of doggie turds that smell bad."

The champagne had to wait for the celebratory party Charles and Rose Marié threw that weekend. Everyone was invited, from President Stoddard to Chairman Thompson to the full department to a dozen students. As Charles had expected (their flat would have accommodated thirty guests maximum), only the students and younger faculty showed up. And Ted Jones. "The invitations were announcements," a very drunk Charles Creed told Lou and me that night. "A cork up Martin Stoddard's ass, and salt in Virgil Cutter's wounded ego."

I have seen no written evidence to contradict Charles Creed's subsequent statement that he received not a single written word or act of commendation from B. T. U. for *Age of Faith, Age of Folly*—not a single letter of congratulations, not a reading, not a University press release, not a spoken commendation from any Busiris

administrator. Nothing when he signed the contract, nothing when the book appeared, nothing when the Pulitzer was announced.

Not that Jack cared. As the Convocation Center Compromise saved his ass in 1971, when he was reappointed by a 6-5 vote of the tenured faculty, the Scribner's contract saved his ass in 1972, when the vote was 7-4. By 1973 Afro-American Literature was a resounding success, and Jack's second article had appeared in print, as well as a few poems and his first short story. A flood of research materials poured through the Interlibrary Loan Office at McKinley Library, and every third week Jack spent at libraries in Evanston, Chicago, or Champaign-Urbana. Colleagues were jealous but impotent. Charles Creed's career was mapped out for him . . . and a comfortable career it promised to be. He would spend another year or two at Busiris writing and teaching. Once the book appeared, he would hit the conference circuit, then accept a position at some Big Ten school. (Jack understood that his Ph. D. from Kent State barred him from positions at any Ivy League school, including Princeton, for which Rose Marié constantly campaigned, but Jack had no real desire at all to return East of Appalachians). There would be more articles and books, witty conversation among learned colleagues, promotions, raises, sessions chaired at the Modern Language Association, and a golden retirement with a rocking chair and a festschrift filled with essays by famous and admiring students.

In August 1973, Charles Creed stood on the threshold of the career every academic dreams of.

In September, Lily Lee Martin walked into Busiris Hall 313 and rearranged his life.

"I need to see Professor Creed about his Afro-American literature class," announced the woman in the pink tank top, Levi cut-offs, scuffed white tennis shoes, and gypsy earrings. Her fingers folded around a silver cross that dangled above her breasts. Her Afro and high cheekbones gave the impression of a woman taller than she actually stood . . . and she stood with a *Playboy* figure, skin like silk, face like glass. Her voice, to adapt a phrase, was full of

music, and she carried herself with the untutored grace of a natural model, the fine nervousness and temper of Vanessa Redgrave in the film *Blow Up*. She was the type of achingly beautiful woman whose presence literally strikes a man dumb and causes constrictions in his chest and abdomen.

It was not, however, the complexion, the 36Ds, or the twenty-inch waist which most struck the observer. It was Lily's Bambi eyes, great moonlit whirlpools that drew one in not with vulnerability, really, but with a vague yet palpable sadness. All the mysteries of love and life swam in Lily Lee's dark eyes. A man could dive into those eyes, I remember thinking, and never come back.

"I need to see Professor Creed about his Afro-American class," Lily Lee announced a second time.

"English 340 is an undergraduate course," I said, mistaking her for an M.A. student.

"I'm a freshman," she replied, "and I need in. The lady at registration say I couldn't get in because they don't 'llow no freshman to take it."

"Technically freshmen are not allowed to register for upper division courses. You might get special permission from Dr. Creed."

"You not the man to see?"

Once again I was not the man. "Professor Creed had an 11:00 class. It's nearly noon. He usually stops here between class and lunch."

Lily Lee Martin stood suspended in the doorway . . . and with her, I have often thought, Jack's life. Maybe not. Maybe events would have unfolded as they unfolded had she walked down the hall and signed up for American National Government. Jack and Lily would have crossed paths somewhere, sometime. I like to think, however, that this was one of those small moments that leverage an entire life.

“If he’s not here in five minutes, he’ll probably not return until 1:00.”

“I give him five minutes,” she said.

“I’d sign an override for you myself,” I said by way of conversation and explanation, “but we don’t sign overrides for other professors’ classes. All I can offer you is nineteenth century British Literature. Or freshman composition.”

“I can wait,” she said, declining the chair I offered. “This office be cosmic.”

“It’s mostly Professor Creed’s stuff,” I began. Then Jack himself arrived, attended by his usual retinue of coeds.

“I have at least one more reading list somewhere. Maybe the secretary can photocopy it for you,” he was saying when his sentence ended abruptly, his attention suddenly focused on the silhouette in the doorway.

“This woman is looking for an override for Afro-Am,” I said by way of introduction.

“Let me find a few more reading lists,” Charles mumbled to the others, his eyes still on Lily. “Here’s two, you take one for keeps, that’s yours, and you take the other, go down to the center of the hallway there and ask the department secretary to make four more copies, one for each of you. Tell her to put it on my account. And don’t forget to return the original to me.” He shooed the flock perfunctorily out the door and turned to Lily Lee.

“My name Lily Lee Martin, I a transfer freshman in here, and I need into your Afro-American Literature course,” the woman with the great sad eyes told Jack. It was more a command than request.

Her directness confused him as much as her beauty.

“You’re a first semester freshman? That’s a junior level class. Prerequisites are freshman composition and junior standing.”

“Not a problem. I got all A’s in high school and at com. college. I be here on a honors scholarship. I pre-law and I can take any courses I want.”

“All A’s in which high school?”

“And 1400 total on the SATs.”

“1400 is impressive.”

“You damn right. Look, Mr. Creed, I can go to any fucking school in this country I want, and I at Busiris. I be here to get the classes I want, and graduate, and get to law school. One course I want is Afro-American Literature, and the jiveass at registration sent me here to get some form from you.”

Lily Lee had just admitted herself to Jack’s class (who among us could have resisted her?), but he strung the argument out, mainly to test her resolve and prolong the conversation.

“The real reason you need the permission is that the course is full. A lot of people want in that class. If I admit a freshman, how can I refuse a junior? Or a senior? If I open the doors, I got fifty people in the room, and I can’t teach fifty people anything. Besides, if you take this class as a freshman, what will you take as a junior, as a senior? Save it for later. You’ll get more out of it as a junior.”

“Mr. Creed,” Lily answered, “I haven’t read all the books for your class—I know I read some of them already—but I guarantee you I can teach the rest of the kids in that class more about *Blues for Mister Charlie* than you can, right now, today.

“And by the time I be a junior, this school be offerin’ a whole mess of classes I want, I guarantee you that too. I here to see those classes get offered, and I here to see I get to take ‘em. Startin’ with yours.”

“Well, you’re free, white, and twenty-one in my book,” Jack said, reaching for a blue override form. “You can do whatever you want. I’ll sign this and you can fill in the rest. Registration is closed for the

noon hour, but that's just about enough time to get back to your dorm, eat lunch, and return to Old Main."

"I got a 'partment," Lily Lee told him. "I don't eat on campus."

"You like pizza?" Jack wanted to know.

Lily's brown eyes blinked. Jack blushed.

"Professor Creed, I from East St. Louis, Illinois."

"Home of the Cosmo Club and Chuck Berry."

"The Cosmo ain't East St. Lou, honkey cat. In my East St. Lou, white folks and black folks don't be eat no pizza together. Usually they shootin' each other."

"You came to Busiris to get out of East St. Louis. You're in college now."

Lily Lee measured Jack carefully. "Professor Creed, assumin' you read *Soul on Ice*, Mr. Cleaver dead on right 'bout that ebony an' ivory shit."

"People obsessed with the past are condemned to repeat it. You're in college now. Leave East St. Louis in East St. Louis."

"I know where I come from. I also know where I goin', and how I gettin' there."

"If it doesn't work, you can go back to East St. Louis."

"I don't never go backwards, Professor Creed. 'Specially I ain't goin' back to no East St. Lou with the child of some hoodlum wrapped in my arms."

"I said nothing about kids."

Lily Lee studied Jack's face more than his argument. "Yeah," she said finally. "I like pizza. And you are buying. Lunch."

"I'm buying," Jack answered, "because I make more money than you do. One day you will be a rich lawyer, and you will buy the pizza. Today? I'll even buy lunch for Andrew."

“Cardboard pizza when I have Linda’s bologna sandwiches?” I answered, raising my brown paper bag. “I have to pass.”

“Pizza Hut has the best goddamn smorgasbord ever,” Jack was telling Lily Lee as he reached for his jacket.

“Your kids are cute,” Lily was saying as they walked out the door, “But who that black chick pasted to your wall, and what with that ‘black is beautiful’ bullshit?”

“Those two conjoined would blow holes in the Van Allen Belt,” I was thinking when the coeds returned with their reading lists.

“Where’d Dr. Creed go?” one of them wanted to know.

“Lunch,” I told them. “And not, alas, with you.”

“Not, alas, with us,” giggled one of the four.

“Tell him thanks. We’ll see him tomorrow,” said their leader, nearly bumping into Ted Jones.

“Who’s Charles’s latest?” Jones wanted to know.

“Not the foggiest.”

“Dangerous game in these missionary times. Chas better watch his step.”

“Thank god for academic freedom.”

“The Melvin Laird stunt was no exercise in academic freedom. Neither are the coeds. Your office partner had better quit chasing women and tend to business.”

“I haven’t the vaguest idea whereof you speak, Professor Jones. I do know, however, that Charles Creed doesn’t have to chase anyone: they flock all over him, as you have apparently noticed. I also know that what consenting adults do on their own time is their own business.”

“Not around this school.”

“Old Main touches a hair on his head, and the Alliance will torch this place.”

“You fellows are too naive,” Jones warned, shaking his head. “The B. S. A. can be bought cheaper than any of us. If Old Main decides Charles goes, he’ll go like anybody else, articles or no articles, book no book, Alliance or no Alliance. I personally know a lot of faculty and a few students around here who would grease the chute that dumps him.”

“ ‘Then I’ll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.’ ”

“Nobody is outside the law,” Jones said finally, “not even Charles Creed. Chas has got more enemies than Richard Nixon, only he’s too dumb to know it.”

Ted Jones never did say what, if anything, he wanted . . . beyond Lily Lee Martin’s name.

“T. J. to the Min,” Charles quipped when I told him the story.

I heard no details of Jack’s first Pizza Hut date with Lily Lee. I don’t know what they talked about, what Jack said or did to win her favor, but clearly things went well. She returned the following day with Lynette Taylor, her roommate, as striking in her own way as Lily, another streetwise freshman transfer from some other Cannery Row who also wanted in to Afro-American. Charles signed another blue form and the rest of us got another case of the blue balls. In the weeks that followed, Lily and Lynette haunted the office, every male prof’s dictionary definition of desire. The two sat together in the first row of Jack’s class, miniskirts showing a good deal of very fine thigh and occasional shots of matching floral bikini panties in usually successful attempts to break their teacher’s concentration. Together they drove Jack nuts.

More than once, I admit, I stashed Linda’s bologna sandwiches in the desk drawer and joined Charles, Lynette, and Lily Lee for pizza. In my mind’s eye I still see the two women together, in identical skirts, white blouses, golden hoop earrings, full of sass and

self-assurance and youth . . . and Charles and I, ourselves also so callow, so full of the future. Five years off the end of my life I would trade for one more day in B. Hall 313, to lunch at the Riverton Pizza Hut buffet with Charles Creed, Lynette Taylor, and Lily Lee Martin.

Even as I write, I can hear the three of them coming down the hall just before noon, trailing leftover class talk.

“So this chick be breathin’ these last fifteen years, or what?”

“Check for a pulse, girl.”

“Better you than me set her straight. Some things I can’t say.”

“She better sure enough not be givin’ me no more of that ‘my hard life as a colored broad’ jive. Weep, weep, weep. I was ready to bust her.”

“She really thinks she’s exploited. She thinks her life has been full of pain and abuse. Maybe it has—for her. Suffering is relative.”

“Shit. Lemme tell her a thing or two ‘bout exploitation. You be as exploited in this life as you let yourself be.”

“Yeah, an’ that chick gonna be plenty exploited all her life, ‘cause she expectin’ to be exploited. Take that sign off her forehead say, ‘Hit me here,’ an’ put up one say, ‘Don’t fuck with me, nigger.’ Then she won’t have so much pain an’ abuse.”

“So for lunch today,” Jack would say, entering the office and dumping his books. “You on, Tucker?”

“Whatever, wherever.”

“Lily calls, I drive.”

“We should do what makes you happy,” Lily would say to Jack. “You the always worryin’ ‘bout what other folks needin’ and wantin’. Start lookin’ out for number one. You the boss.”

“Not after that last bell rings,” Jack insisted.

But Jack was the boss. You could see it in Lily’s eyes, and Lynette’s as well, in their body language and the pitch of their voices.

Conversation revolved around his classes, his family life, his book. I learned more about Jack's life in a couple of one-hour lunches with Lily, Lynette, and Charles, than I had in the year previous. I learned almost nothing about the women, except that Lily came from a broken home, and both she and Lynette had survived in their high school years a lifetime of strange affairs which left both of them book smart, street wise, and independent.

"I don't need nothin' from nobody," Lily told Charles one day. "I pay my own rent, and I can pay this bill, too. This ain't class no more."

Several times Lily did pick up the tab. One of my life's finer memories is heading for the cash register, and overhearing an old fellow who had been eying us all meal as he whispered to his companion, "Jesus H. Christ, will you look at that. And the broads are payin'."

Eventually I realized that I was a fourth wheel and began to decline the luncheon invitations. I was not ready for either Lynette or Lily, and neither was especially interested in me. Both had their eyes on Jack.

That much I knew early. Lynette was quite up front about the whole business. A month into the semester, she came alone to visit me in the office . . . to inquire about Charles' tastes in food and his home life.

"The word is, he gets around," she told me bluntly.

"I really can't say anything about that."

"This is the 1970s, Dr. Tucker, not the 1870s. Although you wouldn't know it to be around here."

"What I meant was, if Jack were the sort to get around, he is certainly not the sort to talk about it. And I, of course, wouldn't discuss Jack's private life with you, even if he did discuss it with me. Which he doesn't. We're the strong, silent types. And your sex life is your private business. Remember that."

“That’s good to know,” she said. “I admire that in a man.”

Two days later Lynette was in to see Jack, soliciting help in dealing with something or another related to the apartment, a busted sofa or leaky faucet. He promised to see what he could do for her and Lily. She gave him an address. He promised to stop by on his way home from school. She said, “Cool.”

After she left, we sat a moment or two in silence.

“How much you betting on the leaky faucet?” Jack wanted to know.

“She didn’t invite me, Jack. It’s your call.” I saw no reason to repeat my earlier discussion with Lynette.

“I asked what you think.”

“I’m cool. So is Lynette. Other people around here are not so cool. I know you are not an easily intimidated man, but no immunities have been granted. You might want to watch your behind.”

Jack rocked back in his seat, legs stretched stiffly in front of him, hands folded behind his neck, more pensive than I had seen him before. He understood that a visit to that apartment would commit him to something very large in his life. While he had no idea what that something might be, he sensed this was not one of those casual adventures. Jack was the most intuitive individual I ever knew.

“So we all know Old Main would love to fry my ass,” he meditated aloud, “these days more than ever. But they really couldn’t, not on something like this. I mean, they could, I suppose, but they couldn’t. Anyway, it’s not a question of the job. Not the job as a job. It’s more a question of . . . the whole . . . situation. Rose Marié. Timm. Jenny Lynn. Supporting Rose Marié, Timm, Jenny Lynn.

“It’s also a question of the other half of that apartment. Lily is twice the woman Lynette Taylor is. Although Lynette is three times the woman your average Busiris co-ed imagines being.”

I thought I saw his main concern.

“Lily Lee didn’t invite you. Lynette did.”

“On the other hand, Tucker,” he argued, resuming his composure, “there is the sound advice of Alexis Zorba: ‘One sin God does not forgive. If a man calls a woman to her bed, and he will not go.’ That’s the rule. I’m with the Greek.”

Charles seemed to want a judgment of some sort.

“Jack, I can’t say what you should do. Don’t lay this trip on me. I can’t even say what I would do, but we both know we’re very different. All I can say is that discretion is quite called for these days.”

“Could be a set-up,” Charles thought aloud. “Lily Lee is very cool. Lynette . . . she’s a different type of chick. Fuck, man, I get in there and Billy Jo Allen or some big spade jumps out from behind the not very busted sofa with a camera, my ass is 120% pure Acapulco Gold grade A grass. Remember Aaron Finkelstein. Remember Ben Allan Browne.”

Ben Allan Browne had been busted for a $100 hash deal, set up by his own student, or by a University plant posing as a student. The kid showed up in his fiction workshop, a junior English major that nobody in the department knew. When a suspicious Browne phoned the registrar, he was told, “student records are confidential.” Unfortunately Browne had not been suspicious enough and was out of Busiris and out of Riverton.

“Lynette and Lily are not setting you up,” I told Charles. “How could you ever mistake them? Lynette likes you and Lily Lee likes you, and if you don’t know that, ‘What’s the use of all your damned books?’ ”

“One of the first things Lily ever told me was that Cleaver is right on about black-white relationships.”

“Hey, buddy, ‘Life is trouble. To be alive. . . .’ ”

“ . . . ‘is to unbuckle your belt and look for trouble.’ You see where it got Zorba.”

“Not to mention his lady friend.”

“Every man,” Charles said thoughtfully, “can be had at some point in his life by any woman who happens by. And every man can be had at any point in his life by one, maybe two very special women.”

“I can’t tell you what to do, Jack. Whatever you decide, I don’t know a thing about it. Make sure nobody else does either. For your sake and for Lynette’s.”

Jack was silent for some time.

“Maybe I’m making too big a deal of this,” he said at last. “Maybe it’s just a busted sofa or a leaky faucet.”

“Check out the sofa, Chas.”

“Maybe earlier in the afternoon. There’s a better chance that they’d be home together. I don’t think Lynette and Lily would pull anything wild together.”

“Fool!” I laughed. “The shit they pull in your classes? I’ve been to lunch with you three.”

So Charles Creed kept his word, and at 2:00 that afternoon, eyes mostly over his shoulder, hands clammy, throat dry, blood pressure about 210, he presented himself at the gate of Lily Lee Martin and Lynette Taylor.

Lily Lee opened the door.

Confusion on both sides.

“Lynette asked me to stop by,” Jack said stupidly.

“Lynette gone to the laundromat, and then to the A & P for some stuff.”

“She said something about a broken sofa.”

Lily Lee didn't know nothing 'bout no broken sofa.

"Or a leaky faucet."

Lily Lee didn't know nothing 'bout no leaky faucet either.

Lily did know perfectly well that Lynette knew perfectly well there was no leaky faucet, and she strongly suspected that Jack knew there was no leaky faucet.

"You comin' in, or you just gonna leave your stuff by the gate?" Lily wanted to know.

Jack hesitated.

Finally, taking him by the hand, Lily Lee Martin led Dr. Charles Creed into the apartment . . . took him by the hand and drew him into the apartment and into her life. Brought him across the threshold and closed the door behind him. She was wearing skin-tight blue jeans and a cotton blouse. Her dark blue bra showed clearly through the white cotton.

"I can show you the place," she went on. "This is the living room. We have two chairs, a stereo, a bookshelf, a sofa that is not broken, and a coffee table."

On the table lay a copy of *Soul on Ice*, a set of keys and a deck of Bicycle playing cards. Nervously Charles fingered the deck.

"We play a lot of five-card stud," Lily said with a sly smile. "Except this deck missin' the jack and ace of hearts."

Absentmindedly Jack fiddled with the cards, cutting to the queen of diamonds. "Third queen to the pair living here," he joked.

"Wild card give you four of a kind. You a joker, Professor Creed? Or you my missin' jack of hearts?"

"I'll be your jack of hearts, if you be my queen of diamonds."

"I be your queen of diamonds any day. But a busy man like you didn't come here to play no cards."

"No, I came to fix a leaky faucet."

Lily led him to the kitchen. “This the kitchen. Small, but we got a refrigerator and a oven. Mostly we eat out at Church’s, or order pizza. We got Coke and beer. You like a beer, Professor Creed?”

Jack declined.

“Busy man like you didn’t come here to drink no beer, either. You too busy to take off your jacket and stay awhile? Lynette done just left. And black folks don’t do no fifteen-minute laundry.”

Lily removed Charles’ jacket and hung it on a kitchen chair. He surveyed the living room. There was only one door, closed, but not locked.

“This apartment got two bedrooms,” Lily Lee told Charles. “That one over there Lynette’s. This one here mine.” She opened one of the two doors.

“This my bed. A very comfortable bed. And very strong. Sometimes when I really tired, I just fall asleep with all my clothes on. But usually I sleep with my clothes off.” Looking straight into Jack’s eyes, Lily began unbuttoning her blouse.

“May I kiss you?” Jack asked.

“Don’t talk. Just do.”

It was not, Charles told me later, the 19-year-old Playmate body inside the hiphugger jeans. Not the blue bra beneath the white cotton. Not the taut nipples, or the dark cleavage below the open blouse. It was her eyes, those smokey recesses of sadness, mystery and possibility. He thought once, fleetingly as he kissed her, of Eldridge Cleaver. He thought twice as he unfastened her blue bra, of the front door. He thought maybe three times, as they fell naked onto the bed, of Lynette.

He gave no thought at all to condoms, birth control, Rose Marié, his job, his career, or the rest of his life. “Completely spontaneous, and completely unconditional,” he wrote in his novel; “just a male and a female locking onto each other as easily and naturally as a pair of magnets. Instinctual, the way sex ought to be.

Unpremeditated, unsanctified, unpoliticized, unapologetic, and unintellectualized. A reflex action, like breathing, turning around, catching a baseball."

No talk. Just sheets of orange flame, oceans of green salt water. Fire in the eyes, electricity in the groin. A great cosmic discharge of energy.

Half an hour later, spent, Jack and Lily rolled apart, naked beside each other.

"I didn't think it would happen like this," Lily told Jack.

"I'm supposed to say, 'I love you,' " Jack told her.

"I suppose' to light a cigarette. Then we talk for half an hour analyzing things. 'Was it good for you?' 'Magical. Was it good for you?' 'Never better.' Blah, blah, blah. Lynette might not be gone all of an hour, though. Maybe we better get our clothes on. Then I can light a cigarette and we can talk."

Lynette, Lily allowed, was not doing laundry after all, had merely gone for a few groceries, could easily have returned, possibly with friends, at any time.

"Okay, so I love you," Jack told her, after they were dressed.

"It was magical."

"At school we have to be what we have to be."

"You don't have to say that."

"I apologize."

"Don't be gettin' no big ideas."

Jack kissed her again. "Thank you. You're tremendous."

"Thank you too, Mr. Fixit Man. I 'spect we'll have another busted faucet soon . . . like about tomorrow afternoon? Seem like somethin' always bustin' around here."

"Any time, any place."

“Now get your honkey ass out of here ‘fore my roommate come back.”

Jack kissed her a third time.

“I didn’t care at all,” she told Jack later. “I just knew what I wanted when I saw it, and I took it. You can’t analyze things like that. Ain’t no such thing as an intellectual fuck.”

# Chapter 5
# **Age of Faith**

“The things that have given me most pleasure in my life,” Charles Creed told me shortly before he died, “are my children, good sex, and writing. Unfortunately, the best of all three came at the same time.”

The early to middle seventies, then, were the happiest years of Charles Creed’s life. This period was his great good place and time, the dream to which he turned repeatedly for a remembrance of where he’d begun, a vision of what might return. For all the pain he felt during these years (and it was considerable) over the continuing disintegration of his marriage, a country plunging into mediocrity and boredom, and his on-going crusade against Busiris administrators, he was more than compensated in Timm, Jenny Lynn, and Lily Lee. And by his work on *Age of Faith*. In the book Creed could move comfortably in his own selectively reconstructed Past (which was perhaps why it took so long to write). In Lily Lee he found all any man could desire of Passionate Woman Present. In the children, Jack enjoyed a Future by no means guaranteed in the relationship with Lily Lee.

Accordingly, he focused as much of his life as possible on Lily, Jenny, Timm and the book, and as little as possible on Rose Marié and Busiris.

In the middle seventies Jack arose each morning around 6:30, showered, then awakened the children. He dressed them and fed them breakfast. Just before leaving the house, they awakened Rose Marié, who was then in the habit of sleeping late. On his way to Busiris, Jack dropped Timm at Helping Hands Preschool, later at Herbert Hoover Elementary School. Around noon, Rose Marié walked with Jenny Lynn to reclaim Timm, unless the son was joining his dad for lunch at the Tech, which he did about twice a month.

From 8:30 to 10:00, Jack held office hours and prepared for class. From 10:00 to noon he taught. He usually lunched off campus. Occasionally on a warm day in early summer or fall, Jack and Lily would take a picnic lunch to Burr Oak Park: Beaujolais wine, Colby cheese, cherries or apples. Eat, walk, talk, and, yes, and make love, on a blanket spread below an oak deep in the park's remoteness, or in the back seat of a car parked in some secluded corner of the park.

Afternoons Jack researched and wrote, initially in McKinley Library, later in the apartment Lily Lee and Lynette Taylor rented on Harding Avenue.

At 5:15 each evening Charles Creed arrived at the home he had purchased in 1973, using the *Age of Faith* advance as a down payment, to enthusiastic greetings from Timm and Jenny Lynn. "Nothing in this world beats the cry of 'Daddy's home! Daddy's home!' in the mouth of a three- or five-year-old kid," he assured me more than once. "That is all life is about. Keep that photo locked in the shadows of your heart, and you can walk through hell. Or New York City."

5:15 to 6:00 was spent reading mail, magazines, and the newspaper. Supper followed at 6:00, and then play until 7:30, when Jack retired to his basement den to read and grade papers. However, the heating duct which fed his den also fed the rec room, so one could easily call up, or down—general greeting like "Hey, dad, how's the air down there?" or a specific inquiry like "Hey, dad, are you working on my dollie house?" or just a general directive to "play with me, play with me." Jack rarely spent 7:30 to 9:30 entirely in scholarship or grading.

9:30 was bath time, and at 10:00 Jack read or told the children a bedtime story. 10:30 brought a choice: join Rose Marié in bed, or finish the evening's work. By the mid-seventies Jack was opting increasingly, I think it is fair to say with some degree of relief, for work.

Among the younger faculty, Jack was regarded as a New Age Father before the term was properly invented, just as he had been—regarding racism and sexism—politically correct before that term was invented. Charles spent a great deal of time with his children. He was a lion in promoting minority causes. Certainly he considered himself a feminist, and by the definitions of his time he was. “Women need to be lovely, intelligent, and hard-working,” he would say, “just as men should be handsome, intelligent and energetic. One out of three, even two out of three, just doesn’t cut it.”

The children were raised to be lovely (which for Jack meant lean and athletic), intelligent, and hard-working. Both Timm and Jenny received art and music lessons. Both Timm and Jenny accompanied Jack to Busiris Buck baseball and basketball games. When father and children played football, son and daughter alternated at tight end. When Timm turned seven, his father bought him the best Spaulding glove on the market. Three years later, Jenny Lynn received an identical glove . . . brand new, despite the fact that her brother had since graduated to a larger model. “She is not to think of herself as a hand-me-down athlete,” he told me, offering Timm’s old glove for my own son.

Father, son and daughter fished together, spent whole weekends camping in state parks from Wisconsin to Kentucky. From their earliest years the children had notoriously late bedtimes—no bed times at all really: Jack used their presence as insulation between himself and his wife—and traveled everywhere with Jack and Rose Marié. The essence of Jack’s child-rearing philosophy was, “Never say *no* when you can say *yes*.”

Returning from a conference in Ann Arbor sometime around 1975, Jack told me, “I figured it out on the drive home, Tucker. I love to travel, but travel usually doesn’t pay. If I am away from home alone, on vacation or at a conference, that’s two pluses against three minuses: I’m away from Busiris and away from my wife; but I’m also away from my kids and from Lily Lee, and spending lots of money. I’ve lost ground. If I’m away from home with my wife and kids, I’m still

down two pluses to three minuses: away from Busiris and with my kids, but with my wife, away from Lily, and spending money. Being on the road benefits me only if I travel with Lily or the kids alone. Otherwise, I might as well stay the fuck in Riverton."

During this period, Jack preferred increasingly to stay the fuck in Riverton and work on his book.

Working on his book brought him to Lily Lee. Writing *Age of Faith* pleased Jack far more than its actual publication, largely, I suspect, because of the environment in which he wrote. While the whole campus understood that Professor Creed was "off writing" each afternoon, most people assumed he was deep in the recesses of McKinley Library. Only Lynette and I knew he was typing away in the Harding Avenue apartment, which Lily and Lynette generously vacated from 1:00 to 4:30 every weekday afternoon of their freshman, sophomore, and junior years. How they managed to keep both themselves and their friends away, how Jack managed to enter and exit unnoticed, and how Jack disciplined himself to writing in such proximity to the bed of the woman he loved, I cannot imagine.

Shortly after lunch Jack let himself into the flat and spread his work across the bed. He typed at her dresser on an electric Smith Corona portable he had purchased for her with money out of his advance. At 4:30 he packed his work into a cardboard box (later several), which he tucked under the bed. On the bureau he left the day's pages and a single red rose, fresh, which he bought around the corner at Main Street Floral, adjacent to the laundromat. Three years of roses bought plenty of discretion from the proprietor, who, she admitted to me later, knew good and well who the recipient was.

Each evening Lily Lee read what he had written during afternoon. The detailed commentary written in pencil on early drafts of *Age of Faith* manuscript (Novum State University Library, Special Collections MS-CC17 through MS-CC32) was written by Lily Lee Martin. Because she read source material as well as Jack's text, Lily contributed a great deal to the final manuscript, as careful examination of successive drafts reveals. One reason promotion of

the published *Age of Faith* was such an agony for Jack was that in his mind the book was so fused with Lily that without her presence it ceased, literally, to have meaning.

Jack and Lily discussed his text and her notes when they met on campus the following day and on those occasions when Jack lingered beyond 4:30 in the apartment of his beloved.

Those occasions were rare. Jack and Lily Lee were determined to keep their relationship secret, as much to guard her reputation as to protect his marriage, and they considered the apartment not a safe place to be together. They also avoided his house and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center as too risky for serious sex. They did not avoid his office (which was probably not bugged at that time), locked bedrooms at some student parties (five minute quickies before somebody noticed they'd gone concurrently AWOL), the sheltering recesses of Burr Oak Park, and the front seat of his car in some rural Illinois cornfield. When Linda and I left town on long vacations I would give him the key to our place, asking him to water plants and vent windows. Lily once remarked on our squeaky brass bed.

One summer day they made love in a canoe on the Sangamon River.

They'd gotten into a mild argument over T. S. Eliot's "Waste Land," which Jack always admired and Lily always detested. "All that shit about ruined maidens," Lily fumed. "Useless Brit. bitches. 'Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe.' You can't do it in a canoe. What this jive-ass talking about?"

"You can do it in a canoe."

"Shit, fool!"

"It could be done," Jack insisted.

"You think so?" Lily challenged.

One hour later Jack and Lily were doing it in a canoe on some backwaters of the Sangamon. "It wasn't too bad, either," Jack

insisted, “with the rocking of the water and all.”

“Yeah, until you got all excited and nearly drowned us,” Lily laughed.

Around Busiris, many suspected and some gossiped, but I think nobody, beyond Lynette, me, and the owner of Main Street Floral, knew absolutely and for certain that Lily and Jack were romantically involved. Those who disapproved did so for political reasons. Those who approved of the nearly inseparable couple considered them kindred spirits separated by age, gender, and race, a model black-white, student-teacher cooperation.

Which, in fact, they were. In addition to, but independent of, being lovers.

Who really cared? Jack and Lily Lee were not the first student-teacher lovers in Busiris’ history, nor were they the last. During the middle seventies, even a campus as conservative as Busiris Technical University, there were no anti-miscegenation laws, and no feminist confusions of sex and power. Any one of three dozen coeds, Lynette included, would have given her sorority pin to be in Lily’s position.

“Everybody should, once in their life, be crazy in love and young,” Jack told me a decade later. “Rose Marié and I were never crazy in love and young, and that was our problem. Victoria Nation, Lucy Kramer, the Dean of Women were never crazy, old or young, and that’s their real problem. I don’t want to be reductionist, you know, that old crap about ‘What they really need is a good fuck.’ But one time or another everyone has to cut the rope and be free. There’d be lots less war, lots less guilt, and lots fewer Puritans. I haven’t the slightest, singlest regret.”

The epigraph of *Age of Faith* Jack selected from Emerson: “Congratulate yourself if you have done something strange and extravagant and broken the monotony of a decorous age.”

Jack and Lily were indeed extravagant and strange and indecorous, especially in 1973 and 1974. Streetwise and full of

energy, Lily Lee Martin matched Jack vision for vision, scheme for scheme, prank for prank. Whereas Jack always tended to be disruptive in his pranks—late sixties surrealism with a comic edge, Lily was more in the earlier sixties tradition: political and didactic. She constructed. He deconstructed. You could laugh at Jack's jokes. Lily's had an edge.

Characteristic of Jack was the "Royal Nonesuch" memo. One morning after kissing Jenny Lynn goodbye and dropping Timm at Herbert Hoover, Jack hustled over to Busiris to type the "Royal Nonesuch" announcement from Twain's *Huck Finn* onto a sheet of white paper. Across the top and bottom he pasted "PLEASE ANNOUNCE TO ALL CLASSES," cut from one of a hundred such requests that had been jamming our mailboxes. The promotions of trivial meetings and self-help sessions had been driving us all nuts. This memo he had duplicated off campus, and by noon it had appeared in mail boxes all across campus. Most Busiris faculty had no idea what to make of it. Walking out the front door of Busiris Hall that afternoon, Lou and I overheard a couple of mathematicians puzzling over the strange document. "Well look here," said one to the other, "it doesn't give a date or a time."

"And there's no room location either," the other pointed out.

"That's the English Department for you," the first said, triumphantly.

Lily got more than laughs for her pranks. She was especially clever in using the strategically placed phone call, letter, and even a bogus news story to further a good cause. Her main causes were the Black Students Alliance, over which she presided as president during her junior and senior years, and the Black Studies Program. With Jack, Lynette and a cadre of articulate black students she developed Afro-American Studies into a program offering a dozen different courses on an annual budget well into six figures . . . over and above faculty salaries (faculty were loaned to the program from other departments) and summer school expenses. She led the

Alliance into a building of its own, the King Center, and to an annual budget of $25,000, most of it from student activity fees.

The base was a $10,000 allocation from B. T. U. Development Funds, which Lily Lee engineered in 1975, starting with two forged memos, one from the Dean of Liberal Arts to the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the other from the VPAA to the Dean. Each supported a program neither had proposed, each indicated a copy to B. S. A. President Lily Lee Martin. Lily took her “copies” to President Stoddard, who recognized a politically sensitive issue when he saw one. Stoddard gave his verbal blessings to the attractive young black woman and to what he assumed was the Dean’s or Vice President’s idea. The following day’s mail brought both Dean and VPAA copies of a phony written commitment from Stoddard. An article in the Thursday *Sentinel* announced the $10,000 allocation. Lily wrote profuse letters of thanks to Dean, VP, and Pres, none of whom apparently gave the subject further consideration.

A special account containing the not-at-all-bogus ten grand was set up by a slightly confused business office secretary, who had not heard of the allocation when Lily showed up requesting an account number. But who was she to quarrel with this Young Black Woman in Complete Control carrying a handful of memos from the Dean, the Vice President, and the President?

Lily was a prankster of no small capabilities.

The Development Funds allocation was renewed four years running . . . some of them years of serious economic hardship at Busiris.

As 1974 wore into 1975, and 1975 to 1976, Jack and Lily’s relationship mellowed, as relationships have a habit of doing. “Sex,” Jack always claimed, “is a necessary spark, but it will carry you only six months, a year at best. After sex comes love.” *Intimacy* is the word favored by people who usually prefer to skip the wild sex and go directly to caring. But as Jack also preached, intimacy follows after and develops from craziness. Men who are gentle, sensitive,

and caring in their early twenties are dead in their thirties, and their women wonder if maybe they haven't missed something.

Lily Lee missed nothing.

With intimacy, Lily and Jack achieved sophistication, elegance and even respectability. Lily's miniskirts, hip-huggers, tank tops, cutoffs, and scuffed sneakers disappeared in 1974. Jack took to calling her "The Lady" and "Daisy" in reference to Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. In the spring of 1975 he joined the Faculty Club, which he had previously scorned, for the sole purpose of entertaining Lily Lee. At the Club, Jack and Lily Lee could look smart and talk Langston Hughes or *Age of Faith* over a gin and tonic.

By fall 1975, Jack and Lily were joining English Department colleagues and lower level Busiris administration types for Friday afternoon happy hour at the Heidelberger Lounge, Jack in pleated slacks and a Christopher Scott shirt, Lily Lee in an outfit from Carson Pirie Scott or Marshall Field's in Chicago. Dressed to the nines, seated in one of those heavy carved oak chairs at the Heidelberger, margarita in one hand and a popped shrimp in the other, Lily Lee Martin was the Queen of Diamonds herself.

Friday afternoon happy hour at the Heidelberger is one reason Lily Lee was hired in 1980 as Busiris affirmative action officer, after some of those lower level administrative types had moved slightly up the Old Main ladder. On the other hand, one particular Friday afternoon is the reason that the mature Lily Lee—intelligent, black, M.A., from Northwestern, right there on the Busiris campus—never taught even an adjunct course in Victoria Nation's Women's Studies program.

Victoria, whatever her other deficiencies, had a natural instinct for political opportunity. She was a Heidelberger regular, even though she really didn't like to drink, was not particularly adept at witty conversation, and was a natural target for practical jokes and put-downs. One thing about Victoria: she did what she had to do.

She sat, invariably, at a polar distance from Jack and Lily, at one end of the long oak trestle table, vying with them for control of the middle. In a direct contest, she was no match for either Jack or Lily, but she had the staying power of a Mike Tyson. They'd get in a few sharp jabs early, then lose interest, retreating into each other or Lou Feracca and me, leaving the field to Victoria, who forged ahead like a D-9 Cat. Occasionally Jack or Lily would toss a nonchalant barb, which bounced off Victoria like a BB off the battleship Missouri. Then they'd return to their private discussion and Victoria reclaimed the ears, if not the eyes, of faculty, grad students, and Old Main lower management.

One exchange, however, was neither ignored nor forgotten.

Daisy had been offering her critique of some young black writer (not Toni Morrison) who was receiving tremendous and, she thought, unwarranted media attention. "This chick hustles her way into a copy editor job for some New York house. Very clever, very bourgeois. Naturally she writes a book of her own, probably her intent all along, which her connections in publishing get published. The same connections provide blurbs and reviews, and suddenly she's the new black voice speaking for her people. In reality, she's still just mousy, middle-class Maud, who gets it all second-hand. Only to literary types, who take everything second hand, could she be anything but a complete rip-off. She's entirely removed from the ordinary lives of ordinary Afro-Americans, and a paradigm for the co-option that's going on in movement right now. Too many people who haven't suffered are making too much capital off the misery of people who did suffer. They collect the goodies, while the oppressed are left behind in the dust, where they always were. Workers still stuck in the back of the bus do not give a rat's ass whether the dude up front is white or a black. Today, working-class blacks got no hope at all, because whenever they complain, they hear, 'Look at all this shit we're doin' for you people. Why Ms. Booshie Black's new novel just won the National Book Award.' "

The black undergraduate's tirade reduced the table of M. A.'s and Ph. D.'s to thoughtful silence. Embarrassed, Lily retreated slightly.

"Anyway, that's just my opinion. My opinion is apparently way out of line, but it's my opinion. So all right, then I'll go to hell."

Unexpectedly, Victoria took Lily's side. "I think it's commendable for a young female student to have opinions of her own," she began. "Many times as a young woman struggling to find my identity in an established graduate program, I was forced to confront the white, Anglo-Saxon, male patriarchy, whose views I naturally wished to question. You could do a fine deconstruction of any text, Miss Martin, I am sure. You don't really have to go to hell for your opinions."

Lily blinked. "Have you read that book?"

"The novel you were describing?" Victoria asked her. "I'm afraid I've been reading mostly theory these days."

"I meant *The Adventures of Huck Finn*."

"The 'going to hell' reference was to *Huck Finn*," Jack told Victoria. "It's the climax of the novel. You got through an M.A. program without reading that book . . . ?"

"I'm also very active on campus committees," Victoria continued as if neither Jack nor Lily had spoken a word. "As some people at this table are not." This with a look at Jack and me.

"Go to, Victoria," Jack cheered. "You're well on your way to being an . . . administrator!"

"Committee work, Chas, is the ward politics of academia. With your purported proletarian proclivities, I should think you'd condescend to do more of it. I could use you, for example, on the academic affairs committee."

"Let it be noted that Victoria wants to use Charles," Lou Feracca said wryly.

“Victoria Nation is the woman to see for an academic affair,” quipped someone else.

“I am the Associate Chairperson of the Busiris Academic Affairs Committee.”

“The Associate Chair of the Academic Affairs Committee,” Jack echoed solemnly. “You’re one important son-of-a-bitch, Miss Vicki!”

Victoria flushed. “Professor Creed [Victoria always jumped to “Professor That” and “Doctor That” whenever she was about to assume the high moral ground], you really should guard your tongue. Especially around undergraduates. A number of your students have noticed your gutter talk, and are offended by it. It hurts them. Words can be as sharp as swords.”

“Sticks and stones will break my bones,” Lily Lee recited.

“You especially, Miss Martin, who have been doubly oppressed, as a Negro and again as a woman. . . .”

“Black women are the strongest force on earth, Professor Nation. Black women dominate all relationships, black or white, male or female. You watch those big black football players Saturday on television. Camera pans the bench. They all wave. ‘Hi, mom.’ ‘Hi, mom.’ Every one of them. You don’t hear any ‘Hi, dad.’ Black women are powerful people.”

“Who know the oppression of words.”

“Names don’t cut no shit with me, Professor Nation. I’ve been called so many fuckin’ names in my life. . . .”

“Every word the lash of a whip.”

“I been hit, and I been bad-mouthed. I’ll take the words any day.”

“Words don’t wound the way sticks and stones wound,” Jack asserted.

“Verbal wounds are more oppressive than physical wounds, Professor Creed. You are a literary man. You know the power of a

verbal construct to imprison us in a false image of ourselves. It is words that define our race, our sexualities, and our class."

"Talk is talk," Jack insisted. "A word does not hurt like a rock hurts."

Victoria persisted. "Verbal assaults injure just as severely as physical assaults."

"You don't really believe that."

"I certainly do."

Jack considered his words. "I'll make you a proposal," he said. "You hit me with five verbal assaults. The worst things you can imagine. True or untrue, vulgar, sexist, demeaning, I don't care. Five of them. Then I hit you five times on the head with a rock. Is that a deal?"

"I'm not a fool, Charles. No one agrees to be hit. No woman wants to be assaulted."

"I agreed to five assaults from you. Why won't you agree to five assaults from me?"

"That's different."

"That's the point, Professor Nation," Lou concluded.

"You don't know anything about abuse, Professor Nation," Lily Lee said. "You're just another white, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class Puritan from a cozy middle-class world looking to cop a free ride off black people's misery. Tryin' to save the world from post-Freudian literature. Have you actually read anything more recent than Emily Dickinson and Virginia Woolf?" she wanted to know.

"Perhaps we could begin with Barbara Moran's *Woman in a Sexist Society*. I commend that book to you as a Negro and as a woman."

"I skimmed that book once. Terrible. It has nothing to do with reality. Or men. It's all useless theory."

“Apparently your advisor is not advising you well, Miss Martin. Theory is the very point of a university education. We are intellectuals at this university. We enjoy ideas. Ideas and cultured discussion. People who do not appreciate ideas . . . perhaps they do not belong here.” This came with a long look at Lou.

“For every theory, there is an equal and opposite theory,” Jack said.

“I’ll take a good fuck over good ideas any day,” Lily told Vicky.

More than one male jaw dropped. “The rest of this table, not to mention the rest of America, agrees with me.”

“Loosen up, Vicky, and get laid,” Jack advised.

“Getting laid, as you so vulgarly put it, ignores women’s integrity and worth. That kind of sexual oppression does not build a society free from prejudice and bias.”

“Professor Nation,” Lily Lee said, “you’re an old maid at thirty. You were probably an old maid at eighteen. Until you get laid, you’re never going to figure it out. All the books and all the theory in the world won’t help you.

“I’m supposed to say I feel sorry for you, but I don’t. Instead of solving your problem, you go around making your problem everybody else’s problem. You’re a bad trip. If this drink were a bucket of water, I’d throw it on you and watch you melt.”

The rest of the table laughed aloud. Victoria did not. She pushed her seat back from the table and left the bar. She did not return to the Heidelberger for several weeks thereafter.

Nobody missed her, least of all Jack. He had Lily, and his children, and his work. He had, in short, everything.

Lily didn’t think much about Victoria Nation either, one way or the other. Not then. Nor did the rest of the campus. In the middle seventies, it was Charles Creed—and Lily Lee Martin—whom others regarded as representing the institution’s future. It was Charles

Creed whose approval others sought, to whom they came when something needed to be done.

In all fairness, Charles Creed did Busiris a great deal of good, sometimes consciously, sometimes as an accident of promoting himself or just having fun. Charles Creed engineered the Field House Construction Compromise. Charles Creed fathered the Afro-American program and later, against his own will, the Women's Studies program. Charles Creed was a Bucks Booster. Charles Creed's reputation gave Busiris national prominence, and attracted both students and donations. Charles Creed is the only Pulitzer Prize winner Busiris ever had, or is likely to have.

Charles Creed brought to McKinley Library the core of its now nationally known Lincoln Collection.

That great adventure may have marked the high point of Jack and Lily's relationship.

It began on September 21, 1976, when Jack received an interesting phone call from his friend Roger Holmes. Holmes had been selected as the new director of McKinley Library from a field of forty-nine applicants for the vacancy created when Basil Gilbert Wentworth completed his death in the spring. With only six years' experience as a reference librarian at De Paul (degree from John Carroll, 1970), Holmes was a surprising choice. Jack, one of two faculty members on the hiring committee, had fought hard and cleverly for him. He had finagled Holmes into the final three on the argument that a young ringer would make the experienced, and older, and safer, and less qualified internal candidate appear seasoned and therefore the better choice. In his on-campus interview, however, Holmes came across as confident, intelligent, and—within the boundaries of Busiris prudence—imaginative. The internal candidate looked old and stale. On a split vote heralded by the younger faculty as one glimmer of hope in otherwise darkening times, the selection committee recommended Holmes. Administration hired Holmes as the cheaper alternative, despite some lobbying from Old Ones inside McKinley Library. By June of

1976, his rival had found a position elsewhere, further reducing the library payroll. Six months later, another of the disgruntled Old Ones left McKinley, saving Old Main even more bucks. Holmes was by far the cheaper choice.

And the better choice. Holmes could make bricks without straw. He was especially adept at getting more work out of fewer people, at squirreling away stashes of cash for under-the-table acquisitions and renovations, and at cajoling selected local citizens into financing appropriate small projects which, down the line and supported further by the same or donors, could be developed into much larger projects. During his tenure at Busiris, Holmes managed to extend library holdings and hours, develop an archival and rare books collection, and lay the groundwork for Busiris' entry into technological informational systems. Unfortunately he never realized his two pet projects: a Regional Studies Collection of downstate literary and historical manuscripts, and a new building.

Holmes proposed the Regional Studies idea during his interview, but Old Main nixed it as expensive. Before Holmes could line up local donors, John Hallwas at Western Illinois had taken the initiative and begun the remarkable collection he has since built there. A new library, of course, came only after fire gutted the old one.

But Roger Holmes was never defeated. When one idea failed, he had two others to pursue. Of three schemes, two failed and one succeeded. Holmes' imagination was fecund enough that even batting .333 he collected a lot of hits.

"Charles Creed, this is Roger Holmes in the Library," said the voice on the telephone that September Tuesday. "I want to talk to you immediately."

"Fire away."

"Not on the phone."

"Meet you in your office?"

“Not in the office.” Jack was intrigued.

“Then you tell me.”

“I’ll meet you in front of McKinley in five minutes. Then we’ll go for a walk.”

Jack indicated he was a little tied up. “A class at ten for which I’m not entirely prepared.”

“Forget the class,” Roger told him. “This is important.”

Five minutes later Creed joined Holmes at the main entrance to McKinley Library. The two exchanged greetings, and Jack moved in the direction of Busiris Quad.

“Not past Old Main,” Holmes commanded. “Off campus.”

“Don’t tell me, I’ll tell you,” Jack mused aloud. “Stoddard has resigned.”

“Hush, hush. Bigger than that.”

“Stoddard has been caught embezzling millions, resigned in disgrace, and named you the new president.”

“Almost as big as that. Be quiet and walk.”

For ten minutes Holmes and Creed admired the fall foliage. Holmes led them past Dorms East, towards the student apartments and vaguely in the direction of Lily and Lynette’s apartment. For a moment Jack’s pulse raced.

Finally Roger Holmes spoke.

“I think I know where we can get 800 to a thousand books published before 1850, all reportedly in good condition. And about 2,000 manuscript letters dating to the early 1800s, many of historical significance. Possibly this material includes some Lincoln items: books, letters, and even manuscripts.”

“Well holy shit.”

“Holy shit is right. Not a word of this to anyone.”

“Doublecross my heart. I am silent as a brick.”

“This conversation is not taking place.”

“A thousand old books, two thousand old letters, and legitimate Lincoln material. You know, or you think you know?”

“I’m 95% certain.”

“I’m listening.”

“You familiar with Jubilee College State Park, over near Peoria?”

“I’ve camped there with the kids.”

“You know much of the history?”

“I read a sign there once.”

“Interesting place. The founder, Philander Chase, was the guy who founded Kenyon.”

“In Gambier, Ohio.”

“The same. Good school, after a rocky start. Chase was the Episcopal Bishop of Ohio, and he set up Kenyon as a seminary for Episcopal priests ‘in the West.’ Seems he didn’t trust decadent Easterners to minister west of the mountains. This is back in 1824. In 1831 Chase got chased out of the school he himself had built, by the faculty he himself had hired. After a stint in Michigan, he got himself appointed Bishop of Illinois, and in 1839—at age sixty-four, incidentally—he began buying land, collecting donations, and raising funds for a second seminary.”

“That’s the College? Not quite Kenyon, as I recall.”

“Jubilee never made it. Chase kept the whole operation in his hip pocket. Land and buildings in his name. Donations made to Chase personally. Faculty appointed ‘for tenure of good behavior’ by Chase personally. Students admitted, and expelled, by Chase personally.”

“Is Stoddard at all related to this guy?”

“It worked until Chase died in 1852. Then came the troubles, including the Civil War. The operation folded in 1860. It reopened a couple of times after the War, but you’ve seen how it ended.”

“Not much there that I saw,” Jack observed.

“Not much at all. Where it all went is anyone’s guess. Chase was more prolific than even you. The library contained at least two thousand books. A dozen or so ended up at Seabury-Western, on the Northwestern campus in Evanston. I’ve seen them. They have Jubilee College Library book plates, a photocopy of which I will provide for you. Each plate carries a number. I saw book number 2251.

“Chase got Jubilee made a U.S. Post Office, and himself made postmaster. That position carried free franking privileges. He wrote everyone who was anyone, and they wrote him back. Chase also had a publishing operation, and mailed leaflets and booklets by the ton.

“He had connections everywhere: England, New England, Charleston, New Orleans, Philadelphia, New York. Dudley Chase was U.S. Senator from Vermont. Salmon Portland Chase—the abolitionist lawyer—was U.S. Senator from Ohio. He was also presidential nominee at the Republican convention of 1860. He was also Secretary of the Treasury under Lincoln, whose candidacy he finally supported in 1860. Also Chief Justice of the Supreme Court during the Reconstruction years. Also the nephew of Bishop Philander Chase, with whom he lived for a couple years in Ohio.

“So Philander Chase has a major Lincoln connection. Another Lincoln connection is Rev. Charles Dresser, member of the Jubilee faculty, who officiated at the marriage of Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd, November 1842 . . . when Philander was very much alive, not a hundred miles up the road from Springfield. Lincoln was a circuit lawyer: definitely visited towns like Knox, Galesburg, Peoria, Pekin, and Eureka. Probably Jubilee too if he knew Dresser. Lincoln

probably knew Philander Chase personally, as an older and very established power."

"Which brings us to the books and the letters," Jack surmised.

"Exactly. This is Philander Chase's personal property we're talking about, kept by his heirs. The letters definitely were Chase's property. The books—who can say, really, to whom the books were donated? If they weren't technically Chase's property, he viewed them as his personal property.

"It's been assumed that the library remained at Jubilee between Chase's death in 1852 and the closing of the college in 1860, and even beyond 1860. Probably some of it did. That closing was viewed as temporary in 1860. But Chase's death precipitated a lot of animosity between his heirs and the institutional Episcopal Church: who had owned what, who still owned what, who owed whom what for loans, mortgages, land, buildings. Chase and the hierarchy had always been at war, and Chase had made the Bishop of Illinois ex officio president of the college. That was fine while he was the Bishop, but after he died . . . the next Episcopal Bishop of Illinois never set foot in the state. I doubt that most of whatever Chase considered his personal belongings remained at the college much beyond 1853.

"Anyway, it has virtually disappeared. I saw a few books in Evanston. Kenyon College has a modest collection of Chase papers, but the heirs detested Kenyon even more than they detested Jubilee and the organized Episcopal Church. The story you most hear is that everything stayed stored at Jubilee, through the Civil War and Reconstruction, through a couple of abortive openings and closings, through World War I, and into the Depression. Then it became fuel for the fires around which indigents tried to keep themselves alive. It's inconceivable that Chase's heirs would have let valuable books and letters molder away in empty buildings. They were learned and proud people. And even today Jubilee is full of old furniture that would have made much warmer fires for Depression hoboes than books."

“Makes sense,” Jack agreed.

“And god knows, enough intelligent people have visited that place. . . . You and I are not the first book people to scrounge around old Jubilee College. The Peoria Episcopal Cathedral has held services out there twice a year since the twenties. If there were stacks of books and letters piled around . . . the philatelic value alone would interest people.”

“So you believe it’s stashed?”

“I believe much of it was stashed. Yes. By whom, and where, I am not at liberty to tell you. I’m not even sure the present owner of the treasure knows. I’m not sure she’s aware of what she’s got. I don’t know what’s there myself. All I know is that I received a telephone call late yesterday afternoon from a certain woman in St. Louis whose mother had recently passed away. This woman is not a Chase, nor was her mother, but two generations up the family tree is one Anna Chase Chamberlain, Philander’s granddaughter. In the attic of her mother’s mansion, this woman gave me to understand, is a large collection of old books and letters, most of them dating back to before the Civil War. The books, she says, contain Jubilee College Library plates.”

“Too damned much.”

“I’m just guessing about the Lincoln material. Her description was only ‘books and old letters.’ ”

“So my assignment, should I accept it. . . .”

“Here’s the situation. I have a little money saved, and I might be able to find a source for some more. Not nearly enough to buy this stuff at its actual value, assuming she’s got what I think she’s got. In a bidding war, I will lose, even to a used book dealer, not to mention more generously endowed and forward looking colleges and universities. Or the State of Illinois. I need not tell you that many schools would love to get their paws on this stuff.”

“Especially that other basketball school over there in Peoria.”

“Especially that one. Also Western, Sangamon, Knox, Wesleyan, Kenyon, and Northwestern. And Washington U., literally in the woman’s back yard.

“There are, however, some strengths to our position. First, this woman’s naïveté plays into our hands. If I can convince her that what she has is valuable enough to interest us, but not valuable enough to interest anyone else, she stays away from outside appraisals, and I’m in the ball game.

“Second, Busiris has the inside track. She graduated from Busiris in the late fifties, and whatever the rest of us think about this place, she remembers her years here fondly. As a Bucks fan, she naturally detests the Badley Braves, which cuts out our number one contender.”

“From what I’ve heard,” Jack said, “they’ve got less money even than Busiris.”

“And less vision. Anyway, this stuff will not end up in Peoria. She is a little suspicious of the State of Illinois and State schools in general: too big. Washington U. and Northwestern both rejected her college application, and she carries a grudge. I think that’s the reason she didn’t call Washington U. in the first place. St. Louis U. is Catholic, and thus eliminated. While explaining Jubilee College, I made a point of mentioning the shameful treatment Chase received from the Episcopal Church and Kenyon College. Maybe we cut them out too.

“There is a third reason, the reason I phoned you. Somehow, somewhere—I do not know where—she has heard your name, and has formed the impression that you’re the second coming of Philander Chase. She has this idea that Professor Creed is a very learned man. If she donates this material to her alma mater, it will be put to good use by Professor Charles Creed.”

“This is a little out of my time frame,” Jack pointed out.

“You’ve published on Thoreau. Maybe after this book you’ve been writing, you can do something with it. This may be a

remarkable scholarly opportunity. And this woman believes in you."

"I have my supporters."

"Not too many of them are wealthy, middle-aged Episcopalians."

"Maybe she's a closet liberal."

"Maybe she's just a not-too-bright alumna who has plenty of money, doesn't read the *Standard-Republican* or the *Sentinel*, and got a notion in her head about you from a niece or nephew. That's a safer assumption, and the assumption under which I want you to operate."

"Should I accept this assignment."

"McKinley Library was very generous in supporting your research. Especially in the early stages. You owe it something."

"McKinley gave me no more than it owes any serious faculty member. If my work over-burdened its interlibrary loan staff, that's the price it pays for decades of chintzy acquisitions budgets."

Holmes retreated. "Okay. Agreed. No bullshit among friends, Chas. Would you buy the 'we all live under the same roof' argument? We're all in this together. Your ass is tied up in this institution, like all of ours. Whether everyone at Busiris admits it or not, a good book from Charles Creed is good for the institution. A coup for McKinley Library archives is good for the institution."

"You can't handle this yourself, Roger?"

"You will impress her more. Besides, I am absolutely locked up. Last Saturday of the month is the Trustees' Meeting. In four days I make my pitch for a new library. That takes precedence over absolutely everything. And while I don't want to appear too eager, I don't want to let things slide much beyond this weekend. I want to phone her back and say yes, I'm interested, and I'm sending your man Creed down to talk."

"I'm pretty buried myself right now. Full teaching load plus page proofs and photo package on the book. Too bad this stuff is not in

New York, next door to Magnum Photo."

"This is important," Holmes pleaded.

Still Jack hesitated.

"Okay, here's the deal," Holmes said finally. "I will blow you to a weekend of class A proofreading in St. Louis. I'm talking absolutely first class. Not the Hilton, but the Ritz-Carleton. Luxury suite. You and Rose Marié make a weekend of it. Put your meals on the tab, too. Take in a show or a movie. That's just for going down there and spending two hours with this woman. Charm the pants off her if you have to. I know you can do it, Chas. I have seen you do it."

A plan was forming in the back of Jack's mind.

"A weekend at the Ritz in return for two hours of tea and crumpets. Check the books, and check the letters. Be casual, be alert. Especially look for Lincoln stuff. In my office I have photocopies of Lincoln's manuscript hand, along with a copy of the Jubilee College book plate.

"Now if we land this little treasure," Holmes added, "before it is inventoried, I will slip you under the table two books out of the collection. The first is a book of your own choice. The collection's Star of India if you want it. Second book is my choice, and I will not stiff you on that either. Plus five randomly selected manuscript letters from the Chase material.

Holmes saw his man nearly hooked.

"And if there is any Lincoln stuff," he added triumphantly, "one manuscript of your own choice. If we land the donation. That's my offer."

"And a generous *quid pro quo* it is," Jack said. "You are a deal-makin' man, Holmes. Sure there's not a little Yom Kippur in your blood?"

"Negotiations may, you understand, involve another visit or two to St. Louis."

“One of my personal favorite cities.”

“And this is absolutely on the Q. T. The first anyone knows of it is an announcement in the newspaper. And I mean anyone.”

“Absolutely,” Jack agreed. “Which brings up a small point, friend Roger. Rose Marié is not exactly one to keep a secret. Why not let me go down there alone Friday, ‘to do touch-up research’ we’ll tell people. I’ll meet this woman and do my best for you. And you’ll pick up the tab, absolutely on the Q. T.?”

“Whatever you want,” Holmes promised Creed.

“Done deal,” Jack said. The two shook hands and, a block from Lily’s apartment, turned their steps back toward McKinley Library.

With his rose that afternoon Jack left Lily a note in a sealed envelope. “For a good time, see Jack of Hearts. B. H. 313 tomorrow. Very hush hush. Lots of love, and kisses where they do you the most good.”

At supper that evening Jack announced that he would be spending the weekend down in Southern Illinois. Timm and Jenny were disappointed. Rose Marié, accustomed to Jack’s research trips, was only mildly curious. She had, as the saying goes, spent a month in Carbondale one weekend, and had no desire ever to see the place again.

“I thought you were done writing,” she said.

“I thought I was too,” Jack answered. “Every time I think I’m done, the Scribner’s copy editor finds a dozen more loose ends.”

“I suppose that means I’m stuck with the kids.”

“This book will make us a bundle.”

“You keep telling me.”

“You gotta have faith and believe.”

“You keep telling me that too.”

There the matter rested.

“It was all I could do to keep from phoning,” Lily told him the next morning. “But I figured if it was so secret, you wouldn’t be able to talk on the phone.”

“It was all I could do to keep myself from hanging around the apartment to tell you,” Jack said. “But I didn’t know who might walk with you through the door. What I’d say if it wasn’t Lynette. Or, for that matter if it was Lynette.”

“So what’s the big deal?”

“I’m going to St. Louis this weekend and thought you might like to come along. Friday night, Saturday, back Sunday late.”

“We’re talkin’ west side of the Mississippi?”

“The original St. Louis. Accept no substitutes. Although you can visit your mom if you want.”

“This girl ain’t never goin’ back to East St. Lou. To that life that never happened. You know that, big boy. You sure this trip is cool?”

“I made an announcement last night. Rose Marié drew a couple of incorrect conclusions, and I did not straighten her out.”

Lily Lee thought for a moment. “You be workin’ on your book or what?”

“You got a better offer?” Jack asked, half afraid of the answer.

“A gal like me always got offers. You know that, honey. An’ you know a gal like me will trade them all for one weekend with her man. Even if it’s lying in some Howard Johnson motel room workin’ on a book and watchin’ football on TV.”

“I never said nothin’ ‘bout reading no book in no Ho Jo motel room. Except for two hours, I am absolutely free this weekend. Cards game, sight-seeing, fine dining. Maybe fuck our brains out. At the Ritz-Carlton, no less.”

“Say what?”

“Holmes in the library has an assignment for me. In payment, he’s offering a weekend at the Ritz, meals and entertainment included.”

“The Ritz? That place on Carondelet Plaza? Shit, fool. We walk in there together, they will send you off for the mandatory shot of penicillin, and send me downtown in a squad car.”

“Not a chance.”

“Now what they gonna be s’posin’, I come walkin’ in there with you? Those niggers at the front door? The desk clerk? The restaurant? They’ll be thinkin’ I’m some cheap hooker from across the river. That’s what.”

“Fuck ‘em. Let ‘em think what they want. The Cards are in town, playing the Pirates. Double-header on Friday, games on Saturday and Sunday. Bound to be plenty of tickets.”

“I ain’t doin’ it.”

“I’ll put a ring on your finger if it makes you feel more comfortable.”

“Don’t you be messin’ with my mind.”

“A big one. You flash a ring in their face, you’re Mrs. Charles Creed. They can think all the ugly thoughts about me they want.”

“Put your ring on Friday, take your ring off Sunday? That kind of a deal?”

Jack was hurt. “Daisy! I am no three-day deal, and you should know that by now. I’m always yours and you’re always mine, whatever I’m doing, wherever I’m traveling.”

“I know this dream, Jack. It’s never going to work. It’s crazy.”

“I’m just trying to blow us to a big weekend together. On Mother B.”

Lily Lee reflected a moment, then smiled. “Shake me, take me, baby. You tell me when, I’ll be ready.”

“Friday noon, after class?”

“Friday noon after class.”

Friday 1:45 p.m. found Jack and Lily buck naked in the front seat of a maroon 1971 Crown Victoria headed south on I-55 just past Springfield.

It was a scene right out of Kerouac. Illinois cornfields flew by on either side. KMOX boomed from the radio. Jack kept watching the rear mirror for overtaking trucks, the front windshield to avoid overtaking vehicles ahead, the speedometer to avoid getting pulled over by cops, and of course Lily Lee’s remarkable body, kissing her, feeling her, feeling her feeling him.

“Gimme a rest stop,” he begged aloud. “A weigh station. A broad shoulder with lots of tall grass.”

“You just drive your stick shift,” Lily commanded, “and I’ll drive mine.”

At the magical moment—Lily horizontal with her head in Jack’s lap, Jack’s right hand busy between her legs—the Crown Victoria got sandwiched between a slow-mover ahead and an eighteen-wheeler roaring up in the passing lane. Jack let the truck ease up to his left fender, then braked lightly, hoping the truck would shoot quickly by. The driver must have seen something, because he swerved, then hit his horn two long ones. Wooooo, wooooo!

“Nothing he hasn’t seen already,” Lily Lee said. “Eat your heart out, good buddy. Ten-four.” Then she went back to her work.

Twenty minutes later, spent but still naked, the couple approached the rest stop at Atwater-Raymond. Jack suggested they put their jeans back on, then use the facilities to dress for the Ritz. “We walk in the way we’re dressed right now, and they’ll put us both in a squad car.”

“And clean up this seat!” Lily ordered her husband for a weekend.

“I love you,” Jack told Lily.

“I love you too. You know that?”

“Well, I guess.”

“Well, I know. The Ritz. My mama would never believe it.”

Jack arrived at the Ritz in a dark blue suit and tie, Lily in a sleeveless white blouse, a pleated yellow skirt, high heels, and wide-brimmed hat. And a gold ring about two inches wide that Jack had picked up in a Riverton pawn shop. The young black car hop and the old black doorman gave the couple a long once-over. The white desk clerk did not. His expression suggested he considered Jack and Lily the most bourgeois Middle American couple in Riverton. Jack signed “Mr. and Mrs. John Charles Creed” and offered a driver’s license and Holmes’ university credit card.

Mr. and Mrs. Creed carried their own small suitcases upstairs. Around 4:20 p.m., early in the first game of the Cards’ twi-night doubleheader with the Pirates, Jack opened the door, caught Lily as she was about to enter the room, lifted her in his arms, and carried her across the threshold.

On the credenza beside the television set, a bouquet of one dozen red roses.

“Jack,” gasped Lily.

“Consider them another little gift from Roger Holmes,” Jack chuckled.

“One dozen exactly,” Lily finished counting. “We’ve got to get busy. . . .”

Mr. and Mrs. John Charles Creed did not emerge from behind closed doors until 9:30 p.m. Neither knew that St. Louis had bested Pittsburgh 10-6 in the opener, and neither knew that St. Louis was losing the night cap bigtime. Neither cared. They took their evening meal in the Ritz-Carlton: shrimp cocktails, fillet mignon, and, believe

it, a bottle of Moët champagne. At 10:45 the couple returned to their room, hanging a “do not disturb” sign on the outside handle.

At 11:00 the next morning, Jack and Lily were awakened by the call they had ordered as a precaution against oversleeping. “Damn,” was all Jack said.

“I could get used to this,” Lily thought aloud. “I really could.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” Jack muttered, assuming his Dean Moriarty persona. “Now darling, there is just one little thing today. I must, repeat I must fulfill my end of the agreement which I have been sent here to do, and that is at 2:00 this very afternoon in. Regrettably I must do this alone, honey lamb, being on my, ahem, very best behavior, preparing for my labors around 1:00 and returning from them, in great triumph we hope, around 5:00. The balance of the day I am devotionally and emotionally, as always, entirely and absolutely yours. The Botanical Gardens call. The Zoological Gardens call. The Gateway Arch, and the Anheuser Busch Brewery. This fair city’s second-to-last place baseball team, with Lou Brock and Gary Templeton. This lovely hotel, with its delights and distractions. Whatever you want, you name it.”

“I done had what I want,” Lily told Jack. “I’m satisfied. ‘Black girls just wanna get fucked all night’. . . .”

Jack smiled. “I just don’t have that much jazz,” he told her, completing the Rolling Stones line.

“Girl, don’t you know that all these rich ole white men got monkey glands and billy goat balls?” Lily announced, quoting Ellison this time. In ten minutes she was riding him once more.

“Damn,” Jack said after half an hour. “I could get used to this. I really could.”

“Rock me, lock me, baby. You’re the one.”

Over a fashionably late breakfast, the two planned what remained of the day. While Jack was off pursuing his own mysterious mission, Lily would tend to a little business of her own. The two

would rendezvous at 5:00 at Laclede's Landing, hit the ball park, and do the town brown.

"You need the car?" Jack offered.

"You take the car."

"If you're visiting your mom, you need the car."

"I'm not visiting my mom."

"Do I get a second guess?"

"Classified mission," Lily told him. "Like yours. You'll know in good time."

"No monkey business," Jack warned.

"No monkey business yourself."

"You're the one I'm livin' for," Jack informed Lily seriously. With a laugh he added, "Besides, what I got, you already took."

"You're loaded," Lily told him, and, below the table cloth, ran a hand up the inside of his leg. Jack stiffened.

"Damn," was Lily's only comment. "You want to pass me a little more of that there dressing?"

When Jack met Lily Lee at 5:00, the rear axle of his Crown Victoria was riding on the axle. The back seat was packed so high with books and papers Jack could not see out of the rearview mirror. The front passenger seat was also nearly filled. Lily could barely find room for herself and the package she was holding.

"Where's you get this nigger car?" she demanded as soon as the door was closed. "What is all this shit?"

"About a million bucks," Jack told her excitedly as he maneuvered back into the flow of traffic. "Man, have I got the story for you. But first we got to get this machine back to protected parking at the Ritz. If I can see to drive it there."

Jack's mission to Mrs. Kathleen Morrison had succeeded beyond Roger Holmes' wildest imaginings. For almost an hour in the parlor of the mansion of her deceased mother Mrs. Morrison had fenced adroitly with the handsome young Professor of English from her alma mater, about whom she had heard so many nice things from the daughter of a very close personal friend. They spoke of Transcendentalist writers and Bucks basketball, the future of higher education and the St. Louis Cardinals' pitching staff. Of Jack's youth on Long Island and her own youth in this home. Of Jack's book, a copy of which she hoped he would send her the moment it appeared.

"Monday I will send a special letter to Scribner's, and tell them to bill my royalty account," Jack promised. "Cross my heart."

"I would so hope it comes autographed," Morrison protested.

"Autographed it will be," Jack promised again.

"And what are your research plans after this book is published?" Morrison wanted to know.

Jack was not sure. "Probably something in 19th century America," he ventured.

After an hour, something inside Morrison broke. "The woman made up her mind," Jack told Lily. "I could see it in her eyes. I don't know what I said or did. The process was entirely sub-rational. I wouldn't be surprised if the lingering smell of our love this morning had as much to do with her decision as anything else. At one point she just decided I was a person she liked and could trust, and she wanted me to have her books. She's not so much donating them to Busiris, as she's donating them to me. And it's a donation. Free. Holmes will be ecstatic. Not like she needs the money, mind you. Holmes will get her a tremendous write-off against inheritance taxes, and that's apparently all she wants. I promised we'd name a room in the library for her mother. He and she can work that out."

"Did she come on to you?" Lily was jealous.

“Probably she did, in her middle-aged, middle-class, Episcopalian way. She came on with tea and cakes and witty conversation. And the contents of her mother’s attic. We hadn’t even got to the attic, and she’d made up her mind.

“Once she made up her mind, her purpose was fixed. She wanted everything out of her grandmother’s attic and on the way to Busiris immediately. ‘You will take these things with you today, Professor Creed,’ she told me.

“ ‘My car is too small,’

“ ‘I want them out of my house by sundown.’

“ ‘It’s raining.’

“ ‘I don’t care.’

“In the back of my head I hear my uncle Lou’s voice: ‘Get the money up front, kid.’ I haven’t even seen the stuff. All this is going on in her parlor. I figure Roger will shoot me if I blow the deal, and what the hell, for this price he can toss what he doesn’t want. I tell her ‘sure thing.’

“So we start loading. I start loading. One box at a time, from the attic. I no more know what’s in those boxes than I know what’s in your package. From the looks of what’s on top, I think we’re into something big time. Anyway, I must have gone up and down those stairs twenty times. Each time, toss a jacket over the top of whatever I’m carrying to keep it dry, open the car door, set the stuff in, close the door.

“She’s right alongside of me every trip, holding an umbrella. On her way through the first-floor library, she pulls an old edition of *Tom Sawyer* off the bookshelf. ‘Here’s something your library might be interested in,’ she says and tosses it into a box of old letters. Next trip it’s a Noah Webster dictionary, I don’t know what edition, very old. I think she tossed in a copy of *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Old Bibles in English and German.

“The back seat is full. I load the trunk. It’s full. My exhaust pipe is practically scraping the road. ‘Don’t you think you should put some boxes in the front seat, Professor Creed?” she suggests. “To balance the load?” What am I going to tell her? ‘I have to keep that open for my girlfriend, whom I spent the night balling but would not bring with me to meet you’? ‘Sure thing,’ I agree.

“The last trip past the bookshelves, she picks up this enormous 500-page folio and offers it to me. ‘Your library might want this too,’ she says. It’s an Audubon *Birds of North America*, and it’s definitely nineteenth century.”

Even Lily Lee recognized Audubon. “Must be worth a mint.”

“Depending on the publication date. Roger will know.

“That’s what I have in the car,” Jack was telling Lily Lee as the valet approached Crown Victoria in front of the Ritz. “Now what do we do with this shit until tomorrow?”

“We could take it to the room,” Lily said dubiously. “Or have it taken there.”

“I don’t know,” Jack said.

“We can’t drive all over St. Louis with this stuff, or park it outside the ball park.”

The valet waited. Jack muddled.

“Sooner or later you have to sort through it,” Lily pointed out.

“I’m not going to spend a Saturday night in St. Louis with my woman rummaging through some old books. They’ve waited a century and a half. They can wait another day or two.”

The valet also waited.

“Where we’re going, we don’t want this car anyway,” Lily told Jack.

“Is the parking secure?” she asked the valet.

“Yes, ma’am,” he told her.

“I want you to go with my husband, and park this car in a special place,” she told him, stepping with her package out of her side of the Crown Victoria. “My husband will lock the car himself and keep the keys. Is that clear?” She handed the boy a five dollar bill.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Bring the Audubon,” Lily told Jack, and entered the Ritz.

“Yes, ma’am,” Jack said, and drove off with the valet in his passenger’s seat.

When Jack met Lily, she was wearing jeans and a cotton blouse. “Change your clothes,” she told him. “We’re late.”

“No shrimp and filet mignon,” Jack asked, “in this elegant establishment?”

“I decided maybe I can’t get used to this place. All this ‘yes, ma’am’ jive. Shit. Tonight we doin’ things my way. We goin’ to the ball yard, and then we goin’ cross the river to where I once begun. To the Cosmo Club.”

“Lily Lee’s East St. Lou,” Jack said, awe-struck. “Reach me, teach me, baby.”

“And we’re taking cabs everywhere, because that Crown V of yours wouldn’t last five minutes outside the Cosmo. You’d find it up on bricks or gone, gone, gone. Find your books in a heap by the tracks along Missouri Avenue, I expect.”

“I ain’t never goin’ back to East St. Lou,” Jack reminded Lily.

“Git into your jeans before I jump your bones again.”

So Jack and Lily Creed joined 7,856 other Cardinals fans to watch McGlothen and the Cards whitewash the Pirates 3-0 in a non-televised game. Gary Templeton went one for three with a run scored, a stolen base, and one run batted in. It was chilly and damp. The couple sat right behind first base and loved it. After the game Jack and Lily hung around the club house door long enough for Lou

Brock to autograph a program “to Jack and Lily, King and Queen of Hearts.”

Then a taxi took black Lily and white Jack to the corner of 17th and Bond Street in East St. Louis, a renovated supermarket called the Cosmopolitan Club, where Chuck Berry had started back in the early fifties. Surrounded by photos of Berry, Ike Turner, Muddy Waters and a hundred other blues players, half of whom Jack did not recognize, Lily and Jack lost themselves in music and alcohol and the moment. In the smoke and dim lights, Jack forgot all about Philander Chase, John James Audubon, and Busiris Technical University. For a moment, he forgot all about Jenny and Timm and Rose Marié.

“It was a moment out of time, out of place,” he recalled later. “Of all the places I went with Lily, the Cosmo Club was where I felt most comfortable in our relationship. Jive-ass white liberals can smile all they want, but they are finally hostile. The East St. Louis clubs were inter-racial way back in the fifties. Bottom line there is the music. As long as you can play, or come to dig the music, people there just don’t care.”

Lily’s reaction was more complex. The ghost of her childhood had hung like a mist over the entire weekend, including tales of black whores gone to work the other side of the River, including the Ritz. “On the west side of the Mississippi, I could keep all that shit behind me,” she told me, “But it was always out there calling me. Accusing me. Threatening me, in a way. Obviously I was pretending to be somebody I wasn’t. I had this notion that some witness would come bursting into the hotel to announce to the world I was just this ho from East St. Lou. I’d sink like Eurydice back into the Hades east of the river, my arms stretching for Jack and light. I figured the only way around something was through it. That’s why I took Jack to the Cosmo, even though I’d never been there before in my life.

“I don’t think Jack sensed my nervousness, but I was one uptight bitch for an hour or so. We kind of hid in the back, as far as

possible from the lights. I knew the Cosmo was cool, but I watched the clientele more than the musicians.

“Then I saw one of my younger brother’s friends. A kid I’d grown up with, must have been around our place seven nights a week in high school. And did he have the hots for me? Baby! I was two years ahead of him and wouldn’t give him the time of day, but he was hustlin’ me like I was the only babe on the block.

“I thought, ‘I am one cooked nigger-girl.’ Just kept smiling at Jack and hoping this guy’s going to split or at least be cool. Then this kid looks right at me, and it’s like he doesn’t even see me. No recognition. Zero. Not accusation: ‘Lily gone booshie whore.’ Not acceptance: ‘Hey, a gal’s gotta do what she’s gotta do.’ No recognition at all. I was a complete stranger to him: up state, out of state, out of class, out of mind.

“I’ve never forgotten that moment. Maybe I wasn’t exactly Ritz Carleton, the wife of Jack Creed, Professor of English, but I was on my way. I had left myself behind and could be whatever I wanted to be. It was a very liberating moment. I suppose I owe Jack, for the trip and the transformation. From there on out, I was completely relaxed. Dug the music, dug the drinks. Dug the Ritz, too, when it was all over.”

Jack and Lily closed the Cosmo down, then took a cab back across the river, where they settled into an all-night bar, and drank until the sun rose.

“So what’s in your package?” Jack asked when he and Lily rolled apart somewhere in the third inning of the Sunday afternoon ball game. “Now that we’ve settled important matters.”

“I thought you’d never ask, white boy. I was beginning to think all you wanted was my sweet black tail.”

“And the soulful sounds in the night. Incidentally, I love you.”

“Nothing much compared to your haul. Just a bunch of posters is all. Incidentally, I love you too.”

While Jack has been schmoozing Kathleen Morrison, Lily Lee had arranged the design and printing of 300 11 x 14 posters announcing a meeting “of all Busiris faculty interested in forming a faculty union” to be held 7:30 p.m. in Busiris Auditorium, October 6, 1976. The unnamed organizers of this non-meeting promised representatives from the National Federation of Teachers and from the Teamsters Union, which was then attempting to organize white collar workers.

“It’s something I always wanted to do,” she reminded Jack. “I thought the best thing would be to post these while you’re known to be off campus, preferably on University business. Like now. Since last night, I was thinking that you could contact Holmes and tell him that you can’t go into details, but if he gives you Monday here, you can bring the stuff with you. He’ll buy that. Ask him to phone Vi and tell her to cancel your classes, and your wife to say you need another day. That brings him in to corroborate your story, if she has any doubts, and he’s the one to be saying ‘You will be so happy when this book comes out.’ You take another day at the hotel, which shows up on Holmes’ card, so the University knows you’re in St. Lou.

“From there we have two options. One is for me to take the 5:45 bus to Riverton, leaving you all alone in this big enormous bed until tomorrow afternoon. The other is for me to stay with you in this big enormous bed in this ritzy hotel in this splendid city, until midnight or so. It’s Sunday, but I think I can find ways of entertaining you. Around midnight, we slip a ten spot to the valet, who springs your car and turns in your key tomorrow around noon. By 3:30 in the morning we’re in Riverton taping these posters all over Busiris. By the time the campus wakes up, we’re at my place. I pull my car out of the garage, you put yours in and close the door. We tuck ourselves into my smaller but cozy bed, where you sleep your little head off all day, because you’re out of town. I make my 9:00 class as usual. Vi cancels your 10:00 and 11:00 and everyone knows you’re out of town and I’m in town. If you wake up early enough, maybe you finally find out what’s in your boxes. Maybe I rush home for a little

afternoon delight. You shower up and drive over to McKinley, like you just got in from Old St. Lou. I won't even pout too much if you take your wife and kids out for a big damn dinner."

"You are one smart cookie, Lily."

"And don't you forget it. Incidentally, I love you, Jack. Don't you forget that either."

So Jack and Lily extended their marriage a little longer, not as long as Roger Holmes thought, but Lily did not take the bus back to Busiris. The rest of us arrived Monday morning to a campus plastered with posters announcing a union organizational meeting—walls, trees, rest rooms, hallways. At considerable personal risk, Lily had even spent 8:00 to 9:00 hitting the interior of academic buildings which had been locked earlier. Of course Administration had removed most of the posters by noon, but the campus buzzed with talk for a week.

President Stoddard circulated two separate memos "to dispel certain rumors circulating on campus," noting that Busiris Auditorium had not been reserved by any campus group or individual for the night of October 6, and reminding all University employees that Busiris facilities must be scheduled, for authorized uses only, through the University scheduling office. Unauthorized use of University facilities, the President noted, was a violation of the contracts. The evening of October 6 brought three squad cars of Riverton police to the front entrance of Busiris Auditorium. Jack and Lily laughed themselves silly.

Jack, meanwhile, had waited in Lily's bedroom until Lynette left. Ten minutes thereafter, in Lily's garage space, he unpacked the car and made a quick inventory of what Morrison had given him. Over 800 books. Over 2,000 manuscript letters to or from Philander Chase, all dated before 1853. Several boxes of manuscript material unrelated to Chase, most of it from 1840-1880, including letters to and from Salmon P. Chase. He pocketed one letter, dated October 1842, from an A. Lincoln to a Rev. Charles Dresser, regarding the

marriage ceremony of this Mr. A. Lincoln to a Mary Todd. Everything else, including the Audubon folio (which he later claimed as his finder's fee), Jack delivered to Roger Holmes at 4:45 that afternoon.

"We'll talk more tomorrow," Jack told Roger as the two finished piling boxes in Roger's office. "Right now you can inventory. I have to take my wife and kids out for a well-earned dinner."

"Put that on the tab as well," Roger offered.

A thick band of gold jingled against the office keys in his pocket as Jack Creed, with mixed emotions, left McKinley Library.

# Chapter 6
# **Longer Days, Smaller Prizes**

How imperceptibly change the seasons of our lives! The pale, tentative chartreuse of May darkens into the firm Kelly green of June, the daylight hours lengthen, and the marigolds bloom. The rhubarb sprouts, the fruit trees blossom, strawberries come to market. One dry afternoon in July you notice a patch of khaki in the meadow, and thistle gone to seed. The days grow shorter, and one withered leaf becomes ten. Somewhere, you didn't notice when, you crossed a divide, and suddenly the breath of autumn is upon the land. You look back and wonder. Sometimes, retrospectively, you identify a moment.

"For three days, Lily and I were husband and wife," Jack told me shortly before his death. "That was the moment. Then she did what she did and got free."

Lily's social life had always posed a problem for the couple. An A+ mind in an A+ body, she was desired by every male on the campus. Since playing the nun might have raised questions about her relationship with Jack, both Charles and Lily thought it wise that she make a show of dating other men. Lily made the rounds, including one basketball player who later spent six years in the N. B. A. It was not uncommon for Lily and her date to cross paths with Jack, Rose Marié, Lou, Patricia, Linda, and me, at a Bucks game or at Smokey Joe's, a jazz and blues joint down by the River. Jack never got used to it. As an evening wore on, I could see his stomach begin to churn. Increasingly he ignored the game or the music, which on other occasions absorbed him absolutely, to focus his covert attention on Lily Lee. If she and her date left before the rest of us, I could almost see the ulcers forming.

"They're teenagers," Lily told her lover. "Boys. In ten years, they may become men. I'm a woman now, and I need a real man now.

And that's where you come in."

Even boys, Jack understood, posed the likelihood of sex, the possibility of love. But what were his options? He did his best to turn it off and accept reality. Lily Lee was no nun. Besides, he had a partner of his own. And children.

Jack even accepted Lily's sustained relationship with J. J. "Big Jim" Oliver, starting forward for the Busiris Bucks. J. J. was handsome and popular, a respected student and certainly no dumb jock. If anything, other players found him a little too upper class for their crude lifestyles: his father was president of his own small business . . . in Wilmette, Illinois. He was exactly the Afro-American for which any corporation was desperate in 1976. Everyone knew he was going to make it: honorable mention all-conference and a legitimate degree in economics, not business, or sociology, or physical education. While no Oreo cookie, J. J. was no radical either. Jack, betting that the differences between Wilmette and East St. Louis would prove ultimately insurmountable, considered Jim a safe way to see Lily through her senior year. The campus generally considered Jim and Lily the perfect couple. During the 1975-76 basketball season Jack, Timm and Jenny could be seen sitting publicly with Lynette and Lily during home games, often joining Jim and other Bucks for post-game pizza.

"It was a great scheme," Charles reflected; "Timm, Jenny, Lily and I all together, once a week, sometimes twice. A good six hours, including the JV games.

"Who would have thought she could accommodate herself to his North Shore life of body guards and silver canes? Not I. Not her. We talked about it all the time. I'd encourage her: 'Yes, you could, yes you could'—the encouragement of reverse psychology. She'd be singing, 'No I can't, no I can't.' It was a gamble. I lost."

As events generated their own momentum, Lily found herself skidding into a deep, deep ditch. In late January 1977, the couple announced their engagement. "I never expected to go through with

it," she told me. "I always figured something would break. But nothing broke."

The wedding was set for June 1977, immediately after commencement. Lily Lee's mother was ecstatic. The black community at Busiris was ecstatic. Jack was, as always, ecstatic with his kids, miserable with Rose Marié, and now miserable with Lily. Lily was miserable with her magazine husband-to-be, and desperately, possessively in love with Charles Creed.

For three years Lily had accepted Jack's love for Timm and Jenny—she loved the kids too—but always there had been jealousy. Her engagement heightened the jealousy, and her desperation. "At least you'll have your children and your book," she lamented. "What have I got to look forward to?"

Jack offered no answer beyond a hug, a kiss and a declaration of love.

Inevitably, and to her subsequent disappointment in herself, she broached the idea she had promised herself their affair would never come to: Charles' divorce and remarriage. Also to her later self-chastisement, she approached the subject with a complaint about the unsatisfactory nature of their relationship, which had always been satisfactory, and a question about Jack's commitment, which had always been unquestioned.

"You love your wife more than you love me. How else am I supposed to see things?"

"I didn't give a damn about Rose Marié," Jack told her bluntly. "Probably I've never given a damn about her. And I'm not sure she gives a damn about what I really am. But I do love Timm and Jenny Lynn. I love them not more, but as much as I love you. Can you understand that? I live for three people: my son, my daughter, and you. All that I have, I would give for you to have been the mother of my children. But you are not their mother. As far as I can see, there is no way you can be."

"There is a way, and you know it," she told him tearfully.

“I don’t think so,” Jack answered. “There is a way you can bear me children, but I know Rose Marié and I know this town. There is no way you can ever become the mother of Timm and Jenny Lynn Creed. There is also no way you can ever be the wife of Charles Creed, Associate Professor of English at Busiris Technical University.”

“With your book, you can get another job at another university.”

“I can get another job,” he said quietly.

“My children won’t be good enough?”

“Your children—our children—would be spectacular. Our children would be every bit as fine as Timm and Jenny. But they would not be Timm and Jenny.”

“If you really loved me. . . .”

“If I split with Rose Marié, she will return to her mommy in a minute, back to New York, taking Timm and Jenny with her. I might see them two weeks in the summer and a few days at Christmas. I can’t do that to them or to me or to you. My grief would destroy our relationship. Then I’d have neither you nor them.”

Charles too was weeping.

“I love you so damned much,” Lily explained.

“Jim will stay in Riverton,” Jack told Lily. “His wife won’t need a law degree.”

“How about you, Jack? You hangin’ ‘round Busiris once that book comes out? I know how you feel about this place.”

“I’ll hang if you hang.”

“I don’t know where this is going. But I’ll always be on your side, Jack. Remember that. Don’t ever doubt I’m on your side.”

“We been through some shit together.”

“Finding love is so easy,” Lily thought aloud. “I didn’t know that before I met you. What to do with love when you find it? That’s the

hard thing."

"A girl's gotta do what a girl's gotta do. By all means necessary."

"By all means necessary. That's what you taught me. By all means necessary."

To her subsequent self-approval, Lily Lee made not the slightest mention of race or class. No "black girl: good enough to fuck, but not good enough to marry." No "okay for a private fling, but never want to be seen with her in public." Jack accused himself on this score, but Lily Lee Martin was no self-pitying, abused black female.

Nor did Lily threaten to go public about the relationship, to run to Rose Marié.

Instead, she threatened suicide.

Then she tried suicide. One evening in February Jack received a phone call from Lynette. In three and a half years, neither Lynette nor Lily had phoned Charles Creed at home. He knew something was up.

Lily had gone into her room for a nap and shut the door. Around 7:00, Lynette took a phone call for her, knocked, heard no response. The door was locked. Lynette banged loudly on the door, and still heard no noise. She pried the door open with a lug wrench, and found Lily Lee on the bed asleep, empty container of sleeping pills in the trash can. Charles told Lynette to call an ambulance immediately, made a technically true excuse to Rose Marié about a student being in serious trouble, then met Lynette, Lily Lee, and the ambulance at the hospital. The medics who pumped her stomach said Lily was two, maybe three hours from gone.

For two days Lily lay in the hospital. She never explained to anyone why she tried to kill herself, and Lynette never explained to Jim why it was Charles, not Lily's fiancé, who got called in a crisis. Jim never pressed the matter.

Out of this near disaster emerged a plan which, the pair thought, would permit Jack and Lily to remain lovers forever. Lily would forget

law school and marry Oliver. She would encourage him to accept the very attractive offer he'd already been made by First National Bank, Riverton, which saw in J. J. a local sports hero and showcase Affirmative Action Black Man. Jack would remain married to Rose Marié and, he promised, to Busiris. Lily would enroll in the Busiris M. A. program, Jack her mentor and lover still. Once she completed her degree, she'd get hired as an adjunct teacher of composition or, ideally, as a full-time member of the Afro-American Studies faculty. Busiris could point to Lily Lee Oliver as a black woman by whom it had done right. If the financial pinch continued, Busiris would be happy to ease some expensive senior Ph. D. into early retirement in exchange for a young M. A. If Busiris enrollment stabilized, First National Bank trustees would see that their client institution hired permanently the wife of their very prominent black employee. Should Lily need a Ph. D., there were programs all over the state.

This plan carried Lily and Jack through March and April of 1977, as the lovers saw less and less of each other.

Through May, with Jack's promotional tours for *Age of Faith* and Lily's increasing absorption into graduation and wedding plans.

Through June, with Lily and Big Jim's marriage at the Episcopal Cathedral.

Charles and Rose Marié attended the wedding, with most of Busiris and a third of Riverton.

"There is the most beautiful woman you will ever see in your life," Jack said aloud of Lily Lee Martin in her wedding gown. I couldn't disagree. Lily's attendants, all cheerleaders and Bucks Belles, were one more gorgeous than the other. Lynette looked like the Playmate of the Year. But Lily was in a class by herself: magnificent, manic, possibly even happy. Her figure—toned by a month of diet and exercise—was spectacular, and her eyes deep as ever. She had added a confidence in her own ability to define herself, which made her almost inaccessible.

As the ceremony wore on, Lily's elegance seemed to confuse Jack. And her distance. While his eyes sought hers throughout the ceremony, hers never met his. Not during the processional, as, strong and unaccompanied, she followed six attendants and Lynnette Taylor down the aisle to meet her future husband. Not during the string quartet solo which preceded the formal exchange of vows, when Daisy stared fixedly into the eyes of her Tom Buchanan. Not during the recessional, when she passed right by the four of us on the aisle end of the pew. Not during the photo session after the wedding, when Charles took a few photos of his own. Not in her last dash through a hail of rice to the safety of the enormous white stretch limo.

Throughout the entire ceremony Lily played her role perfectly.

Or nearly perfectly. As the great white whale of a limo pulled away from well-wishers, the sun roof opened and Lily herself emerged, veil blowing in the breeze, a bottle of Moët in her hand. Reeling unsteadily, she looked back at the crowd, her eyes searching, finally, for Jack. When they found him, she clutched the string of pearls around her neck, raised her bottle, and shouted something. And continued to shout and gesticulate as the distance increased between her and Jack. In the noise and distance, it was impossible to tell what she had said, what she meant.

Then the limo turned a corner, and Lily was gone.

Jack was pierced to the heart. "We're going home," he announced to his wife.

"What about the reception?"

"Go with Andy and Linda if you want. I can't stand ten minutes more with these banker types. I'm going home to play with my kids. Tell them I got sick."

Rose Marié fumed all through the five-course sit-down banquet. We left before the dancing began. Jack's absence did not surprise Lily, nor did she inquire as to his whereabouts.

“A fucked life,” Jack lamented next Monday at the office. “Absolutely fucked. You should try it, Tucker, watching the woman you love play the field, find another man, go through the ritual of engagement and marriage, knowing it’s him she’s balling each night, knowing—she said it right up to the end—she’d a hundred times rather be fucking you. Knowing that’s the way it’s going to be, you in your bed with the wife you don’t love, she in her bed with the husband she doesn’t love . . . and not a damned thing you can do about it except not stand in the way.

“You want pain, I can tell you about pain.”

If Jack had been unhappy at the wedding, he was in absolute agony during June of 1977, which the couple spent on an extended honeymoon in the Bahamas, funded by First National, and in July, when he knew her to be back in the States and settling into married life. Only *Age of Faith* distracted him, and that only temporarily. In Busiris between book signings and radio talk shows, Jack would rush to the office to read her brief letters, written hurriedly and mailed surreptitiously. Invariably they left him less reassured than upset. He, of course, could not reach Lily. He hoped against all possibility that she would show up at Kroch’s to have a book signed or, less improbably, phone WFMT to talk with her former mentor live on the Studs Terkel Show. But she didn’t. Lily was gone.

Gradually Jack sensed that Lily Lee Martin-Oliver, although accepted to the Busiris graduate program and enrolled in his fall seminar, had left his sphere of influence and entered a world he neither respected nor understood, a world in which he had no currency, over which he exercised no control. A world which she might one day find, might even at that moment be finding, might (horror of horrors) even before the marriage have found, vaguely seductive.

In short, Jack understood he was losing Lily.

Inevitably, he cracked.

I arrived at Busiris Hall one day in the mid-summer to find him busily piling boxes and cartons—all the stuff he'd left stacked on his floor—onto his desk and the top of his shelves and cabinets.

"What's going on?" I asked.

He looked up at me quizzically. "Custodial staff is polishing floors this week," he explained, "so I thought I'd help them a little. Get my shit out of their way. Those guys put in long hours for small wages."

"Jack?"

"Those guys can use all the help we can give them. Show them we're not so, you know, high and mighty."

"Jack? You're over the edge."

"You might do something about all that crap on your floor too. And the other assholes around here. Solidarity of the working class, Tucker."

"Jack?"

He caught himself. "Apologies. You're right."

He returned to his work.

"What are you doing in here, Jack, shuffling the past like a deck of cards, day by day, scene by scene?"

He pretended to busy himself with a box of old desk copies.

"The summer of my arrival on this campus, you left me a note," I reminded him. "I offer you, sir, your own advice. Spend as much time as possible out of this campus and out of this town."

"I do," he said.

"That's work. You hate those trips more than you hate being home."

"They're long journeys away from the people I love. It's funny. Once I looked forward to this book being out, to the possibilities it

offered for escape. Now . . . I'd as soon sit here in the office."

"It's been a long year. A long four years. You need a vacation."

"Not until August."

"You need the trip now, buddy. This office isn't for you. Get out of here. Go visit the folks. Go bury yourself in your book."

"The book is finished," Jack said with his back turned. Then he turned to me with the most abject look of exhaustion I've ever seen on a man, and slumped into his chair.

"I thought there might be a letter," he said quietly.

There had been no letter that day, or for several days previous.

"I gambled," he said finally, "and I lost. It's my own fault. I tried for way more than the situation offered. I don't know what I was thinking."

"Hindsight is always 20-20."

"A major league fuck up, and not a damned thing I can do. What a fucked up summer. I tried to get Rose Marié and the kids to go east early, June instead of our usual late summer visit, so that I'd be gone while Daisy was gone, and I'd be back here when she returned. Couldn't tell them the real reason, of course, but made a pretty good case about being out east to push books, and being around to harvest some of our garden for a change. Had her sold on the idea. Then her folks lined up some place at the shore, for August first no less, and we're back to late summer. What can I say? I offered to stay here, let her and the kids go east. 'What about your folks?' she wants to know. 'We want to see grandpa and grandma Creed,' Timm and Jenny say. Hell, I want them to see grandma and grandpa too. I got no argument.

"So Lily and Jim ball their way around the Bahamas, first class hotel and restaurant accommodations all the way, then return to Riverton in July. In July they're busy settling into their comfy Trident Towers apartment, and my publisher's got me in California, home of

the fruits and nuts, and Big D. Dall-ass. I get maybe a phone call because Lily's busy with decorators and social functions at First National. By the time I'm back from Texas and she's settled in Trident, I'm off for the East Coast. 'See you in September.'

"By September . . . who knows? I am mucked, ducked, plucked and fucked."

Jack was in deeper trouble than he knew. During July he and Lily were in touch exactly twice—by phone. She wrote him four letters, all short, none of them answering, exactly, his letters to her. In August, I must have received a dozen calls from Jack out East, "checking the mail and message situation." Rose Marié thought he was keeping abreast with *Age of Faith* promotions. I knew better.

Then, exactly two days after Jack returned in August to Riverton, with fall registration to begin in a week, First National announced the transfer of recent Busiris graduate J. J. Oliver to their Evanston office, not far from his boyhood home of Wilmette.

It was a very big time promotion unprecedented so early in a young man's career. Vaults of money. Barrels of prestige. "Smooth Black Basketball Star With Economics Degree Rockets Into Upper Middle Class." First National obviously had Oliver on a very high trajectory.

Lily Lee was weeping when she phoned Jack with the news, genuinely distraught. Most of her concern was for Jack, of course, but other things were involved as well, including the apartment, which she and J. J. had decorated at the expense of innumerable compromises borne of innumerable disagreements spoken and unspoken. Old animosities between St. Louis and Chicago came into play as well. She wept, too, for a lost Busiris, the scene of some pretty good times in both of their lives.

But the tears Lily shed over the phone were not the desperate tears of her attempted suicide, or even her final, desperate call from the white limo. Part of Lily Lee was ready to move. She had outgrown Busiris Tech, outgrown Riverton as well. Jack's worst fears

were being realized. Backed by First National, Jim Oliver could offer Lily Lee a world to which he could never, even as a celebrated scholar-writer, aspire. Whether it would suit her or not, he couldn't guess and she didn't know. It was, like any world, a world worth exploring.

Memories of the weekend at the Ritz-Carleton haunted Jack.

"I have not seen Lily Lee since her wedding," he fumed, "And I saw her precious little in the weeks before that. One hundred, twenty-seven days it has been since last we made love, and nearly as long since we had a serious talk. I'm not that hard to find."

"She wrote half a dozen letters," I pointed out, "just counting the ones that I've seen you receive."

"Travelogues."

"Can I ask how they were signed?"

"She telephoned, Tucker, she telephoned. She fucking telephoned to say goodbye. A thousand times Lily Lee Martin has walked through this door, if she has walked through this door once. You would think one more time. . . . She owed me that at least, to walk one more time through this door."

" 'You can't repeat the past, old sport'."

Jack's eyes fell. "No. It turns out you can't."

A day after the phone call, Jack was invited, with a number of other Busiris faculty and administrators, to a reception co-hosted by Busiris and First National in J. J.'s honor. Charles, Rose Marié, Linda and I drove together downtown. Rose Marié wanted to save parking fees. I wanted to save Jack.

"If this reception is anything like the wedding, it's going to be some posh night," Rose Marié chirped from the back seat. "Your hours with these students sometimes really do pay off."

"Good thing First National is footing the bill," Linda offered wryly. "If it were Busiris, this would be hot dogs and ice cream."

“Or bring-your-own cookies, we’ll provide the Kool Aid,” I added. “Like the Christmas party.”

Jack said nothing. Busiris and he were in the midst of political battles, his relationship with Rose Marié was dead as a brick, and he had hit the ultimate writer’s block. He felt, and looked, like a dead man.

“My friends at Helping Hands are all jealous,” Rose Marié said. “These bank receptions are apparently really big deals. I suppose the president will be there.”

“Of the University or the Bank?”

“Is there a difference?” Jack muttered.

“Of the University.”

“The president of Busiris Technical University is not that big of a deal,” Linda said.

“He signs my husband’s contracts,” Rose Marié said. “It never hurts to do a little politicking, you know.”

“We marched down this street in the fall of 1972,” Jack remembered as we neared the First National Bank parking lot. “Lily Lee and Jim were high school students. What a long, strange trip this has been.”

The reception was indeed a very big deal with sparkling wine, a string quartet, and an enormous seafood buffet, around which members of the Busiris faculty hovered, gobbling down one jumbo shrimp after another. Most did not even bother with an intervening plate. The First National big shots, to whom jumbo shrimp were passé, spent their time talking Busiris basketball with Big Jim and ogling Lily Lee.

We were introduced to First National President Andrew McDonald and to Busiris President Martin Stoddard. “Very pleased to meet you, President Stoddard,” said Rose Marié.

“So you’re Dr. Creed,” Stoddard said, surprised finally to put a face with a name. “I understand you have a new book out.”

“I do, sir,” Jack answered. “Good reviews, mostly, including the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*.”

“So I had heard. I haven’t found the time to read it.”

“Jack will send you a copy,” promised Rose Marié. “And the reviews, too.”

“Congratulations, Professor Creed,” Stoddard said lukewarmly. “We both know the University appreciates all the good publicity it gets. In its way, a good book benefits our reputation as much as a winning basketball team. Right, Bert?”

“John Bertholt Reich the Third,” said the man at Stoddard’s elbow in a thin Southern accent. “I’m the new Vice President for Academic Affairs. We must have a chat sometime soon, Professor Creed. Professor Jeremy Jones speaks highly of you.”

“I appreciate all the good publicity Professor Jones gives me.”

“I’m sure we’ll be seeing more of each other,” said Reich. “I believe that one of the problems at Busiris has, historically, been failed communications between administration and the younger faculty. I’m hoping that Professor Jones will be able to help us in that regard.”

“I’m sure Professor Jones will be serviceable in any regard.”

“And what a charming wife you have there, Creed,” Reich said, giving Rose Marié a pat on the shoulder and a light peck on the cheek. “Busiris seems full of charming ladies. Good luck, professor, with your book.”

“Since when did we have a new V. P. A. A.?” Jack wanted to know as we turned to our table.

“Since forty-eight hours ago,” Ted Jones informed him. “There are changes afoot in Old Main. I had no more warning than you. Neither, apparently, did Brad Beckstrom.”

“What’s happened to Beckstrom?” I asked Jones.

“Back to teaching speech, and not even the chair.”

“After how many years?” Charles wanted to know.

“Five or six.”

“He was a decent man,” Charles thought aloud. “Not a competent man, but a decent man. Insofar as any administrator can be a decent man.”

“This fall he’s teaching four classes, just like everyone else,” Jones said. “I think this fellow Reich will be to our benefit, Charles. Ph. D. in English from Texas Christian.

“A Texas Christian is usually a real Texasshole.”

“I think you will like him, Chas.”

“You have to admire his taste in women,” said Jack. “You and he have apparently talked?”

“He has some plans in which I might figure. So might you. For the moment, I say no more.” Jones crossed his lips with the open palm of his left hand, winked at Rose Marié, and was off.

“A serviceable villain,” said Jack quietly to Jones’ back, then continued to the rest of us: “Sit you down, people, rest you.”

In a room of silver-gray hair and pot-bellied stomachs, Lily Lee and J. J. made a striking couple, so glaringly young, so obviously animated. Big Jim, who stood a good four inches taller than anyone else in the room, carried himself with the nervous tautness of a prize fighter. He looked vaguely uncomfortable, as if his dark blue suit were a warm-up outfit which would soon be stripped to reveal a gray Busiris Athletic Department T-shirt and navy basketball shorts.

Lily Lee was a woman reclassed. Scarlet dress with black sash, diamond earrings, black heels, red fingernail polish. A diamond on her finger approximately the size of an ice cube. Same eyes. Nearly the same body, slightly more rounded, slightly softer. Jack sought that 19-year-old girl in cutoffs and tank top who had blown his nose

before blowing his mind four years earlier. She was gone. He sought the 20-year-old girl who had written his exams in the morning and critiqued his manuscript at night. She was twice gone. He sought the 21-year-old woman who with forged memos had scammed $10,000 annually for the Afro-American Cultural Center. She was lost in the corridors of history, with the woman who had written “Jes’ Be Simple: The Man and the Message” her junior year, and published it her senior year in *Studies in Afro-American Literature*. In her stead, a woman of style and stature, smooth, smooth ultra-smooth, a woman constitutionally incapable of uttering anything so crude as “There ain’t no such thing as an intellectual fuck.”

To his credit, Jack yielded not an inch to the money managers around him (whom he ignored entirely), to the old President or to the new Vice President. Nor would he defer to the celebrated couple. It was J. J. he addressed first, a jocular remark about him collecting in some Chicago skyscraper a small portion of the millions he and his teammates had earned for corporate America on the hardwood floor as a Busiris Buck. The comment was admiring and probably sincere, but calculated also to assert Jack’s old status as teacher.

“The bank is doing well by us,” J. J. reported. “I guess we owe a lot to good teaching and good coaching.” His use of the first person plural, whether inadvertent or calculated, rocked Jack just slightly. Jack looked quickly over Jim’s shoulder, in the general direction a crystal chandelier. “Champagne, stuffed mushrooms, and all the shrimps you can eat. Better even than Friday afternoon at the Heidelberger.”

“It’s a thrill to see Charles’ students make good,” Rose Marié put in. “That’s what a teacher’s life is all about.”

“It’s a job like any other,” Jim assured her. “We are fortunate.”

“We’re all working on Maggie’s Farm,” Jack observed. “Better a job in the house than in the fields.”

Lily winced, but J. J. betrayed no sense of a slight. The remark addressed Rose Marié’s pretensions as much as Lily’s marriage or

Jim's employer.

"I was really looking forward to graduate school," Lily said.

"Maybe it's time to try something new?" Jack suggested.

"It's hard."

"If it doesn't work out, you can always come back to Busiris."

"I don't never go back," Lily reminded Jack.

"Not to East St. Louis?"

"Once I went back. It didn't work out."

"I don't know what more we had to teach you," Charles said defensively. "It's not good to do your M. A. where you took your B. A. Same people, same library, same courses with an extra paper or two thrown in. University of Chicago and Northwestern are among the best ten schools in the country. Actually Illinois at Chicago-Circle has the best English faculty in the city. And a tremendous Afro-American program. I know a bunch of people there."

Lily Lee looked to Big Jim, who smiled and shrugged his shoulders, and then back to Charles. "Promise not to tell anyone," she asked us, "because we're not sure yet. But graduate school may have to wait."

Charles looked at her blankly.

"I think I may be pregnant."

J. J. smiled again. "We've told nobody at work, Professor Creed, so please. . . ."

"Charles loves his children more than he does his students," Rose Marié said to Lily Lee, "and probably more than he loves me."

Charles nodded his head vaguely. His ears buzzed and his eyes blurred. He gazed again into the distance, beyond the chandelier, beyond the bank's walls, beyond place and time to, perhaps, a picnic table in Burr Oak Park or a hospital room in February.

Then he looked deep into Lily Lee's eyes. "I always favored my children," he said softly. "I guess they were my choice. I hope your child brings you as much joy as mine have given me."

Then, distractedly, almost in a whisper, "They cost you. They do cost you."

"It's funny how we change," Lily meditated aloud. "Four years ago I came to Busiris intent on law school. A law degree wasn't really possible. One year ago, I wanted a Ph. D and a teaching position so bad I could taste it. Maybe that too is something the situation doesn't offer. It seems so far away. Like I was another person."

Jim put his arm around her waist. "I remember when all I wanted was to make the team. I remember the first game I started as a Busiris Buck. I thought I was king of the world. I was just a little boy."

"We're all different people now," Charles said. "The times are different as well. A time for to cast away stones and a time to gather stones together." He looked again at Lily Lee, who understood he was pointing, as he often did, at a line further in the song: "A time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing."

Lily looked away.

"It's all in my latest book, with which I am sure you are familiar," Charles added, with a cocktail party laugh. The remark hurt Lily.

"I miss the person I was," she said wistfully, "but I can't find her anymore. She left here last early spring."

"If you see her, say hello."

"Perhaps one day she'll look you up," Lily Lee suggested, herself on the verge of tears.

"If she's passing back this way."

"Well," said Jim, weary of a conversation grown nostalgic and cryptic. "Wish us the best in Big Windy, Professor Creed. And all the best to you and your wife. And to you too, Dr. Tucker."

Charles shook his hand, and Lily Lee's. "It's been an honor to have known you both," he said. And then, seeking as always the last word, "If you get close to her, . . ." He let the thought drop.

Jim, who had already turned his attention to one of his banker colleagues, did not hear him. His pregnant wife too had turned her head. Whether she heard Jack's parting words or not, she did not look back.

We ate and left early, before the scheduled dance, Charles the picture of defeat, Rose Marié angry at having paid a baby sitter in advance for six hours when they had been gone only two.

"My big night out," she fumed.

"I was choking," Charles argued. "Lily Lee, J. J.—they're okay people, I could have talked to them all night. Not the rest of that crowd. Worse than a goddamn shopping mall."

Linda suggested a movie. We saw *The Sting*, which Universal Studios had recently re-released. After the film, Jack and Rose Marié returned to our house for drinks. The more he drank, the more he thought about Lily and Jim, and the more depressed he became.

"I felt embarrassed in her presence, Tucker," Jack confessed in a private moment. "I felt completely embarrassed for myself. For my presumption. We were all completely, absolutely, totally out of our class."

In September 1977, Charles Creed lost twenty pounds and smiled hardly at all. He absented himself from University politics and, except for classes and office hours, from the University itself. Mail, including what proved to be a long and admiring letter from Charles' hero, Ken Kesey, went unanswered. Phone calls, including messages from his agent and invitations to speak, went unreturned. They were not the phone call, not the letter for which he waited.

Despite the continuing presence of his children and the Pulitzer Prize announcement, Lily Lee's departure brought down on Jack's head the accumulated disillusionments from which book, children,

and Lady had previously distracted him. For the rest of us, the institution and the country had soured somewhere around 1973. Jack had failed to keep abreast of the times, and when he did finally notice the changing seasons, he simply refused to acknowledge the withering leaves. In one of his frequent moments of exasperation, Ted Jones once told Charles to his face, “Look, you are in complete charge. Charles Creed’s situation at Busiris depends entirely on the way Charles Creed handles things. You are the man.” But Jack never took charge. To a considerable degree, Jack’s subsequent problems with Busiris can be attributed to his own adamant refusal to accept a changing climate.

College campuses, contrary to popular belief, are not hotbeds of conservatism. Change, a fundamental law of nature, is accentuated in academia, where students come and go in four, maybe five years. The collective campus memory is probably less than four years since freshmen don’t know anything about anything, and seniors are usually looking ahead to marriage and their careers. A college effectively reconfigures itself every three or four years.

In the old days faculty, staff, administration, and tradition constituted a desirable ballast. The sixties, however, discarded tradition like last season’s Nike airs. The seventies brought a class of professional administrators whose loyalties are strictly to their own careers. Today faculty alone constitute the institutional ballast. And in colleges increasingly driven by Full-Time Equivalencies (the equivalent number of full-time students enrolled in a class or program), faculty do not create or control programs and trends. Trends determine faculty, and trends have short memories. Nobody with power—that is to say, administration or students—recalls or cares what Professor Jones or Professor Creed did for his institution or students four years ago. “What have you got to offer us today?” they ask. “How do you fit the program?”

So even useful faculty can easily prove expendable, venerable programs can quickly evaporate, and good times can sour overnight.

Twenty years of post-war Busiris expansion guaranteed no more than twenty years of dedicated teaching.

The good times at Busiris during the 1950s and ‘60s were fueled by exploding enrollments. Underwritten first by the G. I. bill and then by baby boomers’ parents, Busiris managed a really significant up-grading of students, facilities and faculty. Significant graduate programs had begun in several disciplines, including a M. A. in English. By 1972 Busiris could boast three nationally recognized research scientists, a handful of nationally recognized educators, at least one writer of talent and future reputation. In 1972 we thought we were on the way, and we were having a ball.

Even as we frolicked, money was running short, a result of trustee improvidence or mismanagement or miscalculation. The problem, Jack was convinced and we all concurred, was not a faculty problem or even a student problem. But the faculty and the students, whose tuition soared, paid the price.

A private school, Busiris kept all budgets confidential, and all resource allocations discretionary: physical plant, program development, faculty salaries. Allocations were made, as in old East Bloc countries, by an administration representing a board of directors largely removed from the educational processes. They were made in the best interests not of students, really, and certainly not of faculty, but of the Institution . . . which was seen as a business whose product happened to be college degrees. As in any other American business, marketing was more important than producing a quality product. Even considerations like physical plant and customer satisfaction entered the picture only insofar as they bore on the cost-effective production of marketable degrees.

Like any other corporation, Busiris detested unfavorable publicity, was very adept at playing one group of workers against another, and protected a number of demonstrably incompetent good old boys. During the great expansion of the fifties and sixties, when managerial inefficiency was more than counterbalanced by the rising tide which lifted all vessels, Busiris flourished almost in spite of itself.

Only when the baby boom tapered off and the flow of cash slowed did cracks begin to appear.

Jack had his ups and downs. He had been a popular hire, but the construction strikes had, despite (perhaps because of) his article in *Studies in American Transcendentalism*, nearly finished him off. Jones claimed to have "saved Jack's skin" in 1971 only after a very long discussion among tenured members of the department, and by the narrowest of margins. He once hinted that Rose Marié—not Jack—had personally appealed to him, and perhaps she had.

The ruckus over Afro-American Literature was all but forgotten by spring 1972, when even the old guard were touting "this new course" as evidence of Busiris' currency with the latest trend in academia. By the spring of 1973, two of the old ones had completed their deaths, Jack (or his son) had won the support of Lucy Kramer, and the Afro-American Studies Program was blossoming, with the aid of Jack, Lynette, and Lily. *Age of Faith, Age of Folly* was under contract. Jack was rehired, promoted, and tenured, by a vote of 9 to 3, despite some half-hearted lobbying from Old Main, where most of Jack's remaining enemies concentrated themselves.

Lou Feracca and I too made steady progress toward permanence, despite our relative lack of publications and charisma. Although we were close to Jack, we were not regarded as "his men." We had solid reputations among students and got along well enough with most of our colleagues. Despite our blissful innocent of the traps, the political alliances, the decades-old grudges, the petty animosities, the unspoken agreements, the trip-switches, the land mines, the potential landslides of Busiris politics, we survived, although not without a scare in my case. On the day and the hour I knew my tenure was being discussed, Ted Jones phoned me at home. "Did you once at a party somewhere," he asked me in a distraught voice, "say something about 'voting the old fogies out'?"

Others did not survive. In fact, the handwriting was on the wall, had anyone been wise enough to read it, when a couple of the new appointments didn't even last their fall term. One woman was doing

some kind of group therapy touchy-feely thing as a pre-writing exercise in composition class. She had her kids sitting in a circle in the dark—they all had their clothes on—when the vice president happened to walk by. She was gone within the week. I can't even remember her name.

One of the males turned out to be flamboyantly gay. He lasted a semester. Ben Allan Browne fell to the drug bust. A couple of male M. A.'s returned, after a year at Busiris, to grad school for the doctorates they were coming to understand would be a precondition to permanent employment in the cotton fields of composition. In truth, people were dropping left and right. We considered them isolated cases, or temporary setbacks, a few chilly days in August, not the onset of fall. This was in 1973.

When B. T. U. enrollments dropped slightly in 1972-73, no one considered the decline a trend. In 1973-74 they dropped some more, and they dropped again the year following, despite the expanding Afro-American Studies Program. Administration blamed bad press from construction, civil rights, and anti-war demonstrations. Youngsters blamed the glacial pace of reform. "Look what's going on in Normal," they pointed out. "In Chicago and Macomb. In the junior college across the river. Busiris is a dinosaur."

Those who left were not replaced. We didn't know it when Ben Allen Browne left, but there would be no new hires in the Busiris English department until 1983. Except for two new appointments tied specifically to the Afro-American Studies program, the department added not a single new face in over a decade! It shrunk from 36 to 34 to 30 to 24 to 15. The mail lady disappeared, and the student secretaries, and other faculty perks, including contracts for summer research. Course offerings were trimmed—during summer school and the regular year—and decline fed on decline.

The old ones had survived the fifties, when faculty taught five classes a term and scheduled office hours so that two and three could use the same desk. They had seen the bad times and the good times. Perspective gave them patience. The young ones, who

came to Busiris at her finest moment, lacked both. Having arrived in Riverton expecting a gradually rising slope, they were confounded by the prospect of a protracted decline.

Perspective on the world outside Busiris would have helped as well. Every institution I know was in financial trouble during the seventies. Every school I have ever heard about cut faculty in the 1970s due to “decreased enrollments.” Jack claimed that administrators nationally had created the crisis, as the oil companies conspired the mid-seventies oil shortage, as an excuse to bump class size from fifteen students per class to twenty-five, thirty, forty, to those mega-sections of two, three hundred freshmen or sophomores. “The total number of Americans enrolled in post-secondary education dropped only one year in the 1970s and 1980s,” he pointed out, “and that drop was minuscule, a fraction of a percentage. The decline in students is a hoax perpetrated by administrators.”

The decline in Busiris enrollments was no hoax: a 33% reduction in less than a decade. Jack was right in one respect, however: the teaching faculty shrank more precipitously than the student population. Admissions, counseling, and student services staffs actually increased. While enrollments dropped from just over 7,000 in 1970 to slightly below 5,000 in 1977, full-time faculty positions dropped by 50% and support-administrative personnel actually increased by 27%. In 1977 Busiris needed half the faculty, but 27% more staff to care for 66% of its 1970 student population.

Initial reductions were achieved simply by ending part-time appointments, and leaving vacant the positions of those who left voluntarily. The Busiris faculty was always a faculty in flux, a jumble of in-coming M.A.’s and Ph. D.’s green from grad school, and out-going professionals of three or four years’ experience, their rough edges polished, their skills honed, headed for more prestigious appointments elsewhere. Administration left the “out” spigot open, and shut off the intake valve.

As appointments elsewhere became scarcer, the natural exodus from Busiris slowed. In the 1973 most non-tenured people were notified that their contracts would not be renewed for 1973-74, a counterproductive move, really, since some of our more popular faculty were younger and non-tenured. My Ph. D. exempted me, as Jack's degree and publications exempted him. Not exempted was a young instructor named Sam Reese, an M. A. one year out of grad school, popular with students and a good teacher of grunt courses.

Jack was especially vocal in supporting Sam.

"He fills every section of every course he teaches, every semester, first day of registration," Jack told then-acting chairman Jones. "You've got at least one older tenured person here, we both know of whom I speak, who doesn't register more than ten kids per section. By the end of the term, she's down to five or less. She teaches fewer people in her four sections than Samuel teaches in one section. If you fire Samuel and keep her, those kids are not going to go out of his class into hers. They'll just go to other courses in other departments in the University. Or they'll go to the junior college across the river, take classes there, and transfer credit back here, which is the cheaper and smarter thing to do anyway. Or they'll leave Busiris entirely and enroll at De Paul, or I. S. U., or even that place in Peoria. In one year, English F. T. E. will be down by as many students as Samuel teaches, and you'll have to cut another position. Cut Samuel this year, you'll lose one good teacher, a bunch of students, and, next year, another faculty position. Do it my way, you lose one bad person this year. Her students might even squeeze into Samuel's classes, have a good experience, and come back for more. My cut is a 100% smart cut."

"She's given so much to the University," Jones argued. "And where would she find another job?" ("Did you hear Jones Bones arguing, in my hour, 'Creed has given so much to this University?' " Jack would ask rhetorically when telling this story in later years.)

"She's incompetent," Jack countered. "She's an insult to the profession. For bad teaching, she's received good money. More

good money each year she's remained a bad teacher. By now she's overpaid, as are most of the old-timers here. She's a free-loader. Free-loading for twenty years is no reason to be allowed to freeload for another ten; it's reason to be booted off the gravy train. If anything, she owes the University. Samuel, on the other hand, has put in a lot more than he's taken out. The University owes him."

Of course Sam Reese went. Probably he had the last laugh. After kicking around the States for a year, collecting unemployment from Busiris Tech, he found a job in Saudi Arabia, earning bazillions of bucks and a free airplane ticket outside the country each year. We wept for him at the time—Arabia was not a prestigious post—but Sam lived frugally, invested carefully, and well before Jack's death had begun a comfortable semi-retirement as a gentleman teacher at a sequence of institutions in rather elegant Central European cities.

So Busiris cut the non-tenured M. A.'s, with the conspicuous exception of Victoria Nation, who in 1973 remained an unpublished M. A., although she was a dutiful committee woman, a politician's politician, and close to everyone in Old Main.

By 1974 all that remained were the Ph. D.'s and the tenured M. A.'s.

Economic logic would have impelled Old Main to cut from the top, where salaries were fattest, but no convincing rationale for so doing presented itself. President Stoddard also feared lawsuits, and the Big Damned Mess which would attend any airing of dirty laundry by disgruntled former employees. Seniority, the criterion favored by most older faculty, would have cut the lowest paid faculty. Whatever administration thought of Charles Creed, Lou Feracca, and I, we were still cheaper by half than Percy Thompson, Lucy Kramer or Virgil Cutter.

Besides, cutting popular faculty could also result in a Big Damned Mess, as Stoddard had found out the year previous in the school of art. The situation was not precisely analogous: the man there was not tenured, but he was clearly the department's best

painter and clearly the students' favorite. A showing of portraits caricaturing Busiris art department colleagues as barnyard animals brought a negative tenure recommendation from those same colleagues, which Stoddard was only too willing to accept (he had appeared as a Rhode Island Red). The painter (who also did nudes, including some of his students) had tremendous support (including some of the women he'd painted). The students organized a strike that did not end until the department had uncovered "new evidence" supporting the case for tenure, taken a second vote, and awarded the tenure—and promotion. So much for cutting by seniority.

Almost all faculty, young and old, opposed qualitative criteria.

Inevitably the ball was bounced to departments. "Take a vote," Stoddard directed each department. "Rank order all full-time members of your department by value to your program, #1 being the most valuable. Vice President for Academic Affairs Beckstrom may take departmental suggestions into consideration in making personnel decisions."

If you want division, ask the six men in an overburdened lifeboat to decide who should jump.

If you want an ulcer, try going to work each day knowing that the fellow greeting you so cheerfully from across the hall gets to vote on your job, and you on his. Somebody has to go, and that somebody may be you or him. Unless, of course, you and he reach a mutual nonaggression pact, and go after the guy around the corner. Unless that guy has already cut a deal with the guy down the hall against you. . . .

When Ted Jones presented this directive at a department meeting, Jack moved that the department tell Vice President Beckstrom to shove it. Nothing personal—Beckstrom was probably the one upper level administrator for whom Jack had any respect at all—but Jack wanted us literally to write "Stuff this" on the sheet of paper and return it to Beckstrom. He made a good speech that day,

reasonable, without condescension or real profanity, and somewhat different from his previous positions.

“This department had been through enough, and it has given enough. We’ve had differences in the past, and we’ll have them in the future. I’m not happy with the achievement of everyone in this room, and I know some of you are not pleased with the way I invest my life. But we are all we have, really. If faculty will not protect faculty, nobody will. Professionals do not turn on colleagues no matter what they think of them. Civilized people do not cannibalize each other, and if the study of literature has not civilized us, what has it done for us?

“While we’re being squeezed, administration is living very comfortably, including Brad Beckstrom. I’ve got friends in Old Main—secretaries and staff, the hard-working blue-collar types—who tell me almost to the dime how well administrators live. I say that administration is paid handsomely to make hard choices and to accept the consequences—moral and otherwise—of those choices. Especially the President is paid to make decisions. He should not be allowed to shirk his responsibility.”

Finally Jack reminded us of the World War II ghettos where victims selected other victims for relocation, and of East Bloc nations where colleagues reported on their friends and children spied on their parents. “They too rationalized,” he told us. “Although their rationalizations make them no less complicitous. And in the end, as we know, they all ended up in the same boxcar headed for the same death camps.”

Jack’s speech carried the day. Our vote was indeed to direct Ted Jones to return Beckstrom’s directive without a ranking, with “Stuff this” scrawled across the bottom.

I doubt that Jones ever did what we directed him to do.

I do know that we all finally joined in Beckstrom’s assessment process. We had no union and we had no real unity, so there was nothing else to do. Jones circulated a memo to the effect that

“certain members of the department” had privately exercised their individual right to “advise the dean on personnel matters.” Abstaining just meant giving up one vote—perhaps a crucial vote—in favor of yourself.

I rationalized my way through it, as did everyone else.

Privately, behind closed office doors and in small knots in the Student Center, discussions took place. Victoria Nation proposed to me, Jack’s best friend, that we mutually agree to rank each other high and Jack low. “He’d find another job in a minute,” she told me. “Especially after that book comes out. Of course he’d be first on our rehire list.” It was Victoria who went around explaining how much Busiris had furthered the career of the gay Shakespearean trimmed in 1972, who ended up at Berkeley in 1974.

“Explain your proposal to Rose Marié, Timm and Jenny Lynn,” I suggested. “If they buy it, so will I.”

“Busiris did not force Jack to have a family.”

“Or me either. But we have families, and people need to eat. Our salaries feed four people. Your salary feeds only one. Maybe you should go.”

“The department should not cut a woman,” Victoria said firmly. “There are too many female students in English, and they have too many male professors. The women need a female role.”

“Lucy Kramer, Ph. D.”

“Not an adequate female role model, and we both know it.”

“If the female students need a female role model, that model should have a Ph. D.”

“Being sensitive to the needs of female undergraduates is more important than having a Ph. D.”

“A man can’t be sensitive?”

“Not the way a woman can.”

“Don’t you think that’s letting yourself off a bit easily, Victoria?”

“There are things important beyond degrees and publication.”

“A Ph. D. shows commitment. Are you seriously saying that people should get or keep a job just for being born a certain race or gender? What kind of message is that? Substandard people receiving good pay for substandard work is not a good role model for anyone.”

“Our women are not substandard.”

“You just said Lucy Kramer was not adequate. Maybe we should cut her.”

“I’m just saying that we should not cut a woman. And that Charles could absorb the hit more easily than anyone else.”

The department ended up canning the right guy to my way of thinking, a senior full professor who was not a particularly effective teacher and had published nothing in twenty years more significant that two poems in the campus literary magazine. That didn’t make the consequences any more bearable. Naturally he never found another teaching position. Naturally he never returned at Busiris, not even for adjunct work. He taught briefly part-time at the junior college he so disparaged when it had opened ten years before. Then they let him go. He got a job, finally, as a night watchman at the brewery . . . six months before it closed. Finally he blew his brains with a shotgun.

So the student secretaries went, and the conference money went, and colleagues went as well. A couple of years of 0% raises, were followed by two or three years of 2% or 3% raises. Annual inflation was running about 12-14%, and most younger faculty were adding a child to their family every second or third year. Meanwhile, administrative salaries and the basketball program grew exponentially.

The late seventies witnessed also another curious development in the Busiris Department of English. A decade of accumulated small

changes in student body, faculty, and administration emerged a clear pattern which made Old Ones of Jack, Lou, Victoria and me.

Between 1972 and 1980 six senior faculty completed their deaths and dropped one after the other into retirement. Initially the retirements elicited optimism and some rejoicing among the reformers: one fewer vote for Them, one more vote for Us. But our battles inside the department had been fought (and largely won), back in the early years of the decade. By the late seventies, old and young alike were passengers in a sinking ship. Whatever we might have thought of them in 1972, these were people whose eccentricities, strengths, and even weaknesses we had come to know and understand. They were our colleagues. Whatever Jack might have thought of them in 1972, these people had come to know and accept his rough edges. The shared history of their turbulent relationship constituted a ballast which might have saved the ship in the 1980s. Virgil Cutter had seen Jack in battle. He understood his madness, the palpable and beneficent fruits of which he had seen in programs like the Stoddard Field House and the Afro-American Studies Program. Cutter could live with Creed. And Creed could live with Cutter.

But Jack awoke one morning to find the Old Ones gone. Percy Thompson with his precious quarto of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets.* Lucy Kramer with her drawer of green lollies for her little friends Timm and Jenny Lynn. Virgil Cutter and the three unpublished manuscripts to which he had devoted twenty years of his life. Even old Basil Wentworth, with his endlessly revised plans for the new library that never got built.

Busiris administration changed as well. Vice President for Academic Affairs Bradley Beckstrom, Jack's antagonist-collaborator in developing the Black Studies Program, was reassigned to teaching duties in 1977 and retired the year following. President Stoddard himself, the oldest of the old, departed in 1979. Although he made more than one half-hearted attempt, Jack never developed with the new people in Old Main the same kind of gentleman's

agreement to disagree, the same mutual respect between antagonists, the same shared history he felt for old ones.

Especially Jack disliked, almost from the start, Vice President Bertholt Reich and Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences Ernest Hauptmann. “Bert and Ernie” he liked to call them. He regarded them as members of a new breed of college administrator he especially detested: careerists with no experience in either research or teaching, whose understanding of the pedagogy was basically managerial, and who therefore could never really understand what teaching was about. They picked up a Ph. D. as a kind of vocational prerequisite, in soft or even correspondence programs like education, sociology, administration or counseling. They moved easily and with no commitment from one institution to another, from one low-level administrative position to the next not-quite-so low-level administrative position, building resumes, weaseling their way up a corporate-educational ladder. “They might as well work for General Motors.”

Especially he disliked Hauptmann, “one of those East Coast wash-outs who retreat (always, in their own minds, temporarily) to some American backwater West of Hudson, confess publicly the justice of their exile while nursing petty jealousies and closet exculpations, subscribe to the *New Yorker*, and never, as months lengthen to years and then to decades, forgive Kankakee, Illinois, for not being “The Big Apple.”

“Those fuckers make bundles of money while we do all the work,” Jack would rage. “They’re assholes and thieves, without competence or consciences.”

Jack’s response, in the first year of 0% raises, was a letter explaining that if Busiris couldn’t increase his pay, all he could do was work less. Starting in 1974 he began inserting “Stop Days” in his syllabus.

“What does this mean, ‘Stop Day’?” students would ask.

“It means we stop.”

“Do we have class?”

“You can have class if you want, but I won’t be here.” Then Jack would explain 0% raises in a year of 15% inflation.

“This is a movement, Tucker,” he would tell me. “The Jack Creed’s Underground Hit the Bastards Where It Hurts Them Most Restaurant Movement. Today me, tomorrow us, the day after that the department. Before you know it, the whole university.”

Most stop days Jack spent in the office as usual, during the morning at least, tutoring whatever students happened by.

Although Jack continued his practice of Stop Days throughout the seventies, extending them finally to a Stop Week at the beginning, and then another at the end of each semester, the Jack Creed Stop Day Movement never spread to two, let alone the department. Busiris faculty were, as he never wearied of pointing out, short on balls. Administration fired—faculty left silently.

And with each faculty loss, Bert and Ernie grew stronger. And more hated.

I remember crossing the quadrangle with Jack one gray afternoon, probably in 1981, and seeing the Dean and the Vice President headed toward us. Sensing trouble, I looked for a way to avoid confrontation, but Jack seemed as determined on our course as they were on theirs. We were engaged in our private world, and they in theirs. He seemed to take as little notice of them as they did of him.

At the point of our crossing, however, he suddenly changed the subject and, still speaking to me, observed in a voice just loud enough to be heard, “You know, Tucker, if the sun were shining, or if you had a mirror, I could show you something very interesting about Herr Hauptmann.” Neither of us turned to look for a reaction, and our conversation resumed its previous subject and tone of voice.

Jack’s steam valve (and mine) during the later seventies was Tookey’s Tap, a blue collar alternative to the Heidelberger Lounge,

not too far from the red light district, really, at the foot of Fourth Street down by the brewery. Only workers hung out in Tookey's: no administrators, and no Busiris faculty except for Jack, myself and Lou Feracca. Almost no women. Lily Lee Martin never once set foot in Tookey's Tap. Mostly Tookey's was male bonding, trashing Busiris and what it was becoming, trashing America and what it was becoming. Bitching a lot about inflation and salaries, about the new breed of Busiris student and the new breed of big-buck Busiris administrators. We did a lot of reminiscing about the personal and collective sixties, and a lot of scheming for escape. Jack was going to write a series of academic detective novels. Lou was going to open the first McDonald's in Dublin, and "tell this fucking place to kiss my fucking ass." He had recently visited Ireland seeking roots on his wife's side, and found "not a hamburger stand in the whole goddam country. It's wide open. A gold mine."

I fancied myself pulling down $25,000 a year working full time at the U. S. D. A. Research Lab, where I'd been doing some consulting on business communications.

Or we'd concocted some multi-year grant-funded project wheels inside of wheels, the three of us as executive directors.

Thompson's junket to Madrid triggered one of Jack's finest fantasy scams: the International Friends of Literature Association, headquartered in Milan, where he had shirt-tail relatives. Membership would be $50, stiff in those days. Except for executive chairs, who would collect the $50 memberships. In return for their $50, members of the International Friends of Literature Association would be guaranteed invitations to present a paper at the annual conference. Which, this being the *International* Friends of Literature Association, would be held each year in a different European city: Paris, London, Rome.

Using these invitations, members could leverage from their institutions an all-expenses paid one-week holiday in Europe—not a bad deal for $50. Then, Jack figured, all papers would be read at the same hour of the same day of the conference, in one huge

auditorium, a vast Babel of readings. “Three, two, one, READ. Last one on his feet and still reading collects a $100 prize.” The other six days of conferencing would be devoted to sightseeing, drinking, wenching, and dinner meetings of the executive committee. Down the road Jack and I figured on hitting up participants for another $50 to underwrite publication of their papers. We’d work from their own camera-ready typescripts, and print the books somewhere in Poland or Bulgaria. Members, we figured, would more make up that $50 in promotions and raises attendant on being published. The plan never got off the ground, of course, but there are enough American schools like Busiris that we’d have had plenty of takers. Certainly old B. T. U. would have been none the wiser.

One scheme was more unlikely than the last, spun from the near edge of possibility to the most improbable reaches of desperate hope. The empty bottles on the table were bottles of desperation. Lou and I especially were approaching a point when our careers should have been turning out, only they didn’t seem to be quite turning out. At least not the way we’d dreamed. Bluebeard at the end of that movie, buried to his neck in the sand, with the tide of inflation coming in. Water swirling around his neck, his chin, his mouth, struggling to raise his nose just a little higher, each year a smaller raise, each year more expenses, the job market gone to hell with the economy.

Every Thursday afternoon around 5:00, a gimpy-legged guy came through Tookey’s selling sausage and hamburger. Brought it into the bar from his truck, wrapped in white butcher’s paper, five-pound packages, I forget the price. Just some guy trying to beat inflation and the conspiracy of chain groceries. Ray Kessler in Jack’s story “Ray’s Family Foods” is based on this guy. I always bought five pounds of sausage and five pounds of hamburger: it helped both of us beat inflation. Linda, who disliked sausage and thought the hamburger too fatty, always complained, but she always found a use for the meat. Jack bought some as an act of solidarity with the vendor, but Rose Marié would just tuck it away in the back of the freezer. When it got freezer burn, she’d throw it out, with some acid

remark about “wasting money on that stuff when we’ve already got six packages in the downstairs freezer.” Eventually Jack quit buying.

More than once Rose Marié got caught in mild raves over one of Linda’s casseroles made from Tookey’s Tap sausage. She never inspired her to use our own, however.

By the end of the seventies, Jack Creed, Lou Feracca, and I were spending a lot of time at Tookey’s Tap. Even Jack recognized slow times when he saw them.

One or two beers were an upper for Jack. After three beers he leveled off. With his fourth drink, he’d turn morose and start replaying the past.

“It’s been downhill, Tucker, from June of 1977,” he would say. “Straight fucking downhill. I had my moment, and it came early. It goes like that sometimes. We’re all on a merry-go-round, and when your pony is in the right spot, you got a chance to reach for the brass ring. If you’re lucky and skillful, and whatever, maybe you get it. Then the thing spins around, and you find yourself moving further and further away from the ring. It’s completely out of reach. Before you know it, soon you’re on the far side, and no matter how long your arm is, you’re just not gonna reach that ring. If I live long enough, maybe the wheel of fortune completes its circle and I’ll have another shot. Maybe I’ll be too old to lift an arm. Maybe I won’t. Who the fuck knows? All I know for sure is that right now I’m fucked. For sure.”

“Your Pulitzer came in 1978,” Lou would remind him.

“I wrote the book in 1975,” Jack would point out. “Recognition is always after the fact. Bet the mortgage to your house, I could not have written *Age of Faith* in 1978. Or any time thereafter. For one thing, the faith is gone. For another thing, the Lady is gone. My life is over.

“It went by pretty damned fast.”

# Chapter 7
# **The Dervish Act**

In his last years at Busiris Technical University, Charles Creed taught very little. He attended no departmental meetings. He rarely took lunch on campus. He kept minimal office hours. His “stop days” multiplied, after a decade of raises well below the annual rate of inflation, to fill the first and last weeks of each semester, plus half a dozen other days scattered across the remaining thirteen weeks of class. One afternoon you’d glimpse a shadowy figure in a denim jacket passing the Busiris campus gate. You’d hear the boisterous laugh down the hall or around a corner. You’d think of Charles Creed and realize you hadn’t seen him in ages. Jack was a mostly invisible presence, an idea whispered through the corridors. A rumor.

A ghost.

His absence was ostensibly due to a series of necessities: speaking engagements, writing and researching, a stint as assistant to the Associate V. P. A. A., a semester in England, his term as faculty rep on the Bucks Boosters Association. Those were the excuses. In truth, his absence was the result of a conscious decision to withdraw. Or, rather, to a series of alternative periods of sulky withdrawal and quixotic re-engagement, which puzzled students, outraged enemies, and perplexed friends.

Jack began life after Lily Lee with engagement, a commitment to “the New Busiris” as personified by its new Vice President for Academic Affairs, Bertholt Reich the Third.

Not long after the farewell banquet for Lily and Big Jim Oliver, Ted Jones received a one-year leave from his position of chair of the English Department to serve full-time in Vice President Reich’s office. One rumor had the appointment a payoff for Jones’ service in the faculty downsizings of ‘74 and ‘77. Another rumor had Jones the next dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences. A third scenario had Reich, a

Southern stranger to the treacherous landscape of Busiris politics, tripping a few land mines early in his tenure at Busiris. According to this theory, Jones was nothing more than a hired navigator who was cashiered when Reich felt he could steer for himself. What Reich actually had in mind, we never found out. The deanship went finally not to Jones (who applied for the vacancy) but to another outsider, Ernest Hauptmann.

Ted Jones brought Charles Creed to administration in 1979-80. Jack served nominally as Jones' assistant, although he was more a consultant assigned to a series of special projects. The position as assistant to an assistant released Jack from half his teaching load to write feasibility studies for programs in mass communications and global studies. Jones had convinced Reich that Jack's research skills and sensitivity to educational trends, evidenced by the successful Black Studies Program, could be used to the University's advantage. Possibly Jones was using Creed; possibly he was setting him up. Possibly Jones, who still considered Jack a part of the New Busiris, was trying to bring him into a new administration for which he held high hopes. Possibly Jones was working a favor for a colleague whom he admired. As events unfolded, it's quite possible that Jones' association with Creed cost him the deanship. But possibly Reich was merely using Jones and attempting to buy off Creed. The scenarios are endless. Deconstructionists will have a field day. I'm your quintessential unreliable narrator anyway.

"Work the feasibility studies around your other writing and lecturing," Ted suggested to Jack. "It beats grading freshman themes."

Jack agreed. "It will free up time for my own writing and lecturing," he told Lou and me.

Lou gave him a look.

"So they're using me," Jack admitted. "I'm using them. Why not?"

"You're not maybe compromising your position just a little?"

“He who is completely honest can live inside the law or outside the law.”

“He who is completely honest. . . .”

That fall, Jack taught two classes, both “Introduction to the Short Story,” which he scheduled to meet Mondays and Wednesday mornings, 8:00 to 9:30 and 10-11:30. The rest of the week he was a free man.

On paper.

In fact, the feasibility studies freed him from nothing. “I’m studying shit I don’t believe in,” he told me in November, “and I’m writing crap. The meetings are interminable, full of asshole administrators and asshole faculty, one gaggle more self-serving than the other. I’m irritable when I get home. I can’t concentrate on my own work because my head is full of jargon and academic pieties. Nobody in Old Main gives a goddamn about global studies or mass communication, unless either program can generate outside funding. They don’t even care about more students, let alone the best interests of students they’ve got, let alone developing a quality program. They’re interested exclusively in designing programs that will attract an outside funding agency. We’ve got a new Vice President, but it’s the same old B. T. U. Plenty of heat, precious little light.”

By January 1980, Jack had completed detailed outlines of and carefully documented rationales supporting programs in global studies and in mass communications. Once passed by the Busiris Senate, these documents formed the core of seven different proposals to six different government agencies and private foundations. The four of the seven which received funding brought Busiris 2.4 million dollars between 1981 and 1985.

In February 1980, Jack found himself doing a cost-benefit study of the Speech and Hearing Therapy Program. “It’s a solid program offered by very few Midwestern universities,” he told me, “but it’s out of synch with current educational enthusiasms and thus not a

money-maker. Old Main wants it cut. There are no grants for sustaining successful, useful, established programs—funds only for initiating new projects of high social but dubious educational value. Also, it's a rigorous program. Too much work for the new breed of Busiris student. Not to mention the new breed of Busiris teacher. So a perfectly good program—with a competent and nationally respected faculty—is to be axed, and I'm supposed to forge the hatchet blade."

The job got worse. In March, Jack found himself studying the feasibility of a Women's Studies Program, to be modeled on the program in Afro-American Studies he had helped create.

"One component of the program is that we sent Victoria off to Vassar or Bryn Mawr or some such finishing school for a Ph. D.," he fumed in real or feigned exasperation. 'Two-year leave of absence at full salary, plus—get this—a supplement for having to live Out East. Tuition, fees and book expenses will be paid by Busiris. Victoria comes back A. B. D. in 1982 with an additional two years to finish her degree. But she is promoted immediately upon her return to the rank of associate professor—this is without degree, let alone publications—and directs the goddamn Women's Studies Center, which is also part of this project. As director, she will receive a one-course release per semester."

"You have done very well for Assistant Professor Nation."

"She has tried on more than one occasion to repay me. Or to encourage me. I say no more." Jack rolled his eyes.

"Victoria has always been hot for you, Jack. She's probably a very passionate woman. You missed the see-through blouse."

"Oh, Vicky's a complicated woman," Jack said. Then, turning reflective, he added, "Although she's certainly no Lily Lee Martin."

"Reich seems to think highly enough of her."

"Reich would."

Rumor had Victoria and Reich appearing together in Chicago over Christmas at a conference on “Strategies for Institutional Self-Assessment.” Jack, a favorite of the custodial and secretarial staffs who gave him access to the most private of private information, got the story straight from the business office secretary, who had personally processed the travel reimbursements. “They traveled separately, but only he gave me a hotel receipt,” she told Jack. “I phoned the Palmer House to confirm his receipt. It was definitely a double occupancy.”

“I don’t really care if she’s fucking his brains out, but it strikes me as odd that the only two people on this campus who want a Women’s Studies Program are Bert and Vicky. I can’t see what Bert gets out of Women’s Studies, unless it’s a grant. Or a blow job.”

“Bert’s a feminist. Or claims to be.”

“A male who claims to be a feminist is either a fool or a liar. The self-proclaimed goal of feminism is increasing female power in a world dominated by males. If that analysis is correct, increasing female power necessarily means decreasing male power. Either Reich is too dumb to figure out the program, or he hasn’t figured out his own gender. More likely he’s getting paid off, which means he’s acting out of his own best interests and not women’s, which makes him not a feminist but a paternalistic patriarch son-of-a-bitch. And a liar.”

In April Jack submitted less than carefully written and less than carefully documented recommendations that the Speech and Hearing Therapy Program, “a model in the region,” be maintained and expanded, and that a Women’s Studies Program, “though a trendy idea,” lacked support among both students and faculty and “did not promise to increase significantly Busiris enrollments from the student populations it has traditionally attracted.”

The Women’s Studies recommendation incensed Nation, who regarded it as a kind of personal treachery, and the Speech and Hearing recommendation irritated Jack’s boss’s boss. To nobody’s

surprise, Reich—opposed by student opinion, at least as expressed in the *Sentinel*, but supported by close a vote in the Senate—overrode both recommendations. Whereupon Jack resigned as under-assistant-junior-adjunct researcher to the assistant to the Vice President, to return to full-time teaching.

The department needed him in that fall to cover for Victoria Nation, who was not replaced during her years at Bryn Mawr.

“Meet the new boss, same as the old boss,” Jack told me less than a year after his “they’re using me/I’m using them” speech. Experience in the service of the Bert Reich permanently disillusioned Jack on “the new Busiris” and paved the way for the contingency contract explosion in 1982.

And the contingency contract matter was the beginning of the end of Charles Creed.

Initially Jack interpreted Reich’s offer of a contingency contract, and Hauptmann’s handling of his protest, as delayed payback for his recommendations on Women’s Studies and Speech and Hearing. “*Quid pro quo*,” he told me. “You give ‘em the quid, you got to expect the quo. If I’d played ball with them in ‘80, they’d probably have offered me $3600 for one course. I didn’t, and they didn’t. I got no kicks, no regrets. A man has to learn to just keep out of bad company like that.”

The War of the Contingency Contract, culmination of Jack’s many frustrations at Busiris, was a story famous across campus in 1982. It was a battle Jack fought largely on behalf of colleagues who did not support him, over an issue he personally had settled half a decade before.

The story is as follows.

In the days when Busiris faculty spent their summers alternately teaching and “doing research,” Jack had taught summer school as the rotation required. In 1973 he received a summer stipend to prepare his Afro-American literature course, and when summer research grants ended in 1974, Jack returned to summer school

teaching. He taught each summer until the book was published. In 1975 he received, in addition to teaching money, a $1,000 award from the university's Board of University Learning, Cooperative Research and Artistic Production. (When *Age of Faith* went to multiple printings, Busiris wanted Jack to repay his BULCRAP money out of royalties—an action he considered the first directly and personally hostile action in the Campaign Against Creed.)

Then came the book, and the reviews, and speaking engagements, and the Pulitzer, royalty checks, more speaking engagements, requests for more essays and stories. Jack appeared to be free forever of summer school, if not full-time teaching. "If *Age of Faith* won't do it, sales of other stuff will. I'm out of here, Tucker," he exalted in 1978. "I'm out of summer school, and if things work out right, I'm out of this graveyard forever."

Things did not work out right.

Jack applied nearly all of the initial royalty check and much of the second to his mortgage, on the assumptions that 17% annual interest was immoral, if not criminal, and more royalty checks were only a matter of time. He did not understand that bookstore returns of unsold books—for credit—usually produce negative sales during the second and third years of a book's life. Nor are exemptions granted, apparently, to the winners of Pulitzer Prizes. In 1980, instead of a fat royalty check, Jack received a statement showing him several thousand in the red. Not until 1983 did the book recover this deficit. *Age of Faith* went out of print in 1984.

Nor was Jack's writing career developing in the early eighties as he might have projected in 1976. Despite publication in several major literary magazines and familiar correspondence with major American writers whose work he had previously admired from a distance (particularly Ken Kesey and Robert Bly), Jack had not cracked *Esquire, Atlantic* or the *New Yorker*. He had reached the level of hand-written and personally signed rejection notes with invitations to "let us see more," but he hadn't hit the big time. Far from encouraging Jack, each letter increased his alienation. "I can no

longer deal with the East Coast lunacy," he would rage. "I don't even bother with any publication east of the Appalachians or west of the Rockies," he claimed repeatedly, although he continued to offer ideas, stories and finished essays to publications on both coasts.

Clearly Jack's decade in Riverton had, despite the frequent visits east of Appalachia, cost him his contacts out East. By the early eighties he probably no longer understood the New York mind, and possibly he had lost touch with the mood of the country in and outside of academia. His work, published and unpublished, inevitably regionalized itself in downstate Illinois, the heart of the Midwest, in the country. Garrison Keillor was giving America a new national home town on the Minnesota prairie, and Carolyn Chute was introducing Egypt, Maine, but the literati associated rural Illinois only with Ronald Reagan. Jack's material was just wrong—wrong people, wrong geography, wrong style, wrong attitude.

*Age of Faith* had brought Jack an agent, Connie Lingel, who badgered him for years about a successor to *Age of Faith*. Separate from Lily Lee, however, Jack could not do another *Age of Faith*. Nor would, his agent agreed, the nation have responded in the early eighties to such a book. That moment was passed. Where next? Jack, who had withdrawn from national politics into himself and his children, into Glen Oak Park and the Busiris Zoo, proposed a collection of rural meditations along the lines of Annie Dillard's *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. He gave it the working title *A Country Journal,* and fired off a prospectus to Lingel.

She was not optimistic. "New York is desperate for another book from Charles Creed," she assured him, "but I see zero interest here in a Middle West *Walden*. I could easily sell them on the idea of something political or popular culture, but more focused."

Jack suggested a book on Bob Dylan. Lingel had got word of the Robert Shelton biography and thought that even Creed could not compete with Shelton. Besides, Dylan had been done and done again.

“Phil Ochs,” Jack suggested.

Marc Eliot had claimed Phil Ochs.

“How about Country Joe McDonald?” Lingel suggested.

“Country Joe McDonald?” Jack wanted to know. “Why not the Monkees? How about the fucking Bee Gees?”

Lingel suggested a general Charles Creed commentary on the Seventies, to follow Charles Creed on the Sixties.

“Sure thing,” Jack told her. “We’ll give it the working title *The Great Slumber*. What if they gave a decade and nobody showed up?”

Lingel said she was serious and begged to inform Jack that many individuals, women and gays among them, considered the seventies a decade of enormous and beneficial change. Creed’s hibernation in the hinterlands didn’t mean the whole country was snoozing.

“I’m neither female nor queer,” Jack answered. He had not yet written “Women’s Liberation: the Conservative Revolution”—at least it wasn’t being circulated—so Lingel wouldn’t have known that material, but obviously Jack and his agent were on different frequencies.

Jack suggested that *Country Journal* was where his head was at, and the mood of the nation—as reflected in its choice of President, the popularity of “A Prairie Home Companion,” and its rejection of the Equal Rights Amendment—seemed closer to his position than hers. If New York couldn’t handle a Middle West *Walden*, then New York had lost its sense of the Republic and was no longer useful. Connie Lingel promised Charles Creed she’d be in touch, Charles Creed thanked her, and the two never spoke or write again. Lingel was not involved in contract negotiations on *Song of the North Country*.

Relationships between the Heartland and the Coast remained cordial at best for the rest of Jack’s life.

In 1982, pressed by double-digit inflation, nearly stagnant salaries, a growing family, a house two sizes too large, and the demands of Rose Marié, Jack asked to teach two summer school classes.

His ill-timed request came at a moment when the University was reassessing its summer program. In the mid-seventies, Busiris had developed an ambitious program which, promotional brochures explained, allowed students to attend school all year round and graduate in three years instead of the traditional four. That program attracted students, but it also meant offering a number of upper-level classes each summer for students on the three-year cycle. These highly specialized classes, many of which did not transfer to programs at other schools, were as useless to Busiris freshmen and sophomores as to University of Illinois kids back home in Riverton for the summer. They were high-investment, low-enrollment propositions. Busiris found itself caught between its commitment to a three-year degree and its desire to squeeze as much money as possible out of the summer program by squeezing as many students as possible into each class. How to reduce low-enrollment classes while appearing to support the three-years-and-out program?

The solution was enrollment-contingent contracts. A course would be scheduled and advertised. If it registered enough students, it would be taught. If not, it would be canceled. Since students could enroll as late as the first day of summer school, cancellation could also come as late as the first day of summer school. In those days the University was none too sophisticated about calculations, but somebody in Old Main decided that seven students would be "enough" to confirm a four-hour course. Seven students paying $90 a credit hour (or $360 for the course) would allow Busiris to pay a professor $1,200 for teaching it.

Even English professors could crunch those numbers. We all realized our pay amounted to less than half of the University's *minimum* take. "Enroll ten students," Jack pointed out, "and your salary amounts to exactly one third of what they collect. And what

does the average class enroll? Herr Hauptmann will not tell you, but my connections have provided figures. The average class in summer of 1981 enrolled 11.3 students. There were classes smaller than seven, granted, but the average was 11.3. On average, they took in more than three times what they paid out in salary. And they're bitching that summer school is not cost-effective."

When Jack received his contract for summer school, both freshmen composition and introduction to fiction classes were designated enrollment-contingent.

His initial response was to draw a red line through the phrase "enrollment contingent" and return the signed contract to Vice President Reich. Reich responded with a memo informing Jack that faculty were not permitted to rewrite contracts and that tampered contracts were considered void. Jack phoned Reich to tell the Vice President that as a laborer, he was allowed to negotiate the terms and conditions of his employment. Reich told Creed that the enrollment contingent clause was non-negotiable. Creed told Reich to double the salary from $1200 a course to $2400 a course, $4800 total. Reich told Creed summer school salaries were standard and non-negotiable. Creed told Reich that on those terms he had no interest in teaching summer, and Reich could go fuck himself.

Jack version of the story, recounted over a Saturday evening dinner at his house, was the first Rose Marié had heard of the business.

"I don't know how you can turn down $2,400 just like that," she exploded, "when you know we need the money and you have nothing better to do with the summer. You walked away from two years of house taxes, just because you're too hot-headed."

"By the time they're done withholding, it's more like $1500. It's not worth my time."

"$1500 is a very nice vacation with our folks."

"It's the goddamn principle."

“There is no principle. Your classes always drew at least seven students. They would never be canceled.”

“I resent being paid less than a third of what I earn for that place,” Jack said.

“Basically, the salary sucks,” Linda said.

“The salary is the same no matter what,” Rose Marié told her husband.

“That’s the point. They’re going to pay me $1200 for seven students, and $1200 for seventeen students. I’m bringing in dollars, and they’re handing me nickels and dimes. Because I’m making them a bundle, they should be able to risk a few people who might drop below seven students. But they refuse to take the risks. I’m not bitching about what might happen to me. I’m bitching for what the program does to other people.”

“They don’t feed my kids,” Rose Marié said coldly. “They don’t pay for my vacation. You do. You feel more obligation to some principle involving them than you do to your own family.”

“We don’t need the money that much,” Jack argued.

“In my family, you don’t just walk away from money when somebody offers it to you. You should think more about your children and less about yourself.”

Her last line swayed Jack, although I suspect he reconsidered merely to make peace with Rose Marié. In any event, he was soon in Dean Hauptmann’s office attempting to reopen negotiations on the pretext of proposing a new arrangement. Faculty would teach on a *per capita* basis: $120 a head for a four-hour class, precisely one third of what the University collected in tuition. “If just one student enrolls, I’ll teach the class for $120 and you make $240,” he told Hauptmann. “If 20 students enroll, I make $2400 and you make $4800.”

“No can do,” Hauptmann told him.

“Class or no class, the rooms are going to be there. How much can electricity cost? You’d make money even off of one student. You can’t lose. Only I am gambling: I risk losing five weeks teaching one student in each course for a total of $240. You risk what? A listing in some summer school brochure.”

“Your proposal would set a disturbing precedent,” Hauptmann told him. “It might, for example, set one instructor to recruiting students away from other instructors merely to earn an additional $120. Such behavior would be very unprofessional.”

“Professional means you get paid for your work.”

“The university is paying you.”

“You want unprofessional behavior? I’ll give you a story about unprofessional behavior,” Jack told his dean. “At least one of my colleagues—I know this for a fact—has been approached by at least one student with the suggestion that if the professor could help the student financially, the student would enroll in the professor’s upper division summer school class, bringing his enrollment to seven and guaranteeing him his twelve hundred lousy bucks. The professor is seriously considering spending three hundred to make twelve, because his class has an early registration total of six students. Now how professional is that?”

“I would agree the situation you describe is not a good idea, but per capita salary is not a good idea either.”

“Neither are enrollment-contingent contracts.”

“Per capita salary is open to abuse.”

“Contingency contracts abuse both faculty and students. You ask faculty to commit their summer three months in advance, and some students plan their spring semester classes based on what they can take during the summer. You won’t commit until the very day of registration, the beginning of June. You want us to commit to you, but you won’t commit to us. That’s abuse.”

“On the contrary,” Hauptmann argued. “By allowing us to offer classes that might not enroll seven students, enrollment-contingent contracts open up the summer curriculum and offer students and faculty both at least a chance at classes that might otherwise not even be offered.”

“There’s nothing fucking open about what you offered me,” Jack pointed out. “Freshmen composition and short story fill every semester they’re offered. The least they have ever drawn during a summer was fifteen, and that was last summer.”

“As a collective whole, enrollment-contingent contracts expand our summer options,” Hauptmann insisted.

“So does my proposal,” Jack countered.

“We’re not going to pay you per capita, Dr. Creed,” Hauptmann told Jack. “You might as well accept that fact. Not you or anyone else. And you can quit your crusading for the rest of the faculty, who entered teaching as a profession, Dr. Creed. Not to get rich, but because they enjoy teaching. They have a good time with it. You too, by all reports, are a good teacher who enjoys his students. Why not join your colleagues who understand our rationale and are more than happy to accept what we offer? Who are not, you may have noticed, in this office complaining with you. You’re not here representing them, and you’re no special case, although you seem to think you are. I’m not going to offer you some kind of a special arrangement just because you’re Charles Creed. You can take the contract Vice President Reich has been kind enough to extend to you, or you can decline it.”

“Ernest,” Jack said, “You know as well as I do that Reich is fucking over faculty and students both. There’s apparently not a fucking thing I can do about it, and not a fucking thing that you’re willing to do about it. I’m going to sign your fucking contract, but the fact that I’m signing it does not alter the truth, which it that this thing stinks. For telling such lies, the ground is one day going to open up

and, mark my words, you heard it here first, swallow Old Main whole. I hope you and Bert are in there when it goes."

"These threats, Professor Creed, do not suit the winner of the Pulitzer Prize in history."

"Neither does my salary," Jack retorted.

In June-July of 1982 Jack Creed taught freshmen composition to a total of 18 students. He taught introduction to fiction to a total of 23 students. The students paid $360 per course, or an aggregate of $14,760, in tuition and fees. For his labors, Jack received $2,400, less withholding. In August the Creeds traveled east to visit in-laws, their vacation paid for in part by his summer stipend.

The battle cost Busiris far more than it netted on Jack's classes. It ultimately cost the college Charles Creed. It fixed hostilities between the institution and the professor once and for all, and contributed significantly to the events of 1985 that led to Creed's departure. If Jack's resignation from Busiris was bad for Busiris—and that was the consensus in 1985 (and today)—then the summer of 1982 was bad for Busiris.

The battle also marked an end to Jack's first period of engagement. He retreated to Busiris Hall and to predominantly undergraduate teaching. "Old Main is full of assholes. So, from what I saw of them, is the faculty. The graduate program in English is a joke. Our undergraduates are smarter than our graduate students. This department has you, and me, and Lou Feracca. Period. The only thing left is the undergrad students. Lily Lee is gone, but I'll have to make do with what there is. All you can do is hit what's pitched."

Among the 1980s Busiris students, however, Jack found all too few of the wild, burning ones, more of what came to be known as Yuppies. Like the rest of us, Jack expected the youngsters to be all their older siblings had been and just a little bit more. He found, like the rest of us, that they were less. Statistically, they were dumber: SAT and ACT scores of graduating high school seniors dropped

steadily every year from 1963 until the end of the 1980s. Politically they were inept. Their music was not his music; their dope was not his dope; their good times were not his good times. Jack considered most of his eighties students lazy.

Even the blacks. After Lily, Lynette, and J. J. Oliver graduated, Jack resigned as advisor to the Black Students Alliance which, he claimed, had turned “booshie.” Nor did Jack volunteer to advise any other student organization.

He was desperate, of course, for another Lily Lee, and we saw him frequently with his arm around one coed or another. But there were no more Lily Lees in the world, not in the Association, not at Busiris, not in 1980s America. He hung with a young Polish kid named Paul Popowski and, for a time, with a coed named Annie Brower. Their friendship soured when Jack thought she was using him.

Annie had taken Jack for two classes her freshman and sophomore years, and they did a few lunches and some drinking at the Holiday Inn. Or the Heidelberger, although in later years Jack avoided the Heidelberger. Her junior year, something went wrong which Jack never understood. She had registered for Jack’s Modern American class, but then started missing classes. “She was gone two weeks at least,” he recalled. “Gave no specific reason beyond ‘personal problems,’ which she couldn’t share. Wanted to know if she could just skip that stuff and pick up where she left off. I got a little miffed. I considered Annie B. one of my people, and there she was basically blowing me off. Maybe we weren’t as close as I thought.”

“So my reaction was, if we’re no longer close enough to talk, then I’m not bending over backwards to help you make up lost work. And I always get a little testy when friends want special deals. Lily Lee never asked for a special deal in her life. I told Annie she owed me a couple of written assignments, and I told her get them in when she could. She pressed me about in-class material. I told her, ‘Get notes from a friend. I’m not going to repeat two weeks of lectures.

Except maybe over beers at the Heidelberger.' But Annie B and Jack never returned to the Heidelberger.

Then it was a cheerleader named Carolyn McQuillan, whom Lou regarded as Jack's new Daisy. If their relationship went anywhere, I never knew about it. Jack saw Carolyn mainly at the Bucks games.

Even his relationship with black athletes, whom he had always regarded as hard working and exploited, soured during the eighties, when Jack suspected he was being used to horse sub-par basketball players through freshmen composition.

Jack was still popular with many students because of his character and reputation, and probably could have found more young friends, but he himself pulled back. He seemed to measure everyone against Lily Lee and Billy Jo Allen. And he became increasingly conscious of the distance between his age and his students'.

With the yuppies, Jack was even more dismissive and more abrasive. We all noticed it, including Jack, who attributed the change not to his own character but theirs: "In the old days mediocrity kind of hid itself in the back of the room and hoped to sneak by unnoticed with a C. Now it sits right up front, challenges every idea that is more than a quarter inch over its head, and then demands a B or an A for less work than you used to give C's for. Mediocrity militant. I can't believe the balls of some of these kids.'

One student read *Age of Faith*, found it obscene, and wrote a letter to the editor of the Riverton *Standard-Republican*. Jack responded by photocopying every review the book had ever received and mailing them to her personally. An older woman found the material in her creative writing textbook—as well as other student work, and Jack's discussion of both—full of "sex and vulgarity." Her B in the course, she concluded, was a result of her refusal to be vulgar and sexual. "My minister has read all of my essays and considers them very good," she told Dean Hauptmann. Her formal complaint remained part of Jack's personnel file to the day of his death.

In the fall of 1983 a freshman stormed out of his sophomore-level American Literature class in protest over his reading of Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl." Within the hour she was in the Dean's office, complaining about sex poems in the classroom. Within minutes of her departure, Hauptmann was on the phone, demanding from Creed a justification of the material taught in his class.

"It's the defining poem of the Beat movement," Jack explained.

"She described it as full of obscenity and sex."

"It is. That's the point of the poem. And the movement."

"The poem upset her considerably."

"The poem upset a lot of people in 1956. It got banned in Boston. There was a trial in front of the Supreme Court of the United States—you're a historian, you might remember the trial—which found the poem contained redemptive social value and was therefore not obscene. That was 1957, before this girl was born."

"Busiris is a private school."

"Busiris is a university and I teach a university-level sophomore American Literature class. 'Howl' is one of the two most important poems of the twentieth century."

"Perhaps you could describe it and not read it. This woman is a freshman. She comes from a very sheltered background in suburban Chicago. You can't expose a young woman from that kind of a background to vulgarity and homosexuality."

"This is not Ma Frickert's Finishing School for Girls. If she wants a protected environment, let her go to Augustana. Or to Bob Jones University."

"Don't teach that poem at this school."

"I can't in good conscience teach contemporary American Literature without it."

"Take some advice, young man," Hauptmann told Creed. "Don't teach that poem at this school."

“This from a man who calls himself a humanist,” Jack added in finishing the story.

Another explosion came in the summer of 1983, with a co-ed who showed up in a string bikini to negotiate her assignments.

“I don’t have a lot of time for class this summer,” she told Jack, “because I’m working as a lifeguard at the Busiris pool. Besides, I was never really very good in English. Could you cut out a paper and a novel? I think I could read the stories, write one paper, and maybe get through one book.”

“The work is the work,” he told her. “I’ve already trimmed quite a bit off what I’d do in a normal semester. I don’t see your case as anything special.”

“Then I want to drop the course. I can get a better deal in my major, sociology.”

“What kind of a deal is that?”

“They are talking no papers and only one textbook.”

“Sounds like a hell of a deal to me.”

“I’d really like to have an English course on my record, to show I can do the work.”

“But if you take the course without doing the work, your record is a bit of a lie, isn’t it?”

“My advisor says social workers write a lot and I should have an English course.”

“You might talk somebody else into a deal on an English course, but to have my course on your transcript, you’re going to have to read all the stories, read both the novels, write the papers and take the exam, same as everyone else.”

“Maybe we could work some other kind of a deal?” the girl suggested. “I finish at the pool around 4:00. Could I come back and see you then?”

Jack eyed her up and down. “You are a sexy woman,” he told her. “If we were sitting in a bar somewhere, I would welcome your offer to fuck our brains out. The joy of sex would be our reward—your reward. But you don’t take the reward for one thing and claim it as the reward for something else. So we’re stuck with the class work deal. Here it is: two papers, two novels, one exam, a bunch of stories. Period. If you write A papers and get an A on the test, you get an A for the class. If you write D papers and get a D on the exam, you’re still going to get a D for the summer. Independent of anything else. That’s the deal. You don’t like the deal, you get drop my class and take sociology.”

“I can’t possibly do this, Tucker, for three more decades!” Jack raged in telling me the story.

Jack was being slightly overly dramatic and he knew it. There had always been problem students, and there had always been complaints. There always will be. It’s impossible for anyone engaged in a public act like teaching to please an entire audience. The larger that audience, the more inevitably somebody will be offended. A good teacher pitches the class at a B level of college work, challenging the C students (but not above their possible level of achievement), boring the A students, bewildering the F students. The more students he handles, the more any college professor will bore and bewilder. Any teacher can hope only to entertain and enlighten the many, while offending the few. He can only hope that the kudos outnumber the complaints, and that the complaints fall on understanding ears.

It is fair to say that Jack, beginning in the 1980s, was either unwilling or unable to adjust his public performance to what was becoming the normal Busiris undergraduate.

It is also accurate to say that the complaints, when they came, received a sympathetic and even eager audience in Old Main. The new breed of Busiris student meant complaints. The new breed of Busiris administrator meant trouble as a result of those complaints.

By 1982 Jack was disengaging himself not only from Busiris administration and faculty, but from most of his undergraduate students. Charles Creed had left Busiris by 1983.

Actually, he left in the fall of 1983.

Summer of 1983 was a repeat of summer 1982, with the inequity between institutional receipts and his summer stipend festering in Jack throughout May and June, as enrollment in his classes swelled past the requisite seven into double digits, into the twenties. Among his forty or fifty students he found no Lily Lee, only the string bikini looking for a better deal in English than in sociology. Jack's mood continued to sour throughout June and July. So did mine. I also taught two courses, to nearly as many students as he. Jack and I were equally fleeced.

"Summer school teaching may be the major blunder of my life," he told me a week into the session, "bigger than coming to Busiris in the first place. I can't write, I can't think. I'm grumpy here, I'm grumpy at home. I got fifty students, every one a goddamn minimalist. 'Is attendance mandatory? Do I have to read the books? What is the least I can do to sleaze through this class? How about more time for sun and suds, teach?' A bunch of asshole minimalists."

Then an odd question: "If you could somehow get a howitzer into the middle of the Busiris Quadrangle one night, how many buildings do you think you could level—I mean absolutely level—before you were stopped?"

"Not a good idea, Jack. Great fantasy, but not a good idea."

"Start with Old Main," Jack continued, somewhere between game and earnest. "One shell, two shells, the whole thing in a heap of bricks. Three shells max would demolish the place. Maybe half a minute to load each shell, fire, eject the casing. Two minutes, the building is a heap of bricks. Maybe there's a fire. Incendiary shells. One shell and Old Main's ablaze.

"You start with Old Main because anyone who happened to be inside and got killed would probably be an administrator, and

therefore deserve what he got. With any luck at all, you'd catch Reich and Nation *in flagrante*. Can you see Big Bert, pulling out to peer over his ruined balcony. 'What was that, my love?' 'Oh, fuck me, Bert!' " This was obviously a matter to which Jack had given much thought.

"Not even a good fantasy, Jack."

"Then the academic buildings. Busiris Hall, long and squat. One shell for old Busiris, two more for each of the wings. Bam, bam, bam. Heap of gray facing stones. Five minutes, you've finished off Old Main and Busiris. It's 2:00 a.m. Nobody knows what's hit the place. You got plenty of time left. You could take out every goddamn building around the quad in ten minutes. Bam. Bam. Bam. Nobody in there anyway. If some academic is working into the wee hours and is too stupid to run out and see what's happened to Old Main, then he's got no business teaching and deserves what he gets.

"Take the goddamn dorms, while you're at it. Do it on a vacation, and you've got time enough. Take out the goddamn dorms. Any kid who comes to Busiris when he could get a better education elsewhere for less money is either too stupid to realize he's being ripped off, or too stupid to get accepted elsewhere. Deserves what he gets. Bam. Bam. In twenty minutes, you could take out the whole goddamn campus.

"Maybe the howitzer is a bad idea. Mine the place. String the wires to a truck in the center of the quad, and start pushing buttons. Bam. Bam. Bam. Five fucking minutes. You drive away. How long do you think it would take to dynamite the whole campus?"

Jack smiled.

"You need a vacation," I told him.

"And a long one," he agreed. "A very long one. I'm developing a Bad Attitude, Tucker. And it doesn't promise to improve by fall. The thing about summer school is that you've put in a long year, and then you put in a long summer, and then boom, it's fall again. Your weary ass is looking at nine more months."

“Going east in August?”

“I can’t stand that either. I been there before. The river-boat captain was right on: it’s time to light out for the Territory.”

“How about one of those Famous Writers’ Programs? Be a Bread Loafer?”

“Oh, man. . . .”

“Get a sabbatical. Jesus Christ! Of all people on this campus you deserve a sabbatical. How long has it been? Over a decade! Take a semester off and go out to the West Coast, visit your buddy Kesey. Head for the North Country and hang out with Bly. Do an interview. Do a story. That’s legitimate scholarship.”

“Sabbaticals are frozen.”

“Since when?”

“Oh, nothing official. Applications are still being taken, but the idea of a sabbatical is just another empty promise on which Bert and Ernie have no intention of delivering. I have it from my secret sources in Old Main. No sabbaticals. Too expensive. Unpaid leaves, okay, because folks put on unpaid leave will not be replaced. People on sabbaticals would not be replaced either, but Oberführer Reich isn’t going to pay anyone 50% of his salary for doing anything that doesn’t make the university immediate money. Unless, of course, your name is Victoria Nation, who, you will note, is not teaching this summer, and was in fact been granted another year’s holiday at Bryn Mawr, underwritten, directly or indirectly, by summer school profits off courses taught by Tucker, Feracca and Creed.”

“Maybe you should get a degree in Women’s Studies.”

Jack and I spoke often over the long, dry summer of 1983 of our need to escape, recharge batteries, reclaim the vision. Our conversations—and the two rotten summers—underlay his decision to request, in August, an unpaid leave of absence for the upcoming term.

Out of the *Age of Faith* bonanza Jack had stashed about $5,000. He intended, I believe, to underwrite Lily Lee's M. A. studies (what he intended after her marriage, I never knew). Nearly a thousand remained of Jack's summer salary. Renting his furnished house for the months of September, October, November and December would net him nearly a thousand over mortgage and insurance. For six grand over the cost of air tickets, Jack figured, the family could spend four months in England, longer if they stayed clear of London.

"My life has been frozen too long," he told me. "I'm too tied to what everyone else wants. Now, for just a moment, it's gonna be what I need. Everyone else is just gonna have to wait."

I told him he had my vote.

Bert and Ernie bought the idea partly for economic reasons (Jack's classes, full as usual, could be reassigned to faculty with low pre-registrations, whose sections could then be canceled), and partly because paying Jack Creed only half a year's salary for half a year's work was the next best thing to paying him no year's salary for no work.

Rose Marié was not as opposed to the idea as Jack had expected. Even she could see the changes he was going through, and she accepted at least part of the blame for the summer school debacle. Rose Marié was enchanted as anyone else by the prospect of four months abroad, which she viewed as a second honeymoon. Jack in fact pitched the trip as a time for being together again, although a second honeymoon was the farthest thing from his mind. Mostly Rose Marié worried about the children's education. But Timm and Jenny Lynn were riding years of nearly straight A's. Both had I. Q.'s over 150, and both were taking classes in the district's enrichment program. Jack had no problem convincing the Superintendent of Riverton Schools that four months in England would benefit his kids more than even the most enriched programs that the system could offer. He promised they would keep abreast of reading assignments, and send biweekly letters.

So Jack spent the first week of August with his in-laws, and the next week in Riverton packing and arranging for care of his house. On August 16, 1983 (exactly nine days before we read in the Riverton *Standard-Republican* of Lily Lee's appointment as the new affirmative action officer at Busiris) Jack, Rose Marié, Timm, and Jenny May departed Chicago O'Hare for London Heathrow.

The department heard very little of Jack's adventures in England. Neither did I personally, nor did Lou Feracca, nor did any of his student friends. Rose Marié posted an early letter from London to let us know they'd arrived safely. Jack and I exchanged a couple of letters while he was in London. He indicated the city was more expensive than he remembered it and far less British. By the end of September he had rented a small car—a Simca as I recall—at something like a hundred pounds a month in which he proposed to tour the Isles from Inverness, Scotland to Brighton Beach. Starting around October 3 came a blizzard of picture postcards, posted one each day, each from a different village or town, which traced his journey north and west: St. Albans, Cambridge, King's Lynn, Lincoln, York Abbey, Whitby Abbey, Durham Cathedral, Lake Windermere, Edinburgh, Pitlochery, Inverness, Fort William, Oban. Warrick Castle. Loch Ness. Some town in Scotland I never heard of, with a photograph of little yellow narrow-gauge railroad.

Then the postcards stopped, and Jack, as it were, blinked out of the observable universe. Since the legs of Her Majesty's Post are short indeed from the recesses of the Scottish Islands, his disappearance was not immediately noticed. Postcards dribbled in from Tarbert, Salen, the Isle of Iona. Then it dawned upon us: we'd had no news of Jack in—what was it now?—three weeks, four weeks. Where had we last heard from him? Some island off an island off western Scotland? October melted into November, November to December. Not a syllable.

1984 arrived, and still no word from Jack.

Jack had rented his home through January to a couple at the bank. Had they heard anything from their landlord? Nothing. They'd

already purchased a home in the Dells, into which they intended to move on January 26th. They would let us know as soon as they heard from Jack.

The end of fall semester approached. Zero.

Final exams. Silence.

“So where are you tonight, Jack Creed?” Lou Feracca parodied at a New Years’ Eve party.

“He’ll be here,” I kept saying. “Remember that department meeting when we voted on the first Afro-American course?”

“A man shouldn’t leave his house unattended,” said Ted Jones. “I hope he’s satisfied with his spring schedule.”

“That would be exactly like Jack,” Feracca meditated aloud. “Take a job somewhere in North Scotland and not bother to tell Busiris.”

“Nothing he’d love better,” I agreed. “But Charles Creed will return.”

Jack returned to Riverton exactly four days before the first day of spring semester, only because his tickets specified a Tuesday through Thursday return. “Would love to have stayed a few days longer, but Sunday flight meant another $120 apiece, and we are running on empty,” he told me. “I was on the verge of wiring you and Lou: ‘sell the house, sell the car, sell the furniture, and send me the money.’ ”

Jack arrived in his office early Monday morning, deposited almost all of his mail in the waste basket, and dismissed his classes for the balance of the week. He explained, as always, his reasons for so doing and gave a reading assignment to busy those who felt cheated. Then he grabbed his Nikon camera and disappeared into the alleys of Riverton and the winter countryside of Central Illinois. His plan, conceived abroad, was to convert the Midwest diary idea into a photo journalism book on Ronald Reagan’s Illinois, a project

he hoped would be enormously marketable and liberate him once and for all from Busiris.

Rose Marié reclaimed her job at Helping Hands, and the children returned with almost no effort to their classes. Timm had picked up a slight accent, which made him something of a celebrity, especially after the *Standard-Republican* ran a feature story on the family travels (photographs by Jack). Most of what we learned about his travels came from that article, and from Rose Marié.

Owing to the cold and the short days, she told me, the family had traveled gradually south from Scotland along the western coast, through the Lake District and into North Wales, where Jack had set up for December and most of January at a bed-and-breakfast in a village named Betws-y-Coed. The family enjoyed a picture postcard Christmas, reading Anglo-Welsh poetry and touring the countryside with Timm and Jenny. Jack, Rose Marié claimed, had ignored her from the start of the trip, and she had been absolutely miserable. “London was just museums, and the rest of England was cathedrals, castles and hiking. We ate okay, especially with the breakfasts, but I put on fifteen pounds. If I never see another pea in my life, or a stewed tomato with a fried egg, that’s okay with me. I wanted to go to Ireland and buy some Waterford crystal cheap, but we just sat there in Wales. In London the shopping was great, but that was at the beginning of the trip. The car was too small to carry many souvenirs. By the time we returned to London at the end of the trip we had no money. And I had only a few days to shop.”

Time not spent feeding ponies, investigating slate mines, and hiking the trails of Snowdonia was invested in exploring Celtic sites, Roman forts, and Norman castles. In the evening, Jack read, and the children watched television or played invented games in front of a coal fire in the small lounge. Jenny Lynn became close friends with the neighbor’s daughter, and spent much of her time grooming the six white horses in the barn out back. Timm grew close to the host’s son Darryl, and spent his days in the local school. Jack and the husband, a clerk at one of the mines and a small potatoes politician,

scuttled from mine shaft to town meeting. Rose Marié, odd person out, withdrew into brooding, avoiding the hiking, the travels, and even the lounge, counting days until the end of January. In the end, she had given up arguing for Ireland (three and a half hours by ferry from Holyhead) or a quick return to London. Mostly she read her *England on $25 a Day*, counted their money, and wrote long letters to her parents.

The impact on Jack of this excursion through the U.K. is difficult to assess. It cemented his relationship with the children, and it completed the break with his wife. It had little impact on his published writing: Welsh literature did not influence his style or material, and his enthusiasm for a photo book on Reagan's Illinois waned with each publisher's polite "thanks but no thanks." The stay in Wales did set him up with a Fulbright position when he needed work. In nurturing his growing affinity for things European and rural, the excursion of 1983 might have been indirectly responsible for subsequent European ventures and for his application to Novum State.

The U. K. trip did not improve his attitude. If anything, it increased his alienation. During the spring of 1984 we saw less of the man than ever, and he did not teach summer school that year. Jack Creed never did, in any meaningful sense, return to Busiris Technical University.

Jack's trip to England was the reason he missed the return to Riverton in late August 1983, of Lily Lee Martin-Oliver. After his seven-year absence, Jim returned to Riverton as a vice president at First National. Lily Lee returned, with M. A. and two children, to a position as affirmative action officer at Busiris Technical University. Her appointment was part of a package negotiated between First National directors and Busiris trustees . . . several of whom were identical.

My first letter to Jack in England contained the newspaper clipping. His reaction came by return mail: "Ain't that the all-time pisser? How long have I waited for her, half sick, when I had a million

other places to be? And where then was absolutely sweet Lily? Not a word, not a message. I split for a few months, and who shows up but The Lady herself. Guess Big Jim finally delivered what I couldn't. This deal must have been cooking long before I left, and she did not phone or write. If Lily wants me, she knows where to contact me. If she doesn't . . . I guess I'll know where I stand. Not sure what I'd do myself. She's pretty much got it made now, and why fuck things up by resurrecting ghosts?"

Perhaps the upsetting news of Lily's return to Busiris was one reason Jack dropped out of touch with us all. One of the things Jack settled inside himself during his sabbatical was Lily. In front of a coal-fired furnace in Betws-y-Coed Jack concluded once and for all that Lily had transcended him. And that he should respect her wishes.

Not once between January 1983 and February 1985 did Lily Lee Martin-Oliver telephone Jack Creed. And not once did Jack telephone or write Affirmative Action Officer Lily Lee Martin-Oliver. When Lily met with the department concerning candidates for a tenure-track position, Jack was absent as usual from the meeting. In critiquing the Busiris Guidelines on Sexual and Racial Harassment, which Lily authored, Jack neither alluded to nor drew examples from their relationship. Jack would eagerly have cashiered his little following of juniors and seniors for just a phone call, but failing some token of grace, he was not about to make himself a problem.

The period following Jack's adventure abroad were perhaps the oddest of his career. The disengagement of 1983 was followed by another flurry of engagement . . . of a sort. Jack returned from England not to Lily Lee Martin, and certainly not to the department (where Victoria Nation and Ted Jones reigned unchallenged) or the University (where Hauptmann and Reich had cowed everyone, including the President and the Chairman of the Board), but to his cadre of undergraduates, and to a small office in the basement of the library.

And, oddest of odd oddities, to an appointment as faculty representative to the Bucks Boosters Association.

“It’s a dervish act,” Jack explained to me. “I’ve got four or five different places where I can be, where I should be. I go from one to the next to the next, everyone thinks, ‘He’s not in B. Hall 313; he must be in the library. He’s not in the library; he must be in Wales. He’s not in Wales; he must be at a Bucks meeting. He’s not with the Boosters; he must be in his office.” But I’m not anywhere. I’m sitting invisibly in the middle, taking a joint.”

That’s the way it worked. If I had a dollar for every time I heard, “If he’s not in his office, he’s probably in the library . . . or at a Bucks Boosters meeting” . . . well, I’d have more dollars than Jack and I received for summer session, 1982.

Jack’s library office was the gift of his old buddy Roger Holmes, another *quid* for the Chase papers *quo*. Holmes had conceived a plan for “permanent faculty study carols” to be assigned for a semester or longer to faculty “needing privacy and access to the university collections in their pursuit of serious scholarly research.” Holmes believed that significant writing and research were possible at Busiris: *Age of Faith* and Creed’s announced Reagan project were proof positive that significant research and writing could be done at Busiris Technical University. Such research, Holmes reasoned, should be pursued under conditions more favorable than a faculty office (or a student’s bedroom). While Busiris could no longer support research financially, it could offer space. Space would be allocated on a competitive basis, competition would inspire production, institutional reputation would be enhanced, the new Manuscripts and Special Collections room would gather manuscripts and special collections (including, down the road, the Charles Creed papers). Busiris would become a Center . . . all at minimal cost to the school. The whole project could be billed as “faculty development,” and it was far less costly than the old twelve-month contracts with alternate summers free for research. Reich approved the plan upon first presentation.

Even as Jack was recreating himself in rural Wales, a broom closet deep in the recesses of the library basement was being

rehabbed into the first faculty study carol. In February, Holmes presented Jack with the key to the room: a windowless ten-by-twelve cubicle equipped with a desk, one set of shelves, and a piece of salvaged gray industrial carpet to warm the cement floor and hide the manhole cover.

“That manhole is the fire exit to this room,” Holmes told Jack. “In case of fire, pull back the carpet, lift the lid, and follow the steam pipes to Old Main. Or Busiris Hall. Or anywhere else on campus.”

“This is right out of Bob Dylan,” Jack mused. “Or *The Blues Brothers*.”

“It’s no joke,” Holmes told him. “I actually had to give the fire marshals a signed, written statement from Buildings and Grounds to the effect that a grown man can comfortably crawl or walk through these tunnels in the event a fire blocked his normal exit from McKinley Library.

“This is your map,” he said, opening the desk’s upper right hand drawer, “and this is a flashlight so you can see in the dark. Keep the batteries fresh at all times. The City Fire Marshall is watching you. I have also managed to divert a new IBM Selectric typewriter to this office.”

“You always were a generous man!”

“Of the typewriter, say nothing. Nobody knows. Not even Bertholt the Turd.”

“You’re a clever fellow, Holmes,” said Jack, adding two keys—one to the building and one to the study carol—to his key ring. “I appreciate this more than you will ever know.”

Jack spent that afternoon moving several cartons of books and a number of posters out of his old office and into his new. Thereafter we saw him in Busiris only for classes and posted office hours. He was nearly as invisible as he’d been the semester previous.

In the happy solitude of his basement carol, in less than two years, on his shiny new IBM Selectric, Jack produced a hundred

manuscript pages on Reagan's Illinois, eight short stories (including "Daisy" and "The Watchers"), his critique of the Busiris sexual harassment guidelines, half a dozen articles published in the *Standard-Republican,* Op Ed pieces for the *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, and the two major essays "Women's Liberation: the Conservative Revolution" and "The Teacher as Nigger."

These manuscripts never did find their way into the Special Collections Center. Holmes left Busiris even before Jack, and with him whatever personal commitment Jack might have felt to the Library. After February of 1985, of course, Jack was of no mind to leave Busiris with anything short of a Big Damn Mess.

Certainly the most puzzling aspect of Jack's last year at Busiris was his service as faculty representative on the Bucks Boosters Association, beginning with his return to campus in 1984. The position carried no teaching release, and brought Jack into weekly contact with the kind of crew cuts and blue suits who, as undergraduates or parents of undergraduates, drove him nuts. It also involved what must have been a painful monthly luncheon with Booster bigwigs and former Buck athletes, including the husband of his former lover. To the astonishment of all of us, Jack actively sought the position. Even more astonishingly, Old Main approved the appointment. Either Hauptmann and Reich were unaware of Jack's withdrawal from all other areas of Busiris life, or they saw this as a chance to extract some form of service from their associate professor of English.

While not exactly Mr. Public Relations, Jack had a well-known fondness for athletes. Basketball coach Marty Miller sometimes used Jack to help recruit key players (the Bucks Belles were a thing of the past), and Jack attended probably half of the away games in 1984-85. When he promised to author a series of articles for the *Alumni News*, the appointment was his. (Only two were actually written and published.) Why he subjected himself to the two-hour weekly meetings of the Boosters Association was beyond Lou and me.

“For the tickets and the eats,” he once told me. “And as a gift to my kids. Timm likes hanging out with the basketball players. Jenny likes hanging out with cheerleaders. I, as you know, admire talented athletes as much as beautiful women. Beauty and talent are hard work, Tucker. I respect hard work.”

“The Boosters are a bunch of boozing, bigoted, overweight high-rollers who have never in their lives read a book without pictures,” I told him. “What you got to say to them?”

Jack did not answer.

“There’s talk around the Department,” I told him honestly. “Seems you’ve got plenty of time to gallivant around Wales and take in basketball games, but not enough time for a department meeting. Lots of time to recruit power forwards for Marty Miller, no time for prospective creative writing majors.”

“This very semester I am giving a tutorial to a freshman creative writing major. If and when she shows up.”

“Squirrely Shirley? No talent at all.”

“Have not yet seen a thing she’s written, but I’d guess you’re right. If she’s hopeless, all the more *pro bono*.”

“You know what we mean, Jack.”

“I invest my time where it does me the most good. And, this with a touch of sarcasm, “where I can best serve the institution.”

“Do you really consider those downtown luncheon meetings more important than department meetings?”

“There are intangibles, Tucker. The Bucks Boosters Association is this town’s real power structure. They may be assholes, but they are powerful assholes. These fuckers are more powerful even than Bert and Ernie. I now have leverage within the power structure. I can tell them, ‘Well, the faculty would support this, the faculty would not support that. . . .’ To the extent that they care about the faculty, they listen to what I say. My influence on the Boosters gives me more

leverage on the institution than the goddamn English Department or Busiris Senate will ever have."

"You really believe that?"

"Yes, I do," he said. "You people in the English Department are always sitting around bitching about getting no support from Riverton. Ted Jones: 'You never see any of the townspeople at our Poets on Campus readings.' Vicky Nation: 'Our Women Scholars Series got absolutely no help from those male chauvinists downtown.' When did the English department ever support a Boosters Association project? You want something, you got to give something for it.

"Ever see Vicky at a Bucks game? Not even the Lady Bucks, and you can watch them for free. Women athletes are the cutting edge of American feminism: smart, talented, good looking, self-assured. Work their butts off for no support. Vicky should support them. Male athletes are grace under pressure. Poetry in motion. Jones wants poetry, he should watch a Bucks game. The English Department is a bunch of asshole snobs.

"Something else I learned that year in Old Main. Around Busiris, a program gets done not because of its merit, but because of funding. Funding is, in fact, the sole determinant: if funding is available, even a bad, stupid, ill-conceived program will be implemented. Witness Women's Studies. Failing funding, even good programs will die. This institution is the ultimate whorehouse. We are all flat on our backs. As far as Riverton funding goes, the Bucks Boosters control the bucks. Period."

"Talk around the campus is that Creed is looking for a way out of Busiris, maybe something downtown. You don't think for a minute those people accept you as one of their own."

"I am not one of their own, Tucker. I am not in the slightest interested in a position at First National Fucking Bank, or Timberman Fucking Brothers Fucking Construction."

“One theory is that you’re following somebody else from the B. S. A. to the B. B. A. . . .”

“Lily Lee is out of this.”

“I know that, Jack. Do you? She’s not going to show up at one of your Booster luncheon parties.”

Jack’s eyes focused on some point in the far distance.

“To tell you the truth, Tucker, I’ve got some reasons. I can’t explain them, but they don’t involve Lily, and I’m not coming in from the cold. Every man has an obligation to go where he feels he has to go, and do what he feels he has to do. If I leave my kids with one lesson, that’s what I want it to be. For my students and for Timm and Jenny. This just feels like something I ought to be doing right now. I can’t explain it any other way except that I have my reasons.”

“It is a remarkable thing to see the author of *Age of Faith, Age of Folly* and the personal friend of Ken Kesey, Phil Farmer and Robert Bly writing PR pieces for the *Alumni News*.”

“Well, that’s just shit.”

I didn’t pursue the matter.

So English Department faculty saw very little of Jack during his last year at the school. You might hear him on Radio Busiris during the halftime chat of a Bucks game. If you had money for front row seats, you could catch Jack and the kids at the game itself, alive with the old animation, not far from where Jim Oliver sat, sans wife or kids, with a handful of his old teammates. Or after the game, glad handing some Bucks Booster, cracking jokes with the cheerleaders about the pompom girls. Congratulating or commiserating with Coach Miller, Andre Washington, or some of his other player-friends. Jack met most of his classes, almost all lower division undergraduate courses. Occasionally a small group of us, faculty and students, hit the Friday afternoon happy hours at the Holiday Inn. (Jack had pretty much abandoned the Heidelberger in 1977.) Occasionally he, Lou Feracca and I did a burger lunch at Tookey’s.

Occasionally Jenny Lynn would exercise her option not to attend school, and we'd see the two of them watching television in the lounge, or emerging from the student center, or getting into the car on their way to the zoo.

But most of the time Jack was not among us. He was in England. He was in the library. He was downtown with the Bucks Boosters. He was chatting up some coed over a Coke in the Student Center. He was photographing the back roads and villages of Reagan's Illinois. He was at home. He was not in England. He was not in the library. He was not downtown with the Boosters or with a woman friend. He was not at home. He was . . . gone. Like his own Bernard Feuerstein in "The Watchers," Jack was simply out there somewhere. A presence, an absence, an accusation, a lesson.

A warning.

# Chapter 8
# **Assassination**

John Charles Creed did not come to the events of February 8, 1985 unwarned, although administration had done its best to keep it all hid. Lily Lee's Guidelines on Sexual and Racial Harassment, circulated in the fall of 1984, should have tipped him off. New rules are always designed to hang somebody. Administrative reaction to Jack's critique of the document, published in the *Sentinel,* should have been another sign. Old Main remained absolutely aloof from a debate that ran to three weeks and sixteen letters, columns, and articles. Not a word from Reich, Hauptmann, or the author of the Guidelines. And Victoria Nation had been skulking around the corridors of Busiris Hall for the better part of fall term. Clearly Jack was being given rope enough to hang himself.

The very scheduling of a meeting late on Friday afternoon should also have suggested trouble of a serious nature. Jack's previous altercations had been settled over the phone or in the middle of the week. Marcus, Finkelstein, and Browne were all taken out on a Friday afternoon, in classic corporate America busts. Bring 'em in after everyone else has left for the weekend. Tell 'em to clean out their desks by Saturday noon. When Monday rolls around and the rest of the office finds out, the problem kids are long gone. What's the use of raising a stink?

Jack's friends on the faculty were kept pretty much in the dark, of course, including Lou Feracca and me. We didn't even know about the meeting until after the fact. Jeremy Jones did, but said nothing. Attempting to exculpate himself, he gave himself away: "When they asked me, I just said, 'Well leave me out of this one. I'm a friend of his.' " Jones claimed to have been "on his knees" the whole first week of February, although this too he revealed after the fact.

Undergraduate friends were more savvy and more forthcoming, most notably Jack's cheerleader friend Carolyn McQuillan and his Polish buddy Paul Popowski. In mid-December, Carolyn had drawn Jack aside after a Bucks game. "Blondie Robertson is having some kind of meeting about you this weekend," she informed him. "I wasn't invited because she knows we're tight, but a couple of other English majors are going. I'll try to find out what it's about. I promise to let you know." Jack thanked her. The subject was never again discussed, although Jack saw Carolyn (and Blondie, who was a member of the pompom squad) at virtually every Bucks game between December and February 11.

Jack forgot the matter.

Sometime around February 3 or 4th, another English major, Joline Harte, reported to Jack that when she'd complained to the dean about her psych. class, all Hauptmann wanted to discuss was her departmental advisor. Was Professor Creed meeting his classes regularly? Was he prepared for his classes? How did he treat her? How did he treat women and minority students in general? Was Professor Creed really the chauvinist his writing made him appear? Jo had received the distinct impression that complaints were being solicited. Jo told Hauptmann she considered Charles Creed the best teacher in the department and possibly in the school, the best advisor a student could have, the best friend a woman could have.

So Jack was aware of trouble brewing, although he had no idea how serious that trouble would be. Whatever it was, he considered Carolyn and Jo not a part of it. They were his kind of people, part of a saving remnant in a rising mass of mediocrity. So what was new? Charles Creed had always known he had friends . . . and enemies.

Paul Popowski brought a third warning the day of the 8th, during a burger-and-beer lunch at Tookey's Tap.

Feracca and I were not there. We were not purposefully absent, as Charles in his paranoia later suspected, but Charles told me later that Paul described at 12:30 precisely what would transpire at 4:00.

Jack and Paul talked maybe five minutes about the semester break and the new term. Then Paul came to the point with the directness of a man on a mission. “Word is that Blondie Robertson is getting you busted this May on a sexual harassment charge,” he announced.

“That’s the first I’ve heard about that,” Jack answered, which was not entirely true. “I meet with the Vice President this afternoon at 4:00. Maybe Blondie is what that meeting is all about.” Jack told Paul what he’d heard from Jo and Carolyn.

“Blondie says it’s all settled,” Paul said. “Come May, you’re gone. She seems pretty smug.”

Jack assured his young friend that he had never harassed Leanna Robertson. That he had no interest in Leanna Robertson. That he had never expressed the slighted interest in Leanna Robertson. “Blondie is a Young American for Freedom. I’m interested strictly in Students for a Democratic Society,” Jack told Popowski. Then he explained Y. A. F. and S. D. S. to twenty-two-year-old Paul, who had heard of neither. Nor had Popowski heard the story of the 1971 dismissals, or the firings of Marcus DeLotta, Aaron Finkelstein, and Ben Allan Browne.

“Heavy shit,” Popowski agreed.

“It’s every bit as ugly hanging around the Busiris ink well as thinking about the D. C. government.”

“What does Blondie have on you, Professor Creed?”

“I know she got pretty punched out of shape over my reading of Ginsberg’s ‘Howl’.”

“I was in that class.”

“The ‘Howl’ business is all I can think of, really. She hasn’t taken a class from me since her freshman year. We don’t get along, for the same reasons you and she don’t get along. I don’t respect what she represents, and I suppose she doesn’t respect what I represent. The

difference is that you and I are willing to live and let live. She, I'm afraid, is not."

"The real difference is that you're willing to admit you have a body, and she has yet to come to terms with hers. She's a senior, Dr. Creed, and still a virgin, if that tells you anything. She's a pompom girl, but she's still living in 1954."

"I see her at the Bucks games. She was Kappa Delta's homecoming queen candidate."

"She was, until the Women's Studies people convinced her that was uncool."

"Hanging out with Miss Vicky can't help her any," Jack mused. "Although I could tell you some stories about Victoria Nation."

"Like?"

"I could, but I won't. Anyway, Blondie will one day repent her misspent youth. Probably she does already, subconsciously. But women are a complex mix of impulses, Paul. As I'm sure you've noticed."

"Tell me, Dr. Creed."

"Tell me something I don't know."

"There was a meeting at Blondie's place. She and a bunch of other girls from the Women's Studies Program."

"This also I know."

"They're pretty tight about what went on. Carolyn and Jo think it has something to do with PP 469 last fall."

PP 469 was something Jack did not know.

"Women's Studies 469, Professor Nation's seminar in applied feminist politics. We've been calling it 'Pussy Power for 69.' Get it? The women were very close about what went on in that class, but apparently the general idea was to translate theory into action. If you can imagine any of those broads actually doing anything besides

bitch and whine. Carolyn suspects their action involves you. Anyway, I overheard Blondie mouthing off about getting you railroaded out of here. When she noticed me, she shut up real quick. I'd take her seriously, Professor Creed. And watch out for Sandy the Chaste, and Annie Brower too. Man, she doesn't like you. Did you fuck her and dump her or something?"

"Would I tell you if I had?" Jack asked. "You're one of my best friends right now, and I trust you. I tell you that sincerely. We share a lot of things, Paul. But whether or not I'm banging Annie Brower would be a strictly private matter.

"I have not, incidentally, been intimate with Ms. Brower. Nor with Miss Chase. Annie B. took me for freshmen comp., creative writing, and world literature . . . at least until she dropped the class. Been following me around for two years. She's cute, but she's not bright. Annie's young. Not too young for you, Paul, but way too young for me. Although in a way I agree with you guys: Annie B. cool."

"That may be something you don't know, Professor Creed," Popowski informed his mentor. "Annie no longer be cool. She took Professor Nation's Women's Studies class and has been a different woman ever since. Maybe that's why she dropped your class. Something else you might not know: Annie B. spent her first two years at Busiris going down quick and easy for every frat boy on the row. Used to call her 'Annie Hinge Heels.' Now you date her six weeks without getting into her pants. The frat boys blame Professor Nation. Sigma Nu has a stuffed effigy of Professor Nation hanging in their entrance hall. It's got a witch's cap and in its hands a little doll full of pins, labeled 'Annie B.' Annie was at Blondie's meeting. So was Sandy the Chaste. I'd be careful."

"If Blondie Robertson, Sandy Chase, and Annie Brower are all Bert and Ernie have to complain about this afternoon," Charles promised, "we'll be finished in five minutes."

"Well watch the plain clothes, Dr. Creed," Paul suggested. You never know what's going down."

While Jack's reaction may seem overly complacent, let us remember that this was 1985, long Before Anita Hill. It was not yet apparent that "sexual harassment" might be whatever a woman—or an administrator—wanted to make of it. In his own mind Jack was convinced that whatever he had done, with whomever he had done it, did not constitute harassment in any reasonable definition. And who would be in a better position to understand that than Harassment Officer Lily Lee Martin-Oliver? The thought of Lily Lee investigating his private life made him more than a little uncomfortable, but a large part of Jack's private business at Busiris was Lily Lee. He saw the 4:00 meeting as part of the on-going battle between management and unionless labor, which was governed even its most acrimonious moments by fairness among adversaries.

Other guarantees obtained as well, including the First Amendment, academic freedom, and academic tenure. There were lawyers if you needed them, a contract, and the ACLU. As a final resort, there was always the threat of a Big Damned Mess in the newspapers. Jack anticipated a disagreeable confrontation along lines already too familiar, followed by more anger, frustration, and alienation. Maybe he'd write a piece on censorship for the *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Maybe another letter in the Riverton *Standard-Republican*, or even an interview with one of the kids from the Busiris *Sentinel*. In this case the possibilities for play might be circumscribed by the nature of the problem, but on February 8, 1985, Charles was convinced that Leanna Robertson was not going to railroad him anywhere.

He dropped Popowski at his apartment and returned to campus, where he spent the afternoon in the basement of McKinley Library, working on "Heading Home," a short story which has nothing to do with sexism or racism. Charles Creed's attention was clearly not focused on his meeting with Hauptmann and Reich.

Around 3:45 Charles returned to Busiris Hall, to find on his office door a sealed note reminding him of his 4:00 appointment. He found also Deirdre Williams, come to see him on some business that

remained unclear. “I was a little distracted, of course, but I honest to god couldn’t decide what she was talking about,” Jack told Lou Feracca and me. “She rambled—she was talking about nothing, really. She wasn’t even in my class this term. For a while I thought I was being hit on, but the conversation did not sound like an invitation . . . although a student who comes to your office on a Friday afternoon, when everyone else on campus is getting drunk or arranging sex, has probably got more on her mind than sentence fragments and comma splices. I was just about to tell her, ‘look, I’d love to talk, but I have an appointment to see the Vice President,’ when she says, ‘I just wanted to see you again, and tell you to have a good weekend.’ Then she was gone.”

Williams was one of the striking ones. She had a very full figure, lips not as ripe as some, but high cheek bones and bedroom eyes. Deirdre was a lot more seasoned than most Busiris coeds—a younger Lily Lee, slightly more troubled, slightly less sassy. Jack had gone as far with her as a lunch at the Heidelberger. On that occasion she announced—with no more invitation than the fact of the meal—that she felt absolutely but unwillingly monogamous. “It’s like my boyfriend has tattooed his initials on my cunt,” she told Jack over a Reuben sandwich. What, she wondered, could be done about this troublesome commitment to unmarried monogamy?

“The metaphor left me so nonplused,” Charles said, “that I couldn’t make the obvious suggestion. I hadn’t even made up my mind about her, and there she was coming right at me. This happened right after Lily Lee’s harassment guidelines, when all those letters were appearing in the *Sentinel*. I thought she was a set-up, and maybe she was. But I didn’t want to insult her by acting as if she was a plant. I mean, what kind of an insult would that be? We finished our meal in studied irrelevancies.”

Williams made no mention of the tattoo on Friday afternoon.

“The curious thing,” Charles told me, “was I met her again in Old Main, as I left Reich, around 4:15, when every office in the building

had closed for the weekend. She had as little business in Old Main as she had at my office. She was just, apparently, there."

Deirdre was not among the students at Leanna Robertson's meeting, and not among students making written complaints about Charles' behavior. Deirdre was at the Sunday night meeting of Students in Support of Charles Creed. Given the conversation at the Heidelberger, it's unimaginable that Deirdre could have complained about harassment.

Jack's final theory was that Deirdre had come to his office to warn him he was going to get hit, and possibly to offer support. Then she fell into complete confusion before exiting with the "have a good weekend" remark. Reconsidering, she tried to intercept him in Old Main, then collapsed again when they met there, and disappeared in utter confusion.

At 4:55 Charles donned his yellow Caterpillar cap and blue denim jacket, blew a ritual departure kiss to the photo of his kids, put a stick of Juicy Fruit chewing gum in his mouth, and closed his office door behind him. He walked down three floors to Hauptmann's office —as per Hauptmann's request—so they could walk together to Old Main.

This meeting was obviously important to administration. Hauptmann had scheduled it in a phone call on the 4th. A written reminder had arrived via inter-campus mail on the 5th. On the 8th, Hauptmann's secretary had telephoned while Jack was lunching with Popowski or writing in his McKinley Library office. Hauptmann sent her to post a reminder on Jack's door. He and Reich were taking no chances.

They had cut themselves little slack. A late January meeting was impossible, as Jack was off campus on semester break. A meeting at the end the fall term would have given Jack several weeks to consider his options. A meeting on the 15th of February might have given Charles a legal claim, under the advanced notice

of termination clause of his contract, to another year's salary. The window was narrow indeed.

"I wonder how events would have transpired if I'd just skipped Bert's little tea party and headed out to Burr Oak Park," Jack mused several years later. "Jumped down a manhole somewhere. Taken the kids' warnings seriously. Invited Deirdre Williams to the Holiday Inn for a few brews. Anyone with good sixties political sense should have seen the set-up coming. The old sixties fox, though thrice-warned, was caught napping."

Hauptmann betrayed little. Had he any inkling of the visits of Williams and Popowski, or of Jack's awareness of the Robertson meeting . . . if the Dean was at all surprised at the sight of a man walking casually to his own execution . . . if he felt any sense of satisfaction at his impending revenge for previous affronts public and private, he gave no indication, except, perhaps his studied civility. Hauptmann extended his hand to Jack, clapped him like a Sicilian on the shoulder, coughed twice deep in the throat, and inquired how his week had gone.

"Not as pleasant as the two weeks previous," Jack answered, "but it had its moments."

This invitation to further inquiry went unpursued. Jack concluded that his dean was not at all interested in his week nor, in all probability, in anything he might have to say about Leanna Robertson. He launched another trial balloon.

"I did talk with my agent Tuesday last about the Reagan book. She says she has a New York house interested." This invented phone conversation, fraught with implications regarding the career of Busiris' most celebrated writer, should have interested Hauptmann. He left the second question blank as the first, flunking Jack's pop quiz.

Jack in his denim jacket and Hauptmann in his trench coat walked in silently through the Gothic arches and down the oak-flanked sidewalk on which Ted Jones had escaped the Hilton

demonstration a decade earlier. A pair of local mutts had chased a gray squirrel up one of the trees. The squirrel spiraled the trunk a few times, then proceeded to shower the ranting canines with fragments of bark and shards of ice. The sight was funny, if you had a sense of humor.

Hauptmann did not. He coughed again. “You’ve been at this institution a number of years,” he said.

“I have served this institution well,” Jack reminded him. “I was on the search committee that hired your predecessor. I go back so far, I remember Busiris during the good times. I go back so far, I remember getting a raise larger than the year’s inflation.”

“Professor Creed, this is serious business.”

“Nothing is more serious than a 2% raise in a year of 10% inflation, Ernie. Ask any of the faculty or staff. Especially the ones with families.”

“The topic of today’s conversation is not your salary.”

“The topic of today’s conversation has not been revealed.”

“It’s something you did.”

“When?”

“Repeatedly.”

“To whom?”

“I am not at liberty to reveal.”

“You can’t tell me what or when, but I’ve been doin’ it again and again.”

Another silence. The sidewalk was gray and wet and empty. Only four or five vehicles in the Old Main parking lot, including Lily Lee’s white Chevy and Reich’s gray BMW. Even the library had closed, which tells you more than a little about Busiris in those days. 4:00 on a Friday afternoon in early February, with nothing for

students to look forward to but March, and McKinley Library was closed.

“All I can say about this matter is that it’s something *you* did, and a great deal depends on *your* reaction.” Hauptmann spoke not threateningly, but without consideration and without conviction.

There is a small moment in the classic film *The Blue Angel*—two moments, actually—which compress whole worlds of ambiguous messages into the most fleeting of glances. On his way to Lola Lola’s room, the enraptured Professor passes the troupe’s clown, who gives him a sad, quizzical expression that passes unnoticed. Toward the end of the film in a parallel scene, the Professor himself, wearing the clown suit, is passed by the cabaret singer’s new lover on his way to her boudoir. The Professor’s expression mimics that of the suit’s previous owner.

What is the unspoken message in that expression?

“Do not do this.”

“Do not do this to me.”

“Do not do this to yourself.”

“I, returned from that hell, could warn you. But I do not, and for that you have my sincerest apologies.”

“You do this thing to yourself. I am helpless to keep you from it. We are all fools, and there is nothing for any of us.”

On their way to the elevator in Old Main, Creed and Hauptmann passed the office of Affirmative Action Officer Lily Lee Martin-Oliver. Reflexively Jack looked through the open door, directly into the eyes of the woman he had loved for a decade, the woman to whom he had not spoken in half a decade. Surely Lily knew of Jack’s meeting with Reich, and she chose to be in her office at 4:02 on Friday afternoon, stationed behind her desk and directly in front of the door she chose to leave open. How had she known the instant of their passing? How long could she have sat there facing the open door? Had she watched as the pair crossed the gray campus from Busiris

Hall to Old Main, listened for their footsteps down the hall, then moved quickly into position behind her desk? How many other pairs of eyes watched from how many other windows, roofs or doors?

How long does it take a man, walking at his normal gait, to pass a three-foot doorway? How long for two pairs of eyes to lock on each other?

Not a second. Not half a second. Yet in that split second was said everything . . . and nothing.

“Turn around. Run away.”

“Go ahead. I am with you. I am always on your side, Jack.”

“I have said nothing.”

“I told them everything. I had no choice.”

“I’m as helpless in this matter as you are.”

“I know . . . everything. I have chosen not to help you.”

“You’ve done this thing to yourself. It’s entirely out of my hands.”

What Charles Creed most desperately wanted to read in her eyes was the message he had not heard since Lily’s return to Busiris. The declaration that neither of them was in any position to confront. The promise that was, both knew, best left unspoken.

Maybe that was there too.

Maybe it was not. Everything and nothing. Then that briefest of moments passed, and the gray walls of Old Main intervened once more between them. An elevator took Creed and Hauptmann to the third floor, where another gray door opened into Reich’s office, an office full of gray upholstered chairs, gray curtains, and one of those gold-metal framed family portraits, lobotomized mom and sanitized dad standing behind three kids, all laundered and pressed, a cheesy smile on each face.

And the gray arm of the Vice President motioned Charles across the gray carpet into a gray upholstered chair, and the door shut

behind him.

Hauptmann, Reich, and Charles were the only individuals in that room. No lawyers, no assistants, no Affirmative Action Officer. Reich read his prepared letter verbatim, without introduction, cordial or otherwise. He was as emotionless as Hauptmann. While Popowski's warning had prepared Charles for its opening paragraph, Jack flushed at the mention of physical grabbing and sexual intimacy. He flushed again at the word "racist." When Reich moved toward the subject of dismissal for cause, a mental buzzing began in the back of his head which drowned out some of what the Vice President was saying. He felt also a distinct distancing from the situation, the thought, "This has happened to Marcus and Aaron and Ben Allan. To a dozen good men, at this very institution, in this very room. Now it is happening to you. Today you join those millions of Americans fired each year. You have finally stepped into the trap you can't wriggle out of."

There was also denial: "This cannot be happening. This is a major annoyance, but something, as always, will be worked out."

Charles heard mention of rights and lawyers and courts. He heard the threat of hearings. Of course he heard the deadline for resignation. He did not hear the offer of financial benefits.

Nor did he hear any indication that his future hinged in any way on his reaction to Reich's charges and options.

"It was clear to me, even in my confused state," Charles told me the following morning, "that I had been arrested, arraigned, tried, judged and sentenced before I walked into the room. And the punishment did not fit the crime. Whatever the crime was."

When he finished reading, Reich handed Creed a carbon of the letter and requested his signature at the bottom of the original. Jack retained enough of his senses to decline the signature, on the good sixties theory that whatever The Man wants you to do is unlikely to be in your own best interest.

“Your signature is to indicate receipt of this notification,” Hauptmann explained.

Jack assured him he would be signing nothing until he spoke with a lawyer. Mentally he inventoried those who he thought might legitimately have complained about harassment or racism, including Deirdre Williams, considering also the possibilities of gossip and phone taps and plants in the bed. “I have a very strong record on assisting women,” Jack told Reich, “as many women can attest, including your affirmative action officer. I have an equally exemplary record on matters of race, as Lily and Jim and any number of black students will attest. I have, in my time, seriously jeopardized my reappointment at Busiris with my support of both blacks and women. I look upon blacks and women as my absolute equals”

Reich remained silent. “I can assure you, further, I have never said anything intentionally sexist, intentionally racist, or intentionally, to students at least, offensive. I absolutely have never traded sex for grades or even offered to trade sex for grades. I have in fact on at least one occasion declined such an offer.

“Finally,” Jack added, “I am not about to resign a tenured position over unspecified charges from unnamed individuals.”

Hauptmann assured him that several young women reported being physically touched. One claimed to have been invited to “fuck her brains out.”

“All the students have all been interviewed by myself, Dean Hauptmann, or Mrs. Martin-Oliver [he seemed to place a special emphasis on the name], and we are, unfortunately, convinced they are telling the truth. I am further convinced, Professor Creed, that a case for your dismissal for cause would be upheld.”

“You haven’t even talked to half the people involved,” Creed told Reich, “that half being me. And you haven’t talked to any of my people. I can give you a dozen, I can give you five dozen students and former students who would give me very strong support.”

The argument was less a matter of self-defense than a subtle threat of the Big Damn Mess, a tactic which had proven effective with Martin Stoddard. Jack had been trying to provoke such a public explosion at Busiris for years, most recently on the contingency contract matter. Reich certainly knew that. He would not, Jack was certain, risk a public showdown.

The implied threat wrought not the slightest hint of fissure in Reich's composure. He yielded not an inch. "We are concerned not with your dozen or dozens, but with these specific cases, Dr. Creed," Reich asserted. "Your attitudes toward harassment, as published in the student newspaper, make perfectly clear your own callous position on this extremely sensitive issue. We take sexism and racism very seriously in this office. We would find cause for concern in the legitimate complaint of just one student. And there are more than one."

"The issue of harassment, as I pointed out in *The Sentinel*, is very complex. I'm open to a public discussion . . . I have even tried to create a public debate on the subject of harassment. I will even publicly answer charges and complaints. But I will not, in these times, jeopardize my ability to support my family because of unspecified complaints from anonymous persons."

Reich leaned back in his chair, pressed the tips of his fingers together, and with distraction bordering on weariness spoke for the first time outside of a prepared text.

"Dr. Creed," he said, the father explaining facts of political life to his adolescent son. "Charles. We are talking, first, about a hearing in front of the committee on tenure, promotion, and dismissal. This is not a court of law. This is an administrative hearing. It is like a trial, but not all the rules of a court proceeding obtain. I have presided at more than one such hearing, and they are not pleasant for either administration or faculty. In addition, the transcript of such a hearing would become part of your permanent record. I hope you will spare yourself, your family, your colleagues, your supporters, and your career the unpleasantness of such a public hearing."

“Dr. Reich,” answered Jack, looking directly into Reich’s eyes, “such a hearing would no doubt injure my reputation and my career. I can, however, assure you that many individuals on and off campus detest this institution, or at least its present leadership. They might look upon my departure as signaling the beginning of the end of both the institution and its present leadership. Many on this campus, even among those whose salaries Busiris pays, would rejoice to see this institution swallowed whole by the ground it rests upon.”

“Mr. Creed,” Reich responded, “don’t make idle threats. Don’t invite scandals, avoid them. As you yourself have pointed out, you have a family and a career to protect. Whatever villainy you imagine, this institution is simply larger than you are, and so I am in a stronger position than you are. Besides [his eyes lost their dreamy abstraction and locked directly on Charles], information regarding certain other individuals, who themselves have made no complaint against you, might surface in such a hearing. Probably you would not want that information made public, or those individuals dragged into a public hearing. This is something you might wish to consider.”

The hint of a smile flickered across Reich’s face, the amusement of one who has just sprung a well concealed trap in a game of chess.

Oddly, Jack had never considered the possibility of being manipulated into a situation in which he himself would fear the Big Damn Mess. Naively, he had not considered his enemies clever enough to construct such a trap, or evil enough to use it. Lily’s glance took on increased significance.

Only one card remained to be played. “You’ll hear from a lawyer,” Creed told Reich, rising from his seat.

“We can speak through a lawyer if you wish,” Reich told Creed. “A man in your position should spare himself that expense, but speak to a lawyer if you wish. Then the University’s lawyer will speak with your lawyer. Then, I expect, your lawyer will explain to you the advantages of the course I have already suggested.

“Considering the severity of your offenses, we have made you a generous offer. Accept it. You are no longer a naive teenage hippie. You are old enough to understand that anyone can be bought. White men and black women can be bought, Dr. Creed. Whatever you have done to yourself, and others have done to you, you too now find yourself a situation where you too can be bought. You have been made a generous offer, Professor Creed. Accept it.”

“You’ll hear from a lawyer,” Charles repeated, folding his letter into a pocket, collecting cap and jacket, and leaving Reich’s office in the grandest style he could manage.

Exiting the elevator on the first floor of Old Main, Jack was greeted by Deirdre Williams.

“I just got fired,” he told her stupidly as she passed. Her face registered no surprise. She kept walking down the hall.

Lily Lee’s office door, Charles noted in passing, was closed, and her car was gone from the parking lot.

The two mutts and the squirrel were gone. Black clouds filled the winter sky, and the wind had picked up. February in Riverton left nothing to look forward to except March.

Jack’s odd sense of detachment gave him a surprising clarity of thought, despite the buzzing brain. Back in B. Hall 313 he unfolded the letter and read again the first paragraph, focusing on the complaints. They were vague beyond identification. Whom had he grabbed? What was a grab? A hug around the shoulder? A pat on the ass? Charles was no ass grabber. What constituted “flagrant sexism”? And when had sexism become a hanging crime?

What was with this racism shit? Who on the Busiris campus had more jeopardized his own career to press the cause of Afro-American rights? If Reich and Hauptmann knew anything, they knew that. If they didn’t, Lily Lee could have set them straight in a moment.

With whom had he traded grades for sex? No one, least of all Lily Lee. Charles always prided himself on being scrupulously honest

in that regard.

There was profanity, of course. He'd been there before with women like and Edith Kolb and Sandy Chase—Paul's "Chaste Sandy"—who, he knew for a fact, disliked his broad use of a language used commonly enough among men and women but offensive to the Presbyterian ear. Well—that was a religious matter, or a class distinction. In Sandy's case, a little hard core was genuinely educational.

Jack searched for Leanna Robertson and Anne Brower, but nowhere in Reich's letter could he find them. Had he ever kissed or grabbed them? Not that he remembered. Whatever legitimate complaints they might have scarcely justified dismissal for cause.

Having dismissed them, Charles inventoried other possibilities. Deirdre Williams, who had, more than coincidentally, crossed his path twice this afternoon? Carolyn McQuillan? Lily Lee herself? What was the message she tried to telegraph in that tiniest of split seconds?

It did not occur to Jack that people might have stretched the truth just a little, or fabricated. Nor did he then perceive himself as the target of some exercise in applied feminist politics, or as the recipient of Reich's apocalyptic and final *quid* for Creed's many previous *quos*. He remained caught in a loop between insubstantial charges and the disproportionately heavy consequences. How in heaven's name could a man be fired for anything he ever did, said, or even thought about doing with Leanna Robertson or Anne Brower? Or, for that matter, Deirdre Williams? For authoring a prize-winning book? For bringing Afro-American Studies to Busiris Tech?

Jack reached for the telephone, an old rotary dial phone, click, click, click as the numbers unwound, then a pause, then a ring, then a couple of extra dull clicks as the other party answered. He had once joked with Carolyn McQuillan about the lines being tapped, excoriated imagined eavesdroppers with directives to "fuck off, asshole, this is a private conversation." Maybe the joke was on Jack.

Maybe the phone calls had indeed been tapped. Maybe there were plants under the desk. Maybe he was being monitored even as he dialed Leanna Robertson's number. Maybe that's what Hauptmann had meant by much depending on Charles' reaction.

A pledge at Kappa Delta sorority informed Jack that Leanna Robertson had left Riverton for the weekend. At Anne Brower's apartment, no answer. Dierdre Williams—nobody home. Probably out with the boy whose name was tattooed on her cunt. Jack phoned Rose Marié to say he'd be late for dinner. Then he phoned me.

"I was just fired, Tucker" he announced. "Can you get on over to the office?"

"I'm out the door," I told him.

Jack dialed Annie Brower again. No answer. Click, click, click. Had she and Leanna been sequestered this weekend, removed from a possible line of fire? Well, naturally they'd be gone at 4:30 on a Friday afternoon. What did he expect?

For an instant Jack considered phoning Lily Lee Martin. She too had crossed his path this afternoon. Her unspoken message burned in his heart. Lily Lee was certainly one student with whom Charles had been sexually intimate. If you were investigating Jack Creed's private sex life, you were investigating Lily Lee. Reich himself seemed to have alluded to her. She had certainly seen the letter Jack had just received, although Reich had not exactly said as much. Reich had indicated that Lily was part of the investigation. And Lily Lee had authored the law used to execute him. Lily was obviously the key.

Jack buried the idea almost as soon as it crossed his mind. If she was part of the cabal, Jack had nothing to say to her. If she was not, there was nothing she could do. It was simple as that. Besides, the phone might be tapped indeed. Their conversation might reveal things Reich did not know, jeopardize her position. Even if his phone were not tapped, a long distance call to her home in Lincoln County

would show up on his home or office phone bill. A phone call might compromise both her marriage and position.

Lily Lee would have to remain uninvolved.

Instead of Lily, Jack telephoned Morrie Kaufman. Kaufman headed the Busiris ACLU and chaired of the committee on tenure, promotion and dismissal. According to his letter, Reich had twice conferred with Kaufman. Kaufman could tell Jack as much as Lily Lee.

Morrie had not yet returned from school. His wife promised he'd be in touch as soon as he got home.

Lou Feracca and I arrived at Jack's office together.

"Reich gave me until Monday to resign," Charles said without emotion.

"Motherfuckers," Lou said. "Motherfucking motherfuckers."

"He read me a letter full of vague accusations, threatened me with a hearing, and gave me until Monday morning to resign." Jack offered us his copy of the letter.

"Linda has gone over to your place to be with Rose Marié and the kids," I said.

"I told her I'd be late for dinner. I didn't offer any particulars. I still haven't decided how I'm going to handle her."

"You can't get fired and not have your wife know," Lou said.

"I'll tell her. But I'd just as soon the news came from me."

"Better it come from a woman," I said. "Linda is cool, and she's close to Rose Marié. She can buffer the situation."

Jack flared. "What does Linda have to do with this?" he wanted to know. "Besides, Rose Marié is part of the problem."

"Look, Chas, this is not the time to get pissed at your friends," Lou pointed out. "Andrew and I have been through a bit on this too, you know."

“I don’t know. I don’t know shit. I know what Popowski and a couple of other students told me. From my friends I’ve had only silence in the snowy fields. Unless it was you guys sent Popowski. Somebody sent Popowski. Somebody who lacked the balls to speak up for themselves. Who would let a friend walk blindly into an ambush? Maybe Jones? Maybe other faculty?”

“You been hit before, and you always came out okay,” Lou said simply. “Nobody expected Reich to can your ass this time.”

“Nobody expected them to can my ass. Meaning you guys? Meaning the department? Meaning the whole goddamn University? How come everyone but me had expectations?”

“You don’t need a weather man, Jack. You going to sit there and tell us with a straight face you had no clue?”

“I didn’t expect to be fired.”

“Neither did we,” said Lou

“Then why quit?” I asked Jack.

“I haven’t quit.”

“You sound like one cooked user,” Lou pointed out.

“The implication is that to get the heave-ho, Creed must have really fucked up this time. Lipped off to the wrong nigger? Knocked up at least half a dozen coeds? NAACP attorneys and daddies with paternity suits must be at the gates. Boyfriends with axes must be waiting in the alley way. Is that what you’re implying?”

“I’m not implying shit.”

Jack fell silent, his anger spent.

“Still,” he said finally, “that’s the thing, isn’t it? Nobody’s going to care what did or did not go down, with whom, or under what circumstances. Where there’s smoke, there’s fire. They’ve finished me off with one quick shot. Confidences? Friendships? Trust? Gone absolutely and for good. Rose Marié, my kids, you guys, every goddamn student and teacher on this fucking campus is going to be

thinking, somewhere in the back of his big or little mind, ‘Weeeell, you know, that’s what you get for hanging around with those kind of people. Niggers will do it to you every time. And Creed always was one for the ladies. Had quite a tongue on him too. He must have done something this time.’ Fucking Reich has fucked me good. I will never march in another commencement. Never again in my life wear that robe and hood.”

“Jack,” Lou said, “this is very bad. We don’t know any more about it than you apparently do, but we all know this is very bad. We also know there’s a skeleton in every closet in Old Main, and lots of people pull down beaucoup bucks despite the skeletons in their closet. Reich has a few of his own from what I hear . . . from what you told me. Threaten Reich with what you know about him and Tits. Fight this through. We’ll stand beside you and so will a lot of people in the department. In five years it’s just one more bit of buried Busiris history. There was this president who buggered the entire basketball squad. There was this director of security who ran a whorehouse out of the girls’ dorm. There was this V. P. A. A. who shacked up with the head of the Women’s Studies Program. There was this English professors who. . . .”

“Who?”

“Who nobody knows, and nobody says. It’s dead.”

I sensed Charles already withdrawing from us.

“So what have you guys heard?” he wanted to know. “Absent yourself, Andrew, and level with me. What are people saying?”

“Everyone knew some kind of investigation was in progress,” I told him, “probably since mid-October. They didn’t talk much to Lou or me or your other close friends. Steiner in physics asked me about you, oh, maybe last November. Nation is a significant player, and perhaps your pal Jones. We’re sure they talked with Nation and Jones and maybe several others in the department. There was a meeting among some of the students. There was also something

involving that basketball player, but you know more about that than we do."

"I don't think anybody knows details; it's all been pretty hush-hush." Lou added. "Probably they want to keep it that way."

"We figured you were pretty savvy, and would certainly have gotten wind of it. After all that flap over Lily's Harassment Guidelines, we figured you'd be extra alert. Whatever went down, you'd know what to do. You didn't ask us for help. We figured you were taking care of business in your own way. The investigations, as far as we could tell, were back in November, December. We figured whatever was going to happen had happened long ago and was part of buried Busiris history."

What I had told him was the truth, although I doubt Charles believed me.

"We figured you knew something. We figured somebody upstairs would have had to talk to you, sometime, before today?"

"Not a word."

"On harassment, you're supposed to get a warning," Feracca pointed out. "It's part of Lily Lee's guidelines: 'Since sexists and racists are often insensitive to the feelings of others, any student or faculty member seeing a colleague engaged in what might be considered sexist or racist behavior should point out the offensive behavior and the way in which it might be perceived.' Plus it has to be a written warning. That's in the rule book."

"I know the rule book. I wrote a detailed critique of the rule book. This thing isn't being done by the rules."

"So what exactly is the rap?" Lou wanted to know.

"Blatant racism and sexism. Grabbing, whatever that means. Racial slurs, racial biases, racial insensitivity, whatever that is. Possibly offering maybe to perhaps trade sexual favors for grades, which as we all know is bullshit. Everything is vague. No specific

accusations. No names. I don't even know who is accusing me of what."

"Bet on Leanna Robertson among the women," Lou said. "Among faculty . . . there's been a lot of jealousy since *Age of Faith*. You know that."

"You can't fire a man for writing a popular book, no matter what it says. Period. This is 1985, not 1885."

"You haven't exactly made things easy for yourself these past few months," I observed, "or on others, including us. For whatever reasons, which I don't think you've shared even with us, you've been in a genuinely foul humor, short-tempered, surly. You're never at meetings. When you're not off campus doing whatever you're doing, you're not in the office and you're rarely at Tookey's. With Popowski, maybe, and a couple of the girls. It's hard not to notice. The Bucks Boosters! Jack, for chrissake! Maybe fame and fortune have gone a little to your head. You've alienated a few people."

Lou supported me. "The rap is you wrote *Age of Faith* on Busiris time, with a Busiris research grant, then pocketed all the royalties and blew off classes. And being so close to students is not a really good idea either these days, especially the cheerleaders. It's bound to breed jealousy among both men and women students. Your nose never has been exactly clean, and these days you got to walk on tip toes around this place. It ain't the sixties any more, Jack. You've said that yourself."

Charles said nothing.

"You wanted honesty," I pointed out.

"You should phone Morrie Kaufman," Lou suggested.

"I already did," Charles told us. "Half an hour ago. His wife said he was on his way home. He hasn't returned the call."

"Morrie's a straight shooter," Lou said.

“Morrie’s a classic work-from-within-the-system liberal,” Jack said. “He wasn’t going to be any help anyway. Fuck Kaufman. Fuck the ACLU. What have they ever done at Busiris, seriously? What could we expect from them? Morrie’s probably sitting right now in Old Main, conferring with Nazi overlords Hauptmann and Reich. They and some University attorney probably monitored my calls, gathering more evidence after the fact. I probably should have phoned nobody. Including you guys.”

“There is another person who certainly ought to know something,” I suggested.

“Yeah there is.”

“You talk to her?”

“I have not spoken with Lily Lee since she returned to Busiris. We all know that.”

“The normal flow of student complaints would be through her office,” Lou pointed out.

“She wasn’t in Reich’s office.”

“Reich could not conduct an investigation without her knowledge. He could not have prepared a letter without her input. That’s impossible.”

“He mentioned her name,” Charles said. “I don’t know whether it was a threat, a lie, or a statement of fact.”

“There is only one way to find out,” Lou insisted.

Jack froze. “The truth, fellows, is that I’m not ready to confront what Lily Lee might be thinking about me right now. ‘Harassment’; ‘Racism’—that just destroys me with her. Reich threatened a public investigation that might, and I quote, ‘reveal things I might not want revealed. Or involve persons I might not want involved.’ What would I say to Lily Lee?”

“Look, Jack,” Lou said honestly, “I can see how you might not want to air your private business in front of a woman, but I think in

this case. . . .”

“Lily Lee *is* my private business,” Charles said simply. He paused. “And my private business is going to remain my private business.”

“Then I’d say Reich has you by the short hairs, good buddy.”

“What does Reich know about Lily and me? Reich was not around in the seventies. I first met Reich at that farewell party for Lily and Jim.”

“I could name a few people who would be more than happy to fill him in.”

Finally Lou spoke what we were all thinking. “Lily works for Bert these days.”

“I think not.”

“You told us he said something about everyone being bought, about white men and black women being bought. That’s what you said he said.”

“The bottom line is, my private life is my private business.”

“And Rose Marié’s,” Lou said. “And your kids’. And everybody else’s. Busiris is just a small town, Chas, full of small town gossip and small town politics. This ain’t the time for lectures, but your own business just ain’t your own business here. You know that as well as we do.”

The discussion seemed frozen.

Then a *deus ex machina* in the form of a knock on the door: Paul Popowski, Carolyn McQuillan, Jo Harte, two students I didn’t recognize.

“Deirdre Williams said you told her you got fired,” Paul explained.

“Professor Creed, you’ve got to fight this thing,” Carolyn said. She meant it. Her eyes were red.

“We want to help,” Paul offered. “We’re having a meeting tonight in my apartment. All the good majors, some basketball players and, you know, some of the other students. Remember two years ago, when the art school wouldn’t give tenure to that painter? And all the art majors refused to go to class, because he was the best teacher they had over there? And they threatened to kick them all out of school, but the boycott went on anyway, and finally they had to reconsider his tenure, and then they gave it to him? You remember that? We’re going to organize a boycott, write letters to the newspaper, and all threaten to transfer.”

“It might not be 100%, but we can get enough that they can’t afford to lose us all,” Joline promised. “We’ll shut down the entire university if we have to. A lot of people love you, Professor Creed. We’ll support you.”

“Leanna Robertson is just a stuck-up sorority bitch who thinks she’s a whole lot better than she really is.”

Jack was obviously touched, but he remained silent and a little cool. The students sensed his distance and urged themselves upon him.

“It will be like the sixties again,” Popowski pleaded. “Like your own book.

“Will you come to our meeting?” he wanted to know. Charles shifted uneasily, Mr. Sixties in his own rhetoric, fifteen years’ bulk larded around his middle. How to command the troops to sit still? How to deny their faith?

“I have to deal with my wife tonight. And Timm and Jenny. I haven’t told them anything yet.”

“We can meet tomorrow morning. We got the whole weekend, but we want to get organized for Monday morning.” Jack’s reticence was pushing Paul ever closer to the edge of disbelief.

“It’s tremendous to have friends,” Jack said. I could see Lily Lee, Rose Marié, Jenny, and Timm swirling across his field of vision. I

rescued him: “Dr. Creed doesn’t even know what he’s charged with, Paul. We’re going to get hold of a lawyer over the weekend and find out what the changes are. Then we’ll make some decisions.”

“I don’t know what I’m doing,” Charles said. “One thing I do know is that the knee-jerk reaction isn’t always the best reaction.”

Carolyn McQuillan’s face registered disbelief.

The troops were out ahead of their leader. “You will be a useful threat,” he assured the delegation.

It was Carolyn who finally shamed him. “There are great stories about you, Professor Creed,” she said, “here on this campus. The speeches you gave at the Black Students Alliance, and the Laird protest, and even the hearings on Open College. You’ve told some of those stories yourself. You’re not just a person, you’re an idea. Go home and tell your wife what’s happened. If she doesn’t believe in you, she’s not worthy of you. A lot of people on this campus really do believe in you, and I’m one of them.” Tears welled up in her eyes.

So Carolyn loved Charles after all, and for a moment she didn’t care who knew it.

“We came to help,” Paul repeated.

“So did Dr. Tucker and Dr. Feracca. I’ve got a lot of friends, and I can use a lot of help. But while this is in part a political situation, Reich has managed to make it a personal situation as well. I can’t give you all the details, except to say they have very little to do with Anne Brower and Leanna Robertson. There’s a whole lot of shit going down. The political situation is ours, but the personal situation is mine, and I have to deal with it myself. Give me the weekend to talk to a lawyer. I promise to let you know what he says.”

This was not what the troops wanted to hear—Mr. Sixties talking lawyer talk—and not what Charles wanted to give them. But it was all he had. Jack, Lou and I all sensed the fact, if Paul Popowski did not. All three of us realized the situation was pretty hopeless. So taking Jack’s promises at face value (what else could he do?), Paul

and his followers left. A moment later I drove Jack back to his place, to Rose Marié and the kids, to the ghost of Lily Lee Oliver née Martin.

# Chapter 9
# **Letters**

On Saturday morning, Jack and I met with Michael Stella, forty-eight-year-old senior partner in the Busiris law firm of Stella, Corwin, Purdue, and Holtz. Stella was also owner-landlord of the Old Riverton Courthouse, which housed the office of his own and six other law firms, including Dewey, Rackham, and Howe. Stella had a reputation as the best lawyer in town: aggressive, ruthless, relentless. Flamboyant and reputedly a lady's man, Stella allowed himself to be known around Riverton as "The Italian Stallion."

"He ought to be sympathetic to the case," Jack thought. "Besides, my uncle always told me the only lawyers worth having are Jewish or Italian. Where in this town you going to find a Jewish lawyer?"

"Sympathetic but expensive," I cautioned. "Also, as you may recall, a close personal friend of Ted Jones."

"I know him from the Boosters," Jack assured me as we entered the gray-carpeted, first-floor office. "Besides, lawyers have no friends. Their sympathies follow the money." Heartened by the fact that Rose Marié had not packed the children immediately and left for her mother's, Jack had spent a long night making phone calls and reviewing options. He had recovered remarkably from the bullet's impact and appeared to be ready for a fight, more for the sake of principle and to cause trouble than to keep his job. "If you shoot a man in the back, you better kill him," Jack said to me that morning. "Otherwise he'll come back one day to get you."

By the time we arrived, Stella had conferred with University lawyers, and knew more about Jack's life than Jack.

"The situation, Professor Creed, is this: complaints against you have been more or less constant throughout your years at Busiris.

You are probably aware of some of them, as administration has previously shared some of them with you. These previous complaints constitute what is called a pattern of behavior which has bearing on the present case. In the fall, a particular situation developed which necessitated an investigation by Vice President Reich and Dean Hauptmann. In the course of that investigation old complaints resurfaced, and new complaints were registered. These issues regarded mainly women, one of whom may be an Afro-American. Late in the course of that investigation yet another serious matter developed, regarding an African-American male. You are probably aware of that problem.

"The investigation has resulted in four formal complaints against you, three from women, and one from the Afro-American. Your file also contains letters dating to the 1970s. There are also complaints from other individuals who, for whatever reasons, declined to make written statements. The fact that they refused to put their complaints in writing probably means they'd also decline to testify at a hearing, or to provide a statement in the event of a hearing. But not necessarily. Even the formal complaints were presented to me unsigned. One woman specifically requests anonymity. At a trial, of course, they would have to present their testimony in person. They could not really get away with an affidavit."

Jack nodded solemnly.

"But you're not dealing with a trial, at least not until you've been through a dismissal hearing, and an appeal, and you've filed suit against the University. Initially you're dealing with an administrative hearing, which is different from a trial in many ways, as I believe Dr. Reich mentioned. Most significantly, your accusers need not be present—neither the women who wrote letters, nor the women who did not, nor anyone else. It would help the University's case if those women were to step forward, of course, but at a hearing on harassment charges they may request that, because of the nature of their complaints and their fear of campus reprisals, their complaints be presented by an advocate.

“My suspicion is that all have been guaranteed anonymity, precisely because that guarantee would not impair the University’s use of their complaints at a hearing.”

“So the Busiris campus buzzes with speculation about me, and my accusers remain anonymous. Scarcely seems fair.”

“It’s Saturday morning, Professor Creed. The campus is sleeping off its hangover. Ninety-nine percent of Busiris has no idea what happened yesterday. The Vice President is as anxious as you are to deal with this matter discretely, which is why he chose to discuss the matter with you at 4:00 on a Friday afternoon. Dr. Reich is aware that among certain circles you are a very popular teacher. He is also aware of how damaging these complaints can be to your career.”

“Left uncontested, these charges will damage me forever. I will never teach again,” Creed told Stella.

“I wouldn’t view the situation as that dramatic.”

“Back to the administrative hearing on unspecified charges from anonymous individuals.”

“As a private institution, Busiris is free to set its own procedures for hearings. Still, almost all disciplinary hearings share certain features. One of them is anonymity if anonymity is requested by the student. Also, there is no jury in the normal legal sense. There is a panel—in this case it would be a panel of seven—all of whom serve *ex officio* or are appointed by administration. I can’t challenge membership of that panel the way I can challenge members of a jury.”

“I’m to be tried by a hanging judge in front of a kangaroo court.”

“You could call it that. The presidents of the Busiris Senate and the Student Senate are, of course, elected. You know better than I who they are and how they are likely to react. Vice President Reich can no more control the selection of those individuals than I. He would, of course, determine the two administration representatives.

He might influence the two faculty representatives. And he, or somebody in Student Services or in Affirmative Action, would select the second student representative. I would say administration could exercise a good deal of control over the panel's constitution."

"And I have no control."

"If they are strong-willed, the two senate presidents might be able to help you a little. They might at least insist on fair-minded individuals from faculty and student constituencies. If not . . . I cannot present them with a list of acceptable names, and I can't preempt individuals. In fact, I cannot officially represent you at a hearing. I can go only as an advisor.

"Finally, in a disciplinary hearing the existence of other complaints becomes an issue relevant to the formal complaints, even in the absence of letters and individuals. Letters and complaints on subjects other than racial and sexual harassment might enter the picture: any sort of unprofessional behavior. There are apparently some of those issues too, things unrelated to the specific students bringing charges."

"I'm having trouble making the bridge between alleged crime A, which took place somewhere in the remote past and was never prosecuted, and the present alleged crime B. You can't charge a man with speeding and use, as evidence, a couple of two-year-old traffic tickets."

"As I said, a hearing is different from a trial, although in a trial on this matter . . . well, you couldn't get a trial for racial or sexual harassment. It would have to be a trial for slander or assault, something specific and actionable. A hearing involves a broader range of issues, which in this case are subsumed under the heading 'unprofessional behavior.' The specific charge at the hearing would be 'unprofessional behavior'—of any sort. And your employment at Busiris would be terminated—if it were to be terminated—specifically for unprofessional behavior."

“You are saying, then, that the charges of harassment, which may be made anonymously, open the door to other charges, which may also be anonymous. I’m canned because Reich and his flunkies have decided these nebulous charges, unsubstantiated and certainly denied by me, constitute unprofessional behavior.”

“That’s essentially correct.”

“You’re also implying that this ‘pattern of behavior’ business—and I’m being strictly theoretical here—is endless. Even if I beat these charges, they could be used as evidence in a hearing next year on more trumped up charges. Which, if that didn’t get rid of me, could be used two years down the line, and three years down the line.”

“Again, essentially correct.”

“This is right out of Kafka. No known case of definite acquittal. Only ostensible acquittal or postponement.”

“Your contract has always provided for termination in the case of unprofessional behavior.”

“Which is nowhere spelled out in the contract.”

“Yes, Mr. Creed, that is true. What is unprofessional is as vague as what constitutes harassment. But basically, your behavior is unprofessional if the Vice President thinks it was unprofessional.”

“Just as I’m guilty of harassment if someone feels harassed. I’ve already pointed out the logical fallacies and legal injustices of that thinking in my critique of Busiris’s harassment guidelines. Maybe you’ve seen that article. My basic point is, a crime that cannot be defined except in the mind of the alleged victim is virtually impossible to avoid. Harassment as a crime is bullshit.”

“I have read your article. We can discuss harassment in a minute. My point is that if the Vice President can convince a hearing board that your behavior was unprofessional enough to warrant dismissal, then the Vice President’s judgment is upheld and your dismissal stands.

“Vice President Reich could, in fact, legally terminate your employment even if the panel found in your favor. Busiris is a private institution. The Vice President is virtually an autonomous figure. He’s answerable only to the President and the Board of Trustees. Not to the faculty, the public, or the state.”

“It doesn’t matter who Reich answers to. Only when terminating faculty and expelling students begins to cost Busiris—let’s say $200,000 per victim—will the arbitrary executions end. Put that kind of price on a man’s soul, and maybe Old Main will think twice before sending the good people sent packing.”

“I can’t get you $200,000 Professor Creed. Probably I can’t even save your job. Henry Howe, the University attorney, is convinced that Vice President Reich believes he can get a dismissal for cause out of a hearing committee. He’s prepared to see this thing through. I don’t know what you ever did to those people, but they have a real hard on for you. Don’t underestimate them.”

“So at a private institution, academic tenure is basically meaningless.”

“Nothing in life is ever really guaranteed.”

Jack shook his head. “Right. But before my case is entirely dismissed, I would at least like to know specifically what I’m charged with, and by whom. Reich was pretty vague yesterday. Except on being sexually intimate with a student, and possibly trading sexual favors for grades.”

“First, Professor Creed, let me ask you directly, have you ever been sexually intimate with a student?”

“Mr. Stella,” Jack answered directly and without emotion, “the great love of my life was a student. That happened many years ago, and I cannot believe she would have any cause to complain of our relationship, then or now. However, one’s sex life is one’s private business, period, no matter what the Neo-Victorians say. So yes to your first question, but. . . .”

“Did you ever trade or suggest trading sexual favors for grades?”

“I can categorically say that I have never traded sexual favors for grades. I have never given undeserved higher grades to anyone with whom I was sexually involved, and I have never given undeservedly low grades to punish anyone who spurned sexual advances. I never offered, directly or indirectly, to trade sexual favors for grades, and I never made, directly or indirectly, sexual advances which I thought for even the slightest moment were undesired. I have in fact rejected at least one offer of sex for grades. I stand on that statement.”

“This morning Mr. Howe gave me copies of the four letters and mentioned a couple of other documents in your files. He did not provide names.”

Stella handed Jack photocopies of three typed letters, from which the author’s names had been deleted. At the first letter Jack nodded slightly, although he did flush visibly. With the third letter, his face turned bright crimson.

January 21, 1985

Dear Dean Hauptmann,

I am writing this letter about a member of the English department, whose behavior toward me and other girls is threatening and harassing. Professor Charles Creed insists on using vulgar and obscene language in class and outside of class, even when he knows it offends students and creates a social environment in which learning is impossible. I took his class my freshman year, and it seemed to me that just about every story or poem related somehow to sex. Once I was so offended I had to leave class. Once he talked in class about vibrators. He called me Blondie, a name I do not care for, and which shows his misogynistic attitudes. Just passing him on campus is highly sexual. I have avoided taking his classes since my

freshman year, and my friends can testify that I have gone out of my way to avoid meeting him on campus. His behavior is inexcusable and violates my integrity and worth as an individual. It reflects a person insensitive to the suffering of historically powerless women and needs to be stopped.

I want to make it clear that writing this letter is painful for me, but for the sake of other powerless women he might try this behavior with, I feel it ought to be corrected.

Sincerely yours,

January 21, 1985

Dr. J. Bertholt Reich
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Busiris Technical University

Dear Dr. Reich,

Last semester I had Professor Charles Creed for a class in writing. Because I had been an honors student in high school and consider myself a better than average writer, Professor Creed suggested I could write a novel instead of essays, because I intend to major in creative writing. He promised me an A for my work. When we met to discuss my project, in his private office of course, he made sexual advances toward me, which my roommate can attest to. He grabbed me and kissed me. Because of his harassing behavior, I was reluctant to meet with him again, but I turned in my work for the semester. When I got my grades, I received a C for the class. Dr. Creed is considered very popular and powerful on campus, so I am afraid to speak out against him. I have considered transferring to another college, because I cannot learn in this environment, but I'm afraid I would lose too many of my credits.

This behavior is offensive in a college professor and reflects sexual biases. It should be stopped before it causes the University to lose a lot of students or causes serious harm.

Sincerely,

February 5, 1985

Dear Dr. Reich,

I a freshman at Busiris University. I had Professor Charles Creed for a class. In class he often uses vulgar language, and many of his comments could be interpreted as racist. Once when I was having trouble in the class I went to see him. He put his hands on both my breasts and fondle them. He told me that if I would have sex with him I would pass the course. This behavior demean my personhood and caused me serious emotional distress. I would prefer that my name not be used without my permission.

Signed,

“Look,” Jack told Stella, “I can guarantee you I did not grab anybody’s tits. I never promised anybody an A for a lay. Period. The third letter is so fictional, I can’t even tell you who wrote it. I never physically assaulted anyone. Period.”

“The writer of the second letter claims to have been grabbed as well.”

“She was grabbed, if she was grabbed at all, and this is Shirley Friedman, and I don’t know if I grabbed her or not . . . she was grabbed around the shoulders. Not the crotch, not the ass, not the breasts, but around the shoulder. Not across the front of the shoulders, around the back of the shoulder. She calls it a grab. I call it a hug. I have hugged a lot of students that way. A lot of them have hugged me that way. Nobody has complained. If this was a grab, I’ve grabbed. . . .

“And if Shirley was kissed, she was kissed on the top of her head. Or the back of her neck. Not on the lips or even on the cheek, lightly, not lingeringly. The way I’d kiss my daughter. Or a friend. I’ve done that for years too. Nobody has complained. I can’t say I never kissed students, but they were not kissed on the lips.”

“You are certain?”

“In this case I am absolutely certain. If my behavior offended Shirley Friedman, or Blondie Robertson, who is the author of the first letter, it wasn’t done with intent to offend, nor was it an invitation to sexual relations.”

“What can you tell me about letter number 1?”

“This is a student named Leanna Robertson. She is, I believe, a junior or senior this year. The disgusting episode which forced her to leave class was our discussion of Allen Ginsberg’s poem ‘Howl.’”

Jack explained the “Howl” incident.

“Vibrators?”

“A line off a record album of belly dancing music belonging to Tucker’s wife,” Jack explained. “The kids wanted an example of a metaphor. I said a dancer’s belly should shimmy like a bowl of jello with a vibrator.”

“You have to admit it’s an unusual metaphor.”

“Unusual?”

“Those are not exactly household items.”

“Right. Especially the jello.”

“What about Blondie?”

“We all call her Blondie. Leanna Robertson is the spitting image of Debbie Harry, lead singer for a group named Blondie, very new wave, very New York City four or five years ago. Apart from the facial resemblance, Leanna Robertson and Debbie Harry have as much in common as Bob Dylan and Richard Nixon. That’s part of the put-

down. I don't know whether Robertson understood all the implications or not. Calling her 'Blondie' is definitely a put-down, but the put-down is political, not sexual."

"Who coined the nickname?"

"I couldn't tell you."

"What else can you tell me about Robertson?"

"Blondie is an interesting case. She is very conservative socially and politically, but she is a looker. She's an off-again, on-again member of the Lady Bucks dance line. The Women's Studies people keep trying to convince her that dance line insults women, but she figures being a Lady Buck is one way to land a Busiris Buck."

"A woman is allowed mixed emotions."

"Blondie is basically a sorority sister looking for a fraternity pin, a letter jacket, and a pre-law degree. To get one, she's willing to market herself. But only to a point.

"Of course the freaks all think she's too sold on herself, and some of them whistle at her across the campus just to bring her down a notch. Both men and women. Students. I do not whistle at Leanna Robertson, although I tend to agree with them. She has avoided me since her freshman year, but I've also avoided her."

"She says she's avoided your classes."

"I can list fifty kids who, for one reason or another, avoid taking various professors at Busiris."

"Why would she write this letter about you?"

"I can't say. Popowski indicated to me that she organized, or spear-headed, or directed some kind of campaign to 'railroad me out of Busiris.' That was his phrase. Popowski seemed to think Professor Victoria Nation, head of the Women's Studies Program, is responsible for some of Blondie's thinking and may be responsible for the whole investigation. Maybe she's working a little too hard, trying to have it too fast and too much. Maybe she has some

repressed desires she's not ready to admit to herself. I always felt just a little more kindly toward Blondie—she's smart, but she's young. By the time she figures it out, she'll be over the hill."

"You haven't encouraged her to . . . see herself differently?"

"No, I haven't. But I'd be willing to argue—strictly theoretically again—that's what a teacher is for. Encouraging people to see themselves differently is my job, isn't it, Michael? To give her what I've got to give, and hope that she receives it well."

"Your job is certainly not to persuade female students to have sex with you. I think we'd all say that's pretty unprofessional."

"Professional people don't do sex? Or professional people don't do sex with other professional people? Or becoming a professional person means foregoing sex? What is the law saying, Michael?"

"It's unprofessional for teachers to seduce students. Can we agree on that, Professor Creed?"

"That's not what I'm saying I did. It's also not what I was arguing, theoretically, that a teacher should do. I was saying that my job is to help people come to terms with themselves. To try out new and uncomfortable ideas, to grow into themselves. And to be patient with them while they grow. I talked about that in my critique of the harassment guidelines. I alluded specifically to the 'Howl' episode, without naming Blondie, of course. If the poem presented something a little beyond what she was ready for, or if I represent a sexual presence she finds disconcerting, so it goes. But I don't see that I have any obligation to ignore the poem or change my presence. I'm willing to be patient while she works through her confusion. I'd rather not be fired for trying to make her grow."

"Professor Creed, I didn't ask for speeches or rationalizations. I just asked about these letters."

"Well, any answer is going to involve a little analysis, isn't it?"

"The law will do the analysis. We're establishing facts."

“I would never trust the law to do my analysis, Michael. Or Bert Reich either. Anyone who knows me could tell you that. My point regarding this letter situation is that some people find all sex threatening. Specifically Leanna Robertson, but also some other adolescents of any ages, even in this sexually liberated age. The very idea of sex terrifies them. So okay, that’s a stage in your life. You reach it and then you pass through it. You have to pass through it, or you’re unfinished. Girls and boys. There is this fear and fascination. But how do you come to terms with sex except by coming to terms with it, which is by definition going to be traumatic? I don’t want to terrorize either men or women, but I do think college is the time to come to terms with sex, and sex has its place in a college curriculum, especially literature. Otherwise you get militant virginity: ‘I’m not doing sex, and I want to make damned sure nobody else is doing it either.’ It’s these people who are warped, not the rest of the world. What does Mim say in *Rabbit Redux,* ‘Fucking is just what people do, Harry’? Literature is about people. There’s a lot of sex in literature. Deal with it. If I can’t teach ‘Howl,’ then I can’t teach literature.

“And Busiris has to back me up on this. Not fire me, for chrissake!”

“What can you tell me about the second letter?”

“The second letter was written by Shirley Friedman, who is also a bit more fond of herself than she has reason to be. It is a non-case of non-harassment. Shirley arrived at Busiris with very nice high school credentials. Had even published in some small literary magazine as a high school junior and senior. She announced her intent to major in creative writing, thereby becoming my advisee. Personally, I think she announced as a creative writing major partly to hobnob with the resident Pulitzer Prize winner. Shirley is a snob that way. Pushed or conditioned, I suspect, by family. So Shirley wanted to take junior creative writing as a first-semester freshman, which is where the problem began. I suggested she save junior creative writing for later, register in my section of freshmen

composition, and instead of the usual essays work on a creative project. This was, understand, very generous of me, because at the time I had absolutely zero spare time, and I don't know this girl from our mother Eve. I didn't figure to spend much time on her, though: she could work mostly independently, we could meet maybe every other week to review her writing. The time I spent reading her story would be not much more than I'd have spent reading her freshman comp. essays. For a minimal investment of time Busiris gets a happy customer. I figure.

"I did not, incidentally, promise an A. She brought up the subject of grades, worried that she might be tossing away an easy A by writing stories instead of freshman themes. What I said was, if I recall correctly, 'If you're good enough to get an A writing essays, you'll probably be good enough to get an A writing stories.' Hell, she's the one who wanted junior level creative writing. I would like also at this point to point out something else. Shirley's a troll: squat, swarthy, oily hair and large nose. Could not get herself sexually harassed in a whorehouse. The allegation that I was interested in her is an insult as much to my taste in women as to my professionalism."

"We wouldn't say that in front of a hearing committee."

"Right. Let facts speak for themselves. Anyway, Shirley is not quite as good as she thinks she is. Or as good as the record from her private school indicates. Turns out the little magazine which published her high school stuff belongs to a friend of her father. She wants to do a historical novel, a little love story set in Renaissance Italy. 'Lovely,' I tell her. 'What do you know about Renaissance Italy?' 'Not much,' she admits. 'Better do a little research into love and life in the Italian Renaissance.' She wants to know how to begin. I suggest a few books from the library, give her a fatherly hug around the shoulders and a reassuring kiss on the back of her oily little head, and send her off in search of Padua and Verona.

"Two weeks later she is back. With her roommate. She hasn't read a thing, hasn't written a thing. Now she'd like to write maybe a

love story set in her hometown. ‘Go to,’ I tell her, figuring I will cut my losses on this one and promising myself never again.

“The office door, incidentally, is wide open during this conversation, and her roommate is standing in the hall watching, waiting. The door is open because I sense that Shirley is tense. Her historical romance novel has taken over her head, I figure. So I am sensitive to her tenseness, and I want her and her roommate to see Mr. Sensitivity. Apparently that’s not what they saw.

“I don’t see much of Shirley the rest of the term. Comes the end of the semester, she leaves a manuscript in my mailbox. Doesn’t even deliver it herself. No letter of explanation. It’s a drama script, a mystery, nothing we had ever talked about, not very well written, spelling problems and all. Smells like something she did in high school, and it bears one of those pretentious ‘First Rights Only’ notices, the things that beginning writers attach to their work when they’re afraid of getting ripped off by unscrupulous publishers. That’s the main tip-off that this piece was not written for me. I admit, I should have phoned her, but I did not. Too busy. So maybe this piece is recycled. Maybe it’s plagiarized. At this point I don’t know and I don’t care. I let it ride, give her a C, and wash my hands of Shirley. Next thing I know, she feels harassed.”

“Ms. Friedman was one of the first complaints to the Vice President’s office. In October.”

“Neither she nor Reich said not a word to me. As I said, I could see she was tense, and I was trying to calm her down. I think my reaction was exactly what the circumstances called for.”

“Your conferences with Ms. Friedman were held in your office?”

“That seems like a logical place to hold a student conference.”

“The door was open or closed?”

“The door was open. And the roommate was standing outside. It’s pretty hard to do any serious harassing with the door wide open and the roommate taking notes.”

“You can tell me nothing about the third letter?”

“Absolutely nothing. I have never grabbed anyone’s breast—at least not in that context—let alone fondled two. I can guarantee you I did not fondle any freshman breasts last term. She says she’s a female freshman. Her remarks about racism suggest she’s black. I think I had two black females in the freshmen section. Call them both. If you have to, call in every freshman in my classes last fall and talk to them all. The encounter this letter describes is a complete fabrication.”

“Its author was interviewed personally by the Vice President. Or one of his representatives, Dean Hauptmann or Professor Nation.”

“Professor Nation?” Jack asked incredulously.

“Professor Nation was part of the investigation, in its early stages.”

“What was Vicky Nation doing on this investigation?”

“Some of the girls came to her as an understanding and sympathetic person with whom they could speak in trust and confidentiality.”

“Victoria Nation is Blondie’s advisor, her teacher, the source of her raised sensitivity, and probably the indirect solicitor of the complaints. Regarding the issue in general and me personally, she is not exactly unbiased. If the interview really took place, somebody lied. Maybe the student, maybe Victoria. Women can lie as self-servingly, and as maliciously, as men. Or maybe the student was telling second hand a story she heard from some other girl, who was lying. There’s no other word for it.”

“Mr. Creed, if I am your lawyer, I need to know the truth.”

“I am giving you the truth. This letter is bullshit. Period. It doesn’t even sound like freshman writing. ‘Demeaned my personhood.’ You want me to think a freshman uses that kind of language? A freshman who can’t even spell? That’s Nation jargon.”

“Can you think of any reason this woman would lie about you?”

“If I knew who she was, I could probably tell you the reason. Let me check the C’s, D’s and F’s in my grade book for last fall, and I can probably name the woman. And give you a reason.”

“Collectively these three letters are very incriminating.”

“They are intended to be. The question is, intended by whom?”

“The students wrote them.”

“These letters were not spontaneous. They were coached. Personally, I suspect they were solicited, especially the third.”

“There are apparently a couple of other matters. A woman who chose not to write a letter claims that when she came to you about some missed work last fall, she was invited to some motel. She also claims to have been grabbed and kissed. She’s so upset, she’s thinking about transferring.”

Jack flushed again.

“I’m not sure on this one, but my guess is Annie Brower.”

“I have no names, Professor Creed.”

“Bet on Anne B. I heard indirectly that she’s unhappy with me, because I wouldn’t let her off the hook for missed classwork. The description fits the facts . . . to a point. I always considered Anne B. a friendly freak, somebody close, but Paul Popowski, one of the other students, says she’s trying to rehabilitate her image after being a little too free and easy with the frat boys. Maybe that involves distance from me as well. Maybe that’s why she considered transferring to another school.”

“The motel?”

“I never invited Annie B. to a motel bed. I might have invited her to talk things over at the Holiday Inn Lounge. Annie and I drank there when I thought we were friends. With other students, incidentally. So it’s quite possible, even likely, that I invited Anne to the Holiday or the Heidelberger. But it would have been for drinks, and probably as

part of a larger company. What she's saying is technically correct, if this person is Annie B., but it's been put together, by her or by somebody else, to imply that I offered to take care of her grade in return for an afternoon roll in the sack. That's simply untrue."

"You did, however, grab and kiss her?"

"Not on the occasion of her wanting to make up missed classes. Earlier, possibly yes. I have been quite free with hugs and those kinds of kisses, as I said before."

"If you felt close enough to Ms. Brower to hug and kiss her, how could you deny her request to make up work?"

"I thought she was using our friendship as an excuse to give me less effort than I, she, or the class deserved. I felt she was trying, in a way, to flirt her way through the class.

"I feel that way about several of the women. My experience has been . . . I am very sensitive when somebody I think is being friendly tries to use that friendship as an excuse for receiving special treatment. I've known women to be very direct about it: 'I read your book, that story in the newspaper, and you sound like somebody I would really like to get to know.' Next thing I know, they have a manuscript that's looking for a publisher. Would I introduce them to Ken Kesey or Robert Bly? I sensed that Annie had been playing up to me, looking for a free ride. I probably should have talked with her, and I most certainly should have sat down, explained the assignments, patted her little head—metaphorically, of course—held her little hand—also metaphorically—given her a supportive pat on the back—ditto—and sent her back into the game of academia. But I did not."

"The women sound angry."

"To me they sound coached. Annie B. was even reluctant. She wouldn't even formalize her complaint. Robertson is a case of prolonged adolescence. Friedman needed to explain a C to her daddy, who thinks his daughter is the new Eudora Welty. Who knows what that third letter was about?

“That letter is very recent, written only last Tuesday. You said this investigation has been going on since October. It antedates the letters by a good two months. I think the letters are a result of the investigation, not the cause for an investigation. I think the letters were manufactured by the investigators. You’re the lawyer. Analyze the evidence.”

“It’s not uncommon for informal complaints to be formalized into letters only after some investigation.”

“The investigation never included me.”

“You were the person being investigated.”

“Or railroaded.”

“As you wish.”

“We have two letters dated in late January, one from Leanna Robertson, the organizer of the ‘Nail Creed’ meeting, and the other by the former student most likely to harbor a grievance. We also have Annie B.’s complaint of sometime. Then there is a third letter dated February 5, three days before I got fired.

“Reich claims to have already made two ‘preliminary’ consultations with the Committee on Tenure, Promotion and Dismissal and the President of the Faculty Association. He could not well have gone to them without written documentation, but the three days between February 5 and February 8 would have afforded very little time for him to make a case, have Kaufman and the others deliberate, then draft his letter requesting my resignation and run that by Hyde, as he probably had to. Reich made the appointment with me on February 4th, don’t forget.

“So I figure the first consultation with Kaufman came in late January or early February, probably after the investigation and on the strength of Blondie’s letter and Shirley’s letter, and possibly Annie’s complaint. Maybe this consultation took place over semester break. In the letter of February 8, Reich says only that the Committee and the Faculty Association President ‘concur with our

assessment of the seriousness of these charges,' and he anticipates that the committee will uphold my dismissal. I'm betting that in January the committee told him his evidence was serious but not serious enough for dismissal. He, or Hauptmann, or Nation, or somebody, fabricated a clincher letter, covering themselves by stipulating that the author's name be withheld. Or possibly the letter was based on verbal allegations which, because they were untrue, the author refused to put in writing. Either way, it doesn't matter, because Reich didn't expect to use this letter except to muscle the committee. So he or someone created the letter, then he ran it quickly by Committee and President, and then hit me . . . after he'd squeezed a full fall term out of me, but before he'd have to pay me a full salary for 1985-86.

Jack's analysis was largely confirmed at two decade's remove by one member of the 1985 Busiris administration, who will remain anonymous. Stella remained skeptical.

"Professor Creed, you have an interesting theory. But I do not believe this is a fabrication or a bluff. My sense is that Vice President Reich is very confident and very prepared to press the issue."

"It's a completely bullshit call."

"But you have, Mr. Creed, been sexually intimate with a student."

"Mr. Stella, I have taught for a decade and a half. I taught during the sixties and the early seventies. I have been very close to a number of students. I honestly believe they were close, of their own volition, to me. I have kissed, fondled, and made love with at least one student. Maybe two, maybe a hundred. Maybe not a hundred. Maybe not even two, but with at least one. Not with any of the students involved in this case.

"I'm not even saying that things I did in the high sixties and mid-seventies are things I would do today. Maybe what I did then was unwise even then, but I was lots younger and lots closer to my

students in age and outlook. The climate was very, very different then. No law to be applied *ex post facto*."

"Your behavior would probably not be deemed 'professional' by any standards."

"This was very private behavior, which does not involve Robertson, Brower, Friedman, Hauptmann, Reich, Howard, or the Board of Busiris Trustees. Or, for that matter, you."

"You ever tell a student you'd like to 'fuck her brains out'?"

"Not that I recall."

"One student claims you did.'

"I don't remember it."

"Mr. Creed, if Vice President Reich asks you, directly, 'Have you ever had sexual relations with a Busiris student?' your answer is going to be affirmative. If he asks you, directly, 'Have you ever kissed Ms. Friedman?' your answer is going to be affirmative. If he asks you, directly, 'Have you ever put your hands on female students?' your answer is going to be, 'yes.' If he asks you 'How often?' your answer will be 'frequently.' You claim this is your private business. A panel of students and peers—and, after them, the jury you seem to insist upon—will make your actions their business. Their public business."

"It does not seem reasonable to me," Jack argued, "that students A, B, and C can complain about what went on between professor E and consenting student D."

"They're not. Students A, B, and C are complaining about what happened between Professor Creed and students A, B, and C. And they did not consent to what they claim went on between you and them."

"Nobody ever indicated displeasure. Leanna did, of course, over the Ginsberg business, but that's a matter of course content. When I sensed Shirley's discomfort, I did what I thought proper to alleviate it.

I kept the doors open, kept a friend present. That's as far as I am willing to go. I'm not giving her a free A just because she feels uncomfortable. That's just blackmail. If her work is substandard, she gets a substandard grade. As for harassing behavior, nobody said nothing. Not the women, not Reich or Hauptmann.

"That's the bottom line, Mr. Stella. If Busiris was trying to save a valuable and esteemed teacher, Hauptmann would have called me in—as he has called me in on other occasions—and said, 'Look, Jack, we have a little problem here. You might not think it's much of a problem, but it sounds like a problem, we think it's a problem, and we call the shots around here. You can take care of it, or you cannot take care of it, but this is your first and last warning. Shape up or you're going to be shipped out.' This is, as I recall, exactly the response mandated by Busiris's own guidelines on harassment: 'If you hear or witness a colleague engaging in what might be considered sexual harassment, suggest the inappropriateness of those actions.' And the offender gets at least one written warning.

"If, on the other hand, you want to unload a trouble-maker, you say nothing at all, continue the investigation, make as nasty sounding a case as you can, call him in on a Friday afternoon when nobody's around to see or hear, stand him up against the wall, and shoot him in the back.

"As for the women, all any one of them would have had to do was say, 'Creed, you're an asshole,' or 'Get lost,' or 'not in a month of Sundays,' or 'Professor Creed, you're old enough to be my father.' Victoria's feminist friends are dead wrong here. Men do not enjoy seeing women in discomfort. They are not turned on, made more aggressive by resistance. Men are terrified of rejection. We have egos like egg shells. One disparaging look from a beautiful woman and we collapse. My greatest fear is becoming a parody of myself. The whole idea of sexual favors is ridiculous. I reject it out of hand."

"I know. I read your article in the *Sentinel*. I also read the student responses to it."

“You will note there was no response from Old Main,” Jack pointed out. “Except yesterday’s meeting.”

“Let’s talk about some other things in your file.”

Stella handed Jack another photostat:

Dean Herman Hauptman,

I am a student athlete at Busiris. Last fall I had Professor Charles Creed for composition. Because of my commitment to Busiris athletics I had trouble finishing some of my work. Personal problems also entered into the picture, because I am a Black Man. Professor Creed failed me in his class and was unwilling to reconsider his appraisal of my work in light of my situation. I find Professor Creed very racist and regret my decision to come to Busiris. I am thinking of transferring unless my grade problems are resolved.

Sincerely,

“Now what the hell is a letter like that doing in your file, Jack?” Stella wanted to know.

Once again, Jack’s blood pressure rose.

“This is Alonzo Jackson, Michael.”

“I know the name.”

“Yes, we know the name. Plays for the Bucks. Played for the Bucks, rather. Started, as a freshman, for a division one college basketball team. Unfortunately, Alonzo is about as bright as the bricks in this wall. If they made a zero-watt bulb, Alonzo is it. After the fall semester, Alonzo has 2 D’s and an F. He’s academically ineligible.”

“I know.”

“We know. What you might not know is that Alonzo Jackson’s F is mine. Freshmen composition. No tough decision, either. He never showed up for class, never wrote a single paper, never indicated any extenuating personal problems. ‘A problem finishing some work’ is

the understatement of the decade. He did nothing. Maybe I should have been talking to him during the season, but Alonzo is kind of stand-offish, not only with me but with the rest of the team. At least with the guys I hang out with. Maybe I should have talked to Marty. I thought about this, because I believe in Busiris basketball and Marty is my friend.

"On the other hand, I'm not giving Alonzo a free ride because he plays ball. Any more than I'm giving Annie B. a lot of breaks just because I think she's my friend. Or Shirley a free A because she feels uncomfortable. I've never worked that way. Do the work, get the grade. Don't do the work—well, it hurts me because I like you, but a prof's gotta do what a prof's gotta do.

"I don't call Alonzo. I write down a big fat F.

"Ten minutes—and I do not exaggerate here—ten minutes after I drop off my grade roster at the registrar's office, there's a knock on my door. It's one of the assistant basketball coaches, Andy Schmidt. The lowest of the low end of the bench. He's got my grade roster in his hand, the one I just handed the registrar. 'What's the story on Jackson?' he wants to know.

"I tell him.

" 'This is a very talented athlete, Chas, and very important to the success of the Bucks's program,' he tells me. Calls me Chas, like he's my old buddy or something. I haven't said twenty words to him in my life, even at the Bucks Boosters dinners.

"Well. Have we not been discussing Alonzo Jackson at every Boosters meeting for the past year? I know all about Alonzo, except what he can do in the English classroom. In the English class he's *persona incognita*. 'Didn't show me a damned thing in class,' I say, 'including his face.'

" 'Alonzo is a very sensitive Black Man,' Schmidt gives me to know, 'and he sensed some . . . how shall we say, insensitivity in you which made him uncomfortable in your class.'

“ ‘He never indicated that to me,’ I tell him. ‘Of course, he was never present to indicate anything . . . or, for that matter, to feel my insensitivity.’

“ ‘I think it would be better for us all’ this bozo tells me, ‘if you reconsidered your grade here, Chas.’

“ ‘Did Marty send you over here?’ I want to know. I couldn’t believe Marty would play me that way.

“ ‘No comment.’

“I threw him out of the office. Two days later I got a call from Hauptmann. ‘Zero attendance, zero work,’ I tell him.

“ ‘His coach said something about racism,’ Hauptmann says.

“ ‘He and his coach can take their racism to the B. S. A. and see where it gets them. I damned near lost my job at this institution building the Afro-American program. I stand on my record.’ Hauptmann hangs up. I never heard another word about it until now.”

“This incident took place in January?”

“Late January. End of the semester, when grades went in.”

“The charge is already a part of your personnel record.”

“Motherfuckers.”

“The matter might come up at a hearing.”

“I will bring in twenty Afro-American students of both sexes who will testify I’m no racist. For that matter, I can bring in a hundred women who will say I’m no sexist. This thing is preposterous.”

“There have been other allegations of unprofessional behavior.”

“For example?”

“I’ve been provided with a copy of an unsigned letter to the editor printed in the Busiris *Standard-Republican*, a letter I do not remember reading, but you might recall it:

To the Editor,

I have just finished reading a book called *Age of Faith, Age of Folly*, written by a professor at Busiris Technical University. I saw the book reviewed in *The Republican* and borrowed it from the Riverton Public Library, which owns five copies of this book. This book contains many indecent passages and language and is not befitting a college professor. I would not like my children to be taught by such a professor, nor would I want them to be reading such a book. I hereby call upon Busiris Technical University to fire the author of this book, and the Riverton Public Library to remove copies of this book from its shelves.

Name Withheld by Request

"I remember the letter."

"Was there any reaction at Busiris?"

"Yeah, a funny incident, although not so funny in light of what later happened. I got a letter in the inter-campus mail, on Busiris stationery, purporting to be from Reich, citing this letter and other reaction to *Age of Faith* and calling for my resignation. I blew up, of course, went roaring into Lou Feracca's office, raged at him for ten minutes. When I told him I was going straight to the press, he blanched a little, then produced a photostat of the Reich letter. He'd written it himself. 'Always rage to me before raging to UPI,' he made me promise. I was six inches away from major fuck-up."

"Vice President Reich never responded?"

"Not to the letter in the *Standard-Republican,* and not to the book. I never received a word of congratulations from anyone in administration concerning my book or my prize. Which tells you where they were coming from."

"I've been provided with a copy of another letter, written several years ago by an older woman who took your creative writing workshop:

Dear Dr. Thompson,

Last semester I signed up for a creative writing course with Professor Charles Creed on your faculty. The procedure in the class was for students to write stories and poems and then talk about them. We also used a textbook personally selected by the professor. I was appalled at the amount of sex and vulgarity in the textbook and the work of many other students, but Professor Creed seemed to think that was just fine. All we talked about were these stories. I must say I received very little instruction in writing. My grade was a B, and I am sure that if I had written about some of those subjects, I would have received an A. My minister has read all of my essays and considers them very good. I must say that I consider my money wasted for this course.

Yours Truly,
Edith Kolb, Senior Citizen

"There was no real fall-out on this one either. Until now. I can't imagine it helped my reputation in Busiris administration, though. For all I know, Reich never saw it. It went to my department chair."

"The letter comes from your personnel file in the Vice President's office."

"Well, well, well. Another player unmasks himself."

"What was the end of the complaint?"

"Edith and I had an encounter independent of the letter. She was unhappy with her B, although it was a pretty charitable B as you may imagine. Her stories weren't stories as such, mostly Essays on Moral Living the likes of which a Congregationalist minister would approve. So she called me on it. 'I want to know why I got a B in your class.'

"I gave her the standard answer. 'I thought your writing was good, showed some intelligent ideas, was even above average. But it wasn't outstanding, could have used a little more invention, stronger characterization, maybe a little work on grammar and

punctuation. So a B for better than average, but not the best it could be.'

" 'I bet if I was young and cute, I'd get an A. Like that little Negro girl.'

" 'Edith, there were two A's in that class. One went to a female and one went to a male.' I showed her my grade book."

" 'Maybe you like the boys too.'

"That's what she said. 'Maybe you like the boys too.' I threw her out of the office. Then she wrote the letter. The ultimate irony was that, as a senior citizen, she paid a very reduced tuition for the class, maybe $25 or something. Even at Busiris, a class of 20 Ediths wouldn't have paid me a living wage."

"What was the textbook?"

"The Pushcart Prize anthology for whatever year it was. Each year Pushcart selects the best of small press literature, publishes it in a big fat anthology, makes a lot of money, gets a lot of attention for 'alternative writers and alternative writing.' Most authors are pretty well known, major-leaguers slumming it in the small presses. I had a piece in there one year. I thought that kids writing for publication should have a sense of what's being published in the places they might aspire to publish in. I still think that."

"No one in administration ever talked to you about your choice of textbook? No one ever interfered?"

"I heard nothing about the Kolb letter. My chair gave me a copy of her letter, but I refused, as the expression goes, to dignify it with a reply. Edith died from cancer a year or so later. She was probably dying when she took the course, when she wrote the letter. I forgave her just a little."

"Mr. Howe has provided me with a copy of Vice President Reich's letter to you concerning Mrs. Kolb's complaint. It suggests you be more sensitive to student reaction to your language and the

language in material you teach." Stella handed Jack another photocopy.

"I have never seen this in my life."

"The Vice President indicated you had not responded to it."

"The Vice President did not send it to me. The Vice President probably wrote it over the weekend."

"Is it possible, Professor Creed, that you lost or ignored this memo?"

"Have you been provided with a copy of a letter from the Dean congratulating me on my Pulitzer Prize? Another letter that I might have lost? Or how about a letter from the Vice President, thanking me for writing those Mass Communications and Global Studies proposals that got the University, what was it, two million bucks? Maybe those letters also got lost."

"Possibly," Stella answered. "It seems to be you're in the habit of acting very . . . brashly. Recklessly. Almost suicidally. You haven't listened well to Dr. Reich's warnings. Complaints require response."

"Anyone who has taught more than two years is going to have some complaints. Sooner or later, everyone gets a few cranky letters in his file. You can't please everybody. Basically I'm a popular teacher."

"How popular are you?"

"My classes have always been, and continue to be, among the first to fill at each registration. I have always been close to a number of students, especially blacks, athletes, and women. Sure Reich can find students who dislike me, but I can provide a long list of students who are passionately on my side. Popowski is right: I'm being railroaded. A couple of kids too Baptist for twentieth-century sex. A couple others too lazy or stupid to handle college work. And a couple of megalomaniacal administrators willing, no eager, to use their self-absolving complaints to blackmail me into throwing away my career. The only proper response is a law suit."

“You can’t file a lawsuit, Professor Creed, until you’ve been through a hearing. And if you resign, there’s no hearing.”

“All this shit going down, and I can’t file a lawsuit? Slander. Malicious gossip. Defamation. You mention ‘harassment,’ Michael, and people don’t think hugs and kisses and bad language. They think very nasty things. Assault. Rape. Extortion. My reputation is S H I T. My career is finished. I’m lucky my wife hasn’t packed the kids and the bank account in the car and headed for her folks. This is an insidious, vicious thing that has happened. And you’re telling me I can’t do a thing about it?”

“At the moment, nothing has happened. The confidentiality of this matter is for your protection, Professor Creed. If you want to make this a public issue, request a hearing. Once you’ve been through the hearing, appeal the Vice President’s decision to the Board of Trustees. After you lose your hearing and your appeal, you can sue for defamation of character . . . if you think your character has been defamed. Or you can claim your promising career has been ruined. If you win your hearing or the appeal, of course, your career is not ruined, although these allegations are part of your permanent personnel file. And remember, truth is an absolute defense on their part: if what the students say is true, you have no case.

“Remember also that the students have no money—they’re not worth suing. To sue the University, you have to prove malicious intent on the part of university administrators. They would probably claim to have been motivated by a good-faith intent to protect students’ interest.” Stella folded his hands behind the back of his head.

“They created the guidelines to hang me. That’s obvious. That was part of my analysis.”

“I have read your analysis of Ms. Martin-Oliver’s harassment guidelines.”

“Rather prophetic, wouldn’t you say? I’ll stand on that analysis as well. More today than when I wrote it.”

“You make a number of valid points. And some points that I might, as a lawyer, be inclined to quarrel with. We’re specifically interested in the relationship between this article and the matter at hand. It seems to me that somebody reading this article on one hand and assessing your case on the other might take you as perhaps more of a misogynist than you really are. Some of the student responses to your essay mention the highly sexual nature of the literature you teach. Those letters also might be regarded as part of a consistent pattern of misogynist behavior.”

“I’m no misogynist. I’m just an anti-academic feminist, or whatever this crowd is. They’re the misogynists. One of the student letters pointed that out.”

“Do you know the student who wrote that letter?”

“No more than Victoria Nation knew the authors of those letters you showed me earlier. You may have noticed that no one in administration or the Women’s Studies program responded to my critique. Not Victoria Nation. Not even the author of the guidelines.”

“Ms. Martin-Oliver was one of your students, is that correct, Professor Creed?”

“Is Ms. Martin-Oliver involved in this case?” Jack asked. He was trying to discover, I believe, whether their relationship was the unplayed trump in Reich’s hand, the joker being used to leverage him into resignation.

Stella misinterpreted the question.

“My understanding is that Ms. Martin-Oliver was not involved in this investigation at all.”

Jack and I exchanged glances.

“Reich told me that she was,” Jack said suspiciously.

“My understanding is otherwise,” Stella assured him. “She did write the Busiris guidelines . . . on Vice President Reich’s instructions. Even those were adapted from a number of similar documents at other institutions.”

“She’s the affirmative action officer,” Jack said incredulously. “Complaints about harassment and racism would first go to the harassment officer.”

“Ordinarily they would,” Stella told him. “That surprised me too. They seem to have gone out of their way to avoid Ms. Martin-Oliver. She was not a player in the investigation. Or in drafting the Vice President’s letter. The original complaints came to the Vice President through Professor Nation. I’m quite certain of that fact.”

“Reich mentions Lily Lee in his letter requesting my resignation.”

“Only as author of the Busiris guidelines. Which, as the anonymous response to your critique in the *Sentinel* points out, represent a position far more protective of the accused than the guidelines of most other institutions. I would like to meet the person who wrote that letter. He or she knows as much about the subject as you do. You have no idea who wrote that letter, Professor Creed?

“None.” Jack had not fully recovered from Stella’s roundhouse right. “So Ms. Martin-Oliver was not a player,” he repeated.

“The Vice President understood that she had been your protégé. He felt she might, oh, compromise this investigation.”

“My protégé.” Jack said softly. “Yeah.”

Jack’s eyes hardened.

“I want to ask you one question, Michael,” he said, “and I want the straightest answer you have ever given in your life. Was Lily Lee Martin-Oliver in any way a part of this investigation?”

Jack’s intensity surprised Stella. “As I said before, Ms. Oliver drafted the guidelines on racial and sexual harassment but was kept

out of the investigation. Apparently intentionally. You have my word on that."

I could watch Jack's mental gears churning. At this moment the picture finally snapped into focus: a vision of Penelope weaving at her loom melted into a picture of Lily Lee forced by her employer and circumstances to braid the hangman's noose. To the casual observer, that noose looked stout enough. But into the rope she had woven a weak spot or two. He could break that rope if he wanted, before it broke his neck. She had even provided, anonymously, instructions on how to break that noose. He grasped the message in Lily's eyes on Friday afternoon. He recognized, finally, the clarity and eloquence of that anonymous letter in the *Sentinel*. And its purpose. In the back of his mind whispered a voice. "By all means necessary," it commanded firmly.

For the first time, really, Jack knew what to do on Monday. What he could do. What Lily expected him to do.

"The bottom line is, they didn't even follow their own regulations. If Reich or Hauptmann had issued the warning mandated by Busiris's own guidelines, my behavior would have changed in a heartbeat. They knew that, and they chose not to. Because they wanted me gone. Not a word from October until now. They didn't even follow their own procedure. That anonymous letter in the *Sentinel* makes precisely this point: procedures must be followed in all cases of alleged harassment before disciplinary actions can be invoked. As that letter makes clear, the Busiris guidelines require warning before sanctions. I got no warning. Procedure was not followed. I want a job or compensation."

Stella was listening.

"You have a point on the procedure," he agreed. "And what you say about your behavior toward the students is probably true. Let me ask you this, however. Your persistent harassment of Busiris officials is another thing. When, Professor Creed, when was that going to stop?"

“Bert and Ernie have been fucking me over for years—me and the institution.”

“They’re the bosses. You’re simply a college professor. A ‘field nigger,’ as you’ve been known to say. You might make something of the procedure, if you are inclined. Apart from the procedural business, you’re not in an especially strong position, Professor Creed.”

“Bert, Ernie and Busiris will very soon regret this whole episode.”

“I am afraid the Vice President does not share your perspective.”

“So how much money are they offering?” Jack asked suddenly.

“A year’s salary plus insurance. We could get . . . oh, another $10,000 or so in severance pay.”

“And there’s nothing, as far as you see it, that I can do?”

“The procedural aspect is interesting. It might win you $20,000 or more. Or an appeal, or a civil suit. But that’s an ugly business. Everyone gets smeared, including all the students you have mentioned. Unless you buy your own newspaper, publicity in Riverton is likely to be pretty one-sided. Far from offering an early and easy settlement, I suspect Busiris would draw things out as long as possible. You can expect the University to make both internal and external proceedings as protracted and painful as possible. We are talking years here, years that you will be unemployed and unemployable. If you win the civil suit, you can collect lost pay, and punitive damages, and legal fees. That’s if you win. If you lose, you have invested three or five years of your life in pursuit of nothing. You would have my fees to pay . . . and while I may be sympathetic to your situation and do what I can to minimize those fees, I am not free.”

“The trial, of course, would be held in Riverton,” Jack meditated aloud. “In front of a jury of Edith Kolbs.”

“One faculty member, incidentally, is prepared to testify to hearing noises coming from your office that sounded very much like sex.”

“He’s a lying son-of-a-bitch.”

“He’s a she.”

“She’s a lying son-of-a-bitch. Did she give a date, a year? I was probably out of town.”

“Whatever the dates, testimony like that would end your teaching career.”

“Even if you win, even at the level of a hearing,” Stella pointed out, “the proceedings—not just the four formal complaints, but anything and everything else that is said or done—become a part of your official personnel file, which will guarantee you never get hired elsewhere. At Busiris you will receive minimal raises and maximum scrutiny, including further disciplinary actions next time you step out of line. Or are perceived of as stepping out of line.”

“With this stuff being rehashed to demonstrate ‘a pattern of behavior.’ And so on, again and again until convicted. Why am I not surprised,” Jack meditated aloud. “I’m the one who’s always preached that law has little if anything to do with justice.”

“Mr. Creed, the mechanism of the law is indeed expensive and cumbersome, but as even you appreciate, the threat of the mechanism of the law is more easily used than the law itself.”

“Everything you’ve said suggests that Reich holds all the trumps, except for the procedure business.”

“So he does. But while you have apparently made yourself a thorn in the side of Busiris Tech, Vice President Reich is not, contrary to what you seem to think, obsessed with destroying you. He is as anxious to avoid a protracted disciplinary procedure as you should be. Everything I have heard about him convinces me that he —like most other members of the Busiris administration—is a fair and compassionate man who appreciates your professional

achievements and your popularity among some students. I honestly believe he respects you and values your contributions to the University. He also understands that you have support among some areas of the University community. Although Professor Nation, among other individuals, has convinced him that your behavior has been, by most standard, unacceptably unprofessional."

"He's fouling me out on a very ticky-tacky call."

"Vice President Reich, on behalf of the University, is making an offer which I personally would find very attractive. We can sweeten it considerably on the technicality. I'd take it."

"This is a crock of shit and we all know it. The only bigger crock of shit would be walking away without a fight."

"Mr. Creed, do you want to teach at Busiris Technical University for the rest of your life?"

"I can think of nothing worse."

"Precisely what I thought, and precisely what Vice President Reich thinks. You, he, and I are in complete agreement. Why fill your life up with things you can't touch?"

"I would prefer right now not to move to any other place. If I do leave Busiris, I would prefer my departure to be on my own terms."

"You've had five years to leave on your own terms, and you haven't left."

"I would prefer to resign on my own terms. I would not prefer to be blackmailed into resigning. Or to be fired."

"Mr. Creed, I am as independent a son-of-a-bitch as you, and in my life I have been fired from a dozen jobs. But I am a realist. In each case I accepted the realities of the situation, took what I could get in terms of money and experience, picked myself up and got on with my life. That's what made me the best lawyer in this city. I own this firm. I own this building. I accept whatever cases I choose, and I decline those I wish to decline. I am my own landlord. Nobody tells

me what to do. Nobody. I'm advising you to do the same thing. You are a Pulitzer-Prize winning writer. I personally have read your book. Although I don't agree with you politically, it's a brilliant book. You have talent and influential friends and admirers in the writing and publishing world. You can be a writer if you choose. As a writer you can be absolutely independent of everyone. If that's what you want, be a writer.

"If you want to teach, your Pulitzer—and Busiris's tactful silence—will get you a teaching position at schools far more prestigious than Busiris. Vice President Reich is offering absolute confidentiality and one full year's salary in return for you leaving the university. They broke their own rules—that's probably another $20,000, another year's salary. Quite a nest egg, I'd say. If you want to be a writer, two years' salary will give you plenty of time to write. If you land another teaching position, you will be paid twice for one year's work. Most importantly, you will save your reputation, avoid tremendous legal fees, and keep your mind focused on your true work.

"My advice, and I hope that you receive it well, is simple. Don't destroy yourself battling for a victory the situation doesn't offer. Take the money and get on with your life.

"My further professional advice is, if you decide to continue teaching, become more of a team player."

Jack spent the afternoon of February 9, 1985 at Burr Oak State Park, alone, in communion with the squirrels and trees and the ghost of Lily Lee Martin. On Sunday, February 10, 1985 he heard a sermon on forgiving and forgiving again, to "seventy times seven."

"Thank you," he told his minister; "you saved my life."

"Something you want to talk about?" the reverend asked him.

"Nothing at all," Jack answered. "Only thanks."

On Monday, February 11, 1985, after discussing the matter not at all with Rose Marié, Jack Creed resigned his faculty appointment

at Busiris Technical University “for personal reasons.”

Not until half a year later did we discover that Michael Stella taught both the civil and business law courses at Busiris Technical University. At a stipend of $5,000. Per course.

# Chapter 10
# **Merry Pranksters All**

Jack's departure from campus was instantaneous. He spent the balance of Saturday evening and early Sunday morning in the McKinley Library, which was closed from 3:00 on Friday until noon on Sunday. He joined Timm, Jenny, and Rose Marié at church around 10:00, then spent Sunday afternoon and evening rearranging his attic and study to accommodate the contents of his two offices at Busiris. He spent Monday the 11th away from home and away from school, while Stella parlayed procedural lapses and violations of the University Policy on Racial and Sexual Harassment into an additional twenty thousand Busiris bucks for Jack and $4,000 for himself. Not until 4:45 Monday afternoon did Stella deliver Jack's typed letter of resignation to Old Main. The cover note, written in Jack's own hand, read, "Bert. Here it is. Are you sure you want it? There's still time to compromise. A great deal depends on your reaction. Do you want to make a deal? The Invisible J. C."

Reich read Jack's note as something between an appeal for mercy and another idle threat, the same combination of weakness and bullying he'd come to expect from Professor Charles Creed ever since the summer school contract episode. Mildly amused, he dismissed the idea of compromise without a second's thought.

Jack, however, was not offering a deal but issuing a warning. And he knew as he wrote that the Vice President would misread both the note and the situation, until long after he found himself out on the street.

After dark on Monday, Jack returned to the campus and, by the light of security lights shining through his office window, filled approximately two dozen cardboard boxes with books, manuscripts, and personnel effects. Twice footsteps down the hall, and the

presence of persons outside, interrupted his labors. At one point there were female voices, one black and the other white.

“He’s not here. Dr. Tucker said he wasn’t here all day.”

“What should we do?”

“I tried calling his home. His phone been busy all day.”

“Dr. Tucker thought he’d be in touch with us.”

“I can’t believe he never gonna see us ever again.”

“Leave him a note.”

After the persons had disappeared, Jack moved the boxes to the freight elevator, and thence to the rear basement entrance of Busiris Hall. At 10:15 p.m. he made his first trip home; at 11:30 p.m. his second. Keys to the office, elevator, mail room, and building he left in his desk, where they were discovered three months later by Vice President Reich and Chairman Jones. By midnight, February 11, 1985, Charles Creed was on his own.

Jack was far less precipitous about vacating his library carol. Few on the library staff and almost no students knew about the room. Those who did were Jack’s friends and not in a mood to talk so loud. Roger Holmes had left Busiris in 1984, four weeks to the day after the Board of Trustees rejected for the third time his proposal for a new building. He had either failed to mention the carol, or his hurriedly appointed successor had forgotten its existence. Not until September did somebody at McKinley Library wonder aloud about the mystery room in the basement. Not until October was the room identified as Professor Charles Creed’s former study. When no key could be found, the new head librarian (ignorant as well of the room’s subterranean fire escape) ordered the door broken down with a fire ax. Jack had long ago removed both his personal effects—and the IBM Selectric—leaving in the top desk drawer the red plastic flashlight and keys to office and building.

So Jack became a complete unknown at Busiris during the daylight hours, although his invisible ghost haunted the campus at

night and on weekends, when he continued to make after-hour use of the library. The difference between 1984 and 1985 was, in this regard, negligible.

Those who called for Jack at his home were told simply that he was out, or that he could not come to the phone. Colleagues and students quickly caught on, and in a matter of days quit phoning. In February and March, Lou and I saw very little of Jack ourselves.

Both Hauptmann and Reich expected Jack's resignation to precipitate a real uproar along the lines of the art students' boycott: letters of protest, demonstrations, perhaps even subtle threats. They knew of Jack's popularity among some students and faculty, of his animosity for the institution, and of his reputation for pranks. Reich was in fact surprised to receive Jack's letter of resignation on the 11th. He had anticipated a more prolonged battle. I have seen evidence suggesting that Reich was not as sure of himself as Michael Stella suggested to Jack on Saturday. The Big Damned Mess card, if played, might have saved Jack's job.

Especially Reich was surprised at the quiet on campus the week of February 11-15. At a hastily called department meeting on Tuesday, while the campus buzzed with the most libelous gossip, Ted Jones announced only that Jack had resigned, effective immediately, for personal reasons. He said he had done all he personally could do to try to save Jack's position, suggested that the circumstances were very delicate, and appealed to the English faculty to hold together. He circulated a sheet on which those interested in spring term overloads could indicate their preferences. The only person indicating such a willingness was Victoria Nation.

"Busiris continued to pay him a lot longer than he continued to teach for Busiris," Jones told me as we left the meeting.

"Jack Creed was the best teacher this place had," I said. "His loss is a great loss to the institution and the profession. He taught students, faculty, and administration. By his words and by his example."

“Follow his example, and you will end up exactly where he ended up,” Jones responded.

“Is that a threat, Jeremy?”

“It’s a statement of fact,” he said flatly. “How many times did I warn Chas to beware? He thought I was just kidding him. Now I’m telling you fellows. It’s nose to the grindstone from here on.”

“That this school had ten people like Jack Creed!” rhapsodized Lou Feracca. “Would to god we had a faculty of Jack Creeds. Busiris would be incontestably the best school in the States.”

“A faculty of Chas Creeds? Be serious. Absolute anarchy. No direction at all. An educational disaster.”

“Quit making alibis,” Victoria said. “Charles operated in a political vacuum. He thought he was clever, but he was naive. He was a dinosaur, who could not understand the new order and had no role in it. He empowered no one but himself, and he was completely insensitive to the needs of people from marginalized races, genders, and cultures. He is now . . . an unknown.”

“He was a man who loved and read books, and who taught students to read and love books. What else should we be doing?”

“He knew a few texts,” Victoria responded, “but they were old texts. His ignorance of theory was . . . laughable. In literary theory as well as academic politics, Chas was a clown. He taught the students not practical power but naiveté.”

“I take it you will be scabbing this spring, Victoria?” Lou challenged.

“Jack resigned,” Victoria said. “Face it, guys. Your big macho stud hero—who is, off the record, not much of a stud—walked out on the students, and he walked out on you. He disappointed—I will not say disgraced—the institution and the profession, my institution and my profession. I’m still here, in one of the finest schools in the country, doing my little part to rid the discipline and the country of

patriarchal prejudice and bias. I got it made. Should I commit suicide because Charles Creed couldn't adjust?

"Here's a secret for you," she added. "I feel no sympathy and no guilt. I had nothing to do with his departure."

"That's not exactly the word on the street," Feracca told her.

"Charles Creed, if you will pardon the expression, made his own bed. Or tried to. Tried too hard, from what I understand, in more than one case. He finally got what he's been asking for all these years."

"Tell us about Jack's bed," Lou said with a cold look at Victoria. "You've been hot to climb into it ever since you met him. What do you know about Jack's bed, Miss Vicky?"

"You three can put it all to bed right there," Jones ordered. "Charles' situation is resolved in Old Main, not in this department. Anyone who divides this department is in deep trouble. That goes for you, Victoria, and you too, Lou and Andy. I don't want a divided department."

"You have a divided department. Will the chair be teaching overload this spring, Jeremy?"

"Those sections have to be covered."

"Nobody picked up Professor Nation's sections when she was off at Bryn Mawr."

"We're already into the term. These classes have already met."

"My personal guess is those classes will be pretty empty pretty soon."

"No matter what anyone does," Victoria insisted, "Jack Creed is not returning to Busiris. Someone ought to profit from the situation."

"Scab for $1200?"

"Who better to fill Charles' shoes than Charles' friends?"

"That ain't you, babe."

Jones shot Lou another hard look.

“If faculty can teach five-course loads,” Feracca told Jones, “we should all be teaching five courses a term instead of four, at 125% of our present salaries. If we can’t handle five courses without doing our students an injustice—and I personally believe we can’t—then Max and Moritz do the students a disservice in asking us to take five classes. Or in trying to bump class size limits up another five or ten students.”

“These are extraordinary circumstances,” Jones said. “Whatever occurred between Reich and Creed, we have an obligation to help the students. At the moment that means getting them the instruction they need.”

“If Busiris can’t give students what they deserve, which means quality teachers in reasonably sized classes, then they are best served by transferring to U of I, or Southern, or Wesleyan. Even Bradley, for chrissake. Or by taking an honest job at the Pizza Hut. And don’t go blaming me for the students’ problems. Or Jack either. Blame Reich and Hauptmann. They don’t give a flying fuck for students, or for Busiris either. Or for principles, for that matter. They are strictly careerists who go with whatever ideological flow they think will further their careers. . . which I personally hope that this mess terminates. They dumped Jack two weeks into the term. Let them teach his fucking courses.”

“You’ve been hanging around Chas too much lately.”

“He’s a friend of mine, Jerry—a word you might not understand.”

“Watch your toes.”

“I’ve been watching my toes for a decade. All I see is the moss growing.”

“And tell that Pollak or Russian or whatever the hell he is to keep his nose clean. None of us really know what went on. Not I and not you.”

“And not Gruppenführer Hauptmann or Oberführer Reich. You can bet on that.”

“Leanna Robertson, one of my advisees, is very upset about Jack’s resignation and what may come out of it,” said Victoria. “So are many of the other women on campus.”

“And well they should be,” Feracca said.

“Admit it, Lou. Charles Creed is a chauvinist of the worst order. His language . . . his whole behavior around women . . . just demeaning to their whole personhood. Jack Creed has caused many sensitive women on this campus severe emotional distress.”

“Including Ms. Doctor Associate Professor Victoria ‘Tits’ Nation?” Feracca wanted to know.

“Your language is over the edge, Lou,” Jones warned.

“You start giving me that raised consciousness crap,” Feracca told Nation, “and I’m going to give you a few pieces of your own history.”

“Watch yourself.”

“Jerry . . . fuck you,” I said. “And fuck Victorian Vicky as well.”

I’ve always been glad I said that.

Beyond this small altercation in the English faculty, the explosion administration feared never developed. The old faculty advocates of academic freedom and free speech scurried like roaches for the nearest crack in the wall. Student-staff reaction to Jack’s resignation was nonexistent. No demonstrations, no letters, virtually no protest.

All of us lamented the apparent betrayal. Every indication was that Old Main had grossly overestimated Jack’s support, which amounted to no support at all. I have seen a memo dated 2/22/85, issued by the highest levels of the Old Main steeple, congratulating Vice President Reich on “neutralizing student reaction” by his “adroit

and sensitive handling of the English Department and the situation on campus."

"The situation on campus," however, was slightly different than President Howard understood it. March, April and May would demonstrate that Jack had more sympathizers than anyone ever imagined.

As for mid-February, the students wanted to torch Busiris. It was Jack himself who chilled out the situation.

That story is told here for the first time.

The truth is that thirty to forty students had met on Monday evening to plan a series of actions designed to restore Jack's appointment. "We were pretty careful about who we invited and where we met," Paul Popowski later recalled. "We figured places on campus would be watched and maybe bugged, even the Black Students Alliance. I figured I was being watched, and Carolyn too. We were very paranoid, and probably we should have been. Like a spy movie. Finally we picked the shelter in Riverfront Park. This was the middle of February, at night. We brought weenies and marshmallows, like a picnic, in case the cops asked any questions. People sneaking in one and two at a time from cars parked six blocks away. People patrolling the perimeters, checking for spies. Like a spy movie or something. We were freezing our asses off."

Paul explained what he knew, as did Carolyn McQuillan, Joline Harte, and Dierdre Williams. There was some discussion of Jack's relationships with students, with Afro-Americans, and with women. Williams recounted the story of her lunch at the Heidelberger. "Shit," she concluded; "I couldn't make him for tryin'. Not then, not Friday afternoon. He too uptight about rules and regs."

There was some discussion of the character of the women making complaints. All were well known. Lily Lee Martin was mentioned only as Jack's protégé, a very hip Afro-American, and the affirmative action officer.

Apparently this meeting was not reported to or eavesdropped on by University officials. It is interesting to speculate on how Reich, Hauptmann, and Howard would have reacted to the discussion. Certainly the students' candid assessment of Jack's private life would have shocked them, but this group was sympathetic to Jack, his ideas and his lifestyle. These students, at least, found Jack's behavior neither offensive nor threatening. The tenor of discussion was exculpatory . . . had Old Main been of a mind to listen.

Proposed strategies broke largely along racial lines. Everyone understood that maximum leverage could be had only from a display of maximum power, and any acceptable solution would have to satisfy all persons involved: pro and con factions of the student body, pro and con factions of the faculty, and administration. "What we really want," Deirdre Williams said, "is to keep Professor Creed at Busiris as a teacher, and let administrators know that we don't want no more hassles for him." How best to achieve those aims?

Several very unbooshie Chicago blacks who knew Jack's history proposed an immediate take-over of Old Main by black and white students, negotiations to follow. "Quick, decisive action underscores the point about no more hassles," they argued.

A more moderate group, mostly white, proposed gradual escalation: negotiations backed by the threat of a take-over, with demonstrations or a take-over only as a last resort. "We don't want to alienate administrators right away. This isn't the sixties anymore."

Popowski, claiming to represent most English majors, wanted a student strike. No attendance in any classes until Jack returned.

André Washington, starting playmaker for the Bucks, offered to lead a team boycott which, he pointed out, "would hurt Busiris where it hurts most. If we strike just one game, Professor Creed is back the following day. Probably with a big raise."

"I thought the team was pissed about Jack and Alonzo Jackson," somebody said.

“The nigger is strictly South side. Big fuckin’ trouble for the team and the school,” Washington told him. “We all know we’re better off without him, including Coach Miller. Professor Creed did right.”

The students settled finally on the threat of a strike followed, if necessary, by a strike itself. One subcommittee was formed to draft letters to the Trustees, another to write letters to the *Sentinel*, a third group to create, print, and distribute posters and fliers. The basketball team would wear black wrist bands at the next home game and let the media take the story from there.

Around 10:00 Popowski phoned Jack’s home to discuss the group’s plans. Rose Marié told Paul that Jack was at school. He, Carolyn, and Deirdre Williams drove over to school while the rest waited in the darkness by the river. Popowski found Jack’s lights out and his office door closed. He left a note, and returned to the park. Unable to go further, the group ate their marshmallows and dissolved.

Sometime after midnight the mystery tramp himself met with Paul, Carolyn, Deirdre and André. He suggested that the situation was cool, and no public reaction on their part would be necessary.

On Tuesday, all plans for letters, sit-ins, strikes and boycotts were canceled.

Conventional campus wisdom read Jack’s resignation as an admission of guilt. Most of the gossip was speculation on what crimes could be spectacular enough to fire a fully tenured, nationally recognized professor in mid-year. The students’ passivity was taken as an indication of their understanding of his guilt. Subsequent events suggest, however, that the students’ wrath, Jack’s energies, and the anger of other Busiris constituencies were redirected from sit-ins and strikes to other expressions of applied dissident politics. Creed’s dismissal signaled the beginning of the ghetto uprising which nearly closed the institution permanently.

To say this is not to imply that he, or any of his allies among students, faculty, or custodial staff were in any way directly

responsible for the series of misfortunes which befell Busiris in 1985. Jack and his crowd were not alone in their almost pathological hatred of the institution. Let us admit the facts. He or anyone else looking to work the college harm would not have had far to look for help. Crimes and the pranks both were fully investigated by intelligent and competent individuals inside and outside of the University. No investigation ever implicated either Jack or his friends. At a decade's remove I can add nothing to their reports.

Nor would I if I could.

I can say only what we all quickly learned: Vice President Reich had not been anywhere near as successful as President Howard thought in neutralizing the situation.

For one thing, it soon became apparent that Jack had anticipated his departure long before the meeting in Reich's office. The first intimation of this came as we left the office of Stella, Corwin, Purdue and Holz. I was fretting aloud about employment for Jack in 1985-86. "Not to worry," he said confidently; "next year is taken care of. And the year after that. I'm safe through summer of 1987. Maybe longer. After that . . . I get another job or I write another book. Maybe both."

I assumed at the moment he was referring to the year's salary offered by Reich, plus unemployment insurance, plus whatever else Stella had negotiated by way of a severance package. But Jack's confidence about 1985-86 was based on an imminent appointment as senior Fulbright lecturer in American Studies at the University of Swansea, Wales. He had applied for the Fulbright (without Rose Marié's knowledge) shortly after returning from his first European venture, using academic references from individuals off campus and a teaching reference, oddly, from Roger Holmes in the library. In addition, he had arranged an invitation from the American Studies chair at University of Swansea, Wales, whom he'd met during the winter of 1983. With his Pulitzer Prize and his publications record Jack probably needed neither the recommendations nor the invitation, but the combination of book, prize, experience, invitation

and previous residence in Wales gave him a lock on the assignment every American academic covets: one year abroad, lecturing and traveling, in the United Kingdom.

Jack left word of the Fulbright unannounced, even to his friends. We read about it in the *Standard-Republican* in early March.

Although I felt vaguely wounded at being out of Jack's plans, the news left me curiously elated. Once again Creed had stuffed himself down everyone's throat. He'd been injured not at all by Reich's bullet. To a full year's salary and additional Busiris pay-offs, he added his Fulbright stipend. As for working conditions, there was no comparison.

Once announced, the event was celebrated over burgers and beer at Tookey's. Midway through my second beer, a light went on in my head. I asked Jack about application deadlines for Fulbright appointments.

"Well, Tucker, now that you ask, the application deadline for a 1985-86 appointment was August 31 of 1984.

"August 31 of 1984," I repeated stupidly.

"August 31, 1984."

"You son of a bitch." Feracca nearly choked on his beer.

"And the actual decision date?" I wanted to know. "Just when do applicants get the good or bad news?"

"Well, Andrew old buddy, let's just say sometime between September 1 and December 31."

"You son of a bitch," Feracca repeated again and again. "You weren't going to give them any notice at all, were you?"

"I was going to give Reich just about as much notice as he gave me," Jack laughed. "I'd have given him . . . a weekend."

So the Charles had been more in control than any of us expected. The Jack of Hearts had managed a most satisfying escape out the back door.

Joining him were fourteen undergraduate majors and five graduate students, who transferred or withdrew from the Busiris program before September 1985. Five faculty members followed. By fall of 1986, every significantly published member of the Busiris English faculty save Jeremy Jones had left, including two males whom we had never counted as especially pro-Creed. Jack took from the department—and the university—everything, everyone he could steal. Four of the five, to our surprise and their own, found better positions at larger and wealthier institutions. The fifth dropped out of teaching entirely. He was picked up by a graphic arts outfit as a sales-public relations person. In five years he was pulling down more than any of us, and at least twice what he would have made had he been able to hang on at Busiris.

Resignations in other departments also ran heavy in 1985-86, although the Great Retrenchment of 1986 made them more a benefit to the institution than a curse, and it was sometimes hard to differentiate resignation from retrenchment.

Perhaps Charles Creed's departure had nothing to do with the general exodus from Busiris. Perhaps the students and faculty both had, like Jack, long inclined toward departure, needing only the revelation of handwriting on the wall to push them out the door.

Perhaps it did. The events of February 1985 demonstrated that Vice President Reich could indeed, as he often boasted, "fire anyone I want to, at any time I want to, for any reason I want to." That was the message we all heard, loud and clear. Those who could, cleared out. Whether Jack's departure was part of or cause for the great departure, it signaled the gutting of the English program at Busiris Technical University.

Perhaps Jack had nothing as well to do with the series of pranks and disasters which reduced Busiris nearly to bankruptcy during 1985 and 1986.

Perhaps he did.

The pranks began in late February. They ranged from high jinx to embarrassing annoyances to serious criminal activity. They came from everywhere and targeted everyone.

Chronology is difficult at a decade's remove, but one of the earliest came in the form of a series of bogus memos and phone calls, back and forth among Hauptmann, Reich, Howard, and their assistants and staff. The memos set nonexistent meetings, proposed absurd projects, criticized someone's mishandling of a nonexistent crisis, protested in strong and earthy terms the termination of programs that had not been terminated, threatened dire consequences, warned of imminent falls. One even requested Hauptmann's resignation. Each bogus memo begat legitimate responses, which made no sense to their recipients, who fired off angry responses of their own. The responses created more confusion. Old Main was, by all reports, a regular circus.

The memos were typed on the letterhead of a dozen appropriate offices, carried all the proper secretarial significations, read and looked for all the world like every other legitimate Hauptmann, Reich or Howard memo. The first few false directives produced anxiety, suspicion, and animosity among thieves. When discovered to be false, they created a period of confusion, of constant checkings and verifications. Every piece of paper resulted in a dozen phone calls. How else to differentiate the legitimate from the illegitimate? Then came the realization that people outside the Old Main inner circle might be receiving copies. Or memos of their own. Better check everything. But how, without sounding incompetent or paranoid, do you phone someone and ask, "Have you received any suspicious sounding notes from me?"

While Old Main was awash with memos, the Busiris Maintenance Plant began receiving deliveries of supplies and equipment ordered by fraudulent purchase orders. A whole new realm of anxieties and confusion opened up.

In March, Reich instituted, at no small expense of time and money, a completely revised system of purchase and

communication, with elaborate checks and sign-offs. But the new system did nothing at all to reduce the flow of bogus communications. It's fair to point out that Jack could never have known the new system. Neither could other faculty or students. Besides, the memos referenced discussions and documents unknown to outsiders. Reich concluded that his problem was internal and launched an internal investigation. Charles Creed was not even questioned. Questioning Jack in an internal investigation would have been impossible anyway, since he was never around campus and no longer a Busiris employee.

Reich's inquiry came to nothing. In the end, the Old Main secretarial staff was held collectively responsible for the false memos, and maybe they were. Jack had many friends among the blue-collar employees of Busiris, and most Old Main secretaries detested their bosses. They also knew where the skeletons hung. Not a single secretary lost her position as a result of the March Memo Blizzard.

The memos diminished in March, then ceased as mysteriously as they had begun. When the smoke cleared, the main damage was wasted time in Old Main, and resentment from unhappy suppliers, who lost what they thought were pretty big sales. Busiris absorbed shipping charges on returned merchandise.

One uncaught memo from the Vice President for Business Services cost the Women's Studies Program $15,000 of its 1985-86 speakers and consultants budget. Victoria discovered the prank in the late fall of 1985 when she filed a travel-and-honorarium request for one of her old Bryn Mawr pals and was told her account was in the red. By the time she straightened things out, Busiris was in a world of financial hurt which would have cost her the $15,000 anyway.

As the secretarial corps took the memo heat, the custodial staff took flack for the vandalism in upper level administration offices.

While offering raises well below cost-of-living increases to staff or faculty, Vice President Reich had been treating himself and other high-level administrators to an additional 15-20% annually. For his office he had ordered a new mahogany desk, an enormous chrome-and-leather recliner, an assortment of mahogany chairs for guests, plus a new white leather sofa, plus other furnishings, plus new gray wall-to-wall carpeting. Jack had been one of the first to cross the gray carpet on the afternoon of February 8. Sumptuous new furnishings had been ordered as well for the offices of other administrators, including President Howard. Each day during the spring of 1985 Physical Plant received some new extravagance from Potter and Palmer, Interiors, Inc., to be wrestled by the resentful proletariat to the offices of their betters. Most faculty and staff were well aware that while they were gimping along on a banged up manual typewriter, the Vice President was sitting on his chrome horse and juicing it up with visiting diplomats and potentates.

On March 11, Reich—and half a dozen other bigwigs, including Lily Lee Martin-Oliver—arrived in their recently refurbished offices to find the new furniture, and the new carpet, inscribed with magic marker messages. “This sofa represents the 5% raises Professor Douglas did not receive this year or last.” “This desk represents a 7% raise to Professor Kinney.” “The money spent on this room would have provided a 2% Christmas bonus for every secretary at Busiris Technical Institute.”

The clean-up bill alone would have provided a 5% raise for everyone in Physical Plant, none of whom expected a bonus anyway, all of whom were glad to see a point made.

Cleaning up the offices was nothing compared to cleaning up the campus after some person or persons spread 2, 4-D instead of or mixed with fertilizer in the April 6, 1985, Clean Up, Spruce Up, Fix Up Busiris Day. Hundred-year-old trees died in that disaster, a prank that was no prank. The campus browned to a crisp. First the bedded annuals, then the shrubs and ivy, finally the grass. Unaware of the cause or extent of the problem, the grounds crew attempted first a

number of small landscaping projects: a flower bed there, some reseeding there. The new plants never took. Instead, more of the old foliage died. The re-landscaping grew more intense, still without success. Somebody suggested that the problem might lie in the soil, and sure enough, much of the soil around Busiris was so badly poisoned as to make cover unlikely for years.

Then the trees started to go, including oaks, which dropped like elms afflicted with the Dutch Elm Disease. In a matter of months, the pastoral Busiris campus was stripped bald as a cue ball. It did not recover any semblance of greenery until spring, 1986, and it lost, probably forever, whatever it possessed of the ivy-covered elegance of an old Midwestern college.

A police investigation began on April 30, nearly a month after the fact. Several male faculty members were questioned, including Lou and me, and several students including Paul Popowski. The security staff took a lot of heat, although in all fairness the small Busiris security staff was focused more on monitoring Old Main memos than on guarding the Busiris grounds. The grounds crew came under intense scrutiny when four spreaders were found to contain traces of the herbicide. Fertilizer residue, however, was much stronger than 2, 4-D, and the official police report suggests the spreaders were contaminated after the fact, by someone covering his tracks. Suppliers of farm chemicals throughout Central Illinois were questioned, but the source of the herbicide was never found. By the end of April, of course, containers were long gone, and fingerprints and footprints had long ago been obscured. Riverton Police even questioned crop-dusters and retailers of anything that could have been used to spread herbicides.

Riverton Police also questioned Charles Creed. They were delighted to have an excuse to grill Creed at last. They spent two full days with Jack and his family, trying to fix his whereabouts hour by hour, day by day over several months. “If they’d had it their way, they’d have gone back to the Laird demonstration,” Jack told me. “They had FBI files and everything. I never threatened a lawyer, but I

was a very non-cooperative son-of-a-bitch. Told them that the trauma of being fired had just wiped me out. Most days I just lay around the house wondering how I could support my family. They told me to quit being a wise-ass. I told them to try being fired sometime. They told me they'll be on me like chewing gum, so I better watch it. I said something about police harassment, and they backed off a little."

Jack's home, garage, clothing, and cars were all tested for traces of the herbicide, for contaminated work gloves or coveralls.

Police found nothing.

That particular prank (the defoliation could not possibly have resulted from an honest mistake) produced a tremendous backlash among a community grown somewhat concerned for Busiris's future. We all understood that the sins of Bert and Ernie were not to be visited upon the innocent fauna and flora of the BTU.

Jack was generally held incapable of a crime against Nature. He condemned the prank as roundly as anyone. "Ethics must prevail," he agreed. "An unethical system of *quid pro quo* is unacceptable."

Still, many held him generally responsible for letting his students run out of control. "I'm not in control of anyone except myself," he pointed out. "Not students, not Buildings and Grounds, and certainly not administration." Fall 1985 brought four pink slips in Buildings and Grounds, although the cuts were attributed to economic hardship, not environmental sabotage.

Other pranks were more amusing. The exterminator who showed up one afternoon in Vice President Reich's office claiming to have been contacted about "some skunk loose on the premises" provided laughs for a week.

The Commencement Day Prank of 1985 left parents and friends of the graduates befuddled and the podium contingent profoundly embarrassed.

Beneath the false stage erected for commencement on the floor of the Busiris Convocation Center someone hid a portable tape

recorder (property of the BTU Audio Services) which he or she plugged into an unused floor outlet below the podium. In the absence of power to that particular outlet, the recorder, punched to "play," lay silent and unsuspected through the processional, through the singing of the National Anthem, through "Alma Mater B," whose lyrics were printed on a program insert for the benefit of those unfamiliar with the song. The honored guests, parents, graduates, and those faculty who, being only moderately familiar with the song, thought to check their memories against printed copy were startled to read not the old familiar "Lift up thy voice and sing," but

Stand up and fart and swing,
Blow it out thine ass.
Unzip, and grab thy thing,
Both lad and lass . . .

Those who knew the song cold and sang from memory had no idea what the chuckles and gasps were about. Neither did the Vice President, who, although he knew not a line, tended to mumble along with the crowd.

Some time after the singing of "Alma Mater," however—about the time students, teachers, parents and honored guests were noticing various defacements of "Busiris Bucks" on gymnasium banners ("Busiris Sucks" proclaimed several; "Busiris Fucks" read others; "Busiris Un versity" read the institutional seal on the podium) —the unknown perpetrator tripped a circuit breaker, providing power to the outlet . . . and the tape recorder.

The tape unwound silently below the stage until in the middle of Vice President Reich's welcoming address it emitted a very audible "Bert Reich sucks dead water buffaloes." Several individuals on stage looked at each other, then behind them. The voice fell silent and the speech continued. A few minutes later the voice proclaimed, "Fred Timberman is a fat capitalist pig." (Timberman's honorary doctorate, being presented for "magnanimous support of the arts and sciences," had cost him something like a million dollars in

contributions to Busiris.) Again the dignitaries on stage looked around. Again the voice fell silent.

“Bert Reich is a fascist,” the voice asserted.

“President Howard died five years ago.”

“Busiris is a rip-off.”

The voice, louder and louder, was picked up by the stage microphones, amplified throughout the gymnasium. A technician hurried to the stage, whispered to Dean Hauptmann, and checked behind the heavy maroon curtain. The voice fell silent. The technician reported to Dean Hauptmann. Commencement continued.

Ten minutes later the voice was back. “Hauptmann farts in airlocks,” it announced. “Reich is an Auschwitz swine.” “Busiris Sucks.” More twittering among parents in the bleachers, students and faculty on the gymnasium floor. More consternation on the podium. Reich interrupted his presentation of the honorary degree to request that a technician check the amplification system. Into the ensuing silence broke the voice, unmasked, uncluttered, clear as a bell, amplified perfectly now throughout the Field House: “Bert Reich is a Fat Texas Asshole.” Confusion reigned.

And then more silence. Reich conferred with Howard, who conferred with one of the trustees. “We will now hear a musical selection from the Busiris Chorus,” the Vice President announced. “During this selection, would a technician please shut off and check the Field House sound system?”

Finally the hidden tape recorder gave itself away by playing at top volume Jimi Hendrix’ Woodstock rendition of “The National Anthem.” It got in nearly two minutes of heavy metal anthem before someone could locate the source of the noise, crawl beneath the stage, and pull the right plug.

The students had a field day.

The tape, the recorder, the electrical chord and even the circuit breaker were fingerprinted. The voice on the tape was analyzed:

white, male, possibly adolescent, probably downstate Illinois. Not a voice anyone recognized. The musical selections were analyzed—the Woodstock recording, and further down the tape, which students never heard, “Maggie’s Farm” and “For What It’s Worth.” Distortions on the records used to make the tape did not match the distortions on the records in Jack’s collection.

During the investigation—the third or fourth to bring Riverton police knocking on his door—Jack filed a formal complaint of police harassment. Nothing came of the complaint, except that the Riverton police were, for a time, more circumspect in questioning Jack.

Other pranks were less amusing, and even more devastating economically than the defoliation of the campus. The basketball program suffered tremendously when De Paul, UCLA, and Notre Dame canceled their basketball games with Busiris, effective with the 1985-86 season. The cancellations stemmed from a series of miscommunications with the Busiris sports information office, beginning with letters from Busiris in March seeking to change dates in the 1985-86 schedule and complaining about unfair financial arrangements.

Responses from the three universities brought confusion similar to that attending the Old Main memos. Oddly—and unfortunately—the athletic department took such care to conceal its problem from administration that Reich did not include the athletic department letters in his investigation of forged memos and bogus purchase orders.

“We never said that,” Busiris told Notre Dame. “Who complained about what?” it told DePaul. “What are you talking about?” it asked the fellow from UCLA. A few phone calls calmed the waters, but then another series of calls muddied the waters, and next thing we all knew Busiris basketball was facing an NCAA investigation and probable sanctions.

Finally De Paul, Notre Dame, and UCLA all decided to replace the Bucks with somebody who had their act together.

Possibly Busiris would have lost UCLA and Notre Dame anyway. In the 1980s Division 1 college basketball programs reached levels on which Busiris could never have competed. But very lucrative home-and-home games had been confirmed for 1985-86 and 1986-87 with all three schools. The Busiris Athletic Department estimated loss of ticket and television revenue from those three games alone at about $1,000,000 per year. The disappearance of three major opponents from the Bucks schedule certainly contributed to the collapse of Busiris Bucks basketball, from a team once ranked regularly in the nation's top twenty Division 1 teams to an also-ran in a conference that is close to Division Two.

The main reason for the program's demise, of course, was the NCAA investigation of basketball recruiting violations between 1982 and 1985. The report of that investigation remains absolutely confidential, and to read the *Standard-Republican*, one would think the fellows from Kansas were a bunch of pinkos. Stories in the Chicago newspapers, however, reported a number of minor recruiting violations and major irregularities regarding Alonzo Jackson. Charges included illegal pre-signing contacts, both off- and on-campus, payoffs in the form of jobs and gifts, and fixing Jackson's high school transcript and college records. The minor violations would probably have cost Busiris a slap on the wrist, but any one of the Jackson allegations would have fried the school . . . and Marty Miller, who left Busiris in the summer of 1985. The Busiris Athletic Department estimated that its voluntary three-year abstention from television and tournament basketball play cost upward of $5,000,000—and at least a million more in tickets, concession and memorabilia sales, and contributions if the Bucks had made the NCAA Tournament field in any one of those years.

The impact on recruiting of the suspension and of Coach Marty Miller's departure was immeasurable. The Bucks have not won a conference championship since their suspension. They have not been ranked in the top twenty since 1980. They have not appeared in an NCAA tournament since their suspension, and lost the opening round of their only NIT appearance (1989).

Then there was the Jean Dixon business. In March 1985, the famous psychic was reported to have predicted “a major disaster, involving at least a hundred deaths and millions of dollars in damages sometime in 1985 at a large private college in downstate Illinois.” The college could have been any one of a number of institutions, and although a spokesperson for Ms. Dixon denied such a prediction had ever been made, Howard and Reich delayed fatally in publicizing the denial, being distracted by other matters and fearing that denial would only spread the rumor. They need not have worried. Rumors spread like influenza across an already jumpy campus. Fifty students left Riverton in one week, and transfers out of Busiris for academic year 1985-86 were up a total of 803, an increase of 215%, over 1982-83. (This number included disaffected English majors and persons leaving the Institute for reasons yet to be described.) Transfers into Busiris, on the other hand, were down by approximately 300. At $10,000 apiece in tuition and fees, times up to three years a student, Busiris lost millions.

Clearly Jack had nothing to do with the Dixon prediction. Probably he had nothing to do with the NCAA investigation, although representatives flew all the way to Wales to confer with the former faculty representative on the Bucks Booster Association. Jack always liked Coach Marty Miller and was nearly a surrogate father to several Busiris basketball players.

Jack’s role in the letters to donors, students, and prospective students was less clear.

This was an enormous prank executed right under the nose of Bertholt Reich. It involved 35,000 pieces of mail in three separate mailings. All three came out of Old Main in the atmosphere of enhanced security following the phony memos and purchase orders, possibly concurrent with the campus defoliation. None of the mailings were inspected or even questioned. Large bulk mailings out of Old Main were common enough, especially from Student Relations, the Foundation, and the Admissions and Recruitment Office, so there was no reason to question the contents of all those

out-going envelopes. Besides, all were processed through the university post office and came with crosschecked authorization forms, routine handling instructions, and Busiris bulk mail clearances.

Because they involved the U. S. Postal service, the mailings brought a federal investigation not only of Jack but of several members of the staff (including Lily Lee Martin-Oliver), faculty (including myself and Lou Feracca) and student body (including Paul Popowski). The investigation took months and nearly delayed Jack's departure for Wales. It established that all three began as legitimate mailings, materials planned and printed by each respective office as part of its on-going recruitment, fund-raising or student service operations. The letters and brochures that were to have been included in those envelopes were indeed printed, folded, and delivered to Student Relations, Admissions, and the Foundation. Workers in each office testified under oath that they had prepared each mailing using appropriate materials, and bundled and bagged each mail sack with the appropriate letters. Busiris postal service workers testified they did not check the contents of envelopes in any of the three mailings, as they were not required to do. U. S. Post Office clerks testified that each mailing contained approximately the number of letters indicated on the bulk mailing form, and that the letters weighed approximately what the forms said they did. Since Busiris postal services did not keep duplicates of the forms which accompanied the mail bags to the Riverton Post Office, they had no way of knowing whether someone substituted bags and forms, opened bags and substituted envelopes, or opened bags and unfolded each envelope—a tedious process indeed—and substituted new letters for old.

Workers who prepared the original mailings testified that the labels and envelopes were, as far as they could tell, pretty much what had left their offices. Duplicating Services had no runs of mailing labels for which it could not account.

Inspectors were able to determine that the bogus letters had been produced on the Alumni Office typewriter and photocopied on the Admissions Office photocopy machine.

Intriguingly, the investigation revealed that someone at some time or times might, after somehow gaining access to Old Main itself, have reached most offices, including Admissions, Development, and Alumni Records—by crawling between the true and suspended ceilings, removing acoustical tiles, breaking a hole through the cinder block wall between Admissions and Alumni Records, lowering him- or herself into the rooms. Possibly, however, the tiles had been dented by authorized maintenance workers, from whose clothes several blue and green cotton threads may have come.

The investigation also established that only the central supplies depot in the Old Main basement would have contained 35,000 BTU envelopes. The office would not have been accessible except with a key. The only fingerprints positively identified on tiles, letters, envelopes, drawers and equipment belonged to Busiris staff.

The most puzzling feature of the case was records. Shadow marks of flaws on the machine glass clearly proved the bogus letters, or a master photocopy, had been produced in Admissions. The counter on that machine, however, recorded no unusual surge in usage during February and March of 1985. Copy machine usage had increased by about 10,000 copies per month beginning in September, 1984, an increase attributed at the time to normal increased usage at the start of the school year. When investigators sought, in May of 1985, to audit the Copy Request forms required by Admissions procedures for photocopy orders over 500 copies, they discovered that forms from academic year 1984-85 had disappeared.

Or been misplaced.

Likewise the Central Supplies clerk could identify no request for 35,000 envelopes, and no sudden disappearance of 35,000 envelopes in February. “That’s half a dozen cases of envelopes,” she

told investigators. “You notice when six cases of anything suddenly goes missing.”

Nor could duplicating services find any suspect requests for labels, or any sets of mailing labels unaccounted for by known bulk mailings.

Nor could diligent investigations find the printer of a new brochure, or the remains of old brochures and letters.

In the end, although Reich was screaming for blood, especially Jack’s, no suspects were charged. The only logical inference was that this too had been an inside job, months in preparation, which antedated by weeks, probably months, the events of February 8.

Investigators estimated the time needed to print and prepare 35,000 pieces of mail—even using BTU self-adhesive, presorted mailing labels—was something like two hundred man hours. To unbundle, empty, refill, and rebundle 35,000 envelopes would have taken even longer. This was a prank of enormous proportions. And of enormous, and disastrous consequences.

As there were three mailings, there were three letters.

The first was a letter to students and parents of students announcing an as-yet-to-be-determined tuition increase of up to 50% for 1985-86. “As you know,” this letter began, “the eighties have been a time of skyrocketing costs in all areas. During this time, Busiris has done more than its share in keeping student expenses low while sustaining high quality instruction. Today, however, Busiris finds itself in the unfortunate position of coming to terms with the inflation that its students, and its student’s parents, have helped create by their own rising incomes. . . .”

The increase in tuition and fees, the letter explained, was necessary to pay increased salaries in the areas of Busiris administration, student services, and support personnel, and to underwrite the remodeling of Old Main. It pointed out that such increases were not out of line with those at comparable institutions like Northwestern, Washington University, and Illinois Wesleyan. It

offered statistics to show that Busiris students and parents could, thanks to their new eighties affluence, “easily afford” the increases. It expressed confidence that students and their parents would be more than happy to “pay more to get more: more administrative services, more counseling services, more recreational activities.”

Finally, students on grants and scholarships were directed to “reapply for financial aid, as strained Busiris resources necessitate reconsideration of all awards, announced and pending.”

This genuinely insulting letter brought an instantaneous uproar from irate recipients. It took two days for administrators to understand fully what had happened. Then the Institute hired six faculty wives, including my Linda, to work full-time for a week in a telephone campaign which contacted individually each student and each parent, explaining the letter had been a hoax, tuition was not being raised 50%, and financial aid was not being reallocated. How effective the phone campaign was in neutralizing the letter, no one will ever know, but transfers out of Busiris increased three fold in 1985-86. Matters were not helped when in the summer of 1985 the Board of Trustees, responding to dramatic declines in projected fall enrollment and the economic impact of disasters already described, did in fact raise tuition for 1985-86. But only by 24%.

The second letter contributed significantly to the decline of students by scaring off incoming freshmen. The mailing it replaced left Admissions almost concurrent with the Student Service mailing to enrolled students. The original mailing was to have been a recruitment tool targeted at high school juniors and seniors who had scored well on ACT and SAT examinations. Colleges commonly purchase such lists from the testing agencies for recruiting purposes. Those students, who come usually from affluent families prejudiced in favor of private education, are heavily recruited in elaborate mail and telephone campaigns. Busiris had purchased such a list for Chicago, for downstate Illinois, and for the entire states of Indiana, Wisconsin, and Iowa. To those names it had added the names and addresses of top area and state prospects culled from a variety of

other sources, and, of course, students who had already expressed interest in Busiris. The master list of over 22,000 high school seniors represented the core of its hopes for the 1985-86 freshmen class. Busiris had already sent each student on the list a letter of introduction (November), a view book and catalog (December), and an invitation to visit the campus (January). The February mailing was a blanket clean-up: “Don’t forget about us, we haven’t forgotten about you. And we still have unclaimed financial aid.”

That’s not what the high schoolers received.

At approximately the same time enrolled students and their parents were being notified of tuition increases of up to 50%, prospective students were reading a similar letter alerting them to similar increases. The increases were justified by claims so inflated as to collapse upon themselves. Busiris engineering was compared to the program at MIT, its physical facilities to those at Notre Dame, its faculty to the faculties of Stanford and Harvard. President Howard was quoted as promoting a “new vision of Busiris” in which “only the best of the best would play a role.” “Busiris is in a position to be very selective,” Admissions warned high school seniors. “The mediocre should apply elsewhere,” a Busiris professor of sociology was quoted as saying. “There’s no room in my class for anyone with an I. Q. under 135,” said a psychology professor.

The letter was Busiris boosterism propelled to absurd heights, and its net effect, fully intended by the author, was to insult and discourage. Accompanying the letter came a bogus BTU recruitment flier. “Are You Smug, Middle-Class, Middle-Brow?” it began. “The New Busiris is looking for you.” After four pages highlighting fraternity/sorority life, bars, basketball, and the red light district of Riverton, the brochure offered the concluding observation that “four years at Busiris are excellent preparation for a college education.”

The faculty wives had not finished phoning enrolled students and their parents when they were augmented and assigned to phoning prospective students and their parents. Their supervisor was none other than Leanna Robertson, hired even before she

graduated as an admissions counselor . . . at a salary only slightly below that of an associate professor of English.

Again, however, the damage was done. Of the 22,000 prospective students who received that mailing, only 442 enrolled at Busiris in fall 1985. The freshman class of 1985 was 824, its smallest at Busiris since World War II. Before those letters were mailed, Admissions was predicting a freshman enrollment of 1,750, based on over 1,100 students committed by March 1. Busiris actually lost incoming freshmen after March 1. The net loss to the institution of 1,000 students, each paying $10,000 per year over four years, was nearly forty million dollars.

Between spring and fall of 1985 Busiris lost 1,000 freshmen, 1,100 students who transferred out, and 300 students who did not transfer in. The loss of one third of its enrollment was a crisis of major proportions. That crisis was statewide news. Publicity, of course, exacerbated the crisis. Busiris has never fully recovered.

The third letter played its role as well. It was the spring pre-commencement letter addressed to principal donors and Century Club alumni, those who donated $100 or more each year to their alma mater. This letter announced no increase in tuition. Instead it requested—no, it demanded—increased donations. “You’ve been generous in the past,” the letter informed its recipient, “but let’s face it: you can give lots more. We want to see you give until it hurts. Kick a digit: if you’re giving in the three figures annually, kick to four. If your giving is in the four figures, kick to five. Show us again what we already know: Bucks donors are no cheapskates!” “The campaign was called “Bucks for the Bucks.” It would have insulted even a fat capitalist pig.

The result was, naturally, hundreds of angry phone calls and letters announcing hundreds of thousands of dollars in canceled donations and who knows how many millions in deferred gifts. Yet another telephone campaign reclaimed some of the lost contributions, and may have actually solicited additional sympathy money, but the long-term effects were negative. Even Fred

Timberman took his honorary degree and went into a corner to sit things out for two years. Donations from alums and outside sources to Busiris dropped steadily through the late eighties: $4,400,000 for 1985-86, $2,600,000 for 1986-87, $2,300,000 for 1987-88, $2,100,000 for 1988-89. The letters had created an impression of an institution not entirely in control of itself. In business circles, confidence, once shaken, is not easily replaced. Only after a major administrative restructuring in 1988-89 (which cost Hauptmann, Reich, and Howard their jobs) and another corporate initiative did restricted and unrestricted gifts approximate their pre-1985 levels.

Busiris responded to the crisis of 1985 the only way it could. All programs were trimmed to the bone, including the Women's Studies Program, the Black Studies Programs, and Global Studies. Library acquisitions were frozen, as were equipment budgets. Restricted opening hours were posted for almost all campus buildings. Four dorms were mothballed. A moratorium was ordered on all construction projects. Support staff took big cuts. In return for a promise of no cuts, faculty raises for 1985-86 were rescinded. But when projected enrollments for 1986-87 rebounded only slightly over 1985-86, reductions in faculty became unavoidable. All non-tenured faculty, including those who had come replacing Jack and the five other resignations, were given notice in spring 1986. Senior faculty were retired early. Absolutely no replacements were authorized, and for once the edict was enforced. Global Studies was mothballed.

Then in the fall of 1986 came three major disasters which broke the moratorium on construction and nearly broke the University. The first was the collapse of the radio-television tower, Radio Busiris, which blew down on November 3, 1985, in high winds. Corrosion of one of its three concrete footings had gone undetected in the previous inspection, which, in violation of federal regulations mandating annual inspection, had been way back in 1979. Had the tower itself been structurally deficient, it would have buckled like a collapsing jackknife. Had either of the other two footings been weak, the tower would have fallen innocuously into the quadrangle, taking out a few maple saplings at best. The tower, however, fell intact in

the direction of and directly on top of Busiris Hall, slicing through the upper two stories of the main building and the north wing. Cost to the Institute of replacing the tower and repairing the building: $750,000.

$750,000 was peanuts compared to the cost of replacing Old Main. Old Main—the oldest building on campus, the very symbol of Busiris, the cover photo on all Busiris promotional material and, incidentally, an edifice registered on the Illinois Registry of Historical Buildings—went on November 25. It collapsed into a sinkhole eroded, investigation revealed, over a period of many months, possibly a year or longer, by water gushing through a broken water main deep below the building.

We all watched it go. The sinkhole began manifesting itself on the afternoon of the 24th in the form of a series of cracks in the earth, one directly through the parking lot where Jack had noticed Lily Lee's vehicle back in February. By the time employees were notified to move their cars, pavement was already buckling. Most employees refused to return to the building. Late in the afternoon, as cracks widened and new fissures appeared, city engineers were called in. Their instruments told the tale. Hastily President Howard recruited a bucket brigade of students, faculty, administrators, and staff to rescue documents and records from the doomed building. Within thirty minutes, police declared the building in danger of immediate collapse, padlocked all doors, and cordoned off the parking lot. "CAVERN BENEATH OLD MAIN," ran the headline in the morning *Standard-Republican*. "Only a Matter of Time" proclaimed the subhead.

The sinkhole widened and deepened. The clock tower slumped, cracked, and fell. Its century-old bricks disappeared deep into the ground, how deep we dared not come close enough to see. We bought into pools on when the building would go: date and hour. At 3:13 p.m. on November 25, the earth opened beneath Old Main and swallowed it nearly whole. The scene was unforgettable. The entire building began listing badly to the library side, like a doomed ocean liner. At the opposite end, the foundation actually rose above ground

level. The other end dropped below first floor windows, then second floor windows. It was like watching the Titanic go down. The building just kept sinking and the mud kept rising. Then everything crashed into a great heap of bricks, cement, glass, furniture, fixtures, twisted pipes, mangled office machines. It all disappeared into the mud, fifteen feet below ground level. Even with the water mains shut down, it took weeks for everything to settle.

Over five hundred trucks of earth and gravel were needed to fill the sinkhole. Patching the earth was a delicate operation indeed.

Insurance denied payment on the coverage, claiming that defective heating pipes in the University tunnel system had corroded the water main and caused the rupture. The University was negligent, as regular inspection and maintenance would have avoided the catastrophe entirely. But Busiris, in a false economy similar to that which permitted the radio tower collapse, had last inspected pipes and tunnels in 1975. As far as anyone could determine, the last time a BTU maintenance worker had actually set foot in the tunnel was 1972. Litigation was still going on when the new administration complex was opened. Finally Busiris accepted a settlement offer of fifty cents on the coverage dollar.

Of the fire in the Busiris Library, little need be said. The building caught fire on the night of December 17, 1986, and burned nearly to the ground. The blaze was attributed to faulty wiring. Part of the collection stored in the basement survived: the applied sciences, special collections, government documents, Jack's old study carol. The rest was gone, including McKinley's holdings in Victorian novel, augmented since 1971 by a decade of modest but carefully selected purchases. And the reserve room, with its loans from private faculty collections, including mine. Estimated replacement cost of structure: $8.7 million. Estimated replacement cost of those portions of the collection which could be replaced: $5.3 million. Estimated replacement cost of furnishings: $2.1 million. The building and contents had been insured to a total of $8,000,000.

The McKinley Library fire, coming hard as it did upon Old Main's collapse, convinced everyone the Apocalypse was upon us. One morning it was posters: "Reich, Repent: The Day of Judgment Is At Hand." Then bumper stickers: "Will the Last One Out Please Shut Off the Lights." "Tell Charles Creed All Is Forgiven," pleaded a Busiris *Sentinel* editorial in an attempt at humor. Most of the campus was not laughing . . . and despite the exculpations of one investigation after another, we could not help reading, in the very back of our minds, the wrath of Jack the Invisible in the widening sea of disaster.

If Jack was in any way involved with the disasters of '85 and '86, he protected himself, and his family, and his friends completely. He was formally interrogated by police at least four times. Beginning with April 1985, he was under almost constant surveillance. The only indication anyone recalls of any possible complicity is a remark to Timm in the summer of 1985. Excusing himself from a Little League game, Jack mentioned "having to clean out a nest of skunks" somewhere. None of us can explain that remark.

In 1995, during pretrial maneuverings in Wisconsin, I spoke to Jack concerning the events of a decade earlier. I was concerned that disclosure might prejudice a jury. We were alone, and I felt Jack could speak candidly.

He denied any involvement. "They were on me like sweat on a race horse. I couldn't piss without hitting a plainclothesman. Even in Wales they were calling me."

"Not a thing, Jack?"

"Not a thing."

Something in my face indicated disbelief.

"It's not hard, Tucker," he explained. "You cast a curse over your shoulder on the way out, and you don't have to lift a finger. Sooner or later something goes wrong. When it does, credit is laid at your door. One thing I learned in my years at Busiris: don't try to take more than a situation offers. You get burned every time."

“Jack,” I insisted, “those were not accidents. Some may have been . . . the radio tower, the fire. Most were pranks. Sabotage.”

“Of course they were pranks,” Jack laughed. “And of course I was capable of any or all of them. It would not have been difficult, Tucker, to duplicate my keys before depositing them in my desks. That tunnel system gave me access to virtually any building on campus, including Old Main—to virtually any room in any building on campus. I could have written those letters. I could have substituted 2, 4-D for fertilizer. I could have weakened the appropriate leg of the broadcast tower and torched the library. I could have leaked the dope on basketball recruiting to the NCAA. If it makes you happy, think that I did it all.

“But I didn’t.

“Maybe some friends of mine did it. Not Lily Lee, of course, but others. Maybe I knew what they were up to. Maybe I didn’t. Maybe Bert and Ernie so pissed off a whole lot of people at Busiris that the holocaust was spontaneous. I’d like to think that. Fuck, maybe Jerry Jones and Victoria Nation pulled all that shit to make me look bad. Maybe President Howard crunched his own office to collect insurance and build a bigger one. I don’t know.

“All I got to say is this: it couldn’t have happened to a more deserving institution.”

# Part II

# Chapter 11
# **The North Country**

Jack's immediate plans were not academically ambitious. His lump-sum severance payment from Busiris, combined with his Fulbright stipend, promised to carry him and the family into 1988. Three years would allow him to repair relationships with New York and, he hoped, land another book contract . . . on America in the 1970s, on Ronald Reagan's Illinois, on the BeeGees greatest hits, on any subject New York was interested in publishing. John Charles Creed was Literary Gun for Hire. Meanwhile, he would take whatever speaking engagements came his way (Jack was not much in demand by spring 1985) and type his fingers bloody on anything that promised to make a buck. He could apply for Guggenheim, NEA and Illinois Arts Council grants. If the spirit moved him, he could from Wales apply selectively for stateside teaching positions. He could, if he had to, renew the Fulbright for 1986-87, stretching his resources to the end of 1989.

"If push comes to shove," he wrote me once from Wales, "I'll take a job in the brewery. On the assembly line. As a shoemaker or a restaurant cook, writing at night. You know what Housman did after flunking his exams at Oxford? He got a job in the Patent Office and wrote scholarly articles. After ten years of scholarly articles, University College, London, hired him as Professor of Latin. Still without a degree."

Jack's writing at this time was not exactly Latin scholarship. Convinced he would never again teach in an American university, Jack concentrated exclusively on words for pay. "It's a whole new ball game," he wrote from Wales. "Or a return to the old, sensible ball game. Not only is my writing easier, it's better, cleaner. I don't get all tangled up in footnotes and citations and second guesses. I'm more aware of the audience. Of the real audience, not the academic asshole who is reading some boring dog-turd piece in an academic

journal prefatory to writing a boring dog-turd piece of his own to send to the editor of some boring dog-turd journal he spent three days at a conference kissing up to. I mean the guy who will plunk down a couple of his own bucks to buy the magazine I am writing for, and then, of his own free will, read the words I write. Freelance journalism is the only real school for writers. These MFA people are a load of shit, getting grants from arts organizations staffed by other MFA people to write dog-turd books they can publish only with obscure presses underwritten by more grants and distributed to dead-end bookstores and dog-turd academic libraries by organizations subsidized by yet more grants. Nobody reads them but other MFA people and academics! That's dog-turd writing. It's time to cut the life support system. Let art pay its own way or circulate in manuscript."

Thus wrote senior Fulbright lecturer Dr. John Charles Creed from Wales.

Avid readers of Creed's work have long recognized in his writing of this period a style and vitality all its own, not as polished, perhaps, as earlier and later work, but focused and wailing with energy. Necessity provided the spark missing since the departure of Lily Lee Martin.

The new clarity of vision made Jack's work quite marketable. He found an easy market in the middle-level men's magazines, which he hit regularly during 1985 and 1986. Nine known fictions, each the work of a day or two, were published under at least two pseudonyms in *Gent* and *Cavalier*. They brought between $250 and $350 each . . . in aggregate, about what he was paid for two eight-week summer school courses. There may have been other work in other magazines. *Playboy* paid over $2,000 for "Superjock," as did *The New Yorker* for "The Watchers." "Fish On" brought only $200, but it won an O. Henry Prize. At one point Jack mentioned publishing in a U. K. publication, and his boxes of printed and manuscript material contain several British magazines and newspapers from 1985-86,

including *Mayfair,* but I have been unable to positively identify any fiction or non-fiction as definitely the work of Charles Creed.

Jack wrote several short travel pieces as well. There was a *Chicago Tribune* tour of Reagan's Illinois, and half a dozen pieces on the United Kingdom for the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Sun-Times,* and the Washington *Post.* The "Coal Mines and Castles" article earned him $350 for text and another $250 for photographs. His classic "The Flake of Snow on the Horse's Mane" in the Riverton *Standard-Republican* paid substantially less, but it gave him the satisfaction of flaunting his success during the depths of Busiris disasters. (It also nearly cost Jim Gross, *Standard-Republican* travel editor and one of Jack's former students, his job at the paper.)

All totaled, Jack's writing during 1985-86 earned him about $8,000 from first-rights sales . . . not enough to sustain a married father of two in his career as a freelance writer, but a pleasant addition to Jack's Busiris settlement and his Fulbright stipend.

Speaking engagements brought another $2,000.

Finally—and adding insult to injury—in mid-April Charles Creed applied for, and began receiving unemployment benefits . . . which continued until his departure for Wales in September.

The unemployment claim was a bit much for even Jack's closest friends, and I challenged him on it sometime in the summer of 1985.

Jack's response was an interesting combination of sixties subvert-the-system pranking, rationalization, and honest analysis.

"In essence, you were paid for working nearly a year and a half, February of 1985 to June of 1986, with no teaching obligations," I argued. "During your year-and-a-half paid holiday you augment your income further by writing, lecturing, whatever. And if a full 1985-86 salary, plus a fat cash bonus, plus freelance work, were not sufficient, now you're extorting an additional—what?—60% of your salary from the system. Don't you feel, in this case, just a little . . . well, crooked?"

“Unemployed is unemployed, Tucker,” Jack told me. “From here to September I have no work. For ten years, longer really, I’ve paid into a system of insurance that is supposed to compensate me if and when I have no work. All that withholding that shrunk our summer school checks by 50%, all the money Busiris paid into unemployment compensation when it could just as easily have paid me. Would you pay year in and year out on an insurance policy, then decline to collect benefits when you get sick, just because you think you’ve got enough money right now, thanks anyway? Or because you’re going to get better some day?

“There is the further consideration that when I left Busiris I had put in over a decade toward a sabbatical leave. The institution refused even to entertain my request for a sabbatical while I was there. Of course it’s not going to give me one now that I’m gone. A sabbatical is a right. Maybe not every seven years, but after ten. It’s a fringe benefit. The university banks ten percent of what wouldn’t even constitute a decent annual salary if it gave you the cash up front. Then you collect what’s in your account by taking a year off with pay. The institution, as always, keeps the interest.

“After my ten years’ service, Busiris owed me a year’s salary. The settlement they gave me was just my own money, the account into which I paid, which I’ll never collect in the form of a sabbatical. The additional dollars are a bonus for pain and suffering . . . and a bribe for not making a Big Damn Mess. Busiris owed me that. They got off cheap. The system still owes me. And it owes you too.”

“If last spring wasn’t a big damned mess, you tell me what it was.”

“Nothing next to what it could have been. I chilled Popowski and McQuillan and Williams when they were ready to torch the place on my behalf. Myself, I did nothing. The wrath of other people in their own causes, I can’t control.” Jack apparently believed what he said.

So for all our concern, Jack and Rose Marié were better off financially in 1985 than at any other time of their lives together. Had

they not later opted to maintain separate households, they would have lived comfortably indeed.

The cloud over Jack's departure from Busiris, the tenuous state of their marriage, and Jack's behavior during the previous Welsh adventure determined that Jack would do Swansea on his own. Rose Marié's career and the educational and social needs of Timm and Jenny May were also a consideration. This much Jack understood to be the emotional and financial price he would pay . . . in England and, later, in Wisconsin. "In February 1985, I excised, together, the two great miseries of my life, miseries I once considered permanent," he once told me; "The price was one even deeper sorrow, separation from my children. But that sorrow was temporary. One day, inevitably, they were going to grow up, move away, and send me a Christmas card. Conversely, the further I went into Busiris and that marriage, the harder it was going to get to leave. I traded two permanent problems for one temporary problem."

In the house, an uneasy truce prevailed. Jack feared divorce, a subject Rose Marié discussed more than once with Linda and other friends. "I had a bundle then," Jack later mused; "at least $50,000 in cash. Maybe $60,000. More than I'd ever had previously, and more than I've ever had since, until my advance on the Dylan project. Half of that, plus half the value of the house, would have given Rose Marié a good start on a new life out East."

Which is exactly where Jack's wife intended, in March and April and even into May, to take Timm and Jennifer.

"It's a funny thing," she once told Linda. "I learned to tolerate the gossip and the rumors. At first they bothered me, but they got so ridiculous after a while that nobody would have believed them. Besides I never cared for Victoria, or any of them.

"But what really got to me was the pranks. And all the police investigations. I was willing to take Jack's word on getting fired, but you know he had to have something to do with that stuff. A lot of it was criminal. Killing the trees and things. We had police at the door

constantly. And phone calls. I couldn't stand living in a house that was constantly under surveillance. Talking on a phone that was probably tapped. Being followed every time I left the house. People watching and listening. Did I want my children's father to be a crook? To end up in jail? That's what I really couldn't handle."

Her parents, of all people, finally convinced Rose Marié that Riverton was best for her children . . . and for her. After all, she was out of the house most of the day, and the children too, while Jack did whatever he did. Dinner was tense, but after the meal Jack would retreat downstairs, behind the door of his basement study, reading books by the lamp while the kids did their homework by the light of their television. Usually Jack slept alone in the study, on the pretext of having stayed up very late. By the time he awoke in the morning, Rose Marié and the children were gone.

"Stay in Riverton, dear," her mother advised repeatedly. "You have friends there. You'll be more comfortable in your own place." By May Jack had official notification of his Fulbright appointment, and she could add, "Next year he'll be out of the country, anyway."

So in the spring of 1985 Jack spent lonely days and nights reading and writing and doing whatever it was he did. He saw his wife only at dinner, and his children only in the early evening.

With summer, however, his life changed. Rose Marié's work continued; the children's school ended. Jack backburnered the writing projects to enjoy one glorious summer with Timm and Jenny Lynn. There were fishing and camping expeditions to Burr Oak Park; baseball games in Chicago and St. Louis; excursions to Hannibal, Missouri, and Springfield, Illinois; explorations of every state park and historical site Jack could discover. There was an overnight steamboat excursion on the Illinois River. There were visits to Jack's writing friends up and down the state: Dave Etter in Elburn, George Chambers in Peoria, John Knoepfle in Springfield, Jim McGowan in Bloomington. In Chicago, Gwendolyn Brooks, Michael Anania, Curt Johnson, Ralph Mills, and, I believe, Sandra Cisneros, whose career was then just beginning. A full week they spent in Ellison Bay,

Wisconsin, with Norbert Blei, whose encouragement and influence on Jack's style during this time should not be underestimated.

Only the knowledge that Timm and Jenny would return to school in September kept Charles Creed from calling in crippled to Swansea. He left for Wales with a head scarred by the memories of summer.

Wales again did not go well, perhaps because Jack never gave himself fully himself to the Fulbright experience. Part of him was obsessed with what was going on at Busiris. Letters and in telephone conversations were full of requests for details on the latest disaster. Part of him was still trying to become an American writer—not a European writer, or an American writer in European exile. Wales again exerted no discernible influence on his writing. The landscape was useful for travelogues, but it was not Charles Creed's true material. The rich, musical, tapestried language was a polar opposite to Jack's sparse, athletic Midwestern-American idiom. Only a handful of Creed poems and one story—"The Black Bells of Rhondda"—have a Welsh setting.

And Jack missed Jenny and Timm terribly. "I'm haunted here by the ghosts of '83," he wrote me in October. "Every time I drive a familiar road, every time I pass a familiar landmark, it's Jenny and I here, Timm and I there. I was up in Conway last weekend, walking the walls, and broke down weeping. Tears streaming down my eyes for half an hour. I've had half a dozen offers of Christmas in Wales, but I'm flying home to Riverton. My hosts are tolerant, but I am blowing a golden opportunity. Maybe Easter I can bring the kids over here."

Thus 1985 became one of those turning points that do not quite turn out. Liberated from the petty politics of academia, and committed 100% to writing, Jack collapsed into his children and old comforts. Having gotten himself booted out of the comfortable womb of academia, and having made a promising start on life as a full-time, freelance author, Charles Creed opted at the first opportunity right back into the system he had left with such exhilaration.

Victoria Nation was wrong in that regard. Jack tried to quit, but he never quite made it.

Lou, I, and his friends understood fully his reasons for returning. His need to support the children. His need to rejoin a profession to which he'd made a lifetime commitment, from which he felt he'd been unjustly purged.

His need to prove himself again in a system he might have wanted to leave, but only on his own terms—with a flip of his middle finger and some smart remark over his shoulder.

In any event, we all forgave Jack his aborted rebellion.

He never quite forgave himself. "I could have been a real writer," he told me in 1994. "But I am not. 1985 was the year of decision. I was on my way, but I backpedaled into that Fulbright. And then into Novum State. I became a coffee house writer, a parlor poet. For the second time in my life, I fucked up big time. It was too sweet a deal."

The package Novum State University offered Charles Creed in 1986 was indeed one sweet deal. In the Pulitzer Prize winner Busiris threw away, Novum State saw a golden opportunity to put itself on the academic map. They wanted Jack bad.

Novum is one of those products of sixties affluence and benevolence found in every state in the Middle West. Sometime in the mid- to late-sixties, a group of regents sitting in a state board room with a handful of cigar-smoking politicians watched as the chancellor of their State University System pulled down a map of the state and drew large red X's with a felt-tip pen to work the state's four-year institutions. Pointing to some great vacuum, he made the pitch.

"Fellows, now take a good, hard look at this map. You see we're doing okay by the metro area, and in this sector and this sector and this. But look out here: not a four-year school within a hundred miles. Only little villages and lakes and forest. And the Vo-Tech up here.

“Now my idea, fellows, is that there are lots of very capable youngsters of all sexes in those villages, who are too poor or too timid or too tied down to come to the big city. They’re good kids, too, who deserve every chance we can give them. They’re the backbone of this country, and we’re not doing well by them.

“Meanwhile every state college we have is overloaded. We're building dorms like crazy, putting up new buildings all over the place. Our state colleges are getting bigger and bigger. More and more impersonal and inefficient. You need an airplane to get around some of them campuses. Kids from these little villages get lost in ‘em. So do their own presidents. So do I when I visit some of them.

“My idea is, why not take the college to the kids, instead of bringing the kids to the college? Build us a whole new institution, from scratch, right in this middle of this emptiness. Make it state-of-the-arts right from the git-go. Bring in a bunch of hotshot young teachers and crackerjack administrators. Half our problems with these older schools, and we all know it, is a people problem: bad teachers we can’t get rid of. Start from scratch and we eliminate the problem. Plus, there’s lots less crime and drugs in these small towns than in the big places. Let’s face it, some of the universities in this system are not in the best part of town, if you know what I mean. And it wouldn’t hurt some of those radical city hooligans to put in four years out in the boonies. Toughen ‘em up, teach ‘em wholesome small town American values.

“Plus think what a new college would do for one of those towns economically.

“Finally, we’ll keep our Wisconsin kids in state. Right now we got too many of ‘em slipping across the border to Minnesota!”

(Variants included, in Illinois, “Our state capital deserves a four-year institution of its own” and, in Ohio, a reversal of the pastoral ideal: “Why should kids from Cleveland have to go all the way to Athens or Miami just to earn a college degree from a state institution?”)

Between 1966 and 1969 Novum State had sprung up just outside of Lake-of-the-Woods, Wisconsin, in the northwest “Indian head” part of the state where no four-year institution had previously existed. A former cornfield was transformed into a parking lot, a field house-convocation center, a four-story library, and football, baseball, and tennis fields. Through the oaks and birch of an adjacent wood lot was carved a serpentine chain of interconnected two-story academic buildings. Through the windows of every office and most classrooms, students and faculty gazed out on a Wisconsin woods alive with woodpeckers, squirrels, chipmunks, and other timid woodland creatures. Floor-to-ceiling thermopane windows in the west wing of the student center, which hung cantilevered over a coulee, afforded spectacular autumn and winter views of northwestern Wisconsin sunsets. Even today, Novum State—all red brick, steel and glass—is truly a magnificent campus, like many of those institutions built from scratch in the late sixties and early seventies.

The Novum State faculty was both more and less than its founders had envisioned. Recruited in a seller’s academic market, N. S. U. professors came with little more than an M. A. and aspirations to something further. At the outset there was a sprinkling of foreign degrees and even, in the applied sciences, a B.S. or two. Among an initial faculty of 108, Novum State counted only five Ph. D.s, one in Education from Michigan State.

These were, however, the wild ones, the Jack Creeds, those who would never have survived Yale or Brown or Princeton, who settled, therefore, for the newer, less prestigious programs, thereby disqualifying themselves forever from appointments in elite schools and even at aspiring elite schools like Busiris. As a result, throughout the eighties and into the nineties, students willing to sacrifice brand name diplomas for real learning received far better educations at the less prestigious American colleges than would have been theirs in the big time, big name places. Marcus DeLotta himself had been offered a job at Novum State after being terminated at Busiris. “If I’d taken that appointment instead of going to law school, I’d be

teaching still," he told me. "Not as rich as I now am, but probably a lot happier."

Most faculty were not, in their early years, "real hotshot teachers." What they lacked in formal preparation and experience, however, they more than made up for in enthusiasm. They were not much older than their students, and wild with the wine of youth and a good job. "The stories from those days," Jack told me; "Man, I would love to have been here. Imagine Busiris in 1972 without all the dead wood. Non-stop party, Monday through Monday."

"No Lily Lee Martin," I reminded Jack.

"Yeah, no Lily Lee. But some of these Wisconsin dumplings are A-okay."

Novum State administrators were no crackerjacks either. They came mostly from other Wisconsin institutions: younger men not yet settled, older men on their way to retirement, idealists caught up in the enterprise of a New College and the romance of the Wisconsin woods. The first N. S. U. president (and a good one for the institution) was the former state Senate majority whip, a local politician who held a B. A. in agricultural sciences and spent much of his day schmoozing area businessmen and removing beer bottles and hamburger wrappers from the green swards of Novum State. He spent five years seeing the ship launched and stabilized. With enrollments quadrupled and the institution booming, he passed the president's office to a real academic with a Ph. D. from Columbia, and began a comfortable retirement boating and fishing on the area lakes.

It was under the second president that Novum's troubles began.

By the time Jack showed up, most of the craziness had gone out of Novum State. Town-gown conflicts, the bad leadership of an impractical idealist, and simple demographic realities had caused Novum State enrollments, like those at Busiris, to spiral downward in the middle seventies, bringing layoffs, cuts, and program reviews. The more innovative programs and a good portion of the Fine Arts

curriculum had evaporated. Benchmark programs in theater, painting, vocal music, and forensics had given way to the same business, sociology, psychology, and education curricula found all over the state, the region, the country. The truly wild ones had left academia—or at least conservative western Wisconsin. The moderately wild ones had settled to middle age, habit, and marriage —several to former students. A few of the youngsters had taken advanced degrees and matured into truly first rate scholars, writers, and teachers. Some of the others had moved into administration or union offices. Most had merely put in their years, rising, falling, rising again with the tide.

In its communal memory, however, and in its active faculty union, Novum State retained enough of its sixties heritage to locate Jack Creed, in 1986, at the center-to-right of institutional politics. “All things are relative,” Jack told me. “At Busiris I was Mr. Pinko. Here I’m Just Plain Jack. I don’t think I’ve changed all that much.”

After a rising, and then falling, and then rising curve, the English Department had been awarded in the fall of 1985 its first real vacancy in nearly a decade, a tenure-track position which it advertised proudly in the MLA job listings of that year. More than one member of the Busiris department applied for that position. I thought about it myself before mailing the MLA announcement to Wales. The same vita which brought Jack a Fulbright in the United Kingdom got Jack the interview that eluded his former Busiris colleagues. In December Jack charmed the socks off everyone on the hiring committee, including Marilyn Schneider, who is not easily charmed. In March he accepted a tenure-track position at 143% of his Busiris Tech salary. In view of his remarkable vita and extensive teaching experience, a review for tenure and promotion would be possible after two years.

The security of this appointment allowed Jack, Timm and Jenny Lynn to spend their Easter holiday revisiting—in infinitely good spirits —Conway, Caernarfon, Betws-y-Coed and other remembered landscapes. The same security brought a slight relaxing of Jack’s

mental muscles, a significant curtailment of his writing output, and perfunctory conclusion to his Fulbright. Not two days after finishing his last tutorial at Swansea, with all the United Kingdom, all Europe at his doorstep, Jack was on an airplane, headed for Riverton.

Two weeks after landing in Riverton, he was in Lake-of-the-Woods, Wisconsin, trying to assess what had happened in his absence.

The nine-month separation had finalized the break between Jack and his wife. Neither could abide the other's proximity, certainly not in bed, and not, really, in the same house, and there was no hiding from each other. Rose Marié's job at Helping Hands had been curtailed to nine months, September through May, and Jack had no office to escape to. The very house had, in his absence, lost some of his imprint and taken on a feminine quality that made him uncomfortable. Rose Marié had grown into the place and found his male presence unsettling, even irritating. Timm and Jenny both had found their own circle of friends, and Timm had a summer job.

"I came back to be with the kids," Jack told me, "but the kids were gone. Doing fine, near as I could tell. While I'd been nursing memories of the summer previous, they'd each put on about ten inches and ten years. In Wales I didn't notice the change, but in Riverton they were different kids. I'd like to think they cultivated friends as an excuse to be away from Rose, but those commitments called them away from me too. The Zoo? They were way too mature for the zoo. Baseball? No interest. Not even the Cubs. Camping? Sure—with my buddies, dad. Travel? Love to, but I have to be in Riverton this weekend for the Kappa Chi Car Wash. The situation was ridiculous. Rose and I hiding from each other in opposite ends of the house while the kids were out having a ball.

"As a resident of Riverton with a Public Library card, I still had access to the new McKinley Library, but the place was full of people I never wanted to see again. Riverton Public was hopeless. I spent most of my time in the study, trying to write but really hiding from

Rose Marié. Finally I said to myself, ‘This is crazy. I don’t need this shit.’ ”

What Jack did need was a place to live come September. Loading the ancient Crown Victoria with books, a few kitchen utensils, a toaster oven and some small furniture, Jack headed north past Rockford and Madison, through Tomah and Eau Claire, to Lake-of-the-Woods, to the North Country. He was met by Lloyd Cowley, who had returned briefly to campus from his lake home in the National Forest specifically to welcome Jack. Jack spent his first evening in town walleye fishing on the St. Croix River. “I didn’t catch a goddamn thing,” he reported. “The place caught me.”

Over a late evening beer at the Silver Dollar Bar, Lloyd outlined the housing possibilities. There was Northland Apartments, $350 a month for a two-bedroom on the first floor, very convenient to the University and no problem getting out in the winter. Jack would probably meet a lot of interesting people in Northland. “Possibilities, good buddy, you know?” Lloyd encouraged him. There was a small farm site outside Lake-of-the-Woods, he’d not seen it yet, could be nice, could be crummy, $200 a month, no telling what the roads would be like in winter. There was a duplexed former bank in the town of Stone Lake, a small community fifteen miles from Lake-of-the-Woods, either apartment only $175 a month plus utilities, larger than Northland, convenient to the river but a 20-minute drive from the University, could be treacherous in the winter. “You’re not going to meet a soul out there, unless some hot little number moves into the one you don’t take.”

“I’m still married,” Jack told Lloyd.

“It never hurts to keep the eyes open.”

“I been there,” Jack reported. “And I want this job.”

“I don’t know about Illinois, but up here what you do in your private life is your own business. Speaking of meeting people, you ought to think seriously ‘bout joinin’ Pheasants Forever. And the National Rifle Association. . . .”

There were a couple of student rooms with local townsfolk, “not near enough room or privacy in my opinion,” and a couple of student apartments, “although anything not yet claimed for fall is likely to be pretty shabby, also in my opinion.”

They spent a day making the rounds of Lake-of-the-Woods, Jack trying to be appreciative but finding little to suit him, Lloyd becoming increasingly glum at Jack’s obvious lack of enthusiasm. That evening, nothing settled, they returned to the Silver Dollar for a burger, a beer, and a game of pool.

“It’s gonna work out,” Lloyd promised Jack. “Housing is tight in this town. But it’s cheap, especially on salaries pegged to state-wide cost of living. You’re gonna be okay.”

“You got an ax and some acreage?” Jack joked halfheartedly. “I could build myself a place the way Henry Thoreau did at Walden. Always wanted to try that. My first publication was on Thoreau.”

“Yeah, you betcha,” Lloyd laughed. “Out East, you can maybe get by with that kind of stuff, but up here you’d need one heck of a wood stove, and a whole lot of insulation. We’ll find something.”

Then, pointing to a short, dark-haired man in his mid-thirties who had just entered the bar, “Now there’s a fellow you should meet: Harlan Everts, the Doc’s boy. He runs a dairy operation now, but he spent time in VISTA. He also does conservation and Democratic Party politics. President of our local chapter of Ducks Unlimited, and active in Pheasants Forever too.”

Harlan Everts was younger than Jack by half a decade, not yet weathered, but a real farmer with real cowshit on his real working books. And a real Wisconsin accent. “Ya, I’ve got over a hunert head, dad and me. Put up a tousant ton of hay a year fur feed. Two farms sout of town, another vun out nort. I’m in charch a da whole operation. So you’re gonna be teachin’ out da college, den? I got a farm site dat’s empty, just a little sout a town, if you’re lookin’ fur a place. Da last renter left her a little banged up, ya know, but vhatever you puts in her, you can yust deduct dat from your rent. I’d be glad ta

have somebody on da place, keepin' a eye on her. I got lotta equipment out dere, and it ain't good to have da place empty like dat. Kids always lookin' fur a place ta party. I tink I seen some out dere yust last veek."

"You leave the house unlocked?"

"Some place that far out—what's the difference I leave her locked or unlocked? Better you leave her open: they don't bust no windows. Best thing is you join the National Rifle Association. $150 a month. You pay your own utilities. I'll make sure she's plowed out in the winter. Your car got an in-block heater?"

The following morning Jack found himself exploring a classic L-shaped white clapboard farmhouse: large kitchen with white wainscoting all around, a living room with flowered wallpaper, flowered linoleum rug and flowered drapes; one bedroom downstairs (more floral wallpaper) and two upstairs (flowers); pantry off the kitchen with a trap door leading to a cellar, water pump, and fuse box. Indoor plumbing had been added around 1950, tucked into the pocket of the L along with an entrance shed. The outhouse, against which leaned a rusting red child's bicycle, was forty yards from the front door.

Across the front of the house ran a small porch with hardwood floors and a roof gray and green with cedar shingles and moss. The yard was filled with outbuildings in various stages of collapse. One shed held a large bass boat; a large Quonset hut held Harlan's heavy machinery: a huge John Deere 8920 and an even larger International Harvester combine. The barn, from which all vestiges of paint had long ago disappeared, contained nothing save rusting cow stanchions and a rotting leather horse collar. On the north and west both house and buildings were sheltered by deep woods, the habitat surely of deer, pheasants, owls and foxes.

Twenty minutes after Jack's arrival, Harlan drove up in his Ford pickup. The two shook hands, Jack wrote Harlan a check in the amount of $150, and Harlan handed Jack a key to the unlocked front

door. “If you’re going to leave your stuff here until September, you might want to lock her up. And on the rent—you don’t owe me a cent ‘til October.”

Jack stacked what he had brought with him in the kitchen, locked the door behind him, and returned to the acreage. Two days he lingered in Lake-of-the-Woods, drinking beer, eating burgers, and setting up an office at the college. Then he pointed the nose of his Crown V south to Riverton, toward the children he loved and the wife he didn’t, away from the future, into the ruins of the past. He was less than 100% happy.

Jack made three more round trips to Lake-of-the-Woods that summer, hauling record albums, files, and books, which he stored mostly at his office. The farmstead remained simple as Thoreau’s cabin. In the kitchen, the toaster oven, a refrigerator, and eating utensils. In the living room a couch, an overstuffed chair, the stereo and six cartons of records. In the bedroom, a bed, a table and chair, a lamp, a radio, a rug. And the old Smith-Corona portable typewriter.

On Jack’s second trip, he was accompanied by Jenny Lynn. Her first sight of the farm brought a positive response: “Neato, dad.”

Reaction to the house’s interior was more tempered. “You’re not going to live here, are you dad? All year? In this dark house?” Jack gave her a brief lecture on Thoreau at Walden, and pointed out that a barn which once sheltered cattle might possibly in the future shelter a horse.

“That’s a bribe.”

“Indeed it is.”

The bribe was not effective. As the two returned to Riverton, Jack understood for the first time that neither of his children would be joining him in Lake-of-the-Woods, Wisconsin. In leaving Riverton for Lake-of-the-Woods, he had wandered out alone in the night. The sooner he lost his memory, the better.

So the year unfolded, and the next, and the next, a succession of biweekly commutes, Lake-of-the-Wood to Riverton, 400 miles each way, depart Wisconsin Thursday after classes, drive an average of 55 miles per hour to arrive just around midnight, let himself quietly in the front door and curl up on the sofa in the study, see the kids off to Friday school, kill the day sleeping, writing, reading or lunching with old friends at Tookey's, catch Timm's football game Friday evening in the fall, Jenny's Saturday morning softball game in the spring. Sometimes a movie. Never a Bucks game. Church on Sunday morning, followed by an increasingly painful noon meal. Then another hard goodbye, as painful to children as to father, and the long drive north, baseball or football on the radio, the air growing cooler and the forest thicker as the great whale of a car pressed its way further into the gathering Wisconsin darkness, arrive again around midnight, catch a few Z's, arise to the morning's classes.

During their remaining high school years, both Timm and Jenny visited twice or three times annually, usually over holidays, invariably in a state of exhaustion. "They bring about twenty books and thirty assignments, they have all kinds of plans for the weight room and the pool, they want to skip down to Minneapolis-St. Paul for a ball game or a museum," Jack wrote me. "Then they sleep all the way up here, snooze in the office while I'm teaching, hit the rack early at night, and sleep the ten hours back to Riverton. I get the pleasure of their presence. I guess that's all I really want, anyway. At least they go home rested. And you can't quarrel with their grades."

Before the trial, Rose Marié had never once visited Lake-of-the-Woods . . . which was 100% okay with both her and Jack.

Weathering winters on the rented farm, watching the subtle changes of color through five successive falls, feeling the landscape quicken across three successive springs, Jack came to a genuine and first-hand appreciation of farm life and of the subtleties of the landscape akin to that of his pals Robert Bly and Nobert Blei. He learned the soft, absorptive squish of deep mud and the hard squeak

of boot upon snow at 10 degrees below zero. Owl, deer, rabbits, pheasant, squirrel and woodpeckers frequented the place, and an occasional raccoon, fox or skunk.

He came gradually to appreciate the still center of his own being, and the landscape's, an absorption reflected in his later writings. One winter he set out corn to see what animals he could attract. Another winter it was a salt lick. He sat contentedly by the hour, listening to some sporting event on the radio or a Dylan album on the stereo, reading Norbert Blei, Dave Etter, and Robert Bly, carefully recording the number, frequency, and sequence of animal visitors. At school, he would wander the wood chip trails of the Novum Wildlife Area maintained by the biology department as part of its Natural Resources Management major. Some late afternoons he escaped campus, alone or accompanied, for the National Forest or the St. Croix River. One winter he bought a pair of cross-country skis, and boots, and a snowmobile suit, and spent weekends in Lake-of-the-Woods skiing the farm's back slopes.

Twice Lloyd Cowley invited Jack pheasant hunting, and twice Jack accepted. "The problem," he told me once, "was that if you pretend to be a hunter, when something flies up, you have to pretend to shoot it. And a bad amateur hunter sometimes hits what he's trying to miss." Jack never hit a thing.

Twice Lloyd invited Jack ice fishing, and twice Jack accepted. Ice fishing was another Wisconsin sport for which Jack never really developed a feel.

Snowmobiling was out of the question entirely.

Jack never joined Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, or the National Rifle Association.

The late eighties were for Jack Creed a period of longing for his children, but also of forgetting, of letting go, of—how does T.S. Eliot put it?—learning to care and not to care, learning to sit still.

Charles Creed never formed in Wisconsin the close friendships he had developed in Illinois. He was older, and often absent from the

school and even the state. Also, he harbored, after February 8, 1985, a bred-in-the-bone understanding of the vulnerability inherent in all deep relationships.

Jack was, however, every bit as popular among N. S. U. students and colleagues as he had been during his Busiris heyday. His classes filled early and permanently. “Demanding but fair” is the phrase most prominent on the voluntary (and anonymous) written course evaluations with which he filled his personnel file as insurance against another Busiris Armageddon. “Jack Creed is just about the only member of the Novum English department who could carry a Friday afternoon class,” Marilyn Schneider noted in a letter explaining why the department offered no Friday afternoon classes. Just two years after coming to Lake-of-the-Woods, Jack was awarded, after only pro forma examination of letters and course evaluations, the tenure which he had relinquished upon leaving Busiris.

In fact, liberated from Rose Marié, and once again a (guarded) believer in his employer, Jack gave himself more reign than he had since the days of Lily Lee Martin. He drank and partied, as in the early seventies, with students and colleagues. It was not uncommon for an evening class to extend well past midnight over beers and pizza at the Silver Dollar or the Lone Pine. “Since coming to Wisconsin,” he told me around 1991, “I have come to see quite clearly what is and is not important. I have attended a whole bunch of birthday and graduation parties, eight students’ weddings, and the christening of two students’ children. I have become Papa Chas Creed. Apart from the loss of Timm and Jenny, I’m happy as a clam in mud.

“And what the hell. They were practically gone anyway by the time I came up here.”

# Chapter 12
# **Where We Look for Help**

Jack owed his relatively high salary and relatively good life at Novum State to the old bulls of SUUFAMP: the State University Union of Faculty and Maintenance Personnel. Each year the union took 475 tax-deductible dollars from Jack's paycheck—a paycheck which had increased by about ten grand. Once a year he received a computer-generated roster listing his step, grade, and years of service, and the grade, step and years of service of every university employee from the locker room towel jockey to the president. His rank, salary and benefits, like those of everyone else in the institution, were spelled out in an 80-page printed contract. So were his raises and promotions through the foreseeable future and into retirement. Fresh from the back room politics of Busiris, where nobody knew anything about the budget, where promises were made to be broken, and where the only people who won financially were administrators and professors of engineering, business or law, Jack considered his $475 investment money well spent.

Jack had always believed in the idea of union, and gave SUUFAMP his heart-felt blessing.

He went one step further. He got himself appointed union membership committee chair, and thus received a seat on the SUUFAMP executive council.

"You might think the difference between Busiris and Novum State is the difference between a private and a state school," he told me in 1986. "Or you might think it's the difference between a state which sent Governor Altgeld home in disgrace and another which sent Bob La Follette to the U. S. Senate. I'm here to tell you the difference is one five-letter word. Spell that U N I O N."

"Lou Feracca has talked union from my first day at Busiris," I reminded him. "I always favored it."

“The union has some drawbacks,” Jack admitted. “It too easily excuses sloth. It spends too damned much time and money defending marginal people on the lower end of the scale. It promotes everyone equally: the lazy, the merely competent, and the brilliant. This place has its share of free riders and chronic complainers, and in my bad moments I long for a system that would boot them off the gravy train. But it’s better to reward everyone indiscriminately than to screw everyone indiscriminately. Which seem to be the only choices. I have seen the alternative, and believe me, Novum is better. I am a worker, and this is the workers’ paradise.”

SUUFAMP had not achieved power without a struggle. At one point in the early seventies, the union organizers—virtually all of Jack’s friends—had been sent packing by the university’s president, on orders from the State University System Chancellor, on orders from the Governor.

“It was more complicated than that, actually,” Jack wrote in an early letter. “The founding president was a guy named Lewis Carey, a good guy really, an old liberal Democrat who’d lost his Senate seat in a close race in November of 1968. Carey was basically a good old boy who’d been given the job as president by his buddy, Governor Reynolds, who was also a lame duck in December 1968. Carey’s understanding of a university was only slightly more sophisticated than Rose Marié’s dad’s, but he knew how to get things done, especially in rural Wisconsin. In his home district he had a million contacts, Chamber of Commerce and farmer types both. Carey got a dairy farmer to donate the 80 acres on which the school was built. The general contractor was another old chum, who cut Novum a pretty sweet deal. City Council delivered access roads and zoning easements. ‘Help the school and help yourselves,’ Carey told them.

“He was right, of course. That whole strip of banks and franchised food places along University Avenue is built on former farmland that was sold, believe it, at a pretty fair price. The same contractor that built the school built most of them. Novum’s Advancement Office figures the school pumps $10,000,000 into

Lake-of-the-Woods, excluding the dough people save by not having to send their kids to college in Madison or La Crosse. There was a lot of civic pride in those days too. Novum blossomed while other schools were beginning to wilt.

“Republican governor-elect Knowles was an old political enemy of Carey, but the State Board of Regents and State University System Chancellor buffered education from anything so mundane as politics. At least for a while. Eventually Knowles had his way with the regents, and thus with the chancellor, and thus with President Carey. Carey was muscled into retirement, and in 1973 Novum began a nationwide search for a new president. The committee was full of academics and civic leaders from the Lake-of-the-Woods Chamber of Commerce. Governor Knowles sent the chairman a letter nominating some insurance baron from Milwaukee who’d bankrolled his campaign, hinting that this fellow could do Novum and the community a lot of good academically and politically.

“On nine issues out of ten the liberal academics and the Republican businessmen would have been at loggerheads, but they were all pissed over losing Carey and made common cause on the insurance magnate. Knowles’ man never even got an interview.

“Eventually they hired an East Coast type named Arthur Springerman, a farm boy from upstate New York who’d achieved a Ph. D. from Columbia and had six years of experience as Vice President of Student Services at Cornell. The farmers liked him, the academics liked him, the businessmen liked him.

“Springerman turned out to be not such a good choice. He was a big affirmative action man in all things: hiring, new programs, and student recruitment. First item on his agenda was African-American Studies. This was right about the time I was starting the Afro-American program at Busiris. Well shit, it made sense in Illinois, where we had a solid black student population and a cosmopolitan campus. Afro-American was not exactly what north country Wisconsin kids were desperate for. Then Springerman started a program in “Cultural Studies,” another thing not likely to appeal to

farm kids. Then “Communications Arts.” At one point he funded the Phy Ed Department into starting a lacrosse team. Coach, scholarships, equipment . . . everything but teams to play against.

“He spent a ton of money, but none of it wisely. When the new programs and their new faculty attracted few students, he sent admissions people off to recruit in Chicago, New York, Baltimore and Washington. Kids who couldn’t make their local junior college were awarded scholarships to a four-year institution in one of the better education states in the country. Of course the kids from East Coast urban areas were bored out of their skulls in Lake-of-the-Woods, and Lake-of-the-Woods was offended by their fast and loose life style. The out-of-state students were not exactly the hardest working, either.

“Springerman’s faculty hires were an ethnic crazy quilt that made the original Novum faculty seem bland. Most of them were only slightly more competent than their students. Brand X degrees from Brand X colleges. How could Novum compete with Northwestern in hiring qualified people to teach Afro-American? We couldn’t even hire decent people at Busiris, ‘the Northwestern of Downstate Illinois.’ Springerman signed them sight unseen, without consulting other members of the department or school. In one case he created a whole new department.”

“Springerman’s liberalism alienated Lake-of-the-Woods high-rollers, who wanted not a lacrosse team but a winning football program. They began pulling out of the Foundation. His arbitrary hiring and program development alienated the faculty, who sought a stronger voice in university governance. They threatened votes of no confidence and circulated petitions demanding collective bargaining. Springerman’s affirmative action recruiting, especially his allocation of financial aid, alienated Wisconsin farm and small-town kids, the bread and butter of Novum’s student population. They started staying away in large numbers. It doesn’t take much to fuck up a good thing.”

Then Knowles stepped in again.

From day one, he felt, Novum State had been a hotbed of liberalism, agitation, and general craziness. With town-gown battles a daily occurrence, enrollments falling, and the faculty talking union, it was time to close the place. Minimally he wanted the union squashed and all those who supported it axed. Springerman, to his credit, refused to swing the ax. That was just fine with Governor Knowles. Out went Springerman, and in came Buchanan, Novum's third president. The really bad one.

"This son-of-a-bitch fired none of Springerman's Cultural Studies assholes, but every one of the union guys," Jack wrote. "The same way Stoddard's stooges trimmed the trouble-makers at Busiris. Not exactly that way. This fellow shot them all at once, and he was more man-to-man about things. He told them, 'Those are my orders, and you know the reasons. You also know that if I don't do as Madison says, they'll get someone else in here who will.' At least there was no sneaking around, rubbing them out on trumped-up charges, ruining careers. He just told them they were finished, turn in their resignations effective June 1. Spend the rest of the year meeting classes and looking for some place else to teach.

"The trouble was these guys had balls. Especially Linda Tholen. Linda's a red-haired and fire-tempered spark plug of an Icelander who grew up on a South Dakota farm and takes no shit from nobody. There was not a single letter of resignation or a single letter of application elsewhere. They acted collectively, as the assholes at Busiris never seem to be able to do.

"They did not walk out of the classroom—which would probably have been suicidal. They sent, first, the dove of peace: 'Let's all meet with the chancellor and attempt to work things out.'

"When the dove found no middle ground, they tried the swallow: 'You come after us and we're coming after you,' they threatened. 'You really want our resignations? You can force our resignations. But we'll eat you alive in little birdie bites.'

"That got them nowhere either.

“Third day, they sent the crow. The Novum State faculty marched collectively on the capital, those who had been fired and those who had not, demanding to meet the governor. He wouldn’t talk to them, naturally, but reporters did. The story was all over the Milwaukee *Sentinel* and the Madison *Capitol Times*. I think it even made the Minneapolis and Chicago papers. They printed pamphlets and letters laying out their credentials, their position, and Wisconsin’s history of progressive education, and mailed them out to parents, community power brokers, and state politicos. They followed Buchanan around with placards and truth squads, handing out their leaflets and talking to media every time he opened his mouth.

“It was Novum State’s version of a Big Damned Mess. It worked perfectly. Buchanan left after less than a year, and they all got their jobs back. Most of them are here today, just about every person on this faculty whom I respect. These people have books and articles, they’re great teachers, they’re all over local and sometimes state politics. They did what they had to do when they had to do it.”

One of the veterans was Jack’s buddy Lloyd Cowley. Another was Ed Haley. A third was English Department chair Linda Tholen.

The old radicals had lost some of their youth by the time Jack showed up, but at biweekly meetings of the SUUFAMP Executive Council he saw the inner workings of university governance within a collective bargaining framework.

“They’re more powerful than the Bucks Boosters,” he told me when I phoned in early February of 1988 to invite him to Busiris to talk union with his old colleagues. “Let me tell you about last week’s meeting.”

The chair of the History Department had died suddenly of a heart attack, and the department had recommended as its new chair one of the older males. The matter was of no great consequence, as Novum chairs lack the power, wealth and glamor of a chair at, say, Busiris Technical University. In response to Springerman’s

authoritarianism SUUFAMP had deliberately weakened the chairs: the contract made them non-supervisory positions with limited and mostly procedural and advisory duties. In the matter of appointment, contract procedure stipulated a departmental recommendation based on a secret ballot of all employees, tenured, tenure-track, fixed term, and even part-time. SUUFAMP brought the results to administration, which rubber-stamped the recommendation and made the actual appointment. The net effect was to make chairs elective, and responsible more to their departments than to the dean or vice president.

In this particular case, VPAA Van Overbekke was not pleased with the department's choice. Van Overbekke was new to Novum, which went through administrators like Cocoa Puffs. He underestimated the SUUFAMP's power, and wanted to make a good impression at the state level regarding affirmative action. More female chairs would improve the school's affirmative action profile, and History was one of few departments with female possibilities. Van Overbekke sent his dean Vance Hayes, one of the Old Ones who could have given his boss good advice on the matter had his boss been the type to listen, to tell SUUFAMP to tell the History Department to reconsider. And next time, to select a woman.

Hayes made a somewhat apologetic speech and braced himself for the reaction.

SUUFAMP President Linda Tholen looked at him. "History elects the person they think will do the best job, Vance. If that person happens to be a woman, fine. If that person is a man, also fine."

"Well there was this business last year at La Crosse," Hayes began.

"That business at La Crosse has nothing to do with us."

"I was told it does."

"It does not. It's a completely different situation."

"Van Overbekke thinks it could have a bearing."

“You can tell Van Overbekke that he’s a dumb son-of-a-bitch and doesn’t know what he’s talking about.”

Hayes shrugged his shoulders. “Maybe you’re right,” he admitted and went off to report to his boss.

“What do you think of this Van Overbekke anyway?” Lloyd Cowley asked the others after Hayes had left.

Paul Lesinski was sitting on his right. “I don’t know. He ain’t much of a listener, that’s one thing for sure.”

Linda Tholen was on his right. “I have a few problems with the way he handles faculty.”

Haley was on her right. “I don’t see him being around much longer, unless. . . .”

“He can’t read a contract,” Jack observed.

One after the other, around the conference table in Sandburg Center 201, Exec Council members cast their ballots in the informal straw vote. It was thumbs down all around. “Not in touch with western Wisconsin.” “Reminds me a little of Art Springerman.” “We could do lots better than him. For the money.”

Van Overbekke was gone within two weeks. He did not even survive the spring term.

“Don’t tramp on SUUFAMP,” Jack noted in finishing the story.

After the meeting, Jack, Paul Lesinski and Lloyd Cowley adjourned to the Silver Dollar for burgers and beers.

“We have a proposition,” they told him.

“I’m listening.”

“Linda Tholen is thinking of running for state-wide union president this spring.”

“She’d make a good one,” Jack agreed. “She’s been good for us at the local level. She’d be good for us at the state level.”

“Exactly. We think she might even win. Even as a woman. Even in Wisconsin.”

“So.”

“So if she goes to Madison, our local needs a new president.”

“That’s what vice presidents are for.”

“Ordinarily, yes,” Lesinski told Jack. Lesinski was the vice president in question.

“What do you mean ‘ordinarily’?”

“It’s a two-year term, and I’m due for a sabbatical the year after next.”

“I’m beginning to see things more clearly.”

“I’ve worked up a research project. Something in genetics. There’s a forest on the Polish-Russian border, virgin timber, goes back centuries. Used to be a major source of amber, but the whole forest is now under international protection. My idea is that there is probably some very old amber there, which we can date from the wood once we find it *in situ*. In the amber there will be some very old bugs, and in the bugs there will be some very old genes. People at the National Science Foundation are interested, and I think I can line up a NSF research grant. In fact, I want to ask you for a recommendation. My folks are from that corner of Poland. It’s now part of the Soviet Union. It would be a great opportunity for me.”

“Fuckin’ crazy place to go right now.”

“I’d be okay. Goin’ home.”

“So Linda goes to Madison. Paul goes home to Mother Poland. That leaves Lloyd in Lake-of-the-Woods.”

“Lloyd heads our negotiating team. Next is a contract year. You can’t have the president be the head of negotiations.”

“Negotiations is an unbelievable headache, good buddy,” Lloyd reminded Jack.

“So Paul skips the country, Linda goes to Madison full time, Lloyd shuttles between here and Madison, and we are looking for a new local president.”

“That’s where you come in,” Lloyd told Jack.

“Let me say this about that.”

“You’ve been very strong as membership chair.”

“When I took on the job, every employee of this institution except four belonged to the union. I keep good records and contact all the new people within a month of their being hired. Today, every employee except four belongs to the union.”

“You’re good with speeches and ideas. People respect your opinions. You’d have the cooperation of everybody on Exec Council.”

“I really see myself as one of the new ones.”

“You are,” Lloyd said. “But you’re one of the good new ones. Plus you’ve been in teaching for a lot of years, and you’ve been around the block a few times. You’re one of the older new ones.”

“As opposed to whom?”

“A couple of people really have their eye on the presidency. Brad Newlund in particular.”

“Brad’s a little soft, but he’s done okay on the Executive Council. He was with us today on Van Overbekke.”

Cowley was dismissive. “Soft isn’t the word. Chair of the Committee on Equity and Cultural Diversity? What kind of candy-assed shit is that? You read that interview with him in the newspaper a month ago? ‘My idea of criminal justice is that we should correct wrongs. We’re not necessarily doing that by apprehending and punishing criminals.’ No understanding of the community, and thus no community support.”

“Also no common sense on internal matters,” Lesinski added. “Newlund couldn’t resist Lizzie Bordon if she had a faculty appointment. He’d open the door to every whining wimp in

SUUFAMP. Half of this job is keeping your own people in line. That's where Linda is good. Our own assholes would eat Newlund alive."

"A little round pot belly, and beady little eyes. No scars. No toughness."

"All the good ones walk with a limp."

"No limp and a lot of ambition."

"So we don't like Newlund," Jack admitted. "There are two hundred other faculty at this place. Not to mention staff. Why not a secretary or janitor as SUUFAMP president?"

"No clout," Cowley said. "Even they know the best of the staff has less clout than the worst of the faculty. Just a fact of collective bargaining life."

"There are still two hundred faculty."

"Twenty-five of whom are responsible for 95 percent of what gets done at this institution."

"Agreed. So expand the pool to twenty-six."

"I don't know," Cowley mused.

"Forget he's everybody's caricature of a union boss," Jack argued. "He was with us today on Van Overbekke. He's no administration lackey."

"Oh, no," Lesinski agreed. "That's the point. Newlund won't sleep with administration. Just the opposite. He loves all faculty and hates all administration. It's a knee-jerk reaction with him."

"He's rigid," Cowley added. "Righteous. You know what I mean? Too moral. He gets hold of an idea, and he can't see things from any other way. Everything is a confrontation."

"He can't do politics," said Lesinski.

Cowley agreed. "Completely inflexible. Doesn't respect opposing points of view, even within the membership. Most

important, he doesn't know when to compromise. He's the kind of guy to pull you out on strike on a 52-48% vote."

"I've never really been good at politics myself. I'm a lot more confrontational than you guys think."

"You'd be great," Lloyd told Jack.

"I've been at Novum less than two years."

"One year longer than Newlund."

"We didn't come here on our own," Paul admitted. "We represent a contingent on the Council."

"Is Linda Tholen part of that contingent?" Jack wanted to know.

"She could be."

Jack paused. Jack had a lot of respect for Linda Tholen.

"Look, fellows," he said finally, "I'm a teacher and a writer. I'm not good at day-to-day details, and I'm really not that good a politician. I'm a good writer, and a good speaker. I've got people calling me asking for articles I don't have time to write. There's a backlog of story ideas. You think negotiations is a pain in the ass, try writing. Your time belongs where your talent is, right? What you can do well, you do and you do it well. You don't fuck up trying to do what you can't do well."

"Sometimes we do things not because we want to, or even because we're especially good at them," Cowley argued. "We do them because we owe. We look to the union for help, and we owe the union our help."

"Sometimes we do things because we're afraid who might do them if we don't," Lesinski added.

"I have a really radical idea, fellows," Jack suggested at last. "Why don't we let the membership decide?"

"Don't be naive. What if they decided on Newlund?"

"Then the membership deserves what the membership gets."

“Except we get it right along with the rest of them.”

“I’ve put too much into this union to see it go down the tubes.”

“SUUFAMP is not going down the tubes, Lloyd. And Novum State is not going down the tubes. Whoever replaces Linda at Novum has her above him at the state level, the rest of us below at the local level.”

“Linda wants you to think about this seriously, Jack,” Cowley told Creed.

“Linda does?” Jack asked.

“Linda does,” Lesinski told the as yet untenured John Charles Creed.

In April of 1988, Linda Tholen was elected state-wide president of SUUFAMP. That summer Paul Lesinski wrote his successful application for a NFS grant to pursue genetics research in the western Soviet Union. Lloyd Cowley spent spring, summer, and fall negotiating Jack’s 1989-91 contract.

In May Jack was elected president of the NSU local of SUUFAMP, defeating Brad Newlund by a margin of 2:1.

“It’s better to be on the inside of what’s going down than on the outside,” Jack told me. “Friends aren’t enough.”

Jack’s first-hand experience at a university operating under a collective bargaining agreement was the reason for his first and, to my knowledge, only return to Busiris Technical University after that Friday afternoon in February 1985. He had, of course, spent an invisible Saturday and Sunday vacating his offices, but once the pranks began, and the police questioning and surveillance, Jack had kept a careful distance from campus. Then it was Wales. Then Lake-of-the-Woods. Then it was . . . well, as Michael Stella had perceived, Jack didn’t really want to be part of Busiris Tech anyway.

Still, a man does not easily throw over fifteen years of his life, especially when those are the strength of his twenties and thirties.

Jack carried a lot of mental baggage from his Busiris days, even in the last years of his life, and the visit of May 18, 1989 was important to him for several reasons. The thought of playing a role a hand in realizing one of our favorite Tookey's Tap fantasies—a faculty union at Busiris—appealed to him tremendously. As did an opportunity to survey in person the devastation at Busiris. As did imagining the terror his visit struck in the hearts of those to whom even the name "Student Union" was anathema.

More significantly, the visit was a sentimental journey through a remembered landscape . . . and an opportunity, finally, to lay to rest the ghost of Lily Lee Martin and clear a path in his heart for whoever was to come.

"I'd had a few relationships in Lake-of-the-Woods," Jack admitted, "but they always ran into red lights where the present intersected the past. I couldn't get past the ghosts standing at the crossroads. After my talk at Busiris, the ghosts disappeared and all the traffic signals turned green simultaneously. Kelly drove right down my life on solid greens, here to the California coast."

Some of those who remembered Jack—and few, even at the distance of half a decade, did not—read his announced address on "Collective Bargaining and the Academy: One Man's Experience" as yet another part of Creed's Revenge on Busiris. Others remembered the posters Lily had printed in 1976 and wrote this meeting off as another hoax. Actually, it was neither revenge nor hoax. We were quite serious about organizing Busiris, and Charles Creed was a logical source of experience and advice.

Even during the downsizings of the seventies, in the First and Second Eras of Ill Feelings, many Busiris faculty had recognized the need for some formal representation of faculty interests outside the framework of the Busiris Senate. Lou, Jack, and I were not alone. During the reign of Bertholt the Terrible, however, the slightest whisper of union would have gotten even a senior professor fired. Reich's treatment of Jack had shown what he was capable of doing.

Then came the spring, summer and fall of 1985; we were happy to hang onto our jobs. Talk of raises or unions was out of the question.

By 1989 anyone with a double-digit I. Q. could see the crisis at Busiris was once again being shouldered more by faculty and staff than by administration. Those of us who remained had increasingly less to lose by voicing our anger, and increasing anger to voice. The faculty's collective animosity had earned Reich and Hauptmann their notices (Jack was correct in predicting his resignation would be the end of their careers), leaving Busiris administration in chaos. Some read in the fall of Hauptmann and Reich signs of a new disposition among the Board of Trustees which might be turned to faculty and staff advantage. At least there was a vacuum in Administrative Services, a window of opportunity which might soon close. Clearly, there was no time like the present to seize power.

I had been talking quietly with a couple of persons outside the department, one of whom mentioned the Wisconsin system as a particularly effective model for organization. I knew of Jack's involvement with SUUFAMP, and shared some of his letters. Our group finally decided to set up a series of informational meetings with representatives from several institutions representing several different models of university faculty unionism. Jack and Lloyd Cowley were invited to Riverton to explain the mechanics of the Wisconsin system.

Jack was in no sense coming to organize Busiris, as the announcement in the Riverton *Standard-Republican* implied.

That was not the way Administrative Services saw matters, however. The Old Ones remembered, and the New Ones had heard. Or they could check his files which, despite Reich's promise of confidentiality and a purge, contained all documents related to February 8, 1985, plus earlier complaints, plus detailed reports of police investigations during the balance of 1985 and into 1986. So when our announced meetings—authorized, properly scheduled through the proper University channels—listed "John C. Creed"

among the probable speakers, Busiris Trustees went right through the roof.

Administration attempted first to revoke our permission to use Busiris Hall auditorium, and, when that became too hot an issue, attempted to persuade us gently to uninvite Jack. Failing that as well, they had him legally declared *persona non grata* on campus. Citing the 1972 march on the Hilton, University attorney Howe argued that Jack's presence might well result in a disruption of the peace which Busiris security could not control. Busiris requested and received a court injunction forbidding Jack to set foot on campus, and warned us that if he appeared at our meeting in Busiris Hall Auditorium, Riverton police would be more than happy to arrest Jack for criminal trespass.

I phoned Jack with the news that Busiris had officially declared him an outlaw. He suggested that our meeting would go more smoothly if Lloyd Cowley alone presented SUUFAMP. I suggested that rescinding our invitation was not exactly a show of strength, not a good way to begin a union-management relationship we all recognized as adversarial.

"Whether I show or not," Jack pointed out, "the possibility of my presence brings Riverton cops to your meeting. This too is not a good start for a union."

The logical solution was to move the meeting off campus, which we did. After rejections from the local VFW Post and a couple of area churches, we settled on the Headquarters Hall of AFL-CIO Local 133. If the late change of location cost us some support, the drama of negotiations heightened our case for a union . . . and the Brewery and Distillery Workers provided some muscle when Busiris officials attempted unsuccessfully to have Jack a menace to all Riverton (including, presumably, his own daughter), and extend their injunction to the city limits (which included his own home).

Outsider agitators Creed and Cowley arrived in Riverton early Thursday evening.

On his biweekly visits to Jenny Lynn, Jack normally stayed at the Rocket Motel, a $15-a-night-cash-in-advance place north of town, or with me or Lou. I had suggested Jack stay with Linda and me, Lloyd with Lou and Patricia, but Jack had declined the offer. “This one’s on SUUFAMP,” he told me. “I haven’t done anything first class since the Ritz. Let Lloyd and me whoop it up at the Heidelberger. We can be together and out of your hair. SUUFAMP will pick up the tab. One of the many benefits of union.”

“This one’s on SUUFAMP,” Lloyd repeated to Linda and me, Patricia and Lou, and Jenny Lynn (Timm was already at the Naval Academy) as the waitress at the Heidelberger cleared the remains of seven Thursday evening steak dinners. He penned in a $15 tip and handed her a credit card. “One of the many benefits of union, Professor Tucker.”

We adjourned, with Jenny, to Tookey’s Tap, remodeled in 1986 and nearly a family place, more than hospitable to women, middle class yups, and long-haired students. At Tookey’s we were joined by Phil Steiner from physics, Joe Rausch from mathematics, and two undergraduate English majors. The male was carrying a dog-eared copy of *Age of Faith*.

“Where’d you get that?” Jack wanted to know. “The book’s been out of print for a decade.”

“I know. It’s even missing from the Busiris library.”

“You won’t find any of my work in the Busiris Library. Or in Riverton Public either.”

“It’s funny you should mention that. I thought it was because everything burned up, but the Faculty Publications Collection was in the Special Collections Room in the basement and survived. Your book isn’t there. And your stories and articles are missing from all the magazines.”

“It’s like I never taught at Busiris,” Jack said smiling.

“Everyone knows you did, sir. You’re definitely a legend at Busiris.”

Jenny listened with wide eyes.

“So where’d you get the book?”

“First I read the copy at my home town library. Then I decided, this is fantastic, I got to have a book of my own. I asked the local B. Dalton’s, but no luck. I wrote the publisher, but no luck there either. Finally I photocopied the whole book. Then Terry—this is my girlfriend here, Professor Creed, Terry Cunningham; I’m Randy Hobson. Terry found this copy used at Powell’s, up in Chicago.”

“One of the few remaining real bookstores in the Midwest. Not too many students in my day hung around the University of Chicago.”

“Today either,” Terry told Jack. “I’d like to have been at Busiris in the sixties when you were here, Professor Creed. A lot of us are really into the sixties these days. I was alive in the sixties, but I don’t remember anything. Except the music.”

“You missed a good time.”

“I think I was a freshman your last year at Busiris,” said Hobson. “1984-85? I don’t remember anything, though. I was pretty green.”

“You didn’t miss much of a good time.”

“Not from what we’ve heard,” Cunningham said. “We heard things were pretty wild in Riverton right into the eighties. Carol McQuillan was my R. A. freshman year.” She said this with a peculiar twinkle in her eye.

Jack smiled. “I wasn’t here after 1985,” was all he said, “and I wasn’t on campus much before 1985.”

So the students too had heard the legends. Over Pabst beer and Bartles and Jaymes wine coolers Randy and Terry pressed Jack for tales of the olden days, and the events of 1985 and 1986. Aware of his daughter’s presence, Jack expounded at length on Busiris in

the seventies, but steered clear of the eighties, of Lily Lee and of February 1985. He seemed to perform more for Jenny Lynn than for the rest of us, as if consciously choosing to reveal selected facets of a persona she had not previously known. The Black Studies program was discussed, and the March on the Hilton. Jack talked about the flush days and the hard times of the seventies. Three or four beers into the night, he recounted some of his saltier tales of student-teacher interactions, and recited a few of his memos to dean, vice president and president. He did not lie, but he did not exaggerate, either.

“There was that memo, what the hell was it on? Contingency contracts. I told them they were fucking over students and faculty both. Exactly what I said. I get this letter back from Reich: ‘Please avoid using such language on documents which may be read by women.’ You talk about patronizing women. . . .”

“He had obviously never been inside a women’s dorm at Busiris,” Terry said.

“Or at a Riverton Central softball squad practice,” added Jenny Lynn.

“Then there was the goddamn air conditioning. Have they ever replaced that thing, Tucker?”

“Broke as this place is? What do you think?”

“Every summer, on the summer the air conditioning in Busiris Hall would go down,” Jack explained.

“Just last summer,” I added.

“Regular as the seasons. They got some ancient water-cooled system there, and it breaks almost immediately upon being turned on. We’d swelter for a week, and then came a memo from the president: ‘I want to personally apologize for the delay in repairing the Busiris Hall air conditioning system. Unfortunately the broken component is not available in Riverton. It has been special ordered from the home factory in Indiana. We’ve been told to expect a delay

of up to two months. Again we apologize for the inconvenience.' Well fuck those fuckers, Old Main was cool enough. Of course they had a brand new unit over there.

"Busiris Hall windows have those little vents on the bottom, you can open them maybe six inches if you're lucky enough to have an outside office. Afternoon sun baking through the glass. No breeze at all. I used to plaster the windows with aluminum foil to try to reflect away some of that heat.

"I'd phone the president's office, get his secretary, tell her, 'Tell Stoddard the air conditioning's not working, and Creed's not working. I'll be back when the weather cools or the damned machine is fixed.' Then I'd slam down the phone. Or I'd walk into Old Main, through the front doors, and shout as loud as I could, 'Well goddamn! Cool enough over here. Ought to move all our classes into this building.' Then I'd turn around and walk out."

"He did," Lou nodded. "I heard one of those phone calls."

"You were a hell-raiser, dad," Jenny said in awe.

"Your dad was a hell-raiser in those days," Phil Steiner assured Jenny Lynn.

"When they first built our place, we had a similar problem with the air conditioning," Lloyd Cowley remembered. "They had the buildings finished in time for September classes, but the air conditioning wasn't in. Hottest September on record, swear to god. Middle nineties. You know they got them sealed thermopane windows, not even a little vent on the bottom. You can't open a window even if you want to.

"Well, they give all of us charter faculty a brick, same kind of a brick that was used to build the buildings. A little brick with a bronze plaque on it. Charles has seen 'em. We were just roasting in those offices, sweat dripping from our foreheads, and Ed Haley, I'll never forget it, picks up his brick and says, 'I always knew they gave us these things for a good purpose,' and bashes it right through the window of his office. Then Linda Tholen did the same. A whole

epidemic of lost bricks and busted windows. Well they got the air conditioning installed in a big hurry. We wasn't even union in them days."

Terry produced her copy of *Hail Red and White: a Centennial History of Busiris Technical University*, the authorized version, written by the chair of the Busiris history department and published by the University in 1987 as a fund-raiser. "I thought you might get a laugh out of this, Professor Creed. You won't have time to read it carefully tonight, but I'll loan you my copy. You can give it back tomorrow night after your talk. This book doesn't mention your name anywhere. Not one word about you or your Pulitzer Prize or the Black Studies program. You should read what they say about all the shit in 1985."

"I bet it doesn't mention that director of security was running a whore house out of the dorms, either," Jack laughed. Jenny's eyes widened again.

"Check the index," Feracca suggested.

"Lou," said Patricia.

"Under W," said Jack.

"Dad."

"Well, that was all hearsay anyway," I said. "If we're going to get into hearsay. . . ."

"I'm probably the hearsay champion of BTU," Jack chuckled.

"While you're here, you should do an interview with *The Sentinel*," Hobson suggested. "Terry is the features editor."

"Sometime," Jack said, looking at his daughter. "Not tonight."

"I've gotta go anyway, dad," Jenny said. "Curfew tonight, practice tomorrow. You coming to the game Saturday?"

"If they don't ride me out of town on a rail."

"10:00 at Central complex."

"Game and lunch afterwards? Before Lloyd and I leave."

“It’s a date.”

“Thanks for being here tonight.”

“It’s been a real eye-opener. Kind of like a whole new you, dad.”

“Same old me, daughter.”

“Same old me, dad.”

“Oh, not really,” Jack mused. “But a girl’s supposed to grow, and growth is good. I couldn’t have shared my spider side with the kids who went with me to Wales. Now? Now I can tell you a truth your coach won’t tell you. Or your mother either. Most of the time you’ll get a lot more help from the dark side than from the light side.”

“Ain’t that the truth!” Lloyd Cowley added.

“I wouldn’t know about that,” said Jenny Lynn.

“Hope you never do, Lynn. But some day you will.”

“Tomorrow, dad.”

“Hit ‘em where they ain’t.”

“So tell us about 1985, Professor Creed” said Terry Cunningham as soon as Jenny had left Tookey’s.

“I think that’s best left where it is,” Linda said.

“Tell me what you heard from Carolyn,” Jack invited.

“Oh, a few things,” Terry hinted.

“For gosh sake, Jack,” Linda flared. “Haven’t you done enough already? Let bygones be bygones.”

Jack stared thoughtfully at his beer glass. “I did that once,” he said. “I walked away without saying a word in my own defense, without answering a single accusation or rumor.”

He looked directly at my wife. “So tell me honestly, Linda Tucker, wife of Andrew Tucker and friend of Rose Marié Creed—what did all my silence cause you to think of me?”

“This isn’t the time to open old wounds,” Lou objected.

Linda reflected for a moment. “It’s something we all thought a lot about, Jack,” she said finally. “I’m not going to discuss the matter at length in front of this company. But I can tell you I’ve always known you were an incredibly strong person. We all do. Even Rose Marié admits that much.”

“I’m going to object to this line of questioning as well,” Lou said.

The students backed off. “Maybe some other time, Professor Creed.”

“Maybe some other time,” Jack told them. “Then again, maybe not. I’m not at liberty to discuss details. I’m not sure I would discuss them if I could. That’s water over the dam.”

“In your book you said that people who are ignorant of history are condemned to repeat it,” said Randy.

“I’ve changed my mind since then. I now believe that people who are obsessed with history are condemned to repeat it. You fall into the same traps again and again.”

“The letters to students and donors were the best thing,” Terry said. “Those letters and the tape recorder at commencement.”

“I don’t know a thing about the letters,” Jack told her. “Or any of that.”

Lloyd had not heard about the letters.

“I can tell you about that one,” Linda said. And did.

“Holy shit!” he exclaimed. “That must have taken . . . months.”

“The actual mailings took less than two weeks,” Jack told him matter-of-factly.

“For shit’s sake, good buddy. Photocopy and folding time alone. Then seal the envelopes. . . .”

“I figured it all out once,” Jack said distractedly. “If one person put those mailings together alone, they probably took 20 ten-hour

days. The photocopying and folding were done in Old Main. The labels were run inside Old Main. That's after-hours work, an hour here, a couple of hours there. It must have taken months. Longer if the person wasn't supposed to be there, or had a family and spouse to get home to in the evening. I think those mailings were in preparation long before I left Busiris."

"A bunch of students acting together could have done it quicker," Terry suggested.

"Think what you want to think."

"That would be something." Randy's eyes were glassy, and not from the Pabst.

"You have to draw a line," Jack said dismissively. "Move on. You can't go back. The sixties and seventies are dead and gone. They're of no help to you now."

"That's not what your book says," Randy insisted.

"It's what I think now."

"Is it really?" I asked Jack. "Is that what you're doing here?"

Jack took a long drink from his beer.

"See you tomorrow night," Terry Cunningham reminded Jack as she and Randy left. "Maybe we'll talk some more then."

"What do you hear about Lily Lee?" Jack wanted to know as soon as we were alone.

"No longer at Busiris," I told him. "She and Jim are no longer even in Riverton."

"You said that on the phone. Any new details?"

"Things were very hush-hush, on campus and at the bank. First National is in big trouble, both here and in Chicago. Bad loans on a number of huge urban redevelopment projects. Big Jim resigned before the blow-up, although he reportedly left with a bundle of money. One story is he left in protest over something fishy. The other

story is that he was part of the fishiness. All we know for sure is that he left. We don't even know where he left to."

"I thought all that S&L business was in Texas, California, and Florida," Lloyd said. "Oil money, land speculation money and computer money that had gone looking for someplace to invest itself and had to settle for D-2 bonds."

"Most of it was, but we've got problems here in River City."

"You hear anything about Lily?" Jack persisted.

"Who's Lily?" Lloyd wanted to know.

"Equally murky," I told Jack. "One story is she never got along with Reich and Stoddard, or they with her. Busiris kept her as part of its deal with First National. She stayed because Jim wanted the kids to graduate from Busiris, where their mom's job would have got them free tuition. Linda and I figure that tuition is worth about $60,000. Or was. Worth three times $60,000 in Lily and Jim's case. Busiris rescinded our free tuition, thanks to . . . the current predicament. Lily felt no need to stay.

"That's one scenario. Another story has your old friend Annie Brower sticking a stiletto in Lily's back, possibly with help from Reich. Brower replaced her in Affirmative Action, with a little help from Victoria Nation. Brower as head of affirmative action is ridiculous given her background."

"One more example of the co-option of programs designed to help minorities and workers by comfortable middle class feminists," Jack observed.

"Well Brower is gone too now. Lasted only a couple of months. Hauptman and Reich got in big trouble with the faculty over retrenchment and with the Trustees over enrollment. Maybe because of Lily Lee too. Anyway, they cashiered Brower almost as soon as they hired her. Right before they got the ax themselves. Shit's flying all over the place. It ain't the same place it was when you left."

This was all news to Charles. The acting VPAA issued a very strong statement about a month ago after some co-ed wrote a first-person experience essay on the marvelous and mind-expanding relationship she was having with her sociology professor. The composition teacher to whom she handed the essay was none other than our Miss Vicky. The feminists went through the roof: meetings and marches and propaganda letters in the *Sentinel* about age and 'power differentials' between students and teachers. Usual harassment line these days. The *Standard-Republican* had a pretty good time with it too. I thought I sent you that stuff. The student herself had no complaint, except against Nation for plastering her personal experience all over the newspapers. She's left school, of course. And the guy is gone. I thought I sent you that shit."

"Lily would have brought some sanity to the discussion."

"Lily's gone, rumor has it, because she came down firmly against Nation and Reich and refused to write the decree that would officially ban student-teacher relationships. Brower was brought in specifically to write the thing, with the help of Nation and her feminist colleagues, here and abroad. By the time they got their act together Reich was gone, and Brower was gone. Nation harassed the new guy into fulfilling the unwritten agreement she claimed Reich had made, and anti-miscegenation law has returned to B. T. U. And the rest of the country. You got to keep up with these things, Jack."

"So Lily Lee is no longer at Busiris," Jack repeated.

"Not even in Riverton."

'There was a time, Tucker, when that news would have broken my little heart. Then there was a time when . . . well, you know. Now, I'm not sure how I feel."

"I can put out confidential inquiries if you want," I told Jack. "Lou and I figured it's best we don't.

"Who's this Lily Lee?" Lloyd Cowley asked again as I turned to leave.

The most important part of Jack's visit was not the Thursday night dinner, or his Friday evening speech, or the interview he gave Terry Cunningham early on Saturday morning. It was Jack's daylight excursion on Friday.

The morning of May 19, Jack absented himself from Lloyd Cowley, promising to meet him in the Heidelberger at 5:00, on the excuse of having some personal business to attend to. In a way he did.

Just after breakfast and slightly hung over, Jack picked up his camera, his telephoto lens and ten rolls of Kodachrome 200, and rode the Heidelberger Inn shuttle to the Riverton Air Port. There he rented a car. Then Jack drove to Burr Oak Park and spent four hours revisiting and photographing shrines of his previous existence: camping sites, picnic tables, remote trails, the visitor's center. He drove country roads he'd last seen a decade earlier in the company of Lily Lee Martin, searching out obscure groves and hardscrabble roads where the two of them had talked, walked, made love. He drove past the four-bedroom Dutch Colonial Lily Lee and Jim had built for themselves outside Riverton, the house to which Lily Lee had retreated late that afternoon of February 8, 1985, a home occupied in 1989 by complete strangers who, had they seen Jack, must have been a little paranoid over this mad photographer in the bushes along the roadside.

He drove past the apartment on Harding, where he had written *Age of Faith*, now occupied by strangers, and past Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, where both Timm and Jenny Lynn had spent six years. Past Riverton Central, where his daughter even then was pointing toward final exams of her junior year. He drove past Percy Thompson's home, and Jerry Jones' home, and Victoria Nation's apartment. He drove down Washington Street toward the Hilton. Past Main Street Floral, and the laundromat, now closed. Past the picnic shelter at Riverfront Park, and First National Bank. Past Tookey's and the Maple Shade Motel. Approaching Busiris Tech, he

drove past the Kappa Delta Sorority House and the Black Students Alliance.

Then Jack parked his rented car and walked unobstructed onto the Busiris campus. “I figured nobody in Security was going to stop me, and nobody from Riverton P.D. would recognize me. I was right.”

He walked past the parking lot which marked the site of Old Main, where he’d been fired four years before. He walked past the Faculty Club and Stoddard Field House, through the Student Center and into the quadrangle, photographing old sidewalks and young maple trees. He walked unchallenged into the library, its upper stories still under reconstruction, and down to the basement. For a couple of moments he stood staring in silence at the door to his old study. He entered the Special Collections room and rifled the card catalog to the Philander Chase collection: each book, each pamphlet, each manuscript letter a separate card with a special call number. Each document in its own protective acid-free envelope. He could not help remembering that rainy afternoon in St. Louis when all these precious parchments had been heaped in highly acidic cardboard boxes in the back seat of his Crown Victoria.

Jack walked finally into Busiris Hall, into the basement room where he’d helped push Afro-American Literature into the English Department curriculum. He poked his nose into several classrooms where he had once taught Lily Lee and Carolyn, Billy Jo Allen and André Washington. Paul Popowski, Carolyn McQuillan, Deirdre Williams. Sandy Chase and Annie Brower and Blondie Robertson.

Once again he climbed the stairs to the third floor of Busiris Hall, to room 313, at that time still an empty room. He gave the door handle a gentle turn, but it did not open. Again he stood staring, shot a few photographs, then shrugged his shoulders and headed back down the hall.

“It was just an empty office in an old building I might have visited once in a dream,” he told me later that night. “The place seemed no more precious than, oh, Bradley, or Illinois State, or Western Illinois,

or any one of fifty other schools where I've given readings or talks. The mystery was gone. After all my . . . carrying . . . there was only an empty shell."

"Maybe you were just ready to let it go."

"Whatever. It's beyond helping now. I'm out of their history, and they're out of my mine. It's just a bunch of photographs."

"Time to point yourself forward."

"Furthur it always is."

Jack, Lloyd and I met a dozen or so others for a quick meal downtown at Roy's Ribs. Then we drove in the Novum State car to Headquarters Hall, where a hundred people awaited us at 7:40. By 8:00 the number had doubled. A very aged Virgil Cutter introduced himself, said a few words, and shook Jack's hand. No sooner had Cutter toddled off than Ted Jones, who had arrived with Victoria Nation, approached Jack with outstretched hand and a mouth open to say something. Jack shot him a glance so cold that he dropped his arm, closed his mouth, wheeled on his heels, and walked away. We never saw him again.

Jack spoke first on the mechanics of life under the State of Wisconsin-SUUFAMP Collective Bargaining Agreement: contract negotiations, grievance, meet-and-confer, step-and-lane, committee structures, dues. Strictly the facts. The more cynical in his audience thought Jack was putting us on by being too dry, but those who listened carefully heard a meticulous blueprint for the Promised Land. "This is the way it works at Lake-of-the-Woods," Jack concluded. "And take it from me: it works."

Lloyd Cowley gave a more emotional, motivational speech, painting a vivid picture of the early organizing days of SUUFAMP and the hardships confronting anyone attempting to unionize. "It ain't easy, fellows," Lloyd concluded. "No matter what, you got to stick together. If you go down, you go down together. If you survive, you survive together. The union is always your best source of help. Just ask Charles Creed. He knows better than anyone."

Jack sat in his chair, nodding distractedly.

Throughout Jack's talk, Victoria Nation lurked in the shadows in the back of the room, but she left before the question and answer period even began. Jones was long gone. After fifteen minutes of tepid questions, Phil Steiner wrapped up the formal question session, and Jack found himself surrounded by a small knot of colleagues and admirers. Randy Hobson said hello, and then Terry Cunningham. Jack returned Terry's history of Busiris, which she made him autograph.

"Now I'm in the book," he said wryly.

"In my book at least," she laughed. "We still got things to talk about."

"I'll probably be tied up tonight. Tomorrow morning okay?"

"Anytime, any place."

"I want to be at the high school by 10:00."

"I got a lot of questions."

"You buzz room 212, and I'm ready."

"May be very early."

"You buzz, Terry, I'm there."

"It's a date, Jack."

"Woo, woo."

Terry Cunningham's interview with Jack, printed in the final 1988-89 number of the *Sentinel*, contained none of Thursday night's discussion or Friday's presentation. She focused on the Field House Construction Compromise, on the founding of the Afro-American Studies program, on the glory years of Bucks basketball, on what Jack had written since leaving Busiris, and on Jack's evaluation of the women's movement in general. Jack slipped in a couple of complimentary mentions of Lily Lee and Carolyn, and got off three or four cracks about Victoria Nation, but only an insider would have

understood. In comparison to “Women’s Lib.: The Conservative Revolution,” Jack’s remarks were tempered. He sounded like a man who had fought his battle at Busiris and, having won it handily, was content to revel in memories.

# Chapter 13
# **The Son**

Superficially, Timm Creed's application to the United States Naval Academy and Jenny Lynn's decision to pursue Women's Studies at Bryn Mawr are the greatest ironies of Charles Creed's life . . . or, rather, the greatest contradictions in a life filled with contradictions. What most of Jack's friends have always understood, and what the national news media never grasped, is that Jack fully supported his son and, to a lesser extent, his daughter. In public he joked about sibling rebellion: "What territory did their father leave them, the old advocate of darkness and raising hell, except the straight and narrow?" In private, he was more expansive.

"There was a time when I would have exploded in some dark rage," he admitted in 1986. "Now I'm a more seasoned piece of timber. I understand that the seedling grows best with plenty of light and water. You've got to give it space. There are only two ways to find open space. Move the little tree out of the shade of the old tree, or chop the old tree down. Especially if the old tree is a really old tree. I'm a pretty big tree. Timm and Jennifer will have to move to a space of their own—or cut me down. I'd prefer for this old tree to hang on just a few more years.

"Anyway, I've become a long-distant father, like most American dads. Like most American dads, I have very little control."

In the late eighties, Charles Creed frequently discussed the subject of distant fathers with his friend west of the St. Croix River, Robert Bly. Jack, of course, spent three years neck-deep in Bly while writing *Songs of the North Country*, and at least two poems in Creed's "Visiting the Father" sequence carry epigraphs from Bly's work. Several others make oblique or pointed reference to the Minnesota poet. The Creed-Bly conversations were only a small part of Bly's on-going study of the American father which culminated in

the book *Iron John*, but on the title page of Jack's personally autographed copy, Robert thanked him "for contributing so much to this book, especially to my first chapter."

Jack understood Bly's reading of father-son relationships, and accepted the need for the father to break with his son, even while supporting his son.

Jack would have backed Timm if he'd dropped out of high school to hustle pool in Las Vegas.

As for the Naval Academy, Jack was always one for backing beliefs with action. Busiris undergraduates who believed American interests were best served by obliterating communism wherever they found it were advised to "show the courage of their convictions," join the military, and serve with pride. Undergraduates who believed America's interests were best served by getting the hell out of Vietnam were advised to stop the war by all means necessary. Only the fence-sitters and wimps elicited Jack's real contempt.

Even in 1970, Jack Creed had been no pacifist. In the game of international politics, he fully accepted the need for a well-trained military. "Most people on this planet would like to see the United States of America vaporized," he wrote in his preface to *Age of Faith*. "We like to believe they're misinformed about Americans and if we just smile, shake their hand, and give them a cigarette or a chocolate bar, they'll see the error of their ways. Perhaps we're right. Or perhaps we're naive. Can we really afford to find out? Maybe the world would be best served by a *pax Americana*, enforced by a globally deployed United States Marine Corps. Or perhaps the world would be best served if capitalist America were obliterated. Who knows? One thing is certain: most of this planet's Chinese, Vietnamese, Africans, South Americans, Russian, and Arab populations are not America's friends. And they're out there. America had better be ready to protect itself. The subject of thoughtful sixties discussion of the Vietnam War was how best to protect America, what form the battle for survival would take, and on what terms and geographies that battle could most advantageously be fought."

A service academy was Timm's idea. Where he picked it up, even he does not remember. Part of the attraction, he recalls, was the challenge of getting in. "The United States Naval Academy is statistically the most selective college in the country. It admits one out of fifteen applicants. West Point is not far behind. When I was a high school senior, USNA represented the ultimate challenge. Just as flight school represented the ultimate challenge once I reached Annapolis. Just as the F/A 18 represented the ultimate challenge once I entered flight school. I'm a born pilot. I want to fly higher, further, tighter than anyone has ever flown before. I want to fly beyond the moon. It's been that way since as long as I can remember. Maybe it's something I got from dad."

Part of the attraction was the academy's unique combination of academics, athletics, and discipline. "If you look at colleges collectively, you notice that there are the brain schools and there are the sports schools," Timm told me. "A few, like Michigan, have good athletic teams and good academics, but they're the exception. Usually it's a brain place like Northwestern or a football place like Ohio State. I liked the idea of a college that emphasized brains and body for each of its students."

Another part of the attraction was financial: service academies offered a tuition-free college education. In 1986, even after moving to Novum State, Charles was bringing home about $2,000 a month, slightly over half of which went to Riverton to pay the mortgage and support Rose Marié, Jenny, and Timm. The balance (supplemented by savings, overload salary, payment for writing, and speaking honoraria) met his rent, room and board, and car payments. Not much remained for college tuition, although Jack never made an issue of the subject. "I'll get you whatever it takes," he promised his son. "Only one thing: I'm not paying for anything east of the Appalachians, west of the Rockies, or south of the Mason Dixon Line."

Money was the least of Timm's worries. An all-conference place kicker with a 4.0 average, he was heavily recruited by, and could

have had a free ride to any one of a dozen colleges, including one in the Ivy League and three in the Big Ten. The academies, however, paid students a small salary . . . and guaranteed jobs to all graduates.

Jack supported his son's interest. "The real problem with the United States military today," Jack wrote in 1987, when Timm had pretty much made up his mind, "is that it's in the hands of the bad people. The good people pulled out during Vietnam. 'Killing? Not for this boy. Far too holy for killing. I'm going to Canada. I'm a conscientious objector. I'm in grad school.' I was one of them. 'What if they gave a war and nobody came?' we used to ask. That's a great idea, unless the other side shows up and you don't.

"If the good people won't do it, the assholes will. That's who you're going to run into, and that's who you're going to have to fight. Not the commies over there, but the assholes giving you orders. It ain't ever easy, and it's a lot harder inside the system than outside.

"Still, if the good people keep opting out, then the assholes remain in control. Somebody good has to go in there. . . ."

It was Jack himself who drove Timm to both West Point and Annapolis.

"At the time I preferred West Point," Timm told me. "It was the summer before my senior year. I wasn't thinking flight school—if I had, I'd have probably visited Colorado Springs. Army had most of the heroes, and my maternal grandfather was a World War II infantry veteran. Dad took Jen and me to West Point first, because it was convenient to the folks on Long Island. Then we swung by Annapolis on our way back to Illinois. I think I liked the buildings at Annapolis. Newer. Brighter. Cleaner. I'm not much of a fan of the Gothic."

In August of 1987, after a long week in Lake-of-the-Woods, Charles Creed pointed the nose of Lloyd Cowley's V-8 Ford F-10 pickup (with camper, containing tent, sleeping bags, fishing poles and tackle boxes) in the general direction of New York, Philadelphia and the Fabled East. He headed east and south across Wisconsin to

Rhinelander, visiting briefly with T. V. Olson, whose work Cowley had recommended, then south and east through the dairy farms of America toward Green Bay. In an antique store in Shawano he spent $130 on a complete eight-setting service of the green Colonial style dinner plates off which he had eaten his childhood meals: cups, saucers, dinner plates, serving pieces, even two large platters. One platter he gave to his parents as an unChristmas present. The rest were for his use in his new life in Lake-of-the-Woods.

At Green Bay Jack turned north up Wisconsin 57, crossing the Sturgeon Bay bridge onto the Door Peninsula, taking the eastern route through Jacksonport and Baileys Harbor, headed for Ellison Bay, home of Norbert Blei, another writer whose work he had come to admire. Blei blew him to a fish boil at the Ephriam Town Hall, lunch at the White Gull Inn, and dinner at Al Johnson's. Also a breakfast on Washington Island, which, Jack reported, "was like traveling back in time to summers with my family at Silver Bay, New York, in 1957." The A. C. Tap. was "straight out of Richard Bissell." Two nights Charles Creed slept on the cot of the chicken coop Norbert Blei had refurbished into a writing den. He left with two autographed copies of Blei's *Door Way*, one of which became another unChristmas gift to his folks, and plans to convert one of Harlan Everts' outbuildings into a writing coop. He left Door County also with a Chick Peterson watercolor—"Ephriam Harbor in Winter"—which hung beside his bed for the rest of his life.

At Lloyd's suggestion, Jack stopped briefly in Algoma to fish for brown trout. He caught nothing. Then he drove to Kewaunee, where he boarded a ferry for Ludington, Michigan.

On the Michigan side, Jack drifted south and east through Muskegon, Grand Rapids, Lansing, toward Detroit, where he tried unsuccessfully to hunt up another writer, Jim Harrison. Repulsed by the thought of northern Ohio, he toyed with the idea of a leisurely northern drive through London and Hamilton, Ontario, to Buffalo. Somewhere in the night, however, he thought he heard Kent State

calling. The F-10 pickup nosed south to Toledo, then east across I-80. At exit 13 it turned south, entering Kent on Ohio 43.

"Gone," Jack's journal records. Everything gone. Bachelor pad by the airport demolished. Parking lot for the Maple Shade Inn. Which was no longer owned by my Mad Max [his former landlord]. Grad lounge now a writing center. Grad assistant office now a lecture hall. Cayuhoga Apartments nearly a slum. Timm's birth place. Brand new when Rose Marié and I moved in. Hard to believe. So much good sex, good dope, good music. Gone. Good talk with good friends. Gone. Man, the Kent State I knew is gone and twice gone. Lily was right: 'don't never go backwards.' "

After a night of haunted sleep, Charles pressed east, through the forested center of Pennsylvania, arriving very late at his parents' split level Colonial on Long Island. Breakfast the next morning was polite but perfunctory: Charles was mentally still in Wisconsin or Michigan, fishing, riding the ferry. Deer Park held as little for Jack as New York City. He borrowed his father's Buick and drove to Hempstead to pick up Timm and Jenny Lynn. "Rose would shit if I showed up in Lloyd's truck," he explained. "Her dad would have a heart attack."

Lunch with Rose Marié, her parents, and the kids was even more tense than breakfast, as was the drive to Atlantic City. The truce Jack and his in-laws had negotiated in 1973 had crumbled long ago. It had been years since he made even the pretense of liking, or even respecting them, their friends, their home, their home town. While Jack's hostility was a given, even the grandchildren seemed irritable in 1987. Timm was preoccupied with football (practice had already begun, back in Riverton), with his up-coming senior year, and with the problem of college. Jenny Lynn was bored with everything: bored lying around the beach all day, bored dining in restaurants at night, bored at the night club, bored watching television in the motel room. She was too young to appreciate the attention of strange males, too old to bond easily with strange females, and completely divorced from the concerns of her mother

and grandmother. Both Timm and Jenny had found the crowd hostile and pushy.

The meal was perfunctory. And silent.

“We’ll see West Point tomorrow,” Jack promised them. “We’ll spend two days max with grandma and grandpa Creed: tonight and tomorrow. We’ll hit the Naval Academy on our way home. I drive all night and you’ll be back in Riverton in five days.”

“I won’t be in Riverton for eight days,” Rose Marié objected. “You can’t just leave them there alone.”

“Your son will be leaving for college a year from now,” Jack reminded her.

“He’s not there yet. Jenny is only fourteen.”

“We’ll work this out later,” Jack suggested.

“Maybe we could just skip the Navy,” Timm suggested.

“Maybe we could skip both of them,” Jenny Lynn suggested.

“You’ll love it,” Jack promised.

“You’ve never been there, dad,” Jenny pointed out.

“Trust me.”

“Where are we going to stay?” Jenny wanted to know. “Not Atlantic City, I hope.”

Rose Marié scowled darkly at her daughter.

“We’re going to camp. I’ve got a tent and sleeping bags in the truck.”

“Dad!”

“You guys love to camp. Or used to.”

“Dad!”

Irving offered to spring for a motel if Jack could not afford one.

“I’m sick of motels,” Jenny complained. “Can’t we just say hello to Grandma and Grandpa Creed and drive right back to Riverton?”

“Trust me.”

“Maybe I’ll like West Point,” Timm said hopefully.

“I can’t imagine my son a professional killer,” Rose Marié mused aloud. “All that Vietnam business.”

“Where were you in ‘72?” Jack wanted to know.

Rose Marié scowled darkly at her husband.

“West Point is a lovely place,” Eunice said. “It would be very close to us. I think those boys in their uniforms are very handsome.”

Timm scowled at his grandmother.

“We’ll be going now,” Jack announced.

That evening it was Joseph and Lorraine Creeds’ turn: dinner at Amato’s, the finest Italian restaurant in Deer Park. The party of five arrived to discover their reservations had been lost and the waiting list was an hour and a half.

“Just like Atlantic City,” Jenny said wryly.

In the bar Jack nursed a $4.50 gin and tonic through ninety minutes of Mets baseball. “I hate the Metsees almost as much as I hate the Yankees,” he fumed.

“You always hated the Yankees,” Joe reminded him. “You were a Brooklyn fan as a kid. What ever happened to you and the Brooklyn Dodgers?”

“The Brooklyn Dodgers moved to L. A.”

“The Dodgers is the Dodgers.”

“I used to think that. Then I looked at them on television one night in 1984. Took a good long look at the players and the fans. The names. The faces. ‘These guys are not my Dodgers,’ I decided. Why lose sleep over a bunch of West Coast impostors?”

“They still wear Dodger blue.”

“The Cards have class. I’m goin’ with the Cards. The Mets? Try to be serious.”

Timm sat silent through two $1.50 Cokes.

Jennifer Lynn drank a glass of water. “I don’t want another one of those kiddie cocktails,” she announced.

“I was at a Pizza Hut down in Jersey,” Joe said, “And the walls were full of black and white photos taken by some guy named Amato. They looked to be Italian.”

“In Door County, Wisconsin, there is a Swedish restaurant with a sod roof. The owner is an old Swede, Al Johnson. He’s got goats up there grazing on the grass.”

“Sounds pretty progressive, dad,” said Jenny Lynn.

“They should get some of those Amato photographs for here,” suggested Lorraine Creed. “Although I don’t believe this place has changed in twenty years.”

“That’s longer than I’ve been alive,” Timm observed.

“Well, what’s young grows old,” Joe observed; “what’s old remains old.”

“I’m not ready to be old,” Jack told his parents. “Not yet.”

“You used to love this place.”

“I did, once. Now I could never return east of the Appalachians. I’m not even sure now if I could return to Riverton, even if I wanted to.”

Timm chuckled. “Not much chance of that, Dad.”

“Even if Busiris wanted me.”

“Not much chance of that, Dad,” Jenny added.

“Still, Amato’s is a fine restaurant and a fine family tradition,” Lorraine said. “I think it would be lovely if Timm attended a college

close to us, and every year we could celebrate with a dinner at Amato's."

Jenny Lynn scowled darkly at her grandmother.

Jack and Timm spent the following day at West Point. Jenny stayed home because, she said, she was tired of driving. Although he went with high expectations, something in the place disappointed Timm: the admissions officer, the gray uniforms, the numbers, the architecture. "It just seemed old," Timm recalled. "Maybe it was too close to Hempstead and Deer Park. And I don't think dad was in the best mood either."

The following day Timm and Jenny consented to spend in Deer Park "just chilling out." No restaurants, no shows, no visits to grandparents' friends. Television, some hoops at the local playground, barbecued ribs in the evening. Joe and Lorraine even managed to trap their granddaughter in some polite conversation.

Early on the morning of the fourth day, Timm, Jenny and their dad fought their way around Brooklyn to the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, across Staten Island to Outerbridge Crossing Bridge, and down the New Jersey Turnpike. Jack tuned the radio to WABC, listened for half an hour, then spun the channels. "Nothing stays the same," he reminded himself, "except Bob Dylan." He put *Blonde on Blonde* into the tape deck.

By noon the truck had cleared Delaware, and Jack opened the hoagies, potato chips, and cream cheese and olive sandwiches his mother had packed for them. Jenny, sandwiched in the cab between her brother and her dad, slept uncomfortably.

"I can't handle driving in New York anymore," Jack told Timm at last.

Timm nodded. "Not to worry, dad. I don't think I'll be going to West Point."

"It's your call."

"I know."

“Funny,” Jack continued. “The very thought of this city used to crank me up. The pulse and the throb of it. Every holiday I used to flee from Busiris, land of the dead, to Greenwich Village, where everything was happening. All the energy was out here, in the East. The sixties was so much a Boston-New York-Philadelphia-D.C. thing, with a little California thrown in. The sixties didn’t really happen in the South, the Midwest, the Southwest or the Northwest. I realize that now. If America’s power had been decentralized in the sixties the way it is today. . . . Free love, anti-war demonstrations, and Woodstock don’t happen in Lake Wobegon. Not in Santa Fe or Atlanta either. I think the sixties would be impossible today because the nation is so pluralized.

“Of course, maybe the power shifted because the times changed,” Jack continued, mainly to himself. “I don’t know how I feel now. I know that *A Prairie Home Companion* is funny, and *Saturday Night Live*, lately, is not funny. I know that I feel 300% better in northern Wisconsin than I do on the Jersey Turnpike.”

Jenny Lynn shifted her position and went on sleeping.

“What if I don’t like the Navy either?” Timm fretted.

“There are a thousand colleges in this country. Almost all of them have football teams.”

“A lot of them are east of the Appalachians, west of the Rockies, and South of Mason-Dixon.”

“Well, that’s just talk.”

“No it isn’t. You just said yourself you’d rather be in Wisconsin than here.”

“At this stage of my life, my head is in western Wisconsin. If I were young like you. . . .”

“You’re not exactly an old man, Dad.”

“If I had your opportunities, I don’t think I’d exactly pick Novum State.”

“After this last week, I’m not so sure.”

“I wouldn’t pick Columbia or NYU, but I don’t think I’d pick Novum.”

“Illinois and Iowa have been writing me. Coach Becker says they’ve talked to him about me.”

“You go where you want to go. Your grandfather Creed sure as hell didn’t want me to get a Kent State Ph. D., I can tell you that. But he supported me, and I think it was right for me. Do what’s right for you, and I’ll support you.”

“How do you know what’s right? Aren’t parents supposed to give you a little advice?”

“I’m sorry I’ve been away so much.”

“You’ve been great. You gave up a lot for us.”

“I just did what I had to do. The truth is, I was selfish. I didn’t give up anything. That’s the example I’ve given you: do what feels right for you, because if you don’t, your family and friends feel guilty, and you feel resentful. Altruism creates a bigger mess than selfishness. Maybe.

“Anyway, I’ll respect you more for living your own life than if you try to live mine. I can’t live my might-have-beens in you, and you can’t look to me for your ought-to-bes.”

Maryland 2 junctioned U.S. 150 and after some construction bypasses transformed itself into tree-lined King George Street, route 450.

Jenny Lynn awoke. “Are we there yet?” she wanted to know.

“Pretty town,” Jack observed to his son. “Very picturesque. I always wanted to live on water.”

The boulevard arced right and downhill, past Jonas Green State Park, with a small picnic area, toward the Old Severn River Bridge. A dramatic break in the trees opened on a scenic vista. Across the river, the buildings and fields of the United States Naval Academy

shone in the August sun: Bancroft Hall, the Chapel, Dahlgren Hall and Lejeun, Rickover, Halsey Field House.

“Nice place,” Timm said aloud. “Very picturesque.”

Following signs bearing blue and gold tridents, the truck with the Wisconsin plates passed St. John’s College, negotiated narrow streets flanked by clapboard frame houses: white with green shutters, blue with gray shutters, gray with maroon trim.

“We’re here to visit admissions,” Jack told the Marine on the guard duty.

“Park to your right, sir. Then you want Leahy Hall.” The Marine saluted Charles Creed.

“This place is too clean” Jenny Lynn said as she passed the tennis courts on the way to Leahy Hall.

“These guys don’t even see dirt,” said Jack.

Timm remained silent.

“You’ve got quite a record,” an admissions officer told Timm.

“Yes, sir.”

“You’re playing football this fall?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Hasn’t practice started?”

“Backfield reported two weeks ago, line this week. I’m the place kicker, sir. I report this Monday.”

“Says here you were all-conference last year.”

“Yes, sir.”

“There were games last year when Navy could have used you.”

“You won the one that counted.”

“Napoleon McCallum received his commission last spring. He’s now in the fleet.”

“No one is irreplaceable.”

“Think you can keep that 4.0 over this next year? With football and, says here, class president?”

“I hope so. With physics and calculus this year, it could be tough.”

“There’s a lot of physics and calculus in the Academy curriculum.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Must be tough following an older brother like him,” the officer said to Jenny.

“I can hang,” she told him.

“They’re a pair,” Jack said.

“The Academy is always looking for good female midshipmen. And good men. Why are you interested in the Academy?”

Timm paused. “I can’t exactly say,” he began. “I like a structured life and I’m a pretty organized guy. I like athletics and I like academics. I’m not definite about the Academy, really. We visited West Point two days ago, and I’m looking at Illinois in a couple of weeks. I didn’t much like West Point.”

“That’s not the correct answer, son,” the officer told him. “You’re supposed to say something like ‘All my life my only goal has been to become an officer in the United States Navy. I have lived, eaten, dreamt and breathed Navy. I can give you play-by-play of every Army-Navy game for the past ten years. I love uniforms.’

“That’s what you say to get yourself a free $100,000 education.

“At least you gave the honest answer . . . which turns out to be the right answer. It’s not an answer I hear very often, I might add. At the Academy we can teach a midshipman anything we want him to learn . . . except for honesty. Honesty a man either has or doesn’t have. And honesty is the most important thing. Maybe it’s the only thing. You’ve got a fine son, Mr. Creed.”

“I can’t say I had a lot to do with it,” Jack admitted.

“Admission to the Academy is by appointment,” the officer told Timm. “If you decide you want to come here, you should write to your state congressman. Illinois is a pretty populous state, but not all congressmen use all their appointments. We can arrange an appointment for you . . . if you decide you need one. Your dad’s in Wisconsin?”

“Yes, sir,” Timm answered.

“You should introduce yourself to Coach Tranquil before you leave. You’ll probably find him on Farragut Field. You ready to kick a few?”

Timm did not kick speak to Coach Tranquil on this visit, although the three did watch half an hour of football drills from the sidelines.

“It was kind of a laid back visit,” Timm recalls. “We didn’t even join any of the tourist groups they have wandering all over campus in the summer. Dad picked up a few brochures, and we walked into every building that was open. I don’t think we bought any souvenirs. I never saw a dorm room until I flew out alone. That’s when I talked to Coach, too.

“We wandered out of the yard to the old harbor area. Ate dinner in Chick and Ruth’s kosher deli. Very East Coast, and Dad loved it. The green awning, the tight red booths, the framed photos and newspaper articles covering every inch of the wall. All that East Coast accent and signage. On the Island and in Jersey, Dad hated this stuff. Here, for some reason, it was okay. It brought him home to his childhood.

“After that, every time he visited, we had to have at least one meal at Chick and Ruth’s. It became a ritual: a Reuben sandwich at Chick and Ruth’s, and a pizza in Dahlgren Hall. The Reuben was better than the pizza, but my plebe year we were not allowed out of the yard, and all I could do was meet Dad at the desk in Bancroft, walk around the yard, head over to Dahlgren for food or television or maybe a hockey game.

“We’d eat at table, passing time together. I would study. He would grade papers. Maybe revise something he was working on. I read *Songs of the North Country,* in various stages of completion, over pizza in Dahlgren Hall. It made no sense to me at the time. Dad would usually say something like, ‘That’s one for the book: Charles Creed, Bob Dylan, and Robert Bly at the U. S. Naval Academy.’ He was no help at all with my engineering or math, but sometimes I’d ask him to look over something I was writing. We didn’t do a lot of talking, just sat calm and delighted for a few hours. Then I would return to quarters, and he’d drift off to a motel. Even during commissioning week he maintained the ritual: Reuben at Chick and Ruth’s, pizza at Dahlgren. Dad was kind of like that.”

The Ford pickup left Annapolis shortly after 7:00 p.m., a little late so as to avoid D. C. rush-hour traffic.

“Anybody want to see Washington?” Jack called and asked as the truck approached the Beltway.

“How long would it take?” Jenny wanted to know.

“Just a drive-through,” Jack told her.

“I would,” Timm said.

8:00 found Lloyd Cowley’s Ford pickup on Constitution Avenue, White House to the right, Washington Memorial on your left. Capital behind, Lincoln Memorial ahead. The truck did not stop.

“Who was the greatest president, Dad?” Jenny wanted to know.

“I suppose Lincoln would be the popular choice. Kind of democracy in action. Good common sense, simple eloquence, dedication to a moral purpose. I always felt a certain affinity with him: the man from Illinois, the man far from home. That statue of him in there, him meditating, the immensity of America to his back, Kentucky and Illinois lost in personal and geographical distances. That great sorrow on his face as he looks out over Washington. I always think of that phrase from the Gettysburg Address: ‘whether any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.’ It’s like

he has really wondered if democracy stands a snowball's chance. Yet he committed to the idea."

Timm nodded his head. "I've always been a Lincoln man," he said.

"Jefferson would be the intellectual's choice. It's easy to underestimate Jefferson. Not much sorrow, but talk about faith! Talk about vision! America isn't a place, it's an idea. And the idea is Jefferson's. Thomas Jefferson invented America. With a little help from Franklin and Adams."

"So you like Jefferson?"

"Yeah, sometimes. Sometimes I think Washington was the greatest of them all."

"Because he stuck it out until he won?"

"Because he quit. The greatest thing Washington ever did was quit after two terms as president. Nobody expected him to do anything other than become a king for life. Think about it. There was no precedent for stepping down. None. Washington quit after two, and gave somebody else the chance. That's the essence of democracy. That's the greatest thing Washington ever did. It made America possible."

"What about President Reagan?" Jenny Lynn wanted to know.

"They took a poll at school last year," Timm said. "Reagan was number two, behind Lincoln."

Jack nearly drove off the road. "What's this country coming to?" he wanted to know. "We been talkin' Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln . . . and then you talk Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Reagan. Lincoln was right. Democracy will never survive. There are too many assholes."

By 8:10 p.m., Jack and the children had left the nation's capital. They were headed west.

l0:30 p.m. found them in the Alleghenies, tent pitched on the shore of the Potomac River in Green Ridge State Forest, campfire burning in front of them.

“We came a long way today,” Jack mused aloud. “Early this morning we were in New York City. Then we drove through New Jersey and south Philly when we got off the Turnpike. We were in Baltimore and ate dinner at some deli in the Annapolis. We saw Washington and the White House. A grand tour of Colonial America in one day. Think of it. Now we’re here, lost in the primitive dark. We quit it all. It’s like none of that exists. What an incredible world.”

“We were in five states today,” Jenny counted. “And the District of Columbia.”

“That’s West Virginia right over there,” said Charles, pointing across the river. “Timm could kick a football into Virginia from some of the places we’ve been today.”

“And we’re still nowhere close to Illinois,” Jenny said with a sigh.

“Let alone Wisconsin,” Jack added.

“This is the biggest decision of my life,” Timm said, staring into the fire.

“It is,” Jack told his son. “In my life, it made all the difference.

“Then again, it isn’t. The right school gives you a great start. But life is one big highway system, and you can always get there from here. It’s just a little easier to get there from some places than others.”

“You really think that, dad?”

“That memorial we passed a few hours ago in Washington was to a man who grew up in a log cabin not far from where you live.”

“A century ago. It took a war to get him there.”

“Ronald Reagan made it to the White House from Eureka College, which is even closer to where you live. Before he was president, he was a movie actor. Dick Nixon, whom everybody in

America hated, got to the White House from Whittier College, via several lost elections. Jack Kennedy, whom half the country loved and half the country hated, got to the White House from Harvard College. Kennedy got shot. Nixon and Reagan are alive and well. Your classmates rank Reagan right behind Lincoln. Go figure."

"Do you think you can be a famous writer living in Wisconsin?"

"I talked to two famous writers in Wisconsin on my way out here."

"I mean really famous. I mean best-seller."

"I won a Pulitzer Prize. Once."

"Mom says you were a lot closer to New York in those days."

"New York was closer to me in those days."

"You know what I mean."

"Well, your mom's right. I don't think I'm going to win any Pulitzer Prizes from Wisconsin. Once upon a time, the fact would have kept me awake nights. Now, I'm no longer sure that matters. Thoreau never won a Pulitzer. Who would have bet on Thoreau in 1845? Or Walt Whitman? Publishing his own book! Or Vachel Lindsay, handing his poems out on the street corners of Springfield. Talk about whacko! Or Emily Dickinson, for shit's sake, holed up in her little white house and never even sending her stuff out. All you can do is do what you feel is right, and don't look back."

"I don't know what feels right."

"You seemed to like Annapolis."

"Yeah, I guess so."

"I found myself walking a little straighter there myself."

"That was just a few hours."

"Whatever you do, someday you'll catch yourself wondering, 'What if I'd taken that other road?' Either way, you're going to

wonder. Maybe there is no right decision. Only what you do with the decision you make."

"Was marrying mom the right decision?" Jenny wanted to know.

"It was just a decision."

"Do you ever look back?"

"I spent a lot of years looking back," Charles admitted. "Then I finally realized what a very smart woman told me a long time ago: you can't go back. If I'd remembered my Fitzgerald, I'd have understood that from *Gatsby*. Walking around with my head backwards, I couldn't see what was going on beside me. I was losing what I had for a bunch of woulda, coulda, shoulda that maybe I shouldn't have. Then I quit looking backwards and started enjoying my kids. If I hadn't married your mother, we wouldn't be here now. And everybody knows, I have the greatest kids in the world."

"All parents say that," Jenny said.

"That's what they tell their kids," Jack said. "What they tell me is, 'What did you do right, Charles?' I tell them 'nothing.'"

"You're a good dad," Timm assured Jack.

"I've been a distant dad lately. I can't say I've done much for your mother, and I think sometimes she takes out her frustrations. . . ."

"She's a little happier now that you're away," Timm said candidly. "You weren't really a good match."

"I think we were a better match when we started than we are now. We kind of grew apart."

"She thinks you've changed a lot."

"She's changed a bit herself. No, I'm not going to get into that. Life is change. What's young . . . grows old. I learned a few things in the past fifteen years."

"Like what?" Timm wanted to know.

“For one thing, people change. For another thing, if you’re not happy with yourself, then your anger gets shot out at those around you, maybe the people you love. Maybe the people you were trying to support in making the compromises that made you unhappy with yourself. So it’s better for everyone if you’re a little selfish.”

Jack paused.

“I also learned that you can survive anything that doesn’t kill you right away.

“And I learned that there are real snakes in the world, and they come in both sexes.” Charles stirred the fire with a walking stick. “You’ll meet some at the Academy, or wherever you go. Either side of the Appalachians. They’re not all that easy to get rid of. You got to watch them twenty-five hours a day, and just when you think you’ve got them holed up, they sneak out the back door and bite you from behind. But you survive the bite.”

“You should write this down for us,” said Jenny Lynn. “Seriously, Dad.”

“When you’re eighteen,” Charles laughed. “Father Creed’s Axioms For Life.”

“Be a best seller.”

“Mom wants me to go to the University of Illinois,” Timm said. “She didn’t even want me to look at the academies. She says they probably won’t take me anyway.”

“There’s no guarantee,” Charles told his son, “even with your record.”

“That’s not what she meant. She said they would never take me because of my father’s record.”

“Well, son, that’s possible. I’m sure there are files on me somewhere. If my files keep you out of the academies where you want to go . . . I could not be more apologetic.”

“You did what you thought was right.”

“Yeah, I did.”

“And you were right about Vietnam. Even mom agrees with you now.”

“It wasn’t that I opposed the idea of an army or a navy. You have to fight to defend yourself. I believe that. I just thought Vietnam was a bad idea tactically and morally. We’re still paying for that war.”

“So you did the right thing.”

“I’m not sure. Maybe I should have joined the army and fought the war from within.”

“I don’t see you as a soldier, Dad.”

“You’re right about that. But I always come against things from outside. All my life I’ve been the force from without that necessitates compromise inside the power structure. I still believe you need that threat from outside, because the system understands only power, and compromises only with power. We used to call it throwing ourselves in the gears of the machine, becoming the friction that wears the system down. Well okay, but you can get pretty ground up that way.”

“So maybe it’s better to be inside?”

“One of the other things I’ve learned is sometimes you have to hold back a little. I’m not saying you compromise, not all the time. That doesn’t work either. But you have to put up with a little shit. I never accepted shit. At the Academy, you’d have to put up with a ton of shit just to get your commission. But without the commission, you’re not an officer in the Navy. Then you put up with more shit if you want to get promoted.”

“What’s the point?”

“The point is, somewhere down the line—I don’t know where—a bunch of people are sitting in a room deciding whether or not to drop a bomb on Japan, whether or not to spray 2, 4-D all over North Vietnam, whether or not to start a war with Russia. The ones who

got their commissions, made their rank, got their promotions, are the ones sitting in that room. The ones who opted against the system are outside the room. If the people outside are vocal and strong, the people inside might consider their reactions to the decision being made. Or they might not. Either way, it's the ones inside the room that make the decisions."

"Kind of like playing sports. You have to be on the team."

"Yeah, kind of like making the team. One thing about me: as much as I like sports, I've never been a team player. I'm not on the team. Not in that room. I cut myself out. I just hope that I didn't cut you out. I think you'd be a good, humane, intelligent officer. And decision-maker. I would trust you with my country."

"But you said I can always get there from here."

"Yeah, I guess I did," Charles admitted uneasily. "The guy who really makes the decision these days is President Reagan from Eureka College. One day we might even have a president who opposed the Vietnam War. It's theoretically possible. Let's just say it's a lot easier to get there from some places than from others."

"Dad," Jenny Lynn said softly.

"Yeah?"

"I'm awful glad we came here."

"Me too, daughter. Me too."

The three sat quietly together, staring at the dying fire.

"Dad," Timm said finally. "I think I could make it at the Naval Academy."

"I think you could too, son," Charles told him. "And I couldn't be more surprised."

On December 30, 1987, Timm Creed received his appointment to the U. S. Naval Academy. After a two-hour long-distance phone conversation with his father, he accepted that appointment on January 4, 1988. The entire family accompanied him to his induction,

the family joining him and his mates for sit-down steak dinner in Bancroft Hall. Throughout July and August, Jack wrote daily letters to his son, mostly to provide him the distraction of mail, but also to support him as best he could in the absence of any response. With the start of the academic year, those letters tapered to one or two a week.

Jack visited Annapolis three times during the 1988-89 year, twice each of the following three years. Twice he saw Timm dress and play for Navy football. Other games he watched on videotape. He had a nearly complete collection, which Kelly Creed returned to Timm shortly after Jack's death, along with Timm's home jersey, which Jack had hanging from his den wall, beside a pair of Jenny Lynn's ballet slippers, Kelly's college volleyball jersey, and the battered pair of Air Jordans Kelly had sold Charles when they first began seeing each other.

Timm and Jack talked by phone every weekend during the academic years, through the good times and the not so good times. When one of his political science instructors made reference to *Age of Faith,* Timm sought and actually found the book in the Academy library. He read it then for the first time. "You're famous, dad," he wrote. "Even here. My prof wanted to know what you're doing now. Said next time you're here, introduce you."

On the afternoon of service selection in spring of 1991, Timm spent another two hours on the phone to his father. They sweated together while those with class rankings 1 through 125 were called to selection. Over the loud speaker and radio they heard constant updates on what billets remained open, what options had closed. Jack and Timm both were pleased that flight school openings remained when numbers 125-150 were called for selection.

'Go get 'em, Tiger," Jack said as Timm hung up.

Half an hour later Timm phoned briefly: "It's air corps."

Jack was prouder of his son's commission and of his wings than he was of his own Ph. D. or his Pulitzer Prize.

The circle encompassing Jack, Busiris, the Naval Academy, and Timm closed finally after Timm had completed flight school and reported to Mirimar in California. In a letter, Timm wrote his father,

> Our C. O. here is a captain by the name of Eric Marcuse. He's got a chest full of ribbons. Been through more shit than any of us can imagine, including Vietnam, and the guys call him "The Big Marc." Everyone says he's pretty decent. Anyway, the first time I met him, he wanted to know where I was from. When I told him Riverton, Illinois, he wanted to know if I was any relation to Charles Creed. He said he had you as a teacher back in the early seventies, and you were responsible for his transfer out of Busiris and into the Academy. From there he went air, and the rest is history.
>
> He also said, and I quote, "Your dad taught me more about honor and commitment than anybody I ever met, including people at the Academy." It's a small world after all.

This information gave tremendous satisfaction to the man who once said, "You know, Tucker, all I really want out of life is for my kids to look back and say, 'My old man was an okay guy.'"

The document which most embodies Charles' love for his son is the list of "Father Creed's Axioms for Life" which Charles sent Timm not long after that night in Green Ridge State Forest. The axioms are contradictory and paradoxical, vintage Creed from beginning to end, the distilled wisdom of Jack's forty years on the planet. The letter, and the list, are the most private of documents and thus the most honest. Had it been introduced at Charles' trial, or read to VPAA Reich or Dean Hauptman, it would, I believe, have clarified Charles' position on any number of issues. In that interest Timm Creed has given me permission to reproduce it, unedited, here:

> Good My Son,
>
> You are now eighteen, which is, as Sherwood Anderson put it, a time when a boy begins to think of the future and the

figure he will cut in the world. A father should not live out his own might-have-beens in his children's lives, but maybe it's time for the serious father-son advice your sister requested when first we visited the Academy. I am, alas, miles out of talking range, as I have been for some years now. Besides, I don't want to just talk, as talk has a way of evaporating well before what is said proves pertinent. So I want to write you a letter which I hope you will keep close to hand and consult at various stages of your life. It contains the kind of advice I wish my father had given me when I was your age. He did not, and probably I would not have listened if he had (I was a headstrong lad, as I am a headstrong old man), and it wouldn't have made much sense to me when I was 18. Maybe when I was 21, or 25, or 35. Some of it, perhaps at 18. Just trust me, keep it handy, and take it for what it's worth whenever you think it's worthy.

First and most pressingly, the father-son talk on life and love, girls and sex. On the biology of sex, I expect your school has given you rudimentary instruction. Schools certainly did not when I was your age, and certainly things have improved since those dark ages. I hope so. There is a certain delight in exploration and discovery, but ignorance in sex carries a tremendous price, both for a girl (who can get pregnant) and for a boy (who can and should feel responsible in the case of an unwanted pregnancy).

But knowing the biology of sex no more prepares you for the art of sex than knowing the mechanics of an internal combustion engine makes you a comfortable and experienced driver. Boy-girl relationships take a lot of time before anyone feels any real self-confidence. Expect frustration, confusion, and a deflated ego at first. Don't be discouraged. Don't be angry. Sex is a tricky business. First time is not likely to be as spectacular as it's made out to be, either for you or for her. There's a lot of guilt and a lot of ego. As I'll suggest, learn to forgive others, and learn to

forgive yourself. Also, do not force sex on a woman or on yourself, as love under obligation is not love at all. Don't buy love or sex, for the same reason. And don't sell love or sex. (There are many ways to buy and sell other than cash, as you know.) Alcohol numbs the senses, so sex—and love—while drunk are not usually very satisfying.

I am of two minds on the matter of sex. On the one hand, it seems a natural appetite (necessary for the continuance of the species) and, among consenting people, enjoyable. I would encourage you to enjoy the company of girls and whatever it brings.

On the other hand, there are a number of sexually transmitted diseases, ranging from mononucleosis (kissing) to crab lice (contact of genital body parts—and also sleeping in the unpurged beds of people who have had crab lice; always a danger in dorms) to the old pair of gonorrhea and syphilis to the new pair of herpes and AIDS. These diseases can be inconvenient and embarrassing, or they can be fatal. A lot of joy has gone out of sex in the past decade. Be careful. Keep clean. Avoid girls who get around a lot. Fuck trash and you'll become trash. Especially avoid prostitutes (this may seem ridiculous advice to a young man of 18, but it is not so ridiculous to a man of 21, 28, 35). I would avoid homosexuality because (1) it is not natural (no children come of it), (2) from all reports it is a life in a fast and dangerous lane, (3) it's a big hassle psychologically and sometimes socially, and (4) it's physically dangerous. AIDS is still an overwhelmingly homosexual disease.

I am also of two minds on dope. As you know, I drink occasionally, less now than I used to. As you and your sister know, I smoked my share of pot in graduate school. I don't think it did me any harm. In fact, I think it sharpened my perceptions in art and music. I know a number of people who dropped acid (when it was legal, and after it was

illegal), who apparently suffered no ill effects. On the farthest edge of the spectrum is William Burroughs (still alive, I believe), well known author of *Naked Lunch*, who spent a very long lifetime filling his system with chemicals in any and all combinations.

On the other hand, millions of people who drink are alcoholics and lead ruined lives. At Busiris, I knew one student who fried his brains out: overdosed, lay in a coma for months before dying. Pot comes, these days, laced with so many other chemicals—some toxic—that you run a risk every time you use it. Marijuana may not produce death, disease, and insanity, but stuff sprayed on it may. Hard drugs can kill you. Nobody who offers you hard drugs is really on your side. Promoters are just looking for somebody to get hooked and squeeze money out of.

Cars are dangerous. Sports are dangerous. Falling passionately in love can be dangerous. You'll soon discover that the things which bring the most potential for joy also carry the greatest potential for destruction. I don't think you can enjoy one without risking the other. It is true that you never know what's enough until you've discovered what's too much. I have lived my life a bit on the edge, as my own father once put it, and I have on occasion paid the price. Your mother tends to be a little conservative. I think she too pays a price. Whatever, know that you have a father who loves you very much, and the door is always open and the phone is always there, and I will do anything I can, under any circumstances, to help you out of a jam. Whatever it is, the chances are, I've been there myself.

For the past two months I have been thinking of what advice I could give you on your eighteenth birthday, compiling a list of things to say. Here is that list. I hope you find some things in it, now and later, that ring true and save you some of the mistakes I have made, relieve some of the

worries I have had, see you through a sleepless night or two.

1. It all goes by all too quickly.

2. Refuse to harden yourself. Practice naiveté, against all evidence.

3. Some girls just want to have fun. Others want More. Frequently the ones who just want to have fun are also those who want More.

4. Life is, finally, a little thing.

5. Forgive others. Forgive yourself.

6. You are never as well off, or as bad off, as you think you are.

7. Things look worst at night.

8. Exercise improveth the body, study the mind, and art the spirit.

9. Too many men have learned too late that there is no future in marrying a pair of big tits or a tight ass.

l0. Don’t kid yourself: the power structure is deliberately trying to keep you ignorant, especially of history.

11. Why be little when you can be big?

12. Don’t look back. You can’t live in a museum.

13. For what it’s worth, the things that have given me most pleasure in life are, in rank order, my children, travel, music, sex, reading, sports and athletics, my own writing, and art.

14. “May you always do for others, and let others do for you.” (Dylan)

15. Ideas are cheap. Talk is cheaper. Work gets things done.

16. The Law has little to do with truth and justice, plenty to do with power and money.

17. We are all prisoners of our own experience, and ultimately we all die alone.

18. Never say no when you can say yes, but when you have to say no, say no.

19. Air, earth, fire, and water. The basics.

20. The way to be is to do.

21. Any creator who would make love a natural appetite and also a sin is not a god you would care to spend eternity with.

22. Nobody, including you, acts from only one motive. If you wait to act until your motives are entirely pure, you'll get nothing done. And don't second-guess yourself.

23. Most of the perimeters which contain your life are beyond your powers to enlarge.

24. Way does lead on to way, and no matter how enormous the crisis, it will resolve itself if given time.

25. He who loves commits himself to folly. He who, for that reason, abstains from love commits greater folly.

26. America is in a never-ending struggle to reclaim democracy.

27. Books are the minds of the people, and a culture that has lost its books has lost its mind.

28. For what it's worth, the major influences on my life have been the Bible, Thoreau's *Walden,* Bob Dylan's songs, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (all of them), Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Kerouac's *On the Road,* and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby.* I commend all of them to you.

29. Help the good people. Kick the assholes in the balls. If you err in judgment, err on the side of generosity.

30. One's job should interfere as little as possible with the real work of life.

31. Things take time. Great things take a great deal of time.

32. Live not merely a life, but a life that makes a difference.

33. We all get about ten good years. You can take them early, or you can take them late, but few people can extend the years of their greatness beyond the number of their fingers.

34. You can't argue with an ideologue, because they're not rational and they're not really very smart.

35. Just because you make love with a girl doesn't mean you have to marry her.

36. Don't waste a lot of psychic energy worrying about things you can't control.

37. Looking back over my life, I find few things I regret having done, a number of things I regret not having done . . . or not having done more of.

38. No matter what you think now, relationships are more easily begun than ended.

39. A daddy should always have some magic in his pocket.

40. If you can't understand why something is happening, follow the money.

41. Most people are small, petty, mean, unimaginative, boring bastards. They run the country, and thereby control your life.

42. There are two kinds of problems: those which time will solve, and those which time has solved.

43. Passion is half way to love, which is all we know of god.

44. Most of the time there is a direct inverse correlation between true value and monetary value.

45. It is far, far easier than you could ever imagine to fill your life up with junk.

46. What many teachers, most women, and all corporate employers want most is strong, imaginative, creative men who will sit down, shut up, and do as they're told.

47. "When mastery comes, the God of Love anon beats his wings, and farewell! he is gone." (Chaucer)

48. One goal of your life should be to create as little trash as possible.

49. If you want to survive, sane, past age 25, you must discover a way of living with paradox and contradiction.

50. Flex your muscles, and you will attract women who admire you for your muscles. Dress well, and you will attract women who love you for your clothes. Spend cash or drive a fast car, and you'll attract girls who like cash and fast cars. Well, what did you expect?

51. If you are an intelligent, decent fellow, lay off the dope, and show up for work punctually, you will be ahead of 95% of the people in this country, and you'll do okay.

52. You have no obligation in this life to carry those who can—and should—carry themselves.

53. Many of the things you take for granted—universal public education, democracy, personal freedoms of speech and travel—are recent social experiments the outcome of which is still very much in doubt. You may be the test case.

54. There is only the Eternal Now. As my friend Dave Etter put it, the past is a stale beer and the future a loaded shotgun.

55. There's a difference between culture and civilization. You have too few years on this planet to garbage around in a trash culture. Go with civilization.

56. Beware all ISMs and ISTs.

57. Take no one's word for it.

58. There are the times you live for, and the times you live through.

59. Why play at your work, or work at your play? Intensity, intensity, intensity.

60. Dream big, or what's a heaven for? Ultimately, as Thoreau says, you hit only what you aim for.

61. Lose your dreams, and you lose your soul.

62. Love yourself. Love others. Love this mad, insane country and this delicate, fragile planet.

63. On the road of life, we travel mostly at night, in fog.

64. Failure often teaches us more than success.

65. Yes, it's true: you are running against the wind.

66. Nevertheless, do what needs to be done. By all means necessary.

# Chapter 14
# **Kelly Ayers**

Between 1978 and 1989 Charles Creed was in many respects a man in suspension. His output during that decade, of course, represented a life's work for most academics, but his life lacked direction. He was doing little more than keeping afloat, supporting his family, extending a teaching career he wasn't really sure he wanted. Even his enthusiasm for Novum State seemed forced, the affected good nature of an accomplished actor in the middle of his career, happy to be going through the motions of the five hundredth performance of a Tony Award Winner, but aware nevertheless he is merely going through the motions while his days dwindle down. This was nowhere more clear to me than Jack's visit of May 1989, which seemed staged and distracted. An old Dylan line kept echoing through my mind: "There was no actor anywhere better than the Jack of Hearts. . . ."

Then in the fall of 1989, in the middle of Jack's union presidency, came two telephone calls which convinced me that he had finally recovered his way.

The first came in September. "Tucker, this is Creed."

"Jack . . . !"

"Quiz time: what do Robert Bly and Robert Dylan have in common?"

"I give up."

"They're both from Minnesota and they're both poets."

"You call me long distance to tell me that?"

"They were together in Moscow in summer of 1985. The only American poets invited."

"So what."

“There’s an article in there somewhere. Maybe a book.”

“The union business getting a little on your nerves, Jack?”

“I’m serious, Tucker. It couldn’t miss: Bob Dylan and Bob Bly. I interview Dylan on Bly, and I interview Bly on Dylan. Two North Country poets in Mother Russia. A dozen places would publish that piece.”

“I’ll tell you something else Dylan and Bly have in common.”

“That is?”

“Both disappeared somewhere at the end of the sixties, and nobody has heard from them since.”

“They’re the two major American poets of our generation,” Jack insisted.

“Jack!”

“The others are just cannon fodder. Including Berryman and Lowell and your man Ginsberg. And that nice Bill Stafford and that not nice bitch Rich.”

“Geography aside, I can’t think of two people who have less in common,” I told Jack. “But then again, you’d know better than I.” It cannot be said that Charles Creed’s best friend encouraged him into writing his second book.

Despite my lukewarm support, the project soon became an important article in the Creed canon, and, somewhat later, Jack’s second major book, *Songs of the North Country: Explorations in Two Minnesota Poets,* begun in 1989, published finally in 1994.

Jack Creed had first met Robert Bly at a poetry reading in Knox College, May 9, 1979, seven years before he moved to Wisconsin. Long before that, he had been familiar with Bly’s work, especially the poems of *Silence in the Snowy Fields*, and he knew of Bly’s involvement in the Vietnam War protests. *Age of Faith* and a few trips through the American Literature survey course had firmed up what in the sixties was a nodding acquaintance, but Jack had never

heard Bly read before 1979. After that date, Robert Bly joined Kesey, Kerouac, Thoreau, Twain, Dylan and Fitzgerald as major stars in Charles' constellation of American literary greats (later to include Cather, Garland, and Dave Etter).

We drove together to Knox, with a few Busiris students—May O'Hara, I think, and one or two of the undergraduate men—not Paul Popowski, who hadn't yet arrived on the scene. The students came less to hear Robert Bly than to be with Professor Charles Creed, who gave a pretty good performance of his own over dinner at Jumer's in Galesburg.

Bly gave a marathon reading, nearly three hours, in a rather intimate setting, something between a reading and a theatrical production. He used no masks, but he did have his dulcimer, and his hands danced like birds across the strings, through the air in front of him, around his head. Jack, a decade later, recalled "Finding the Father," which Bly did with the dulcimer.

"I wept and wept," Jack remembered, "and I didn't know why."

I don't recall the weeping. I recall Jack's rapt attention—and May's. I recall "Snowbanks North of the House." For some reason I recall a very lonesome train whistle which cut through the spring night (and Bly's poem) from the Burlington depot in downtown Galesburg, where Carl Sandburg's father once worked.

I recall also that May O'Hara was definitely more attentive to Jack than to Robert. It occurred to me that May might have been Jack's new Lily Lee, except for the timing. "It's too early, May, although you don't know it," I thought and nearly said aloud. "Give him time."

After the reading Jack introduced himself . . . as Charles, not Jack, Creed. Bly recognized the name and gave Jack and two dozen other listeners a five-minute critique of *Age of Faith*. Although not without criticisms, it was largely favorable and devastatingly accurate. Bly even quoted a couple of lines. May O'Hara was enormously impressed with both Bly and Creed; Jack seemed

slightly embarrassed that he couldn't respond with some equally insightful remarks on *Silence in the Snowy Fields*. He did tell the poet that he hadn't been so moved since the 1974 Dylan concert.

Bly harrumphed.

"Now where did you say you were teaching?" he wanted to know.

"Busiris Technical University," Jack admitted.

"And where's that?" Bly demanded.

"Riverton," Jack told him.

"And you have to come to Knox to hear Robert Bly?"

The students giggled uncomfortably.

"I don't control the readings budget," Jack explained. "To be invited to Riverton, you have to be a close personal friend of Professor Ted Jones."

"Can't say I've ever heard of the man."

"And you never will," I told Bly.

He and Jack laughed together sardonically.

During his Illinois years, Jack heard Bly read again at Eureka College, Ronald Reagan's alma mater. Then, preoccupied with his own troubles and possibilities, he lost touch with the Minnesota poet, although he did own first editions of both *The Man in the Black Coat Turns* and *Silence in the Snowy Fields*. In the late eighties, however, walking the muddy roads of rural Wisconsin, Jack returned to Bly as he turned to a number of rural Midwestern writers. From spring of 1987, he never missed an opportunity to hear Bly. And before *Iron John* made the best seller's lists, Robert Bly was very visible in the Upper Midwest.

Bob Dylan, on the other hand, had been an obsession with Charles, and to a certain extent with all of us, from the early sixties. It's not possible to imagine *Age of Faith*, or Jack Creed of the 1970s,

without Dylan. Lily Lee, a black girl from East St. Louis, only reinforced Jack's Dylan obsession. She and Jack could do whole songs in dialogue, hold complete conversations in Dylan lines. Jack claimed to have heard Dylan "frequently" in the early sixties Village, at Gerde's Folk City and the Gaslight Café, and at Newport in 1963. He claimed to have caught Dylan in the mid-sixties at Carnegie Hall and Hempstead Island Gardens, and at the August 1, 1971, Concert for Bangladesh in Madison Square Garden. This is certainly possible, even probable. I know he saw the 1974 tour performances in both the Chicago Stadium and the St. Louis Arena. There were at least three performances in Minneapolis-St. Paul in the late '80s and early '90s. Much to Charles' disappointment, the Rolling Thunder Tour never rolled through the Midwest.

Dylan and Bly conjoined in Jack's mind at a Bly reading in Duluth in the summer of 1988. Asked about his combination of dulcimer and poetry, Bly commented on "the interesting things some of the rock singers, people like Leonard Cohen and Bob Dylan, had done with music and poetry." Bly and Creed were by this time known quantities to each other, almost friends, and in the small talk which followed the formal question-and-answer period, Jack felt he could press Bly further. Bly was evasive, except to mention his experience with Dylan in Russia. "It's something that needs looking into," he told Jack. "Maybe that's your assignment."

The comment hung in the back of Jack's mind. By 1989 Timm was settled into Annapolis. Jenny Lynn was, to all outward appearances, doing fine without him, thank you. The job at Novum appeared secure. The term as union president carried a half-load release and required, initially, only a few hours each week. It was time for Jack to take a blow.

*Songs of the North Country: Explorations in Two Minnesota Poets* was more than just time off. It was the perfect project for Creed in the late eighties. Three years into the writing, the book united an old passion with a new passion: the American sixties with the Edenic vision. It offered a return from social politics to history and

literature. In 1991 it reclaimed Jack's national reputation after the polemics of "Women's Lib: The Conservative Revolution." And, as 1989 melted into 1990 and 1991, it provided a gift for Kelly Ayers, the ponytailed phenom who did finally become Jack's new Lily Lee.

"I got tired of all the time telling Kelly, in effect, 'I've done this, I've done that, blah, blah, blah,' " Jack admitted. "You can get a twenty-year-old girl with this heavy trip about all you've done and how important you are, but you're not going to keep her. You might get away with 'I'm gonna do this, I'm gonna do that,' and small potatoes like an article or a story, but sooner or later she's gonna want to see some big potatoes. If you're all that hot a shit, you should be doing it."

Starting in 1989, Jack was doing it again.

In his essay called "The Bifocal Vision of Charles Creed," Perry Higginson has advanced an interesting interpretation of Charles Creed's work between 1978 and 1989. During this period, Higginson argues, Jack was running on memories, reputation, and momentum from the late sixties and early seventies. An unusually high percentage of his work reflects a backward vision, from a short story like "Daisy" to the memory poems on his children to photo journalism pieces on Ronald Reagan's Illinois. Rightly or wrongly, he scoffed at new developments in pedagogy and literary theory: deconstructionism, feminism, multi-culturalism, collaborative models, the teacher as facilitator. He was equally dismissive of the new age college student: a lazy, complacent, thin-skinned, under-achieving middle class wanna-be with an inflated grade point average, a mini-I.Q., and a maxi self-image, more than happy to blame his failure on anyone but himself. Locked inside his sixties persona, Jack kept bashing his head into the walls of a new world which to him was increasingly unrecognizable. In the process he bloodied mostly himself.

In both Dylan and Bly Jack found artists who had—not without pain, discomfort, and regret—worked their way out of the sixties, through the seventies, and into the eighties. In Dylan's exploration of

one musical style after another, and in his excursion into born-again Christianity; and in Bly's redirection of deep-image poetry into deep-image psychology, and in his refocusing from female Other to distant Father, Jack found more than new values for his own life. He developed a sense that options exist for any artist: multiple personae, multiple subjects, multiple truths. Higginson quotes a letter in which Jack wrote, "I understood, finally, what Thoreau meant when he said, in walking away from Walden after a couple of years and a couple of months, 'perhaps I had other lives to live.' What Whitman meant when he said, 'I am large. I contain multitudes.' I understood that Robert Bly is large, and at times self-contradictory. That Dylan contains multitudes. That Charles Creed too contains multitudes. It was time to leave Walden. Or, in my case, to come to Walden."

Jack learned also about accepting the unattractive parts of attractive wholes, himself included. He was never really comfortable with Dylan's fundamentalism, Jewish or Christian, and even while writing on Bly, Jack never attended a men's gathering.

"I couldn't afford them for one thing," he said. "And Robert did those conferences mostly to chase ideas into the open, where he could have a look at them. You can see *Iron John* developing through Robert's readings, poems, talks, and those Alley Press publications. Both Dylan and Bly are intellectual artists: they're craftsmen, but they're more interested in ideas than art. Essentially they're message-oriented moralists. They're not just entertainers; they're prophets, preachers. I think that's my position as well, a peculiarly Midwest manner of writing. That's why there's so little gossip in *Songs of the North Country*, why I did so little interviewing of old friends and former lovers. Who cares? I looked at the art: the performances and the culture from which the performances came. I called it sociological anesthetics."

The project had the additional virtues of bridging some of Jack's own constitutional polarities: the urban, East Coast sixties in which he had grown up, and the rural, Upper Midwestern scene in which he

found himself living life after his fortieth birthday. It moved him finally and completely out of Wales and out of Afro-American studies, a field in which he lost interest proportional to the extent it became dominated by female feminists. In the longer curve of his career, Afro-American studies proved something of a detour. He wrote only one critical essay in the field, and Afro-American style, insofar as there is an identifiable Afro-American style, never really flavored his creative work.

"Sociological aesthetics" was not the dominant criticism of the 1980s, and most of *Songs of the North Country* was written without a contract or even the suggestion of a contract. Jack tried some of his old New York connections, but in the game of musical chairs that New York publishing had become, most of the old friends and many of the old houses were long gone. "Robert Bly?" wrote back the new editors, responding to his proposal. "He's a poet. Try a university press. And who is this Dylan fellow?"

"Bob Dylan?" wrote the university press editors, responding to an outline plus one or two chapters. "We buried him long ago. Besides, only a commercial press doing a large run could afford permissions."

So Jack wrote for the best of reasons: to focus himself, to please himself, to serve the discipline. When the manuscript was completed and once revised, he sent it once again to University of Illinois Press, to Dick Wittington, whom Jack had known briefly at Busiris. Wittington sent Jack a contract, accepting the book conditionally and making several suggestions. The contract, which carried no advance in light of anticipated permissions costs, Jack celebrated with bottles of New York State champagne . . . in the Novum State recreation center, with Kelly Ayers and his Novum State colleagues. The suggestions, all of them, Jack incorporated into his final revision, a marked contrast to his experience with *Age of Faith*.

Charles Creed's second book was written under circumstances in some ways similar to and in other ways quite different from his

first. In a purchased farm house well outside of Lake-of-the-Woods—larger, more cluttered, but in many respects similar to the house he had rented from Harlan Everts in 1986—Jack read, listened, and meditated. He wrote letters and he answered letters. Occasionally he spoke by telephone with writers whose work on Dylan or Bly he admired. Less frequently, he spoke with persons who knew both Dylan and Bly. (The interviews included Joan Baez, Pete Seeger, and Robert Shelton, whose interviews were a testimonial to Jack's status as a music critic; Donald Hall and David Zimmerman, whose interviews were a testimonial to Jack's status as a scholar and a writer; and Carol Bly, whose interview was not only generous but courageous, considering Jack's late-eighties reputation as an anti-feminist.) Despite his early plan to interview Dylan on Bly and Bly on Dylan, Jack spoke directly with neither of his subjects. Supported by a N. S. U. research grant, Jack made one extended trip to England in 1990 to pillage some Dylan files maintained by *The Telegraph*, for which he wrote several articles. Supported by another grant he and Kelly made a tour of Dylan's North Country (Hibbing, Duluth, Red Wing, the Dinkeytown area of Minneapolis). On his own he took Kelly on an extended tour of Bly's Minnesota, the land of cornfields and sloughs, of gloomy groves watched over by abandoned farmhouses and haunted by fox and owl. Using contractual travel, he and Kelly Ayers traveled to western Minnesota for the 1989 Marshall Fest, where Robert Bly joined Norbert Blei, Dave Etter, Eugene McCarthy, and two dozen other neo-agrarians for a week of sensory overload. Unmarried at the time, Jack and Kelly were refused a joint room in the Southwest State University dormitory and, the local motels being booked to overflowing, commuted 45 miles each morning from Montevideo.

Jack traveled and read and thought and wrote, achieving finally a sense of spiritual and geographical place which was at once the reflection of his subject and the subject itself. Dennis Engebrecht caught the synthesis in his *New York Times* review when he observed, "not only is this a Charles Creed we have never seen before, it is a form of scholarship we have not seen before."

There was no Pulitzer in 1994, of course, and *Songs of the North Country* proved too subtle for the general trade market. It fared well among older Dylan fans, and very well with the kind of serious male literary people who harbored reservations over Bly's excursion into popular psychology, and hoped Creed's book would return Bly's focus, and the popular focus on Bly, to his poetry.

The book delighted Kelly, who read in Jack's dedication of the book to her, to Jenny, and to Timm the message Jack had intended her to read.

And the book won the approval of its two subjects. Robert Bly not only read the book, he understood it. He took the time not only for a congratulatory phone call, but for a five-page typed letter in which he annotated, expanded upon, and took issue with a dozen of Jack's points, major and minor. Their correspondence continued through the ensuing years and, as the nation's news media noted, Robert Bly spoke eloquently at Charles' funeral.

The media noted as well the presence at the funeral of Bob Dylan, who did not speak. What the media did not know was that at the time of his death Jack Creed, despite the distractions of his trial, had completed two chapters of the authorized biography of Bob Dylan.

Kelly Ayers was the subject of the second significant phone call I received from Jack in the fall of 1989.

It came late in the evening of Tuesday, November 7.

"Tucker, this is Creed," it began.

"Jack . . . !"

"I think I'm head over heels in love," Jack announced. "With one of my students. I need some good advice."

"Well."

"Yeah, well."

I paused a minute.

“The only thing that surprises me,” I told Jack finally, “is that it didn’t happen sooner.”

“Actually, it did.”

“Well, yes.”

“What do you hear of Lily Lee?”

“Nothing since February. You want I should check?”

“I think I’m ready to let it go.”

“New love drives out old love. Who is this woman? How old is she?”

“That’s what I need some advice on. I’ve been through this before, and I know where it can lead. I need this job, Tucker. Well—let’s say I want to keep this job.”

Kelly Ayers, Jack explained, was two and a half decades younger than he, not even one decade older than his daughter. She was Novum’s star volleyball player, a sophomore, who had taken Charles’ American Literature I class as an elective and spiked one right through his lonely heart.

“She seems a little young,” I said dubiously.

“Or I seem a little old. When we’re together, though, I don’t find myself wishing I were twenty-four. And she doesn’t want to be my age. We’re pretty much content to be who we are, as old as we are. Is it possible to be out of time?”

“She’s in your class?”

“In two weeks she’s out of my class. She’s a phy. ed. major, so I think we can keep her out of my classes in the future. Lily Lee was in lots of my classes, but these days. . . .” Charles’ voice trailed off.

“You’re asking my advice about a PE major, a college sophomore less than half your age. How does that sound to you, Jack?”

“About the way it sounds to you.”

“At least she’s not a cheerleader.”

“My daughter is a cheerleader.”

“You never did care much for the stupid ones.”

“This girl is no dumb jockette, Tucker. I can guarantee you that.”

I paused again.

“I don’t know how it is in Wisconsin, but around here we’re not even supposed to socialize with students. New regulations from Our Miss Vicky, after that affair between the girl and her sociology prof. I told you about that last spring.”

“The movement has not yet reached northwestern Wisconsin.”

“You couldn’t have picked somebody a little older?”

“She kind of picked me.”

“I’d be very, very careful if I were you, buddy. Rose Marié could take you to the cleaners.”

“What’s to clean? Timm’s settled, Jenny’s doing okay. Our marriage has been over for years. For”—Jack laughed himself at the absurdity of his situation—“as long as Kelly’s been alive.”

“I don’t see this thing as doing you any good.”

“It’s a rush when somebody young and good looking and full of life comes at you like that. It’s . . . rejuvenating.”

“That’s what the guy in sociology thought. I’d be careful. You want this job.”

“I guess.”

“On the other hand,” I heard myself saying, “maybe if you keep things quiet you can enjoy it while it lasts. How long can you keep this up, anyway?”

“No need to say anything to Rose Marié,” Jack added.

“No need to tell me that.”

“I just had to talk to somebody.”

“Yeah. Well I guess my advice would be to eat the ice cream before it melts. And maybe check the rules. You’re a state school, and you’re union. Maybe things are different there.”

“Nothing on Lily Lee?”

“Lily has left Riverton and she has left your life,” I told Charles. “She forgot you a long time ago. Focus on this Kelly woman. Anybody that young. . . . You have a whole lot of unlearning to do.”

“It ain’t easy being twenty-five again,” Jack admitted. “Wish me luck, good buddy.”

“Ten-four,” I told him. “Over and out.”

Kelly Ayers was indeed no dumb jockette. “I’m in the honors program,” she told Jack when he asked what a PE major was doing in a junior level American Lit. class. “Dr. Freiberg told me to include some literature classes in my honors program, and since I’m an American, I thought I’d take this one. Plus everyone says you’re a good teacher. Guess that kind of puts the pressure on you, doesn’t it?” Her remark broke up the class.

“Guess it does,” Jack admitted. “But everyone else in this room is an English major. Some are seniors with lots of background in literature classes. And I’m going to teach on a junior level, English major level. Guess that puts a little pressure on you, huh?”

“I can hang,” Kelly told him.

“She hung, all right,” Jack told me, recalling their early days with Kelly on a visit to Riverton for Jenny Lynn’s graduation. It was the first time I’d met her. “Highest score in the class on the mid-term.”

“I was studying my ass off to impress you,” Kelly admitted.

“And a lovely ass it is,” Jack pointed out.

“It was the middle of volleyball season, and I was in shape.”

“And a lovely ass it still is.”

A week into the term, Kelly had announced she might miss a class or two because of away games. “If there’s a way I can meet you during office hours to make the work up, I will.”

“I’m not going to repeat lectures. I’d give you my lecture notes, but I rarely use notes. You’ll just have to read the stuff.”

“Maybe I can borrow somebody’s notes. If I miss something, I guess I’ll just miss it.” Kelly sounded, and looked, disappointed.

“Volleyball, eh?” Jack asked.

“Full scholarship.”

“I’ve always been partial to athletes,” Jack admitted. “But I don’t know a thing about volleyball.”

“You should come to a game. We’re pretty good this year.”

“If that’s an invitation, I accept.”

“That’s an invite, Teach—to the game. Home opener is Wednesday night at 7:30. Duluth Bull Dogs. I’ll serve an ace just for you.”

“You’re an ace, all right,” Jack told her.

“You’re the ace, Teach. I am . . . the missing Queen. But I’ll deliver an ace for you.”

“She did, too,” Jack recalled. “First serve. She looked up at me in the stands, smiled, and banged that ball over the net, off the arm of some poor girl from Duluth, high enough it hit the rafters. Then she looked up at me and smiled again. I thought the sun had risen.”

Jack lingered in the bleachers after the match. “That first one was for you,” Kelly announced in front of the entire squad. “Did you notice?”

“I noticed. Nice win.”

“Always a nice win.”

“We hate the Bull Dogs,” one of Kelly’s teammates told Jack.

“Hate keeps a man alive,” Jack told her.

“A woman too,” the girl laughed. “This your dad, Kel?”

“This is Professor Creed.”

“So you’re Professor Creed! . . .”

“I’m Professor Creed.”

“My favorite prof,” Kelly said enthusiastically.

“I just thought, with the wing-tips and all. . . .”

Jack looked self-consciously at his feet.

“Nobody wears wing-tips these days,” Kelly told Jack. “Come on over to the Foot Locker Saturday and I’ll sell you a pair of Air Jordans. They got some really slick models this year—none of that red, white and black stuff. You’ll look way too cool. Loosen up a little. This isn’t practice, you know. This is the only life we’re gonna get.”

Like Lily, Kelly was a full tilt boogie. Like Lily, she was her own woman with her own program. Unlike Lily, Kelly was flagrantly, sometimes recklessly public about that program, including Jack’s role in it.

“You’re allowed to come to away games,” she told Jack after he complained of missing her the weekend previous, when the team had been on the road. The two were sitting in Jack’s office, where Kelly had taken to visiting an hour after the completion of a home match. It was 10:00, the night of October 7, a weekend.

“Who comes to road matches?” he wanted to know. “Parents and friends and people who really love volleyball.”

“You’re my friend,” Kelly argued.

“I mean friend friends,” Jack told her. “It would be pretty obvious.”

“What would be obvious?”

“Just. . . .”

“So you love the game.”

“I don’t love the game. I . . . enjoy watching one of the players play the game.”

The office became real quiet really quickly.

“Well I enjoy you enjoying watching me,” Kelly said thoughtfully. “And I think if two people enjoy something, then that’s okay.” Kelly looked at Jack. He looked at her. It was just like in the movies. He kissed her lightly on the forehead. She kissed him on the lips. With his foot, Jack kicked the office door shut, and they kissed some more. “The light,” Kelly said. Jack reached behind her and turned the light off.

“If I get out of line, say something,” Jack said, sliding his hands under the back of her sweatshirt.

She reached for his belt buckle. “Don’t ask. Just do.”

Within five minutes the writer and the ponytail had become lovers.

“We were fucking each other’s brains out is what we were doing,” Kelly remembered, “On that sofa in his office. Something I’d been fantasizing for a month. All of a sudden there it was. Plus I had all the energy from the game. God, it was the greatest ever!”

“It was something,” Jack admitted.

“If I’d have been any wetter, we’d have needed a rowboat,” Kelly said. Both Jack and I blushed.

“I didn’t feel particularly threatened at the time,” Jack admitted. “It was 10:30 at night. My office was, you’ve seen it, in the second floor of one of those towers. Pretty out of the way. If you’d been watching from the outside, you might have noticed the lights go out; if you’d been inside, you might have heard some strange noises. But it was 10:30. Classes were over, and so was the game.

Kelly and Jack dressed in the dark. He gave her one more kiss and turned the light on.

“I want you to think about this in class Monday, because I sure will,” she told Jack. “When I remember, I’m going to get wet all over again, just thinking about you being inside me. I’m going to smile. What are you going to do then?”

“I don’t even want to imagine.”

“I know. You’ll get good and hard. I’m going to stare. It’s gonna feel so goooooood!”

“I am still married, you know. I have two grown children. My son is exactly your age.”

“They’re not in this room right now, are they? Your wife’s not even in Lake-of-the-Woods. If she throws something out, I got a right to pick it up.”

“I guess if it doesn’t bother you, it doesn’t bother me.”

“I think it’s great,” Kelly told Jack. “You’re special. Everyone here thinks so. I want everyone to know about us.”

“There is the fact that you’re in my class this fall.”

“Well you are one, Professor Creed! I could tell you some stories about a few people at this school.”

“About me? About yourself?”

“No, not about you.”

“That’s just the way we want it to stay. You don’t need those stories being told about you, and I don’t need them being told about me.”

“Are you ashamed of me, Professor Creed? People gonna think you’re robbing the cradle?”

“Are you ashamed? Making it with an old bag of bones?”

“Afraid, then? I’m not going to bite you. Not there.”

“I am afraid,” Jack admitted. “For you, and a little afraid for me. I know some stories too. I know students who got burned by profs

who were just using them, and I know profs who got burned by students who were just using them. Or who got quickly tired of them. I've also seen these things blow up."

"Nobody runs my life but me."

"That's what they thought. Turns out everybody runs our lives. Your coach. Your other teachers. Administration. Jealous gossips. Believe me, our lives are one thing we do not control."

"If it feels good, I'm doin' it," Kelly Ayers told Jack Creed.

"You feel good, I got to admit."

"Guess that settles things, then."

"How about if it feels good, we do it, but we don't talk about it? At least not until the term ends. And not until I check Wisconsin State University System regulations on student-teacher relationships."

"You're the union president."

"I don't know the rules on this one."

"You'd make a lousy ref," Kelly told Jack. "But you make a great player. That's a joke, teach. You get it?"

Jack and Kelly exchanged a few more tokens of their newly redefined relationship, and Kelly left for the showers.

Then Jack phoned me.

The next morning, he phoned Linda Tholen in Madison.

"It's not exactly the behavior we look for in a union president," Linda told Jack. "And as you know, on some campuses there's talk of setting up some kind of guidelines, if not actual regulations. Still, in Wisconsin, there is no rule, written or unwritten. If anybody were to propose a rule, SUUFAMP would fight it. If you're over eighteen and she's over eighteen, what you do in private is your own business. Use discretion. Keep it private. I do think you should make sure she's not in your class after this fall."

"That's understood."

“Also,” Linda warned, “she may change her mind later, and file a sexual harassment complaint. The fact that she’s a student and you’re a teacher would give her a case no matter what she says now.”

“It’s not exactly courteous to ask a woman to sign a legal release,” Jack pointed out.

“I’ll admit it’s not very romantic, but I’m pointing out a worst case scenario. The fact that you’re a teacher and she’s a student could make a difference. Not with SUUFAMP, but with administration. Or someplace else. Especially if she’s registered in your class.”

“So whatever we do is our own business, but it could not be our own business.”

“I’m saying that student-teacher relationships break no system rules, and SUUFAMP will always protect its members. Just don’t make life difficult for us or yourself. And be sure you’re not being used.”

“That’s a real insult,” Jack told Linda.

“Just a note of caution. Some of these women can be pretty manipulative. You don’t read the right books.”

“In this case. . . .”

“I don’t even know this woman. I do know there’s no fool like an old fool, and while you’re not old yet. . . .”

By Christmas of 1989 Kelly and Jack were out of the closet. They arrived as a couple at the SUUFAMP Christmas party, lunched together in the Student Center, and sat near each other, holding hands, talking or not talking, at basketball games and wrestling matches. Dylan and Bly were put temporarily on hold, Jack’s classes ran on momentum, and Kelly’s roommate rarely saw her. Jack bought himself five pairs of Air Jordan’s and a restored red 1966 Mustang convertible. When the Mustang was not commuting between Lake-of-the-Woods and Riverton, it was headed toward the Twin Cities or Chicago. Kelly and Jack spent Easter 1990 in Florida.

After graduation, they took off for Quebec and the Gaspé Peninsula. In August, between summer school second session and the start of volleyball, a week in Door County.

“One of the few advantages of being older,” Jack pointed out, “is that you have money to do things.”

Initially the couple raised a few eyebrows, especially among faculty, but Novum State had been there, done that back in the high sixties. Most faculty were young enough to remember their own childhoods. “We attended all the University functions together,” Jack testified in his deposition, “and not once did anyone give spoken or written indication of displeasure or discomfort. Not that we would have cared, really.” Kelly’s quick wit and expansive mind made her instantly popular with even the female members of the department. By fall 1991, attendance at Novum volleyball home games had increased by half a dozen English Department faculty members, and the number of jocks and jockettes taking advanced English classes had increased similarly.

“I believe it was William Byrd who once said a sprightly lover is the most prevailing missionary that can be sent amongst any infidels,” Jack told Lloyd Cowley.

Some members of the Novum State faculty were not entirely sympathetic to Jack and Kelly. Not surprisingly, they were those who had disapproved of Jack before the SUUFAMP Christmas Party of 1988. One such person was his old antagonist Brad Newlund.

Brad went to Marilyn Schneider almost immediately after the party in December. Behind closed doors, he told Marilyn that Jack was engaged in unprofessional if not unethical behavior, that he was an embarrassment to the department, the profession, and the union he headed.

Marilyn saw, or thought she saw, where Newlund was coming from and quickly dismissed his complaints. “Their relationship has sustained itself for some while now,” she told him, “and promises, from all appearances, to sustain itself for some time to come.”

Newlund was “not so sure.”

“If it doesn’t, then it doesn’t. Not all love ends happily, I’m afraid.”

“This could be a terrible scandal for SUUFAMP.”

“A lot of SUUFAMP people I know are all for it, Brad,” Marilyn responded. “It does not appear to be abusive from either end. They’re both as happy as pigs in shit. Kelly is pursuing a Health-Phy. Ed. degree, not even an English minor, so I foresee no pressures related to future employment. Not that Jack or Kelly would bring such pressures to bear, implicitly or explicitly.”

“A couple of other people have complained to me.”

“I don’t know what they’re doing complaining to you. I don’t know what you’re doing talking to me.”

“You’ve been around the department and the union for a long time.”

“So you want me, as department chair and union old timer, to have a talk with Charles because his relationship with Kelly Ayers gives you problems?”

“And others.”

“I have heard no complaints from anyone else, Brad. Nor am I sure I would be open to receiving complaints from others, students or faculty. Not about Kelly’s and Charles’ private business. If the relationship somehow interferes with the professional working relationship between you and Professor Creed, then I would have a problem. I can’t imagine how a love relationship between Charles and Kelly could affect the collegial relationship between you and Charles. No more than Jack seeing anyone else, married or unmarried, of any age, color, profession, or, for that matter, sex.”

“You honestly have no problem with a forty-something professor dating a twenty-something coed?” Newlund persisted.

“Not as long as the relationship is mutually consenting and transgresses no University regulations.”

“Some of us think it’s time for a university regulation. Other schools have codes.”

“That’s an item for discussion at the next SUUFAMP meeting. Not in my office. I will, incidentally, speak against your proposal.”

“It’s a matter of professionalism.”

“To intrude upon the personal relationship of two consenting adults strikes me as unprofessional in the extreme. Your position is completely intolerant. You’re trying to impose your morality on others. That’s exactly what we try to teach our students not to do. I know you’re a Baptist, and I respect your religious convictions. Miss Ayers and Dr. Creed are not Baptists, and you have to respect their rights. If Ms. Ayers should one day choose to complain—although I couldn’t see how, under the circumstances, she possibly could complain—then I might have a problem with Charles’ behavior. But I am certainly not about to call him on the carpet on behalf of an apparently deliriously happy Kelly Ayers.

“Which raises another point, Brad. Since Ms. Ayers is apparently very much in love with Charles, I personally approved of the relationship.”

By the end of her speech, Marilyn’s blood pressure had risen.

“And I’ll tell you one last thing before you vacate my office,” she concluded, “while we’re talking about professionalism. If you’re looking for a club to beat up on Charles Creed with, then you leave Kelly Ayers and every other student out of it. That’s what I have to say about professional behavior.”

That was the extent of Newlund’s conversation with Schneider.

Newlund went next to Linda Tholen, whose position accorded with that of her old colleague and union buddy. Linda told Brad essentially what she had told Jack: the couple’s private business was their private business, as long as both he and Kelly were over

the age of consent. The university system did not hold itself *in loco parentis.* “At least we did not then,” Tholen added in recalling the episode. “Our understanding of sexual harassment has changed since 1989. The law has changed and our policies have changed. I’m not sure I could be quite as clear cut today as I was then. But that was my reaction to Brad Newlund’s phone call.”

Perhaps it was Linda Tholen’s parting piece of advice which sent Brad Newlund reaching for the club which did knock Jack out of the union presidency in the spring of 1991. Perhaps Newlund would have created whatever he needed. Perhaps this club presented itself inevitably: Jack was too much a believer in qualitative standards to last long as president of SUUFAMP. Sooner or later, Jack Creed was going to find Dr. John Charles Creed, President of SUUFAMP Local 12, defending someone or something for which Jack Creed, Professor of English and professional writer, had only contempt.

The issue involved neither Kelly Ayers nor Jack’s professionalism . . . except insofar as Jack’s sense of personal professionalism brought him into direct conflict with the policies of the Novum State University Learning Resource Office . . . whose employees, although not teaching faculty, were members of SUUFAMP Local 12. It revolved around the Novum State Office of Learning Resources.

The Congressional Task Force on the Rights and Empowerment of Americans with Disabilities had done most of its preliminary work on what would become The Americans with Disabilities Act, and its chairman, Justin Dart, had for years been touring the country drumming up support for his cause. In November he spoke to a small but receptive audience in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Jack was not there, nor for that matter was Brad Newlund. But Madeline Santos, director of Novum’s Office of Learning Resources heard Dart’s address, along with three of her subordinates. The four returned to Lake-of-the-Woods fired with a vision of the future and determined that for once Novum would position itself on the cutting edge, not the rear guard, of change.

Santos organized a forum of her own, which Newlund did attend, and made the rounds of NSU administration. She then prepared a Blueprint for the OLR of the Future, complete with projected staff and budget: eight additional special needs counselors (two per year for the following four years), two (rising to three) dozen student interns, a whole gaggle of “peer tutors.” Office and support staff for all of the above, and a budget which, by its projected fourth year, would quadruple Santos’ 1988-89 allocation.

The late eighties had been good years at Novum, and while slightly pie-in-the-sky, Santos’ request was worthy and a not impossible dream. It did, however, present problems. For one thing, everyone knew Novum was flush. Worthy proposals for educational utopias were more plentiful at Novum State in 1990 than mystical visions of peace and love had been at Woodstock, twenty years before. Novum could never fund them all. The OLR proposal was in competition with a dozen other proposals, and Santos was in competition with a dozen of her NSU colleagues.

For another thing, Santos’ proposal dramatically expanded the instructional role of non-instructional personnel, including the student interns and peer tutors. Special needs counselors, trained in particular learning disabilities, could possess skills not found in ordinary faculty which might arguably make them more effective teachers despite their relative inexperience in the subject field. However, when N. S. U. faculty saw ordinary undergraduates scheduled as tutors, exam proctors, and “alternative-form instructional delivery personnel,” their necks stiffened.

The most vociferous objections were to Santos’ dramatically expanded definition of what constituted a disability in need of special assistance from the Office of Learning Resources. “We’re not talking blind, deaf, or paraplegic,” Lloyd Cowley pointed out to Jack over beers at the Silver Dollar. “And not dyslexia either. She’s got a whole bunch of mental and psychological disabilities that are just a little pink, I’d say. I had a kid in my office the other day telling me he had trouble remembering things. This is a learning disability, he says,

and he gets special attention. Specifically he needs extra help from the Center for Learning Resources, and extra time on exams. I told him that being unable to remember things is going to be a heck of a problem in college, but I didn't see where it entitled him to extra help or extra time. I told him I forget a lot of things too.

"Then there's that Attention Deficiency Syndrome. What the hell is that? You can't pay attention? That's a disability? How about depression? That's a good one! Hell, we all get depressed. Being depressed entitles you to special help? Pretty soon every kid in the college will be learning disabled, and we'll need a hundred special needs counselors. Madeline's building an empire over there at the expense of regular faculty. It's time we put our foot down."

Push came to shove when it came time to prepare the 1991-92 budget, in which Jack as SUUFAMP president played a central role. Under the collective bargaining agreement, both union administration develop complete budgets for an upcoming academic year, based on data provided by the Admissions and Business Offices, and on their own priorities. In a series of labor-management conferences, the two budgets are merged into a compromise acceptable to both sides. Inevitably both SUUFAMP and administration proposals are products of several internal compromises, and as well as pre-conference in-the-halls discussions between the labor and management. A local president attempting to negotiate among parties who don't wish to compromise is a man caught between a rock and a hard place.

Santos was not much for compromises. She had seen the future, and it was hers, deeded to her, she anticipated, by the full force of the law.

"Why not take this thing step by step?" Jack wanted to know.

Santos wanted to lock Novum into a fully developed, long-range commitment.

"Why not four counselors and ten interns as a reasonable target, adding more as need arises?"

Santos had already documented an arisen need.

“ ‘An estimated ten undiagnosed cases for every reported incidence’ is not hard documentation.”

Santos considered the figures conservative.

“Could some response be formulated to faculty concerns that OLR appeared to be usurping faculty teaching duties?”

Santos considered the faculty, including Lloyd Cowley, callous and insensitive to the special needs of “her” students. Many faculty, including Cowley, were no better suited to teaching than her student interns. Probably less suited.

“For the purposes of this proposal, can we settle on a definition of ‘special needs student’ which seems less all-encompassing?” It seemed to Jack that Lloyd was right: by Madeline’s definitions, just about anyone would qualify as learning disabled.

It seemed to Marilyn that Jack was being insensitive.

“None of us have any problem with physical impairments,” Jack told Madeline. “Things like dyslexia and depression are a trickier issue. People are initially sympathetic, but as you move to less extreme situations, I begin to question the extent to which Novum State needs to be involved. Many faculty members, including myself, I’ll admit, have difficulties seeing emotional illnesses as a learning problem.”

“Those are all serious disabilities.”

“They may be. The question I’m raising, in the name of other people inside SUUFAMP, is the extent to which those serious problems are cause for special education initiatives. And once we get into the realm of emotional matters like motivation, or mental problems like retardation, attention deficit, or short- and long-term recall, then I personally don’t believe there is much an institution of higher education can do. Or ought to do. These are social, psychological, and medical problems.”

“They’re obviously linked to student success rate. Every study shows that.”

“Granted. But the institution cannot treat students socially, psychologically, and medically as a preliminary to, or even concurrent with educating them. To do so overextends the university’s resources. Or lowers standards to the extent that the degree becomes meaningless.”

“Your position is entirely insensitive to the student’s need to develop a positive self-image. The weak self-image perpetuates poor performance. The cycle has to be broken.”

“Call me insensitive. Call me whatever you like, Madeline. A kid who can’t remember, who won’t or can’t pay attention, who is just plain stupid—that was the old-fashioned word for it, and I think it has some currency even today—a kid who is just plain stupid doesn’t get a college degree.”

“No learning disability should disqualify any student from the opportunity to secure a college degree.”

“Some of the things you’re identifying as learning disabilities are absolute disbarments to achieving a college education in any meaningful sense of the word. And the compensatory adjustments you propose in the learning and testing environment make a college degree meaningless. Open book exams for people with short-term memory problems? OLR personnel rewriting essays for students with poor writing skills? Many faculty have problems with that, including me.”

“Your position is contrary to the law, Professor Creed.”

Santos thought she had played her trump card, but the law was exactly the wrong way to argue with Jack. He gave her the John Charles Creed lecture on American Justice and American Law, a lecture I knew by heart.

“In the first place, Ms. Santos, you’re a little ahead of yourself. My position is not contrary to law, it is merely contrary to the prevailing interpretations of those Washington bureaucrats who, usually in their own self-interest, set guidelines for the interpretation of law.

In the second place, law is a mere matter of power and convenience. We will both agree, probably, that law has historically operated in this manner, and I see no reason to believe it functions otherwise today. I have seen enough of law to know it has nothing to do with truth, justice, or even common sense. Slavery was part of the Constitution. For much of America's history, and human history, it was perfectly legal. Capital punishment for crimes as trivial as adultery and poaching has been, as you put it, 'the law.' All those deportations and executions in Nazi Germany were 'the law.' Consuming alcohol was within the law, then it was outside the law, and now it is within the law. Driving 60 miles per hour on I-94 was inside the law, then outside the law, and now, thank god, it's inside the law again.

"I don't care what is and isn't the law. I care what is sensible and manageable. What you're proposing is an overly ambitious program that is neither sensible nor manageable within the limited resources of Novum State, and the uses your colleagues would like to make of those resources. I can't responsibly take your proposal, as it exists, to administration. And I guarantee you, they won't buy it if I do."

It was "I don't care what is and isn't the law" that got Jack into trouble in the long run, but the short-run battle waged by Newlund and Santos against Jack's alleged insensitivity to the needs of the disabled cost him energy, respect, and credibility. Newlund formed a coalition of left-leaning behaviorists, largely psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists, which put up a floor fight in support of Santos' proposal at the March 6, 1991, SUUFAMP meeting. President Creed spoke "for a faculty consensus" which favored serious reductions in the OLR proposal. Newlund's coalition accused him of misrepresenting the faculty opinion, offering their own vocal presence as evidence that Jack was out of touch with his membership. The fact that Jack's position carried the day in SUUFAMP and in the SUUFAMP-NSU administration negotiations only increased the bitterness of the dissatisfied.

Later that spring, as Linda Tholen won election to her second term as statewide president, Newlund defeated Creed in the Local 12 election. Newlund never mentioned Kelly Ayers, but he did accuse Jack of “unprofessional behavior.” He attacked Jack as insensitive to the plight of disabled students and “significant” elements of his membership. He accused Jack of illegal conferencing with administration on the budget and a number of other occasions. His most effective point was Jack’s own “I don’t care what is and isn’t the law.” “With all due respect to our present president,” Newlund argued, “is not the function of a leader of this organization to uphold the law, as represented by our binding contract? Not only is our president distracted by other people and projects, he candidly tells us he doesn’t care what the law is. Our contract has the force of law. How can we reelect as president of our organization someone who says he doesn’t care what our contract is?”

Jack took defeat gracefully, even gratefully. He was by this time far more interested in *Songs of the North Country* and Kelly Ayers than in union business, and was happy to be able to devote more time to each. Not to mention teaching. Newlund, he reasoned privately, would have Linda Tholen above him in Madison, the old bulls patrolling the fences in Lake-of-the-Woods. If Newlund led the union astray, the membership deserved what the membership got.

The only trouble was, Jack got it right along with the rest of them.

# Chapter 15
# **The Daughter**

There are men who, in a love relationship, instinctively seek a mother figure. They often go for older women, and always for women with large breasts. They are docile and make easy lovers, but they are also psychologically weak. Always they are dependent, frequently they have trouble holding a job, and sometimes they are alcoholic. Their wives end up with a child, not a husband.

There are men who marry their sisters. Brother-sister loves have the advantage of age balance and thus equality. Unfortunately, these couples often fight like brothers and sisters. Women who marry these men run a strong risk of black eyes.

Then there are men who marry a daughter figure. They seek younger women whom they can protect and provide for. They are strong, independent and generous. Their weakness is that they often try to run their wives' lives, and women married to such men feel smothered.

Jack Creed was clearly a man who sought a daughter-lover. The child lover is a motif repeated in Western culture with varying degrees of eroticism, from those sepia Victorian engravings of Eros and Cupid, with budding breasts, flirtatious smiles, and phallic arrows; to high school cheerleaders; to *Lolita* and *Baby Doll* and *American Beauty*; to Mary Lou Retton and Bela Karolyi's Nadia Comaneci and all those pixie gymnasts who bewitch American hearts every four years. American girls have heard so much "good touch/bad touch" talk that many fear any touch these days. They've heard so much about child abuse, incest and even psychic incest that some "recover" entirely imagined memories. The psychologists, sociologists and lawyers are having a field day. But Americans need look no further than the average family fourth-of-July outing to see that a tremendous amount of psychic energy passes back and forth

between fathers and daughters . . . and between mothers and sons. Any psychologist worth her six-figure salary could have a field day, and probably a law suit if she wanted.

This is not to suggest anything overtly erotic to the relationship between Jenny Lynn and Jack Creed. It is strictly to observe that Jack preferred younger women, that Jenny Lynn was his number one female, and he was her number one male. Even when she was a child, and even when the two were of different opinions.

Jack and Jenny were nearly inseparable until 1985. Then, suddenly and dramatically, they were separated by great distances of geography and, for a time, point of view. Togetherness was a great joy. Distance pained both father and daughter. “My early adolescence was difficult,” Jenny told me, “because dad was in Wales or Lake-of-the-Woods, and because that’s just a hard time for anyone. I adjusted a little to his being away most of the time, and had some successes at school in the late eighties but those years were probably the worst of my life. I wouldn’t want to live through them again, even if it meant having dad alive again.” Unaware of Jenny’s problems, Jack felt pain the pain of distance, a sorrow reflected in the father-daughter poems written during this period: “Visiting the Father,” “The Distant Father,” and “The Father Writes to His Distant Child.”

Then came serious distance. The daughter broke from her father to find a life of her own. The father broke from his daughter and found Kelly Ayers. Both grew, and grew apart. The early nineties were more painful than the late eighties.

Finally there was conjunction. The two came together again as mutually respectful adults—perhaps brother and sister. In 1997 it was Jenny Lynn who, having returned from her own exile on the East Coast and opting not for Illinois but for Wisconsin, steeled Jack’s resolve in the Virginia Coyle suit.

Most vivid in my memory is the younger Jack and the younger Jenny: the indulgent father of the born dancer who could not sit still,

the wild girl with eyes full of mischief and a pair of flying ponytails.

I remember little Jenny coming with her older brother, even before seeing daddy in daddy's office, to visit Lucy Kramer, the Green Lollie Lady. Jenny's feet kicking back and forth below the black naugahyde chair seat, Jenny ever so impatient with the polite talk Timm knew was a necessary prerequisite to opening that upper left hand desk drawer and winning a green lollipop for himself and his sister. I remember Lucy stalling, and Timm finessing. I remember Jenny and Timm entering our office, each with a green lolli, looking like dogs who had treed a cat.

I remember Timm and little Jenny stopping by Aunt Lucy's office again on their way home. "Lollies all gone?" Lucy would ask.

"Yes, ma'am," Timm would answer as Jenny looked on wide-eyed and expectant.

"We can't let you go home without a lolli, now, can we?"

I remember summer nights at Burr Oak Park, I with my children Audra and Austin, Jack with Timm and Jenny, campfire guttering to dark, sleeping bags calling in the tents behind us, Lou and his crew out for the burgers and marshmallows, a Cardinals game on the radio, stars overhead. Jenny would lean against Jack's shoulder or curl up in his lap, worn out after an evening of pitching tents, gathering wood, hiking trails, playing wiffle ball, roasting hot dogs and marshmallows. She'd start sucking her thumb and twirling a pony tail, as she always did when she was tired. Inevitably she fell asleep in Jack's lap. He'd hoist her over his shoulder like a 20-pound sack of potatoes, and carry her to her sleeping bag in the huge cave-like tent. Invariably she awakened as he shifted her position, or as he brushed the flap upon entering. "I'm not tired, Dad," she'd protest briefly. Then she dropped off again until the morning.

Timm and Austin would hit the sack as well, and Lou, who was never much for camping, would gather his brood and drive them home. Then there would be only Jack and I and the voice of Jack

Buck on KMOX, and the glowing coals below, the distant stars above.

Then we'd talk.

I remember the years of Park and Rec summer slow-pitch softball. Jenny had always been jealous of the attention Timm received for Little League baseball, and when Riverton organized a summer softball league for girls, she recruited my Audra and Lou's Shelley Lynn to join her on a team. This was, as I recall, the summer after Jack taught all those kids at Busiris, after his first escape to Wales. Jenny was a natural: trim, fast, quick reflexes and athletic instincts. Jenny, Timm and Jack had been playing backyard football and baseball for years, and Jenny could sock the cover off a ball. A good fielder with an accurate arm, Jenny was assigned to the outfield, then to shortstop, then to first base. Then she got it into her mind she wanted to pitch.

"You've never pitched in your life," Jack told his daughter.

"Pitching is where the action is," she told him.

"Pitching is tough, even slow-pitch softball."

"I can hang," she told him.

So Jenny Lynn Creed told her coach she used to be a pitcher, and he let her throw a couple of innings. She walked about ten batters, the coach sent her back to shortstop, and Jack ached with embarrassment and the frustration of seeing a child in pain he could do nothing to ameliorate.

Jenny Lynn ached scarcely at all. She came home after the game, dredged up two boards about as wide as home plate, paced off what seemed to be the distance between the mound and the plate, and spent the rest of the day throwing her two practice softballs and a couple of bean bags first from one board to the other, then from the other to the first, four practice pitches and walk to the opposite board, four more practice pitches, and walk, break for supper, out again after supper and toss, toss, toss. The following

morning Jack borrowed half a dozen softballs from his buddies in the Busiris Athletic Department, and Jenny spent another day practicing.

Over the objections of all the other girls, she talked the coach into another start and pitched the rest of the season. Shelley took over first base, and Audra moved to a starting position in right. Jenny was starting pitcher for her division in the all-star game. Jack and I were watching from the bleachers when one parent asked Jack, “Is it true that your daughter hasn’t walked a batter all season?”

After that summer Jenny pitched every year for a Park and Rec squad, and then for her school slow pitch team. Her background in ballet gave her agility, grace, and a wiry strength. Although slight and willowy, she managed the conversion from slow to fast pitch softball and pitched for Riverton Central. Later at Wisconsin she converted to utility infielder. She was quick on the bases and a good punch hitter. “A banjo hitter,” Jack used to call her. “Like her old man. Like Pete Rose.”

Jenny Creed was probably the only woman in Riverton Central history to letter in cheerleading and softball.

Cheerleading also began in grade school, and Jack took as much pleasure in it as in softball. Jack was always close to cheerleaders, whom he understood as did few faculty members. He argued regularly with Lou, me, Jerry Jones, Victoria Nation . . . the entire department. “Cheerleaders are not stupid people,” he would tell us. “That’s just one more inaccurate sexist stereotype. Some are dumb, and some of them are quite bright.” He would cite May O’Hara and Carolyn McQuillan, both English majors who captained the squad, both magna cum laude graduates. Or Cassy Peterson, another bright English major-cheerleader. On one occasion, I think, he even cited Leanna Robertson and the Bucks dance line. “The trouble with intellectuals is they think that just because somebody looks good, they have to be stupid. My freaks think that way too. There are a lot of very smart jocks, and a lot of very smart cheerleaders.”

“It’s a T and A show,” Victoria Nation told him long before she knew Jenny Lynn was a cheerleader. If Victoria had been male, Jack would have punched her. Instead he gave us another Jack Creed Lecture on the Girls of Dance Line, Cheerleading, and the Pompon Squad.

“It’s a lot of hard work, is what it is. And yes, it is sex, Victoria. There is real sex involved, even at the junior high school level. Sex means vulnerability. Unbelievable vulnerability to a junior high school girl. It takes courage to move like that in front of five hundred people. Let alone five thousand people at a Bucks games, not to mention the television audience. It takes practice and discipline. You have to be in shape, and you can still get hurt, physically as well as mentally. Cassy Paterson nearly broke her ankle last winter.”

Victoria persisted. “It demeans the personhood of all women.”

“Persons are unities of body, mind and spirit,” Jack told Victoria. “Cheerleading celebrates the female body and spirit. It’s in a league with dance and gymnastics. Cheerleading showcases women the way athletics showcases men and women. It’s a form of athletics.

“It’s not a matter of sound mind *or* sound body. A sound body complements a sound mind. You think just because you have ideas, you don’t have a body? Bullshit. What do you do for your body? You run off to some feminist feel good camp, pump yourselves up with a lot of talk, shimmy around a campfire like a bunch of overweight water buffaloes. You convince yourself you are artists dancing with the goddess, and that gives you female goddess power over the men around you. Bullshit.

“The trouble with you, Victoria, is you’re lazy. You and women like you are too lazy to discipline yourselves to meet the standards set by cheerleaders. Look carefully at those women: they’re not naturally beautiful, not most of them. They train their bodies and take care of their hair. It’s a lot of hard work and discipline. You want to see dancing the way it should be done, watch the cheerleading squad. Watch the Busiris dance line. Watch the Honey Bears. That’s

female power . . . female body power. Every bit as legitimate as female brain power, because it's an art form."

Jenny did not hear that conversation, but she grew up among Jack's cheerleader students. They were her babysitters when she was young and her role models as she watched them perform at Bucks home games. She understood her father's philosophy of cheerleading as an art form, and it became her own. Her dissatisfaction with Bryn Mawr came as much from other students' denigration of her softball and cheerleading accomplishments as from homesickness, class differences, and disillusionment with the women's studies program and the East Coast.

The acorn, finally, does not fall far from the oak, and Jack believed that in America smart was not enough. "*Death of a Salesman* is a great play," he told me once, "but Miller is wrong. In America, you do have to be well liked. And good looking and athletic. American men must be handsome and strong; American women must be athletic and lovely. We must raise our children in a tradition of sports and beauty, as well as art and intellect. Watch your television set and you'll see who the system takes care of. Victoria Nation, a member of the losers' club, knows exactly what I mean. Which explains her attempts to exact a pathetic little revenge on members of the winners' club."

During the middle 1980s, Jack spent more time with his daughter than with his son, who was already running with his pack. Jenny was still interested in jigsaw puzzles, the Riverton zoo, and night walks around the old neighborhood. Jack bought a zoom lens for his camera just so he could take close-up photos of his ballerina daughter . . . and, later, his cheerleader daughter and his conference champion fast-pitch softball player daughter. Jack never missed a spring dance recital, except for his year in Wales. And that year he went considerably out of his way to bring Jenny not one but two pairs of Freed ballet slippers all the way from mysterious and far-off London. It was Jack who, in addition to the $1200 he sent each month to Riverton to support Rose Marié and the kids, footed the

bills for ballet lessons, athletic equipment, cheerleading uniforms, and summer camps.

The break between Jack and Jenny came not with his resignation from Busiris, but with his withdrawal to Wales and Lake-of-the-Woods. Despite the rumors and gossip in February 1985, Jack's departure from Busiris had virtually no impact on his daughter. Rose Marié was more tense than usual, but the relationship between Jenny's parents had always been brittle. Dinner was served punctually as always, and her dad was available more than ever. The summer of 1985 was every kid's dream, an orgy of attention and, as she once put it, "one fun thing after another."

After such an idyll, fall was an abrupt shock. Her mother's temper improved and dinner was served as usual, but there were no more fun trips and no more fun dad. A Christmas visit and an Easter visit to England were small compensation for nine long months. Neither were the many letters, some containing poems, or the pair of ballet slippers.

Then came Jack's move to Lake-of-the-Woods, nearly as distant as Wales. There were more visits and calls and letters, but a maturing Jenny Lynn could read the future: a dad gone from her life, on the streets of a distant city, laughing, busy with his many appointments . . . his sixteen-year-old daughter, once the apple of his eye, ignored, discarded, forgotten in Illinois. "I admit I felt a little abandoned," Jenny remembered. "All children of divorces and separations do. I never felt it was my fault, though, which is another thing they're supposed to feel. I don't think I blamed Dad much, either. At first I blamed Mom for not following Dad to Wisconsin, because I didn't know any better. Then I wised up a little and realized he didn't really want her in Wisconsin. Then I figured he didn't want me in Wisconsin either because of Kelly."

Kelly Ayers posed a serious problem for teenaged Jenny. So too did the divorce Kelly seemed to precipitate, although Rose Marié had long understood that Jack intended to "hang around Riverton" (the phrase dates to the Lily Lee years and is his, not hers) only until

Jenny graduated from high school. That Jack should begin to talk divorce as spring of 1990 neared did not surprise her. “I was surprised it didn’t come up years ago,” she told Linda. Nor was Timm at all surprised when Jack had broached the subject of a formal divorce to his children even before mentioning it to Rose Marié. “Frankly, I’m out of there, dad,” he wrote from Annapolis. “Do what you have to do. By all means necessary.”

Jenny told Jack simply, “I could handle that.”

The divorce began in January of 1990 and ended, finally, on July 26, 1991. Once Rose Marié and her lawyer got wind of the volleyball player in Jack’s life, they intuited, correctly, that she was the catalyst for the divorce and further assumed, incorrectly, that she was probably pregnant and Jack would offer the sun, the moon and the stars in return for a quick resolution. Confronted with what he considered outrageous demands, Jack stalled. The divorce, which had begun quietly, turned into a real *War of the Roses*, which took a subtle toll on Jenny’s relationship with her dad. “I don’t know how I would have wanted him to behave,” she admitted later. “I wanted him to stand up to Mom. I was basically sympathetic with Dad, and I’d been fighting Mom for years. That’s a natural thing in adolescent girls. But all of a sudden there was this Kelly person, more my age than Mom’s. She was really more a threat to me than to Mom, because Dad apparently loved her, and he loved me, but he never loved Mom, so where could he find love for her except by taking love from me? That was kind of the way things looked. Dad was willing to break up the Creed family unit as I knew it for this other . . . girl.”

On April 17, 1990, the cumulative weight of distance, talk, Kelly Ayers, and the divorce collapsed around Jenny Lynn Creed. Denny McPhearson, a male classmate whose father taught at Busiris, told her that an accusation of statutory rape had ended her father’s employment at Busiris and thus his life with her in Riverton.

The accusation connected with something Rose Marié had said about Jack “having an eye for young girls, especially his students,” and it fit with what she knew of this coed named Kelly.

Mentally Jenny inventoried everything her father had ever said or done involving her or her friends. “I couldn’t remember ever feeling molested, harassed, or even uncomfortable, so the picture didn’t fit. But something about it stuck, and this guy was very adamant. He’d been trying to get me to go out with him and had every reason to be making a good impression, not screwing with my mind. ‘I’m really sorry to be the one to tell you,’ he said. ‘I thought you knew. Everyone else does.’

“It was the ‘everyone else does’ that really wrecked me. The thought of my father with a girl my age devastated me. And of course I was thinking of Dad in 1990, not of dad in, for all I knew, 1972. So that made things even more grotesque.

“Anyway, I was unbelievably upset. I was crying and everything. I just left school immediately, cut practice and drove out to Burr Oak. I didn’t know what to do, really, just be alone and think. But dad’s ghost was there, and I couldn’t think straight, so I drove to my best friend’s, Pam Meyer. By then school was finished. Pam came home and could see I was really upset. I was all red around the eyes and incoherent. I couldn’t tell her what the problem was, and she kept making all kinds of wild guesses. Finally I said, ‘It’s just something about my mom and dad.’

“Then Mom called looking for me, because I hadn’t shown up for softball, and my car was gone, and some kids had noticed I was upset. Pam covered and said I would be home soon, so that was okay. Mrs. Myers invited me to stay for dinner, but I told her I wasn’t very hungry. I just kept nearly breaking down.

“Finally Pam said, ‘Look, Jenny, I’m supposed to be your best friend. You can share anything with me, and I’ll never tell a living soul, you know that. There’s nothing I wouldn’t tell you.’

“So I just asked her, ‘Tell me honestly, Pam, what do you think of my dad?’

“ ‘Neat guy,’ she said. ‘Everybody says so. Everybody says you’re lucky. Except, of course, you’re not, because he’s up in

Wisconsin.'

"I asked if she'd ever heard anything bad about him from anybody. She said no. I said ever? She said never. I said, 'on your honor?' She said, 'On my honor. I wouldn't lie to you. You're my best friend. I wish my boyfriend was more like your dad.'

"Then I told her what I'd heard. She couldn't believe it. 'Dennis said everybody at school knew, and he thought I did too.'

" 'Dennis is a geek. He doesn't really like you, Jenny.'

" 'Did you ever hear anything like that?'

" 'That's ridiculous. He's just saying that to hurt you, because you're going out with Andy and not him and he hates Andy. Dennis is jealous. That's why he hates you.'

" 'I never really understood why dad quit Busiris,' I told her.

" 'It doesn't make sense,' Pam reasoned. 'If he did something like that, he'd be in trouble with the cops. Or her parents. Not Busiris. Besides, kids at the university are over eighteen. Dennis is a geek.'

" 'That's what I thought. It's pretty awful.'

" 'There's only one way you're going to find out for sure, though,' Pam said. 'You got to ask your dad. Or your mom.'

" 'Mom can't be objective.'

" 'Then you have to ask your dad. He loves you and will tell you the truth. You can't go through the rest of your life with something like that hanging over your head.' "

Jack did not hear of the conversation between Pam Myers and his daughter. He didn't even know Dennis McPhearson. What he did know was that when he returned from school that evening, about 8:30, he received a long distance phone call from an obviously distraught and, he thought, slightly distant daughter, which began, "I've got something important to ask you, Dad, and I can't talk very long because mom's due home at nine."

Jenny began by asking Jack why he'd left Busiris. Jack answered with what he saw as the reasons behind the excuses: the meanness of the environment, the unhappiness of his life, the protracted battle between himself and the institution. He did not mention Lily Lee, Annie Brower, Shirley Friedman, or Leanna Robertson.

"One of the kids at school said you had to leave," she told him.

"That's technically true," Jack admitted. "I was fired. Well, that's not technically true. It was suggested that I resign, and I took the suggestion."

"Why did you get fired?" Jenny asked her father.

"It's very complicated," Jack told her, "and I don't really understand it myself. I think I was ready to resign, and people there knew it. They gave me a little push, and I did it."

"It must have been pretty bad to get you fired."

"I personally don't think that anything I did to or at Busiris before February of 1985 was bad enough to get me fired," Jack told the daughter he loved. "If I had been vice president, and I honestly mean this, I would have given me a fat raise and a promotion."

"One of the kids at school said you got fired for statutory rape." Jenny started crying softly over the phone.

Jack was stunned. "I can't tell you why I got fired," he answered finally, "but I can guarantee you it was not for statutory rape, and anybody who says it was should be sued for slander."

"He said everyone at school knows. He said he thought I knew."

"That's just a lie," Jack said, increasingly angry.

"Then why did you go?" Jennifer wanted to know.

"Because I felt it was right to go. Because the people at Busiris were dishonorable people, and I thought I should not have anything more to do with dishonorable people."

“What were the reasons, Dad?” Jenny wanted to know.

“I can’t tell you the specifics. The whole thing is classified,” Jack told her. “But I can guarantee it had nothing to do with statutory rape. Absolutely. That’s a terribly mean accusation to make. There aren’t any children at Busiris. Children are your mother’s department at Helping Hands.”

For twenty minutes Jack tried to convince his daughter he had not lost his job for molesting girls under the age of eighteen. In his craw stuck the truth that he’d lost his job in part because he’d been accused of molesting girls over the age of eighteen. Further in his craw stuck the truth that he had not molested anyone. But how to defend himself, this time to his own daughter, against charges that could not be articulated?

Finally Jenny said, “I hear Mom’s car. I better hang up now. I still love you lots, Dad.” Then she hung up the telephone.

Jack’s reaction was confused. At first, he sat in angry confusion, mentally cursing Reich and Hauptmann and Busiris. “It was the very scenario I’d pictured back in 1985. The worst gossip circulates and, in the absence of facts, assumes the aura of a possible truth. There’s no defending yourself except a public hearing, which is impossible because the accusers are granted anonymity and exemption from cross-examination. Even a public investigation risks self-incrimination. Stella pooh-poohed my fears, but there it all was, years later, coming from my own daughter. The fuckers had fucked me over good.”

Jack left the farmstead, walking out into the wet spring night, railing aloud against Reich and Hauptmann. “I still love you lots, Dad,” echoed in his head. It was the “still” that hurt. Jenny at least had convicted him.

Jack walked a mile down the road, long, angry strides. The conversation replayed itself. He rehearsed what he had said, what he should have said. For a moment, finally, his wrath directed itself against the women who had played along with Reich and

Hauptmann and Nation, girls not much older than his daughter. Then his pace slowed and he turned around.

Back at the farm house, he put a sheet of paper in his typewriter and started to type a letter. “Daughter whom I love and have missed so much,” it began. Jack stopped typing and began to weep.

After fifteen minutes, another idea took possession of him. From the Red Files in the living room he fished his copies of the Busiris documents and his diaries for 1985, the year in Wales, and his first year in Lake-of-the-Woods. He selected also his own portfolio of letters from the Busiris days, reviews of books, newspaper articles, citations and commendations, most importantly letters from colleagues and students congratulating him on what a fine fellow he was. These I have read: there were dozens of them, many indicating one degree or another of intimacy and affection. Finally he took the file marked “Lily Lee Martin.” These he placed on the passenger’s seat of the 1966 Mustang and, without phoning Kelly Ayers, began driving south.

It was 10:00 p. m.

Down the black ribbon of County F drove the red sports car with the gold and blue “U. S. N. A.” decal on the back window. Edgewater. Birchwood. Mikaga. Campa. Rice Lake. Rain driving across the valley. The interstate and Chippewa Falls. Eau Claire. Tomah. Mauston. Jack was oblivious to the landscape of birch and pine, opening at points to fields and water shining darkly in the sporadic moonlight. His mind spun out across the landscape to other geographies, other times, to evening campfires at Burr Oak Park; to afternoons at the Riverton Zoo; to a little bed-and-breakfast in Betws-y-Coed, Wales, and the epic 1983 adventure in the United Kingdom, and the golden summer of 1985, and the empty Fulbright in Swansea, and the reasons for its emptiness. To every dance recital and softball game and Riverton Central football or basketball game he had endured for the sake of his children. To the great Bucyrus Bucks game against UCLA and Notre Dame, where Timm had watched his heroes on court, and Jenny had watched her

heroes on the perimeter of the court. To the grade school conferences, where he'd heard like a litany, "You have the most wonderful child, you have the most wonderful child, you have the most wonderful child." To the birthdays, the vacation visits to Grandma and Grandpa, to each Christmas eve and Easter morning, to church, to school, to fishing expeditions in Burr Oak Park and north to Wisconsin, to the simple, empty afternoons—all too few—playing catch with a softball, playing run-and-throw with a sponge football across the living room and hallway floors in the home in Riverton.

Camp Douglas. Mauston. Lyndon Station. A spire of limestone jutting up from the sheltering valley. The Dells. Portage.

The breaking of the North Country woods.

1:00 a.m. Jack's mind expands with the news. Moscow cutting oil and gas supplies to Lithuania. Consumer prices up .5% in March, 8.5% annually. Genetic link found to alcoholism. Cubs defeat Mets 8-6 in thirteen innings after Strawberry strikes out with bases loaded. Cards 4-4 after loss to Pittsburgh.

What, Jack wonders, is to become of Lithuania? Of Hungary and Czechoslovakia and brave Poland? Anything that could conceivably involve the Navy? Is .5% inflation a good number or the start of another run of inflation akin to what he had weathered in the seventies? Would Strawberry's K-2 cost the Metsees a pennant? What would the backward view show of this night, ten, twenty years hence? A night like any other night, inconsequential against the enormous expanses of space and time? A night of decision?

Jack thinks back ten, twenty years. What was he doing twenty years ago this night?

Jack remembers vividly the moment he wrote "C" beside Shirley Friedman's name on a grade sheet. The day he read "Howl" to a class containing Leanna Robertson. They were spur-of-the-moment decisions made in the heat of a hundred other things to do. He had given them perhaps ten minutes' thought. Who possibly can weigh

the consequences of each of his actions? The first cell to go cancerous? Strawberry was expecting fastball when he got a curve. If the pitch had hung. If the pitch had broken a split second sooner. Or later. Two inches closer to the plate. Who can identify the minute fulcrum on which swings the movement of our life?

“Isolating a specific gene in the human DNA complex is like finding the dead light bulb in one room of one apartment of one city on the North American continent.”

Everything is causal. Nothing is inevitable.

Until something is, and you’re over the edge.

Live your three-score years and ten, and then you are dead for billions of years.

Jack’s mind too breaks free of Wisconsin, free of the radio, spreading now across the great prairie opening around him, across the continent, across the waters to parents, brothers, sisters, the folks asleep on the Island, Rose Marié’s parents somewhere, now, in Jersey, Timm in Annapolis, Lily Lee somewhere in the great American immensity with her husband and her kids. Carolyn McQuillan, now who knows where? Paul Popowski, now who knows where? May O’Hara. Lynette Taylor. Terry Cunningham. Billy Joe Allen. André Washington. His editors, his writer friends. Kesey and Bly, Etter and Blei. Mr. Dylan himself. His enemies as well, Berthold Reich—how sleeps his head this April night? Blondie Robertson, who knows where? Shirley Friedman, who knows where? Repentant yet? Understanding yet? Giving even a moment’s thought to the mischief she had worked? And Rose Marié—how sleeps her innocent head this April night, with the kiss of spring upon the land, and the warm, moist breath of spring seeping through the auto’s closed windows?

2:15 and the Illinois border. The red Mustang coasts to a stop in front of a sign reading “Buckle Up, Its Our Law.” With a red felt-tip embossed “Novum State University” Jack adds the missing

apostrophe. Then he returns to the Mustang, buckles up, and continues south.

Rockford. Mendota. Peru, asleep now in the morning stillness. The empty streets of the tiny river villages, asleep in the moonlit stillness. South into warmth. South into memories. South into the history stored in the documents by his side, in the tiny, mysterious, infinite complexity of his memory, his imagination.

5:47 and Riverton. This town too asleep. Jenny Lynn sleeping? Jack cannot imagine. He has driven nearly eight hours now and formulated no plan. How to explain his life, the reasons for all the things he had done? How to argue his case before the only jury that really counts?

At 5:55 Jack's red Mustang coasts to a stop in front of the house that was once his home. More history, more life in need of explanation, more explanation he can never offer. "The reason we repress pain," he thinks, "is that dealing with it all is simply too devastating." He sits for a minute or two, staring at the house. "This is a fine house," he thinks. "It would serve somebody well." He hopes it serves Jenny well, and, for that matter, he hopes it serves Rose Marié well too.

At 6:00 a.m. Jack unlocks the front door of the house that was once his home. A thousand times he has opened this door. Muffled cries of "Daddy's home! Daddy's home!" breathe from the curtains, echo through the infinite complexities of his memory. But not in his ears. "If all time is eternally present. . . ." There is no sound in the house.

Quietly Jack ascends the carpeted stairs of the house that was once his home, past the closet that once contained his clothes, outside the bedroom he and Rose Marié once shared. Pulse racing, breath short, he passes Timm's bedroom, door open, still filled with his trophies and citations, with his Riverton Central letter jacket, with, yes, his stuffed Teddy Bear. Past Rose Marié's door, shut fast, the sound of snoring from behind. Through Jenny Lynn's open door,

Jenny sprawled across her bed, a bare pitcher and basin on the dresser, her softball uniform on the floor beside a pile of notebooks and textbooks. She sleeps soundly, Jack thinks, in the cave of her canopy bed.

Then, in his daughter's bedroom, in the house that was no longer his, Jack realizes that there is no plan.

In the gathering dawn he bends quietly over the sleeping form and kisses her lightly on the cheek. Silently he removes the red felt-tip from his pocket and the Minnesota Twins baseball cap from his head and sets them atop her books. Turns. Hesitates. Returns and picks them up again. Noiselessly he backs out of the room, silently descends the stairs, lets himself silently out the door. He puts the Mustang in neutral and pushes it a block down the road before starting the engine. By 6:15 a.m. on April the 18th, Jack is out of Riverton.

At 8:15 he phones the department secretary asking her to cancel his day's classes and let Kelly know he'll be in touch by early evening. By mid-afternoon he is back on the farm, writing a brief letter to his daughter: "I couldn't explain it in a hundred years, but just trust your father on this one. My departure from Busiris had nothing to do with statutory rape."

Then Jack slept for a few hours. In the evening he phoned Kelly. He said merely that his daughter was having problems which had nothing to do with the divorce and he'd made a quick trip to Riverton. Kelly let the matter drop. She knew what Timm and Jenny meant to Jack, and besides, she had wisely decided to stay out of whatever went on down in Riverton. As a result of her ignorance, however, Kelly interpreted the growing split between Jack and Jenny more as a result of the divorce, and her relationship with Jack, than it might have been. Looking back in 1996, she voiced second thoughts. "I know Jack was trying to avoid anything that might make him look bad, or remind me of our age differences. And he always told me that what was going on between him and Jenny had nothing to do

with us. Probably it was the right call. But maybe if he'd explained the whole situation, I would have blamed myself a little less."

For the balance of 1990, and into 1991 and 1992, the whole situation was not good. Jenny never knew of Jack's midnight ride. She shut Dennis McPhearson out of her life, but, afraid of what she might find, made no investigation of her father's resignation. When Jack telephoned next, she made no mention of the incident. Her written response to his letter was a strained version of "I still love you." Jack, who had formulated no answers, was more than happy to let it ride. Still, a new reserve had crept into Jenny's telephone voice and into her relationship with her father. On his next visit, Jack noted that his daughter seemed to duck his fatherly hugs. Over the course of weeks and months, she was increasingly "busy" during his visits, "away" when he called.

Jack's calls and visits became less frequent.

Jenny's reassessment of her father was encouraged by the late eighties consciousness-raising talk at the high school warning women against predatory men and alerting them to the dangers of rape, assault, and harassment. She began to see in her debonair, fun-loving rogue of a father suggestions of the dangerous psychopath hysterical feminists and date-rape counselors like to portray lurking inside even the most innocuous looking dates, husbands, fathers, strangers, and guys next door.

"There was a poster my senior year at Central," she told me, "one of those 'When Does a Date Become a Rape?' things—they were all over Bryn Mawr—with this gorgeous hunk of a fraternity guy on it, and all these inflated statistics about date rape and harassment underneath. I used to walk by it and think, 'That guy looks like pictures of dad when he was younger.' I couldn't help making the connection, which was exactly what the people who made up the poster wanted you to do. 'Any male you know could be a rapist,' they tell you. Subtly it becomes 'every male you know is a rapist.' That's probably what they want you to think too. Some radical feminists actually say that: all heterosexual intercourse is rape, so every

heterosexual male is a rapist. It's very insidious, I now realize. Lesbian propaganda. The posters and the talks did me a lot of harm, and it was years before I got my head straight. Sometimes I think that I still make that subconscious association between the guy on those posters and every other male I meet. If I were the victim type, or just somebody looking for quick cash, I think I'd have a good law suit—against whoever printed and posted those posters."

Rose Marié, as ignorant of the entire episode as Kelly Ayers, sensed she had gained some mysterious edge which could be exploited, if not in the divorce court, at some future time. Disappointed at receiving only the house in Riverton with all its furnishings, half of Jack's retirement, and forty-eight $1,200 alimony-child support payments, when the time came to select a college for Jenny, Rose elected to assert her advantage. "I certainly don't want my daughter going to Wisconsin, near her father" she admitted to my wife.

"Madison is a good school. She'd get in-state tuition there."

"She can get in-state tuition at Illinois. Besides, tuition is Jack's problem. Let Mr. Moneybags worry about tuition. Or is he too broke paying for his little bed partner?"

Rose Marié made sure Jenny visited at least six different elite East Coast schools, including Radcliffe, Mt. Holyoke, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Swarthmore, and Brown. "Dad said 'nothing east of the Appalachians,' " Jenny told her mother.

"I'm sure he wants only the best for you. As do I," Rose Marié assured her daughter.

Jack did, but Bryn Mawr was a large lump to swallow. Women's Studies at Bryn Mawr was even larger.

Jack sent Jenny a copy of "Women's Lib.: the Conservative Revolution."

"You told Timm, if the good ones won't do it, the assholes will," she reminded him.

“I don’t think you’re going to be happy there,” Jack told Jenny on the telephone.

“You said it’s my call.”

“It’s your call,” Jack agreed.

“*Songs of the North Country* better get me a bunch of readings and talks,” he thought to himself. “Or another Pulitzer.”

Kelly Ayers said nothing.

On her eighteenth birthday, Jack sent Jenny $3,000 toward her first term’s tuition and another letter:

Daughter Whom I Love,

I sit here 1,000 miles away from you, thinking about your eighteenth birthday, about all the good talks we have had on night walks and at the zoo (about all the good talks those miles have prevented us from having), and my joy for what has been is as great as my sorrow for what has not been. I guess that’s the way life works out most of the time —a lot of happiness, a lot of sorrow, and as often as not, the things that cause the sorrow are the same things that cause the joy. Maybe that’s what Emerson meant by “compensation.”

What is most on my mind, of course, is your birthday, a milestone of sorts. Traditionally, eighteen is the time when girls become women, although Shakespeare’s Juliet and Chaucer’s Wife of Bath were married at thirteen and fourteen, and other women manage to prolong their girlhood until they die. Anyway, happy birthday. You’re legal now.

I’m not sure what fathers are supposed to say to their daughters under the present circumstances of family life, or how much you want to hear from me given the current state of our relationship, which seems not to be as close as it once was. Lou Feracca and I once talked about father-son

and father-daughter talks. My position was that we should say the same things to the girls that we say to the boys. Lou's response was, "Why bother? Kari wouldn't need it, and Julie wouldn't understand it."

Robert Bly told me that what eighteen-year-old girls need they typically can't get from their fathers. Maybe that's so.

However, you're not Kari or Julie, and you're not the typical daughter, as I'm not the typical father. Since Timm seems to have taken somewhat to heart the letter I wrote him on his eighteenth, and you're the one who told me to write all this stuff down—remember that great night camping in Maryland?—I believe I owe you a similar letter . . . just some of the things I've learned my four and a half decades on this planet. Much of what I'm saying may not make much sense to you now, but the benefit of writing this father-daughter talk is that it will still be around—if you save it—in five or ten or twenty years. Maybe each time you read it, it will make more sense. Not that a daddy can live his might-have-beens (or avoid his should-not-have-beens) in his daughter's life, but perhaps some of what I've learned can make your life a little easier.

The most pressing consideration, I suppose, is sex. Your mom and I have not set a really good example: men and women are supposed to like each other, have fun together in a very physical way. Sex is supposed to be natural, comfortable, a joy. It can be, but there's a great deal of trouble, confusion, deflation of ego, and genuine discomfort along the way. Many men and women go a lifetime without developing a really satisfying relationship because variables are so many and social contexts are so constantly changing. One of the characters McMurtry's *The Last Picture Show* remarks, "It's terrible to only find one man your life who knows what you're worth." At least she found one.

I'd encourage you to date, and to develop familiarity and intimacy with boys. Expect confusion, frustration, and pain —physical and psychological—at first. Boys don't really know much more than girls. Don't be discouraged. Forgive yourself, and forgive others. They're probably not using you anymore than you're using them. Looked at from a certain perspective, all relationships involve using. Never feel obligated to give either sex or love just because somebody else wants or "needs" it. And don't force either sex or love on yourself or some boy. Unwilling love is not love at all. Do not buy, trade, or sell love for the same reason. And many forms of sales do not involve money. You know that.

On sex, I'm really of two minds. On the one hand, it seems a natural thing for both men and women. What does Mim say in Updike's *Rabbit Redux*? "It's what people do." I don't suggest you hop from boy to boy, bed to bed (I can't imagine you doing that anyway), but virginity is a funny thing: kept long enough, it becomes more of a burden than a virtue. And virginity is a mental state as well as a physical condition: a woman who spends eighteen, twenty-one, thirty-five years avoiding sex is not going to change much on the night of her marriage.

On the other hand, losing love can knock you just plain flat on your ass ("everybody sees you're blown apart; everybody feels the wind blow"), and sex can be dangerous to reputation as well as health. Guys who get around are called stallions or studs; women who sleep around are called tramps and whores. The old double standard is still alive. More importantly, the various sexually transmitted diseases have increased in number and severity over the past decade: they range from uncomfortable and inconvenient to fatal. Mono requires a long rest. Herpes and AIDS have no known cure.

So I don't know what to say, except don't avoid sex, don't run out looking for sex, don't use sex. (There's the tricky one.) Someone once told me that women trade sex for intimacy, men trade intimacy for sex . . . and after marriage, both renege on the agreement. In my experience there's some truth to that statement. Anyway, if you're going to have sex, use birth control pills *and* make sure the guy is using a condom. Don't feel guilty. Don't do what you don't find enjoyable, and don't feel guilty about not doing it.

I am also of two minds on dope. As you know, I drink occasionally, less now than I used to. Your mother drinks more than she used to. I smoked my share of pot before I married your mother. I don't think it did me much harm; it might have done me some good. Food, sex, music and art are very good on pot. I know people who dropped acid without apparent side-effects, although I never did acid. I know a Busiris student who rotted his brains out on chemicals . . . became an absolute vegetable, so that they finally had to pull the plug on him. Hard drugs can and do injure people. Lay off the cocaine: it rots the nose and brain. People who offer you hard drugs are just looking for somebody to drag down into the same hole they're in.

Cars can be dangerous as well as lots of fun. Thousands of people die each year in accidents. One could be you, but that doesn't mean you don't drive. It means you drive with careful abandon. Sports can be dangerous. Dozens of people die in athletic competition each year, and the number of athletes with wrecked legs is astounding. That doesn't mean you avoid sports. You'll discover that most of what's fun is also potentially dangerous. The fact that 100% of people who live end up dead doesn't mean you quit living. It means you live with careful abandon. And yes, it's true, you can't tell what's enough until you've found out what's too much.

But hey, this sounds too grim. I have had a pretty fun life. I've taken a few bad spills and paid a price. Your mother, conversely, takes few risks . . . and pays a price for her timidity. She's definitely more unhappy than I, and I suspect her relative melancholy comes from her refusal to cut loose and take risks. I'd rather have life my way, and I see a lot of me in you.

Whatever happens, never, never, never sell out the enormous talent you have. Know always that your father loves you very much and will come any time you call with whatever you need. The door to his house is always open, and he will do anything he can, under any circumstances, to help you out in a jam. The chances are good he's been in a similar jam himself.

For the past two months I have been thinking of what advice a father should give his daughter on her eighteenth birthday, composing a little list. At the risk of sounding like an old fool, or shockingly direct, or morbid, or sentimental, here's that list. Some of this will sound familiar, from the night walk talks. I hope it helps you, now and later, that it sees you through some sleepless nights, that it helps you avoid some of the mistakes I have made, that it brings you some of the joy I've experienced.

1. It all goes by all too quickly.

2. Refuse to harden yourself. Practice naiveté, even against strong evidence.

3. Live not merely a life, but a life that makes a difference.

4. She who loves, commits herself to folly. She who, for that reason, abstains from love, commits even greater folly.

5. Life, finally, is a little thing. Learn to laugh, and laugh easily.

6. Forgive others. Forgive yourself.

7. You are never as well off, or as bad off, as you think you are.

8. Things look worst at night. Come morning, it'll be better.

9. A lie is sometimes kinder than the truth, and kindness is the greatest virtue.

l0. Exercise develops the body, study the mind, and art the spirit.

11. Too many women have learned too late that there is no future in marrying a pair of wide shoulders and big biceps.

12. Don't let them fool you: there is a power structure, and it is deliberately trying to keep you ignorant, especially of your own history.

13. Why be little when you can be big?

14. Don't look back. You can't live in a museum, and you can't relive, or change, your life.

15. For what it's worth, the things that have given me most joy in my life, in rank order, are (1) my children, (2) travel, (3) music, (4) sex, (5) reading, (6) sports and athletics, (7) my own writing, and (8) art.

16. "May you always do for others and let others do for you." (Dylan)

17. Ideas are cheap. Talk is cheaper. Work gets things done.

18. As soon expect blood from a turnip as justice from the law.

19. We are all prisoners of our own experience, and ultimately we all die alone.

20. Never say no when you can say yes. But when you must, say no.

21. Air, earth, fire, water. The basics.

22. The best way to be is to do.

23. It all comes ‘round again. They all come ‘round again. At least once.

24. Any creator who would make desire both a natural appetite and a sin is not a god you would care to spend eternity with.

25. Things take time. Great things take a great deal of time.

26. Motives are always mixed, in you and in everyone else. If you wait to act until your motives are pure, you’ll get nothing done. And don’t second-guess yourself.

27. Most of the boundaries that circumscribe your life’s potentialities are beyond your power to enlarge.

28. Way does lead on to way, and given time even the most horrendous crisis will resolve itself.

29. God did not intend women to be merely sex partners, merely consumers, or, for that matter, merely mothers.

30. America must struggle constantly to reclaim its democracy.

31. Books are the minds of the people, and a people which discards its books is losing its mind.

32. For what it’s worth, the major literary influences on my life have been the Bible, Thoreau’s *Walden,* Bob Dylan’s songs, Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* (even the later, religious ones), Whitman’s Kerouac’s *On the Road,* and Kesey’s *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest.* I commend all of them to you.

33. Help the good people. Kick the assholes in the balls. If you err, err on the side of generosity.

34. One’s job should interfere as little as possible with the real work of one’s life.

35. If a woman wants her man to take good care of her, she should act and look like she's worth taking care of.

36. "There's no use in tryin' to deal with the dyin' " (Dylan again). Or, you can't argue with an ideologue, because they're not rational and they're really not very smart.

37. Just because you make love with a guy doesn't mean you have to marry him.

38. Don't waste psychic energy worrying about things you can't control.

39. Looking over my life, I can find few things I regret having done, many things I wish I had done, or wish I had done more often.

40. Relationships are easier to begin than to end.

41. A woman should be always just a tiny bit of a con.

42. Love your body and take care of it. It's not likely to go away.

43. Most people are small, petty, mean, unimaginative, boring assholes. They run this country and your life.

44. Passion is half way to love, which is all we know of god.

45. There is a direct inverse correlation between true value and monetary value.

46. But making money is easy: swim where the money is.

47. It's easier than you can ever imagine to fill your life with junk.

48. What many teachers, some men, and all corporate employers want is strong, imaginative, creative individuals who will sit down, shut up, and do as they're told.

49. "When mastery comes, the God of Love anon beats his wings, and farewell! he is gone." (Chaucer)

50. One of your life's goals should be to create as little trash as possible.

51. If you want to live, sane, past twenty-five, you have to come to terms with paradox and contradiction.

52. If you parade your body around, you will attract men who admire you for your body. Dress well, and you will attract men who love you for your clothes. Drive a fast car, and you'll attract guys who love your car. Well, what did you expect?

53. If you are intelligent, decent, and punctual, lay off the dope, and are willing to work, you will be ahead of 95% of the assholes in this country, and you'll do okay.

54. Life consists of getting yourself into and out of trouble.

55. You have no obligation in this life to carry those who can—and should—carry themselves.

56. If your life gets shitty, change it. There's no excuse for living in unhappiness.

57. Much of what you take for granted—public education, democracy, personal freedom—is recent social experimentation. The outcome may depend on you.

58. There is only the Eternal Now. As Dave Etter put it, the past is a stale beer and the future a loaded shotgun.

59. There is a significant difference between culture and civilization. We are given too few years to waste our years rooting around snout-down in a trash-heap culture.

60. There are the times you live for, and the times you live through.

61. People who have never failed have probably not stretched themselves very far.

62. Why work at your play, or play at your work?

63. Intensity, passion, fire. That's all there is.

64. The obligation of people who have money is to spend it on worthy projects.

65. Dream big, or what's a heaven for?

66. Lose your dreams and you will lose your mind. (The Rolling Stones)

67. Love yourself. Love others. Love this mad, insane country and this fragile globe that is our home.

68. Take no one's word for it.

69. The purpose of sex is pleasure. If it's not pleasurable, why do it?

70. Keep an open mind, and somebody will fill it full of crap.

71. On the road of life, we travel mostly at night, in heavy fog.

72. Failure often teaches as much as, sometimes more than success.

73. Yes, what you've heard is true: you are running against the wind.

74. Nevertheless, do what needs to be done. By all means necessary.

# Chapter 16
# **Virginia Coyle**

Ed Haley once described Virginia Coyle as “the most self-centered individual I ever met. The universe revolves around her, and she is that universe. There’s nobody else in it. No students, no colleagues, certainly no men. As far as we could figure, no family. She doesn’t see you, she doesn’t hear you. She hears only golden trumpets celebrating her eminence, which is a lot less eminent than she imagines. But Virginia—you have to understand this—genuinely believes she’s the next Barbara Tuchman or Helen Vendler.”

Lloyd Cowley was less charitable. “Virginia is the supreme product of affirmative action,” he grumbled. “Mediocrity empowered to empower more mediocrity. She’s more proof, if you want more proof, that affirmative action in action means no action.”

Marilyn Schneider’s view was tempered and politic. “Virginia was just not right for us, for our students. When she wants to, she can look very professional. At the right school . . . a research institution, perhaps, where she could sit quietly in her office and read books. Perhaps. Somewhere out East. Here? I’m afraid that she just did not connect with rural Wisconsin.”

“Yeah,” Jack added. “Sit quietly in her office and collect $30,000 a year. She’d have loved it. Virginia never put in a day of useful work in her life. Not teaching, and not researching either. Not even politics.”

Dr. Virginia Coyle was precisely the kind of woman who—given Jack’s blue-collar proclivities, his high level of energy, and his preference for sassy, young, go-getter coeds over middle-aged academic feminists—would be expected to grate on him, and he on her. Even Jack agreed the pair created a mutually hostile working environment. “However,” he always added, “I was here first. The burden of adjustment is on her. Plus, there’s nothing sexual about it.

Take one look at her, and you'll see exactly what I mean. That woman is a walking blizzard."

Virginia Coyle came to Novum State in the fall of 1991 as a result of a national search for a fixed-term adjunct appointment to fill Eric Syverson's one-year sabbatical leave. The department anticipated another sabbatical the following year, and another the year after that. In fact, the department anticipated a long string of vacancies. With NSU enrollments generally up, the English department expected all sabbatical leaves to be replaced. As a department which enrolled every NSU student in a minimum of four required courses, it even entertained hopes of adding a tenure-track position in the not-too-distant future. Had Virginia played her cards right, she could have parlayed her one year into a lifetime job.

The position for which Virginia Coyle applied, however, was not a tenure-track position, or even a multi-year appointment. It was not advertised as tenure-track position, and her contract was not written as a tenure-track position. All records at Novum State, and all individuals involved in the hiring—except for Coyle—agree that there was no promise, indication, or even talk of tenure or permanence. Most people did assume that if and when a tenure-track position opened, "near and dear beats strange on the range," as Lloyd Cowley put it. But everyone at Novum saw Coyle's 1991-92 appointment as nothing more than the first of a possible string of sabbatical replacement contracts, or the rail position in a race for a tenure-track job.

Novum might even have covered Syverson's sabbatical internally, saving its faculty and students a good deal of suffering, had not SUUFAMP been crusading against administrative abuse of overload and adjunct contracts. Ironically, SUUFAMP President Charles Creed was a leader in that crusade. "America is full of intelligent people who have in good faith plowed their way through the death of a Ph. D., and then they got finished and found—nothing. No job, no prospects, not even unemployment. Because fat cat M. A.'s who haven't done a thing in the twenty years since they left

graduate school are gobbling up four and five overloads a year." Using the same logic employed by Lou Feracca in spring, 1985, SUUFAMP argued that full-time faculty could not effectively teach one and two overload sections each term, and that the sustained, planned use of adjunct personnel was exploitative.

"The school knows it will need at least one more full-time position in English for each of the next four years," Marilyn Schneider argued. "Andy Olsen's own projected student populations for the next four years would justify two and two-thirds positions. The need for another person in the English department will probably last forever, so there is no reason on earth this position should not be tenure-track. At the very least it should be a full-time, fixed-term position, not just a bunch of part-time and overload classes."

Administration was amenable to a compromise, as long as the position could be used to improve the school's affirmative action profile and increase cultural diversity. Affirmative action and cultural diversity were two very strong thrusts in Wisconsin education from the middle 1980s to the middle 1990s. "Brownie points with Madison," Jack called the agreement. "A blueprint for mediocrity if ever I saw one, but one of those compromises you have to make. With a little diligence and a lot of luck we could have done ourselves some good while doing Madison some good too. We just weren't diligent. Or lucky."

With authorization to advertise a fixed-term appointment nationwide, the English department received very explicit instructions: hire black, Hispanic, Native American or female, or don't hire anyone.

"In those days women counted," Lloyd explained. "Asians didn't count, because they were too successful, too good. Real African Africans didn't count. Why, I don't know. Certainly Eastern Europeans didn't count, and Jews didn't count, although there isn't a Jew within thirty miles of Lake-of-the-Woods. We were not told to look specifically for a young Ph. D., or for a gay Ph. D., or for somebody with a handicap, or for a person from a working-class

background. Any one of them would have diversified our department and provided useful role models for some of our students, and all that other shit the cultural diversity people use as excuses for imposing quotas. If we really wanted diversity, we would have gone for a Buddhist. If we really wanted a role model, we would have gone for a single-parent mother of two who grew up on a farm, got married and divorced, and worked her way through an M. A. program. We had a lot more of those women in our program than we had blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics, or childless second-generation academic females from California.

"But we were told to go for a black, a Native American, or a Hispanic—none of whom we had. Or a woman, several of whom we already had. Go figure. Affirmative action is all bullshit. The longer you look at it, the more it unravels. The point is, administration told us to select a candidate from a very narrow list of minorities, or hire nobody."

The directive met some resistance within the department. "It's patently discriminatory," Lloyd Cowley pointed out in November, "an administrative intrusion on departmental turf. Who we recommend, and why we recommend are our own business. That's the way it has always been, and that's the way it should be."

"Minorities are very underrepresented on this campus, Lloyd," Marilyn Schneider argued. "We've talked about that for years. It's time we quit talking and started acting. And women are still very underrepresented on this campus."

"Not so much in this department."

"Even in this department," Marilyn said.

"You would not accept this directive in any other context," Lloyd argued. "I've known you for two decades, Marilyn. This thing goes against everything you believe in."

"I'm for hiring a protected minority not because Andy is telling me to, but because I think we should hire a minority. That's been my position for a number of years now."

“We never discussed this issue when we wrote the job description. Not once. You didn’t bring it up then. Neither did Linda, and she was up here. On that history department chair business, Linda was very clear: hire the best person, male or female, black or white. This minority hiring is administration’s idea. They rewrote our job description. Those are the new terms of the position, right there in print: ‘acceptable candidates will be Black, Native American, Hispanic, or female.’ It’s as much a condition of the job as having a Ph. D. and experience, and it’s a condition imposed by administration. I can’t see it any other way. And I don’t understand your evasion of the obvious.”

“I think your real problem is affirmative action.”

Lloyd’s argument fell on deaf ears.

“You don’t hear the Packers saying, ‘We need a quarterback in the worst way to turn this thing around, and we don’t have any Middle East types on this team, let’s make sure our next quarterback is Syrian, Lebanese or Turkish.’ What kind of a team would they have if they did that? ‘Think what a wonderful role model he’ll be for all the Turks in Wisconsin.’ That’s crazy. Another thing you don’t hear them saying, incidentally, is ‘The Packers are a municipally owned franchise, so the ethnic make-up of the team should be proportional to the ethnic populations of the city of Green Bay.’ They’d be worse than they are now. Lindy Infante doesn’t refuse to look at a quarterback just because he’s black, or Iranian, or Catholic. And he doesn’t hire a guy just because he’s black or Iranian or Catholic. He’s going after the best quarterback he can get. That’s the only way you build a better team.

“Yes, I got a problem with affirmative action. Being black or Hispanic or female has become an unspoken condition of employment. We all know it. It’s discriminatory. We would not tolerate any other unspoken condition of employment that amounted to *de facto* prejudice against certain individuals. Why not just put it in the job description: ‘White Anglo Males Need Not Apply’? You tell me how that’s different than ‘Colored Need Not Apply’? The only fair way

—the only constitutional way—is to be completely color and gender blind. I say we hire the best person for the job."

Lloyd waxed passionate, but he received little support.

"And while I'm on the subject," he added finally, "I'd like to point out that I personally can remember the day when there was not one black man playing professional football, basketball, or baseball. Or college either. I can remember the day I rooted for the team with the black player just because they'd included a Negro on the squad. Nowadays, I root for the team with a white player. If I can find one. Black athletes have taken over football, basketball, and baseball, and they did it just by being good. I'm not complaining. I'm just pointing out that minorities do not need affirmative action programs to break into fields traditionally dominated by white males. They just have to be good enough."

"Our last hire was white, Anglo-Saxon and male," Schneider observed.

"You got a problem with our last hire?"

"Of course not. We're all happy with him. I was just saying. . . ."

"If we're all happy with the white, Anglo-Saxon male, maybe there's another out there just like him. Maybe we'll get lucky with another white Anglo-Saxon male. Now wouldn't that make the most sense?"

"I was saying let's try something different for a change."

"That's not what I do when I'm fishing. I go with the odds, fish the holes that worked for me before. That's what you do when you buy a car. If you get a Chevy that runs good for 200,000 miles, starts all the time in the winter, and gives you no hassles, you buy another Chevy. You don't say, 'Well sir, that old Chevy was one hell of a car, but I'm gonna try something different.' "

Jack avoided the argument entirely. "I was in no position to support you, good buddy," he told Lloyd after the meeting. "In the

first place, I was the last hire. How could I object to a minority this time, when you guys took me, a majority last time?

“In the second place, I have a reputation for being a male chauvinist since that women’s liberation essay. Sometimes I wish I had never written that thing. Also, Linda is still in a snit over my remark that academic feminists are middle-aged, middle-classed nearly menopausal Puritans who were too repressed to get pregnant and have kids of their own but feel the need to scowl and lecture, so they run around picking on everyone else. Having no kids of her own, she took that a little personally, although Linda’s no academic feminist.”

“You could have backed me on the added condition of employment,” Lloyd told Jack. “We can’t let them be rewriting our job descriptions like that.”

“I resigned myself to a compromise,” Jack admitted. “Besides, part of me believes in affirmative action—for the younger people and the working class. Age and class are much stronger determinants of attitude than gender or even race. And in academia? Hell, anybody who makes it through a Ph. D. program is going to come out true WASP. Once the job description stipulates a Ph. D., it doesn’t matter whether you hire a black or a white, a woman or a man, a youngster or an old fart. A Ph. D. is a Ph. D. You got about as much diversity as Republicans and Democrats. I resigned myself, Lloyd.”

Lloyd did not.

“I personally will not participate in any search where the candidate’s qualifications are dictated by administration,” he declared. Then he dropped out of the search committee.

Nobody followed him.

Only one applicant “self-identified” as being black, Hispanic, or Native American: a male named Schmidt who had been born in Argentina. “Technically, he counts as Latino,” the English department was advised. Dr. Schmidt was a linguist with a specialty in socio-semantics.

“I’m afraid we wouldn’t have much use for him,” Marilyn Schneider told the Affirmative Action officer, who was forced to agree.

A candidate named Leroy Brown, with an M. A. from Oklahoma State, sounded promising, but discrete (and illegal) inquiries determined he was no more Afro-American than Leroy Andy Olsen, Novum’s dean.

Most of the 120 applicants were white Anglo males. Several were highly qualified, including a Ph. D. from the University of Minnesota with a published article in a respectable journal, teaching experience as a grad assistant, good recommendations, and youthful energy and imagination. “He also had a wife and a child to support, if that’s a consideration, and I think it should be,” Jack added. “Kind of a 1990 version of me twenty years earlier. The guy should have saved his 29 cents. His credentials were not even considered. The position had become ‘a female position’.”

Even among the women, Virginia Coyle was not the department’s top candidate. Her B. A. in philosophy from St. Mary’s of Maryland, an M. A. in Women’s Studies from Indiana University, and a doctorate from University College, Dublin, with a specialization in Anglo-Irish literature, were not especially suited to the Novum State curriculum. “Her background is all over the place,” Ed Haley pointed out, “and we have nothing here for her to teach. Except for an authors’ class in Yeats or Joyce or something.”

Jack, who had had experience at a U. K. institution, mentioned that European Ph. D. programs differ dramatically from American programs. “I’m not saying it’s less intellectually rigorous, but there is a lot less course work—virtually none—and a lot of sitting around reading books, engaging in research, and chewing the fat with colleagues. Teaching is mostly tutorials, not the U. S. style teaching at all.” Jack figured the fat being chewed at UCD was not very British-American.

“Her M. A. work is not necessarily literature, nor was her B. A.,” someone noted. Novum offered survey courses in American and British literature, with occasional classes in special topics or authors.

“NEH Summer Seminar in ‘Women of the Revolution(s)’,” Ed Haley read. “Now what do you suppose that means?”

“You don’t want to know,” Jack answered, and rolled his eyes slightly. “Highly specialized in areas we don’t need,” he noted under “comments” on his chart of the candidates, later introduced as trial evidence.

Another department member noted, “Her degree is two or three years old. If her research on Maud Gonne is significant, why isn’t it published?”

A third wrote sarcastically, “Having accomplished nothing, applicant seeks to travel somewhere else.”

A lower ranked candidate even among the women, Virginia Coyle would have remained in California but for other accidents of fortune, also related to affirmative action guidelines.

As part of its instruction in equitable hiring procedures, the English department search committee had been directed to formulate a standard set of questions to be asked of all candidates. A list of “Do’s and Don’t’s” instructed the department not to inquire as to age, arrest or conviction records, citizenship, credit, public assistance status, family situation, marital status, disabilities, and political or religious affiliations. The department was warned that “questions regarding any of the aforementioned areas may or may not be discriminatory or illegal in and of themselves” and “answers to questions in some of the above areas may produce an adverse effect on the opportunities of women, racial or ethnic minorities, or older persons to receive full consideration for employment. In any of the listed areas, answers to questions may trigger biases.”

One of the more bizarre features of affirmative action is that employers who are making a special effort to recruit “protected minorities” are supposed to pretend they don’t know the minority is a

minority. It's like an engagement ring your fiancé helps you pick out, and when she receives it, all wrapped up, she's just flabbergasted. "Oh, what a surprise! I never imagined!"

The one thing no one admits is that the minority is being hired because she or he is a minority. Under affirmative action, hypocrisy rules.

The number one female candidate for the position was a Ph. D. in American Studies from Penn State University. Her degree was not quite in hand, but was expected by summer's end . . . was promised in writing by her director by summer's end. The dissertation was finished, even to the final typed version. Only a *pro forma* defense remained. The department, less Lloyd Cowley, interviewed the woman by telephone and found her acceptable, even exciting. Jack liked her, but he was suspicious on the degree business. "You don't have it until you have it," he warned. "I know these East Coast types. There are several other candidates, including other women, who already have their degrees. Some have publications."

The majority of the department, however, favored this candidate. After a few more telephone calls she was flown in for an interview, round-trip air fare Philadelphia to Minneapolis-St. Paul, four-day automobile rental out of Minneapolis-St. Paul, three nights at the Lake-of-the-Woods Quality Court, meals, meetings, tours—the complete package. The department and the University were on their best behavior, the candidate was on her best, and even Jack was impressed. "She had poise and maturity. She got along well with the students, and the sample class, as I recall, went very well. She'd have been a good addition—within the parameters of a middle-aged, middle-class female Ph. D."

Among the questions affirmative action had not permitted to be asked were those regarding the candidate's marital status and number of children, if any. "The woman shows up for the interview alone, and she says nothin'," Jack recalled. "She's personable, competent, apparently hard working. Immediately after she leaves town we meet, talk for all of ten minutes, and vote to hire her. She

hasn't even taken off from the St. Paul Airport, and the offer is in the mail. Marilyn calls her that evening with the good news. She wants a day or two to think things over. Marilyn says, 'Fine, I'll await your call.' A day or two goes by and there's no call. Marilyn phones again, but this woman is not home. She's at another interview, we figure, and start to worry. A week later she calls and turns us down cold.

"Not that she didn't love the school, love the faculty, love the state, mind you. All of them are just beautiful, exactly what she's dreamt of. What a wonderful place to teach and live. Couldn't be more effusive.

"Problem is, the woman is married. To a lawyer, now that you ask, who has naturally not passed the Wisconsin bar, who practices in Pennsylvania and doesn't really care to relocate in Wisconsin. Not that he has a great practice going in Pennsylvania, but there are some differences in state law, and I don't know what all. Anyway, the husband about whom we were not permitted to ask is the number one reason she won't come.

"The number two reason she's turning the job down is an adolescent son, about whom we also were not permitted to ask. She feels that while she and her husband could, in the interest of her career, handle separation, one parent in Pennsylvania and another parent in western Wisconsin would not be in the son's best interests. She is so sorry, blah, blah, blah.

"Why did this woman apply for the position in the first place? You tell me. Like she and he couldn't have figured out, before we blew a grand bringing her here, that he couldn't practice in Wisconsin? That the kid wasn't ready for a commuting mom? This is ridiculous. I personally suspect it was evil, because I know these East Coast types. I believe this woman knew when she left Philly she wouldn't accept a job at Novum. She was taking a holiday, practicing her interviewing skills, bolstering her ego at our expense. She cost us two weeks, maybe three. That's evil."

The department went to its second female candidate . . . who by then had accepted a position elsewhere. So had female number three.

“We’re getting pretty low,” Ed Haley observed. “Maybe that white boy from Minnesota is still looking.”

“Black, Latino, Native American, female, or nothing,” the vice president insisted.

That brought the department to its fourth choice, Dr. Virginia Coyle of Los Angeles, California. Virginia Coyle was a lower-ranked candidate for a fixed-term position, who would probably reject an offer anyway. The department was by this time fatigued. It gave her file the most casual of examinations and, after a slightly acrimonious discussion, forwarded her name to VPAA Olsen as an acceptable candidate.

Charles Creed, of course, had not been carefully scrutinized either. “If we had done a lot of checking, and if anyone had raised the issue about her background, I’d have been willing to draw a line,” he said in retrospect. “In her case as in mine. I would never have survived the kind of investigation we’ve given candidates after Coyle. Not with some of those letters in my file, and all those police investigations. I’m not bitching about phone calls. I’m willing to make a hiring decision based on credentials, and a rehiring decision based on a record that begins the day a person walks into Novum State.”

“None of us got the full F. B. I. treatment,” Ed Haley pointed out. “We were hired in a tight job market. ‘Got two hands, two feet, one eye and a degree? Okay, teach for us. No questions asked.’ Us older ones couldn’t get our own jobs these days. I sure couldn’t.”

“Her references were okay, but references are always good,” Ed Haley reflected. “Who’s going to request a reference from somebody who’ll give a crummy recommendation? Nobody these days pays any attention to letters of reference anyway, unless you know the person writing it. A lot of them were all Irish fellows and East Coast

types. We didn't bother to phone Dublin—we were too cheap, when it comes down to it."

Olsen found Coyle perfectly acceptable for a one-year fixed-term appointment. Vexed at having spent a thousand dollars on one bad choice, and facing similar expenses on Coyle (who was not even black, Hispanic, or Native American), he told the department he would not pay for another on-campus interview. A conference telephone interview would be fine, he insisted. This was only a sabbatical replacement anyway.

"Not only did Virginia Coyle not teach a sample class, not talk with students, and not interact with faculty—all of which are standard procedure and always had been," Lloyd Cowley pointed out; "we hired Virginia Coyle sight unseen. Nobody, literally, had ever met the woman."

"I don't think it would have made any difference," Haley insisted. "Virginia made a good first impression. She could have fooled us for a day or two."

"Not a chance," Cowley insisted. "I took one look at that bitch at Marilyn's party, and I thought, 'Sister, you don't fool me for a minute.' And she didn't fool that damned jury very much, did she then?"

"Most of us soon felt we might have made a mistake almost from the start," Schneider later testified. "Virginia has a presence . . . a stiffness, I'd say, a reserve which I thought when I met her would not work well in our situation. I had sensed some hesitation on the telephone, a certain tenseness, a formal distance. At the time I attributed it to the strangeness of a phone interview situation. In person, the moment I saw her, I could see that Virginia is a very reserved person. Admittedly we're a little relaxed here in rural Wisconsin, but I think—I thought upon first meeting her—that Virginia is a bit . . . the opposite of gracious."

Marilyn was in a position to get to know Virginia better than anyone at Novum. As department chair, and as a woman, she took a special interest in the new hire. Schneider received Coyle's early

shipments of books and belongings, met her at the St. Paul airport when she flew to the Midwest in late August, and provided bed, breakfast and dinner for over a month while Virginia searched for a “suitable” apartment. In a hundred ways, large and small, the department’s senior female faculty member welcomed the department’s most junior female faculty member.

The honeymoon lasted, by Marilyn’s account, not more than a week, although the department chair kept on trying. “I’d invent excuses for what I considered bad behavior, telling myself Virginia had real cause for offense, and I was being overly sensitive. I’d accuse myself of being . . . well, you know how we can be in the Midwest, too intrusive. Then I would back off a little, on the theory that Virginia needed more space. Still she seemed offended, as if I’d been neglectful. I felt personally responsible for Virginia coming to the department. For the sake of her career and the department’s cohesiveness, I tried everything I could think of. None of it seemed good enough. Eventually I decided Virginia was just playing a game with me. But that was much later.”

Coyle’s introduction to the department came, like mine at Busiris so many years before, at a preschool year party hosted by the chair. Schneider spent the day shuttling between Lake-of-the-Woods and her home outside of town, buying alcohol and ice, cleaning, laying in groceries, composing plates of rolled slices of ham and beef and cheese, and stashing bowls of Cheetos and Nachos all over the first floor of her house.

She invited her house guest to join in the preparations, but Virginia opted for the Novum State library. “She offered neither physical nor financial assistance,” Marilyn remembered in a pretrial deposition. “Not that I would have taken her money, but I wouldn’t have minded the help. It was hard not to notice. Hard not to feel offended. Hard not to remember that day and maybe hold a little grudge.”

Novum State librarian Arnie Marin remembered that day very well. “The term hadn’t even begun, and there was this complete

stranger sitting at a table in the reference section with a couple of bagels and a pot of tea, reading the *New York Times Book Review*. I went up to her, polite as pie, and told her that food and drinks were not allowed in the library, which was not yet open to the public. She laid into me like a butcher at the Hormel plant. 'Just whom do you think you are speaking to? I am a member of this faculty, and this library exists to support my work. If the library is not open to the general public, it can certainly accommodate faculty research.

" 'What's more, I consider it perfectly reasonable to assume that if the door is ajar, the library is open. Would not that be a logical inference?

" 'Finally, I am not some helpless incompetent woman. I am perfectly capable of handling my tea. I take full responsibility for whatever damage it may do to your precious furnishings. If you have a quarrel with that, perhaps you would wish to take it up with the dean.'

"Holy smokes! I never did get her name. A month later she finally came in to get photographed for a card. By then everyone knew who Virginia Coyle was."

Late in the afternoon Coyle phoned Schneider requesting a ride back from the university. Marilyn indicated that she had no further business in town and suggested that Virginia ride out with any one of a number of persons who'd be coming to the party.

Virginia thought she would feel uncomfortable riding with a complete stranger.

"This would be a colleague in the department," Marilyn explained. "One of the people who hired you."

Virginia would want to freshen up a bit before meeting her future colleagues. "To make a suitable first impression."

Marilyn drove once again into Lake-of-the-Woods. The library was clearly closed, and Virginia was nowhere to be seen. Schneider drove to the English complex, parked her car, and spent fifteen

minutes wandering empty corridors. Outside the building again, she finally met Coyle walking toward her from the general direction of the dormitories. She had left the library when Arnie Marin, after several less subtle suggestions that he was ready to leave, started turning out the lights on her. Marilyn was too angry to ask why she'd wandered off, and Virginia apparently saw no need for explanation beyond the "beastly rudeness" of the NSU librarian.

"I don't think I said ten words to Virginia the whole drive home," Schneider remembered.

In Schneider's guest bedroom, Virginia changed from her white dress into a tartan mid-length skirt, a white blouse, a sweater of a plaid to match her skirt, and a tam-o'-shanter. "She had gray knee-length woolen socks," Jack recalled. "The ensemble looked a lot like the uniforms worn by girls attending Catholic high schools when I was growing up. She looked like one of those Archbishop Prendergast High girls, but that's not what I told her."

What Jack did say to Virginia at the Schneider party would become a significant issue five years later.

"This is Professor Creed," Marilyn Schneider said when Jack and Kelly arrived. "And this is Miss Kelly Ayers."

"Captain of the volleyball squad," Kelly volunteered.

Virginia held out her hand and gave Jack a straight look.

"Professor Creed," she said. "I've heard so much about you. From Professor Schneider, of course." She looked again at Kelly. "Wouldn't a more mature woman be more suitable for a man of your stature?"

Jack could not believe he had heard what he'd heard. "I appreciate beauty regardless of age," he told Virginia diplomatically. "I also appreciate talent, brains, and hard work."

Virginia persisted. "I would have thought you'd be aware by now of the risks inherent in these . . . younger relationships."

“What a very striking outfit you have on,” Jack told Virginia. That according to Creed, corroborated by Schneider and Haley.

In her complaint and deposition Coyle claimed Jack eyed her “suggestively” up and down and said, “Very cute.”

“I am certain I did not eye her suggestively,” Jack later testified. “She was coming on to me. I’ve never in my life eyed Virginia Coyle suggestively. Besides, Kelly was standing right next to me at the time. Between Kelly and Virginia—no contest. I doubt very much that I used the word ‘cute.’ I’d seen the movie [*Bull Durham*]. Baby chicks are cute. Kelly is cute. Virginia is not cute. Sorry if I sound discourteous, but the time for courtesy in this matter has long passed. I know cute, and believe me, Senator, you’re not.”

Kelly Ayers’ recollection accords with Jack’s. “She was definitely hitting on my man,” Kelly agreed. “Not a chance. What a bitch. Overdressed and pretentious from the word go. It was like she was used to a level of elegance far beyond anything we Wisconsin types could even imagine, and she wanted to impress upon us our inadequacies. I was totally turned off, right from the beginning. I didn’t say much to her after the look she gave Jack.”

The “very striking” (or “very cute”) was followed by a greeting in Gaelic, something Jack remembered from his Welsh adventures. Virginia Coyle offered no response, so Jack tried again. “For a moment I thought I’d lost the phrases,” he recalled. “Then I thought the differences between Welsh and Irish might be greater than I’d supposed.”

Finally Virginia understood what Jack was about.

“Mr. Creed,” she told him, “you may not assume that the fact that my degree is in Anglo-Irish studies means I am fluent in Gaelic.”

Jack was nonplused. “I wouldn’t want to assume anything but the best of you, would I?” he asked.

“I am sure you are as admiring of mature, competent women as you are of students,” Creed, Schneider, and Haley recall Coyle

saying. Coyle did not later recall the remark.

Kelly did. “Let’s get a beer,” she suggested.

Jack and Kelly left, but Ed Haley tried to engage Virginia on the subject of Anglo-Irish studies. “I understood you’ve been working on Maud Gonne,” he said.

“That is one of the foci of my research.”

“I read the Levinson biography once. Maud Gonne was a fascinating woman.”

“That’s a very unscholarly work. Quite superficial and unprofessional. So too is Diana Norman, I’m afraid. And she published only last year.”

“What interests you about Maud Gonne?”

“I’m working on a book of her letters and speeches. The manuscripts are scattered everywhere: Dublin, London, New York. She even visited your Midwest, on her first voyage to America in 1897, trying to arouse Americans against the Boers and cement unity between the Irish in America and those in Ireland. She spoke in Chicago and St. Louis. Even, I believe, in Peoria, Illinois, invited by Bishop Spalding. I’ve been tracking her through America, but the process is frightfully painstaking and expensive. I understand our institution supports faculty engaged in research?”

“We get $500 each in professional development funds. You can spend it any way you like.”

“That won’t go very far, I’m afraid.”

“You can always ask for more. Asking doesn’t guarantee you get, but not asking guarantees you won’t get.

“I thought the Boer War was in the early 1900s,” he added. Haley was not trying to start “any big argument,” he testified later. “I was genuinely befuddled. It was just a point of information remark.”

“1897,” Virginia said with great certainty.

“Too bad you’re not a Hemingway scholar,” said Lloyd Cowley in what he later explained as an attempt to prevent embarrassment. “Then you could spend your $500 trout fishing in Idaho. On the other hand, a round-trip ticket to Ireland wouldn’t be such a bad deal either.”

“I’m afraid I’m strictly a library person. Not much of a fisher. But a very dedicated scholar.”

“Virginia was such a dedicated scholar of Maud Gonne,” Ed Haley added later, “that she confused Gonne’s first and second voyages to the States and didn’t know, or pretended not to know, that Anna McBride White and A. Norman Jeffares were already heavy into the Gonne-Yeats letters. After the party I did some checking in the library and asked her a few more questions. Those questions were test questions, and she flunked. Didn’t know anything about Maud Gonne. Hadn’t seen things that had just been published on Gonne. Talk about the tailor weaving away on an empty loom and telling everyone how swell the emperor’s new clothes are going to be. What an act!”

Haley later remembered one other episode from the Schneider party. “I was wandering around the living room, a drink in my hand, talking to no one in particular. You know that kind of party lull when nothing’s going on and you lose yourself in the books on the shelf and the art on the wall. A small stack of books on Marilyn’s coffee table caught my attention—I can’t even tell you why, or what they were, except that they seemed not to be the kind of books Marilyn would have been reading—and I started to thumb through one of them. Suddenly Virginia pounced like a leopard out of nowhere, as if I was personally perusing her private diary. ‘In the United Kingdom, pawing through someone’s personal belongings is considered very boorish behavior,’ she informed me. I looked at her, closed the book, and walked away. Virginia walked away too. Just left the books there. Maybe they were hers. Maybe they weren’t. I never found out.”

What colleagues perceived as the new women's supercilious demeanor sent them scurrying into food and small talk among themselves. "We tried to be friendly," Lloyd Cowley summarized, "and found we didn't have much to say to Virginia. So, logically enough, we talked amongst ourselves. Some of us had had pretty interesting summers."

Coyle interpreted their distance as deliberately rude and insulting. After two hours—none of the others could say when—she retreated to her bedroom to drink tea and read *The New Yorker*. Virginia Coyle's coming out party was less than a success, although it was not nearly the disaster she later attempted to make it.

As university attorneys later pointed out, Virginia was comfortable enough with Creed and Schneider to request letters of evaluation from both of them later that month.

Toward the end of September, Virginia invited her chair to visit one of her classes and, based on what she saw and heard, write recommendation for her personnel file. Jack also was invited to visit and write a letter, as was Linda Tholen, whom Virginia had met the night of Marilyn's party. Virginia apparently never understood that as state-wide SUUFAMP President Linda taught no classes and lived in Madison most of the year. Invitations were not extended to Lloyd Cowley or Ed Haley. One would conclude that in late September Virginia perceived Cowley and Haley as enemies, Creed, Tholen, and Schneider as friends. Or as powerful enough within the University community to significantly affect her employment. Or as powerful enough outside the community—by position or reputation—to help in subsequent searches for employment. It is not unusual, of course, for senior faculty to visit classes and drop their written endorsement in a candidate's file, although Virginia's invitation was slightly premature. Usually new teachers wait until they have settled into the course, the students, the school, and their colleagues: winter or spring of the first year, when they're building a case for reappointment.

The senior faculty detest such visitations, which are painful for everyone involved. The situation is entirely artificial. The teacher prepares a trophy lecture. The students, who at Novum are a good lot and try their best to deliver for their professors, listen attentively, scribble reams of notes, and ask questions by the handful. The visitor takes fifteen minutes of glowing comments, then starts penciling numbers in the margin: 35, 30, 25, 20, 15, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 0.

Jack never did visit Virginia's class. Marilyn recalls the visit as confirming her earlier judgment of Virginia Coyle as a cold and formal personality. "Dr. Coyle delivered a formal lecture, almost memorized, and then asked for questions. When there was little discussion, she drew a disparaging contrast between Wisconsin students and students she had taught in California. Dr. Coyle had memorized names, but she couldn't put a name together with a face. She'd invite a comment from Mr. Brown or Miss White, and be looking in the wrong direction, at the wrong person. Also, it was always 'Mr. Brown,' 'Miss White.' Never a first name. I noticed that.

"I also noticed that the kids did not seem to be doing their best for Dr. Coyle. They were not embarrassing her at first, but they were not performing. I have seen many, many students put on spectacular performances when they knew a favorite instructor was being evaluated.

"A reason for their behavior became apparent later in the class. I can't remember what point Professor Coyle was making, but she paused at one point to draw an analogy between sports and literature, trying to impress her class. American sports was a realm far outside her area of expertise, and a teacher is well advised to avoid what she doesn't know. Dr. Coyle missed the analogy entirely, making a reference to "Kirby Plunkett of the Minnesota Vikings." The students caught her mistake immediately, and they did not let it pass. Sympathetic students will let such errors slide, not wishing to embarrass their teacher. Not these kids.

“ ‘Excuse me, Professor Coyle, but it’s Kirby Puckett and he plays baseball for the Twins,’ one of them pointed out.

“There was an instant of silence as everyone cringed, including me.

“Virginia was not at all embarrassed. She was angered. ‘Kirby Plunkett plays for the Vikings,’ she insisted.

“I looked up. Virginia’s face showed no sign of doubt or embarrassment.

“There was a chorus of voices: ‘No, no. Twins. Baseball. Puckett.’

“Virginia insisted a third time: ‘Kirby Plunkett plays for the Viking, children! I saw him in last Sunday’s game.’

“The kids looked at each other, not smirking or anything, just looked at each other, and shrugged shoulders, as if to say, ‘Whatever you say, Miss Coyle. This is your program.’

“I never wrote a recommendation or an evaluation, either good or bad. Not after this experience. I wrote nothing on Virginia Coyle until spring when, as chair, I was required under the contract to provide a recommendation to the dean. In that recommendation I was very guarded, and I didn’t mention this incident or others subsequent to it. I never mentioned my visit to Professor Coyle’s class to anyone. I was still trying to keep her record clean, keep specifics out. I believe I was successful. Charles Creed authored the recommendation that Dr. Coyle’s contract not be renewed, when he was acting assistant dean. That’s administration’s responsibility, as the contract specifically states.

“Still, I think any one of us, in his position, would have written just about what Jack wrote. He too was being kind and protective.”

Additional evidence of student dissatisfaction came hard on the heels of Marilyn’s visit, including an avalanche of students wanting out of Coyle’s classes.

The deadline for withdrawing from a class without financial penalty, one month to the date after preregistration, brought eighteen students to the English department office with slips to be signed.

“Your professor signs these forms,” Marilyn explained. “Not I.”

“We haven’t seen Professor Coyle for three days,” one student told her.

Another corrected him. “Sometimes she’s in her office, but she won’t open the door. You knock, and you know she’s in there, but she won’t open the door.”

“Is this during office hours?”

“She hasn’t been at school this week during office hours or for class,” the first student insisted. “Today’s the deadline for withdrawal. We think she’s trying to not let us drop.”

“I’ll sign this thing myself if I have to,” another student threatened. “I’m not staying in that class. It’s like Auschwitz.”

“Please, Professor Schneider, you’ve got to do something.”

Marilyn signed the drop slips, then circulated a memo to all members of the department urging them to keep posted office hours and notify the department secretary, either before or after the fact, of missed classes. “I’m not here to police you,” she noted, “and the contract requires no formal notification. Still, there have been some confused students lately, and neither I nor Marilyn knew what to tell them. Think of this as a courtesy you would want others to extend to you.”

Virginia Coyle returned to teaching the day after the deadline for withdrawal had passed. Presumably she noticed that her classes had shrunk some, but not until the end of the term did she discover that eighteen students had formally withdrawn.

There was a tremendous uproar. She demanded that Andy Olsen formally reprimand Marilyn Schneider. When he refused, she tried to file a grievance through the union. She accused Marilyn of

withdrawing students from her classes without their knowledge or hers, in an attempt to make her enrollments look bad. Brad Newlund thought her charges merited investigation, but pointed out that one union member could not grieve another. So Coyle filed a grievance against Vice President Andy Olsen. Olsen was not even part of the complaint, and the grievance was later withdrawn.

Olsen, however, could not escape the next Virginia Coyle fracas. Three weeks after the penalty-free drop date came preregistration for winter term. Preregistration figures are a good barometer at any school of any teacher's performance. "I don't need written complaints," Andy Olsen had once told Jack Creed. "I don't even need students in my office. One look at registration figures tells me all I need to know about a teacher."

Coyle's numbers started bad and stayed bad. While other sections filled and students added their names to waiting lists, hers remained in the single digits. Marilyn Schneider circulated another general memo to the effect that faculty should not sign "Special Permission to Register" forms for their own sections of a multi-section class like composition and introduction to literature until all sections of the course were filled. Everyone in the department knew what she meant, and everyone pretended not to.

Students turned away from Creed's and Schneider's sections, and Cowley's did not spill over into Coyle's. As Jack had pointed out years before, when making the case for Sam Reese at Busiris, students confronting an unattractive professor simply go elsewhere. By the time preregistration ended, Coyle's figures in classes designed for twenty-five and thirty students were barely in the double digits. For the time being, the kids had gone elsewhere, hoping for better luck come spring.

Olsen was furious. "We're paying full salary for half classes," he fumed to Schneider the day after registration ended. "Where did this woman come from anyway?"

"You hired her," Marilyn reminded the VPAA.

“You people recommended her.”

“She was the best candidate within the parameters within which we were operating.”

“Let’s see if we can’t straighten this thing out before winter begins. And I damned sure don’t want this happening again come February.”

“That’s a management problem, Andy.”

“Don’t get technical on me, Marilyn. If it’s a management problem, I know how I’m going to solve it. So if you don’t want it resolved that way, you better straighten it out before it becomes a management problem.”

“We’re not on the best of terms,” Schneider mused. “She tried to file a grievance against me.”

“She did file a grievance against me. And I haven’t forgotten it. You’re the chair. I’d suggest you have a little woman-to-woman talk with Dr. Coyle. Soon.”

In mid-November of 1990, after the close of preregistration but before the end of fall term, Marilyn Schneider invited Virginia Coyle to lunch at the White Gull Inn, ostensibly to discuss ways Novum State could further ease her adjustment to Wisconsin, but really to broach the subject of enrollments. The conversation was more formal than the meal.

“Your preregistration figures might be cause for concern,” Schneider told Coyle.

“I’m new here,” Coyle reminded her, “and my methods are unknown. We all know that students are reluctant to experiment with an unknown quantity.”

“There have been a couple of complaints,” Schneider hinted.

“Why wasn’t I informed?” Coyle wanted to know. “What were their names?”

“I didn’t even write names down,” Schneider told Coyle. “It didn’t seem like anything serious. Confusions over assignments and grades. I sent them all back to you. That’s our policy at Novum. Chairs do not adjudicate. We merely facilitate. My own policy is to send all students back to their professors.”

“None have come to see me,” Coyle insisted.

“If there’s anything I can do to help alleviate the problems,” Schneider offered.

“I don’t know of any problems. Only a few trouble-causers. I always find a few trouble-causers, among my students and colleagues. I’m a very demanding professor, and I’ve always had a few trouble-causers who resist being forced to do work. I am a very competent woman, and I am quite adept at handling them myself, I can assure you. They will not be giving me problems come winter term.”

Schneider lapsed into silence.

Coyle continued. “There is one situation in which you might be able to help me. I believe I have secured publication of some of my research in a very prominent Irish-American journal. But publication is contingent on page costs of $30 per page. I’m afraid this is not something I could manage on my salary. . . .”

“Perhaps your $500 professional development funds could be applied to those costs,” suggested Schneider.

“I’ve already earmarked that money for a conference in Dublin next spring, although it’s quite insufficient. I’ve requested supplemental funds from Faculty Improvement funds. Dean Hayes is quite optimistic.”

“The department doesn’t have a slush fund,” Marilyn answered. “I might be able to assign you a summer school course or two. Each class pays 8% of your annual salary. In your case that would be. . . .”

“I’m afraid I’ve committed myself to a research project in Washington, D.C. over the summer. I found some very significant

Maud Gonne material there last time I visited. I think publication is a real possibility, if I can discover the means to complete my research."

"Would this publication involve page costs?" Marilyn asked rhetorically.

"The practice is quite common these days, I'm afraid. Of course they would be unnecessary if our library, and libraries all over the country, fulfilled their obligation to keep abreast of scholarship."

Marilyn Schneider put down her fork and studied the woman in front of her. "I was flabbergasted, but Virginia saw no inconsistency at all in declining summer school in the same instant she requested additional travel funds, research expenses and even money to underwrite publication," Marilyn told Jack and Lloyd at the Silver Dollar Bar. "She genuinely believes that her only teaching problem was a few trouble-causers who will not be in her class winter term. I think she missed the whole point of our conversation."

"I don't want to be an I-told-you-so," Cowley began.

"You didn't tell us so, Lloyd," Marilyn answered. "You abdicated all responsibility."

"Now don't go blaming me because you didn't do your homework."

"What homework was that? You know how Olsen handled that search."

"How many calls did you make on this woman? Anyone outside her references?"

Marilyn admitted to having made no calls.

"I'll tell you one other thing," Lloyd announced. "I been doing a little checking lately, and I noticed a couple of things. If you take a close look at the letters that accompanied her application, you'll notice that every one of them were written very early in the school year. I don't mean early in the term, I mean early in the school year.

Not one letter later than October of her first year on any job. Now that should tell you something.

“And something else you probably didn’t notice, but I did. She told you she was teaching last year at Mount Saint Mary's, California, but not one letter in her file comes from Mount Saint Mary's. Now if that first bit doesn’t tell you something, this should. You should have been more careful. Learn to read the surface of the water, and you’ll know what’s going on underneath.”

“You should have stayed on the search committee. We needed you then,” Jack told Lloyd.

“Yeah, well, you got me now, good buddy. You also got her, incidentally. And you don’t need me to tell you what’s going to happen next. You’re gonna teach thirty kids a section, a hundred kids a term, and she’s gonna teach fifteen kids maximum per section, taking off for a conference every third week, and looking for ways to get rid of the trouble-causers and trim her enrollments to twelve. And it’s you publishing all them journal articles. It’s you that’s writing the book that’s going to get published. And you won the Pulitzer for the book you already published.”

“I’m afraid you’re right on this one, Lloyd,” Marilyn agreed.

“One last point. There’s not a damned thing either of you can do about it. As soon as anybody so much as scowls at her, Dr. V. C., Ph. D. is going to hit him with a grievance, if not a human rights action. You heard it first here.”

# Chapter 17
# **Virginia, Cont.**

Virginia Coyle, for all her other paranoid fantasies, was correct on one point. Considerable discussion between department and administration preceded the maneuvers which resulted in her departure from Novum State in spring of 1991. Some of it was related to Coyle's performance. Some of it was related to the SUUFAMP contract, and to Linda Tholen's position as State President.

Marilyn Schneider's luncheon with Virginia had no apparent impact on the English department's most junior member. With final exams, the flow of complaints into Marilyn's office swelled to a small river. Marilyn did her best to keep Virginia's record clean. "Since her students were not majors—mostly freshmen and sophomores—I didn't know them well enough to judge the merit of what they said. They sounded sincere, but still I thought Professor Coyle should be given the benefit of the doubt," Marilyn testified in her deposition. "The problems might have been the result of a few bad apples. I resolved to contain the matter as best I could." She advised the students, "Before going to see the dean or vice president, or filing a formal complaint, it's always best to try one more time to work things out with your professor."

Few returned to Virginia Coyle.

Very few of their friends registered for Virginia's winter term classes. Marilyn had tried two general memos to the entire department advising tact and sympathy in hearing student complaints. She had tried a luncheon with Virginia. As November turned to December and fall term slouched toward winter, all Marilyn Schneider could do was sit in her office as department chair and hold her breath. Others, with somewhat less trepidation, held their breaths as well: Andy Olsen in his office as VPAA, Vance Hayes in

his office as Dean of Liberal Arts, Charles Creed in his position as interim associate dean—a position he had taken partly because it offered release time for *Songs of the North Country* and partly to counterbalance Brad Newlund's SUUFAMP presidency.

Then fall term grade rosters arrived at the registrar's office, confirming people's worst suspicions: out of 84 students who had begun Virginia Coyle's two sections of Freshman Composition 101 and one section of Introduction to Literature in September, 23 had dropped the class. 22 had received grades of NC, or "no credit." Six, all composition students, had received I, "incomplete," on the understanding that once they performed certain remedial tasks in the NSU Writing Lab, Virginia Coyle would review their work. Twelve students, mostly in the literature class, had received D's.

21 of 84 students had passed with grades of C, B, or A.

"What this meant," Marilyn Schneider explained later, "was that 63 of the 84 students who had registered for Dr. Coyle's courses during fall term would have to repeat the classes . . . if they wanted to graduate. Unless, of course, they transferred to another institution or dropped out of school entirely. If they stayed at NSU, three quarters of Professor Coyle's students would have to be taught again by her or someone else. I thought that was not an acceptable situation in light of our already crowded classes. If we extended that proportion across the entire faculty, we'd be teaching and re-teaching and re-re-teaching . . . why, it would be impossible!"

On any college campus word travels fast, and at Novum State word travels very quickly. Virginia Coyle started winter term with registrations of 18, 16, and 22 students respectively in her two sections of composition and one literature class. These numbers come from the official report issued December 4 after the last hour of winter term registration, the day before classes begin. The numbers are not significantly different from those on the registrar's report for November 6, the close of preregistration. Between November 6 and December 4, Virginia had picked up a few students among those who had not preregistered.

Then students returned from the term break, fall grades in hand, and gossip began in earnest. At the beginning of the term, NSU offered students three days of open drop-add, during which they can drop one class and add another without course-change fees. “It’s chaos,” the University registrar testified, “and we don’t keep track of individual changes. Only after those three days are official class rosters printed.” The official class roster for beginning winter term showed Virginia Coyle with 11, 10, and 13 students. (Less than a third of them would finish the term in February with passing grades.)

“I scheduled another meeting with Professor Coyle,” Schneider later testified. “This time I was more firm. I pointed out that her fall grades were unusually low, and her winter classes contained unusually few students. She said she was aware of the fact. She said that students in her fall classes had been abnormally weak. She felt she was being unfairly stereotyped by students in a possibly sexist manner. She hoped she would not be similarly stereotyped by her colleagues. I asked her what she meant by stereotyped. She indicated that she felt Novum State students could not deal with a strong, demanding, competent female professor. I said that I considered myself a strong, demanding, competent female professor, and my classes were always full. Virginia cited ‘several studies’ which showed that members of marginalized groups seeking to make their way in a profession often faced stiffer opposition from already successful members of their own groups than from members of the white patriarchy. I assured her that nobody in the department or university held her any particular ill will, especially myself.

“I told her that several students had visited my office during the previous term complaining of unfair grades and unclear assignments. I told her I tended to discount complaints about grades, and I was certainly not going to read and re-evaluate their papers, as some had requested. I told her that I had suggested they work with Professor Coyle, especially on the nature of her assignments, and they had indicated to me that Professor Coyle was not a person with whom they felt comfortable talking. That was a more serious problem, I suggested to Professor Coyle, than the grading or the

assignment business. I urged her to take a more amicable stance toward students. I also offered to let her visit my classes, suggested a few other faculty members whose classes I thought she might profitably observe, and mentioned the possibility of finding a faculty mentor for her, someone inside or outside of the department with whom she could comfortably work."

"Did you share with her the specifics of the student complaints?" Virginia's attorney Roger Barclay wanted to know.

"That was the first question she asked," Marilyn answered. "I told her the students had come to me in confidence and, I felt, with a certain degree of anxiety. I felt that if I was too specific, I might jeopardize their privacy, and the spirit of confidentiality in which they had come to me."

"What was Professor Coyle's reaction to your luncheon?" Barclay wanted to know.

"She said she was aware that she had a few trouble-causers in her classes, and she knew how to handle them," Marilyn had answered. "That was the extent of her reaction. She did not respond in any way to my suggestion she visit other classes, or my offer of a mentor. My impression was that she either didn't hear what I had said, or was intentionally unresponsive as a means of refusing to acknowledge my warning."

Virginia Coyle was given another year at Novum "to prove herself."

And she did prove herself.

Late in January over JumboBurgers and fries at the Silver Dollar Bar, English department chair Marilyn Schneider, VPAA Andy Olsen, Dean Vance Hayes, SUUFAMP President Brad Newlund, SUUFAMP veteran Lloyd Cowley, and interim associate dean Charles Creed discussed the matter of Virginia Coyle.

"She's a disaster," Marilyn admitted. "The kids won't take her. The non-majors are on to her already and the English majors have

heard the talk. She's scheduled for a novel class this spring, and I can already list you half a dozen English majors who have told me directly they will not be taking novel this spring. I'm afraid she'll get five or four students. Maybe there will be none. To more than one person, and not very discreetly, she has suggested that Anglo-Irish and literature by women are major holes in our curriculum. You can see what she has planned there."

"She's already spent her contractual travel allotment," Dean Hayes reported, "plus some additional money I gave her, flying to 'professional meetings,' in California and Maryland, eating fancy meals and staying in fancy hotels. You got any idea what that's all about, Marilyn? The reimbursement forms say only 'professional meetings.' I've never called her on it."

"I see the same forms you do, Vance."

"You sign them."

"As the contract requires," Newlund added.

"We had a bit of a scene once," Schneider admitted, "when I asked her to be a bit more specific," Schneider told Hayes.

"Virginia said you refused to sign the reimbursement requisition," Newlund said.

"I believe I told her that the forms I was accustomed to signing for other faculty members specifically named the conference title, hosting institutions, and participants, as well as providing dates and hotels. Some even provide conference programs. This was not an accusation, Brad, it was an offer: I was suggesting Virginia could recover her conference fee if she provided a canceled check or a program."

"If Virginia doesn't want to request conference fees, she doesn't have to."

"She could be more specific," Olsen said. "What is the university getting for its money?"

“That’s the point,” Newlund insisted. “Virginia understood immediately that Marilyn was checking up on her in a way she would not check up on other faculty members. Her request was discriminatory. Virginia has a perfect right, under the contract, to spend her professional development money any way she wishes, as long as it’s for professional development. The faculty member, not a supervisor, determines what constitutes professional development.”

“Some of that was Faculty Improvement funding,” Hayes told Newlund. “Now she’s raising hell because I can’t find her more money for some meeting in February.”

“This from a woman who can’t teach and has published, in her lifetime, one paper,” Schneider concluded. “She’s been very ugly to me, to students, and to other members of the department. She has been a disaster. I have to admit it, and I will.”

“How many days of class would you say she’s missed?” Olsen wanted to know.

“Virginia missed a total of two weeks fall term, including several days right before the deadline for dropping classes. She’s missed four days this term already,”

“Meetings and conferences are accepted in the contract as professional activity,” Newlund pointed out. “Faculty cannot be penalized for attending professional meetings. And the fact that you’re keeping records suggests a prejudice.”

“This is excessive,” Marilyn huffed.

“Has she been reading papers or chairing discussions?” Olsen wanted to know.

“None of us know,” Hayes answered.

“Who in the fuck cares?” Jack asked. “Scholarly conferences are just academics on holiday. Nobody listens to those papers. Nobody learns from those papers. If you have something to say, you don’t have to go to Kalamazoo, Michigan, to babble it to the four walls of a room and six snoozing nuns from Cardinal Stritch. Say it in

print in print. If you can't get it into print, Xerox it and mail the thing to your friends. These conferences are just ass kissing, job hunting, and work-at-your-play vacations. They don't even have the sense to hold most of them in fun places."

"Professor Creed has given a few talks in his day," Newlund said.

"That's how I know what bullshit it all is."

"You'll undoubtedly be giving more once your new book is published."

"After the book is published. My second, incidentally."

"Virginia is entitled to a few years of doing what you spent a few years doing," Newlund argued. "It's good publicity for the University. Makes us appear quite professional."

"Only if she's on the other side of the table," Andy Olsen said. "If she's just going to conferences to go to conferences, that's another thing."

"She can't meet students here when she's in Los Angeles," Lloyd Cowley said. "That's why you don't catch me going to them conferences."

"By definition, a teacher is in class, teaching his students," Hayes observed. "Or her students. Pardon me, Marilyn."

"I don't buy that argument," Jack said.

"Novum is a teaching institution," Schneider insisted.

"Granted," Jack agreed. "But there are several kinds of students, and we have responsibilities to all of them. We've got our students here, the ones who sit in front of us, listening and taking notes and writing exams. We also have our students in Los Angeles and New York, and Swansea, Wales, and all over the world. If we're cutting edge, as college professors should be, we have something to say to some of them. There are also students who aren't in college yet, who maybe haven't even been born yet. In a sense we're teaching them

too, and we should include them in our thinking and allocation of time. I'd say that's one difference between high school and college teaching, that we reach toward people not in the immediate classroom. I do think conferences are not the way to reach those people. You do it through publication. Talk just evaporates. The published word is permanent."

"Virginia has an article tentatively accepted for publication," Newlund announced.

"I know," Schneider said. "She's been to me, and I think to Andy too, looking for money for what she calls 'page costs.' I never heard of such a thing."

"It's quite common in low circulation mathematics and science journals," Newlund said.

"It's cheaper than a conference," said Charles.

"Pay to publish your own article?" Lloyd wanted to know. "Then get promoted for publishing it? What kind of a crazy deal is that?"

"Look," Marilyn said, "nobody's going to fault Virginia's professionalism. She can have all the conferences she wants, and money for her article too, if she can teach. The problem is, she can't teach."

"Historically that's been a difficult thing to prove," Newlund warned. "Almost impossible."

"Andy could just dismiss her for cause," Lloyd suggested.

Newlund objected immediately. "You want her dismissed for cause? After a trial of four months? SUUFAMP would have to grieve that immediately. Anyone else in the union, you'd grieve it too, Lloyd."

"You'd grieve it if we fired her for cause after nine months," Olsen pointed out. "You'd grieve it whenever."

"That's the job of a union," Newlund told the vice president.

“I think we should just not hire her next year,” said Hayes. “She’s a fixed-term appointment. We give her proper notice and just don’t hire her. This is her first year. We’ve got until June 1.”

“May 1,” Newlund corrected him. “But SUUFAMP would have to grieve that too.”

“Well fuck that,” Jack said at last. “I’m not saying exactly what I think about this whole business, but I am saying that if the department agrees, for good reasons, it doesn’t want her, and administration agrees it does not want her, and students have made up their mind they don’t want her, I certainly resent my union, into which I have paid dues of time and money these past six years, telling all of us we’re stuck with her.”

“Let us all congratulate Professor Creed,” Newlund announced, “on his move from union to management.”

“A union does not afford cart blanche license for bad worker. Or non-worker,” Jack argued. “The college can’t work that way. The country can’t work that way. If that’s what union is, I quit.”

“I believe I just made that point.”

Marilyn interrupted. “Calm down, fellows.”

“The union advocates for faculty in an adversarial situation,” Newlund insisted. “We’d have to advocate for Virginia as we’d advocate for Jack or for any other member.”

“That’s a crock,” said Lloyd Cowley.

“SUUFAMP had better clean its own house or others will,” Jack growled.

“Linda Tholen has defined SUUFAMP’s position on fixed term hires very specifically,” Newlund argued. “If there’s a fixed term position open in the department next year, first preference goes to a faculty member who’s filled the fixed term position this year.”

“I was there when that position was formulated,” Jack objected. “SUUFAMP bases its position on the assumption that the teacher

has done a good, competent job. We all agree that Virginia hasn't done a good job."

"We don't all agree," Newlund objected. "That's not been proven."

"I think that's been proven."

"On what evidence? Hearsay? Stories told in a bar by people with extremely prejudicial records in what constitutes an illegal meet-and-confer?"

"Look at her enrollments. Look at her grades."

"How many of you have ever been in one of Professor Coyle's classes?" Newlund asked rhetorically. "Only Marilyn. The rest of you have no direct knowledge of her capabilities as a teacher. This whole process is grievable. If it actually results in Virginia's termination, it would give her a good law suit."

"My point," Jack answered, "is that the whole business about giving present employees fixed term teachers first crack at subsequent appointments is designed to protect good teachers from getting screwed over, after they've been teaching a few years, get good, and get their salaries up there. It's designed to keep the experienced teachers because their experience makes them better for students than the newer, inexperienced, and cheaper teachers administration would like to replace them with. SUUFAMP's position is intended to improve teaching and reward faculty . . . not to retain bad teachers. Follow your reasoning, and a bad teacher—we will refrain from mentioning any names—would be reappointed year after year after year, without ever being reviewed by either her department or administration."

"As long as there's a fixed-term appointment for which she's qualified."

"Surely that's not the intent of the contract!"

"I'm giving you the standard interpretation of that clause. That would have to be SUUFAMP's position."

“My position is you help the good guys, and kick the bad guys in the balls,” Jack said.

“That’s why you made a lousy union president,” Newlund told Creed.

Jack did not deign to answer.

“That’s why Andy should fire her for cause,” Marilyn insisted. “Right now.”

“Not without a recommendation from the department,” Olsen insisted.

“That wasn’t your position in November.”

“It’s my position now.”

“Firing people is your job, Andy. That’s what you’re paid for.”

“All of this will be grieved,” Newlund promised.

“And administration deals with grievances,” Marilyn insisted. “Not the department. Or the department chair.”

“Maybe Andy could simply not give the English department a position for next year,” Jack suggested.

“We’d certainly grieve that,” Newlund objected. “Given your enrollments.”

“To which Virginia is contributing damned little,” Cowley growled.

“Marilyn claims that three quarters of her fall students had to repeat the class this winter. She’s increasing your enrollments.”

“That’s just a crock.”

“Look, folks,” Newlund said finally. “Let me put the cards on the table. The bottom line is that Linda Tholen is just completing a highly successful four-year term as state-wide president. We all love and respect Linda. We all have an obligation to avoid anything that might weaken the contract. How would that look, coming out of her home

institution? Out of her home department? That's going to be my position as president of Local 12."

"And the hell with the students, and the hell with your local members and the hell with Linda's colleagues in the department," Jack said.

"Have you talked this over with Linda?" Marilyn wanted to know. "She might have an opinion on this."

"My position reflects her opinion."

"She hasn't been around here this fall. She hasn't seen or heard what Chas and Lloyd and I have heard."

"She met Virginia at your party in September and was favorably impressed. I understand Virginia and Linda have met on other occasions as well."

"That's just bullshit."

"You asked if Linda and I had talked about Coyle. I'm telling you Linda's position."

"If Linda had been here for that paper clip episode. . .," Lloyd began.

"The paper clip episode?" Newlund asked.

"Kid comes into the office," Marilyn explained for the benefit of Olsen and Newlund, "and asks to see the chairman of the English department. I tell him that's me and ask what the problem is. He says, 'Well, it's about my English teacher.'

" 'Which one?' I ask, although I already know.

" 'Professor Coyle.'

" 'What's the problem?' I want to know.

" 'We just had class. Not a real class or anything, just to hand in papers. I handed in my paper, and she said she couldn't accept it because it had a paper clip instead of a staple, and it was against her written policy to accept papers without staples. I said okay, wait a

minute, I'd run downstairs and get the paper stapled. "But then the paper would be late," she told me; "and I don't accept late papers."

Marilyn slapped the table. "Now this woman is psycho, Brad."

"Right here in this bar," Lloyd began. "I get to talking with this fellow, young fellow. Stranger. Never seen him before. Nice fellow. Must have been a couple of weeks ago. He wonders where I work, and I tell him over at the college. Then he starts right in ragging about Virginia Coyle. 'Novum State?' he says. 'I took some classes out there last fall. They got this bitch in the English department. . . .' Must have gone on half an hour. She's a legend. And she ain't been here a full year yet!"

"How about the poster on her door?" Marilyn began.

"I'm going to have to object to this," Brad Newlund said. "We all know this kind of talk has no place in this company."

Andy Olsen had been thinking. "Now here's an idea, fellows," he said finally. "How about if the English department, based on all the arguments Marilyn has made and all the arguments that would prevent us from cutting your fixed-term spot, requests a tenure-track for next year. I'll approve that request. I don't have your figures handy, but everyone seems to think they justify another position."

"Make that two positions," Marilyn broke in. "Probably three."

"No, no, no, young lady. It works this way. I give you one tenure-track position, my end of the deal. You do not request an additional fixed-term position. That's your end of the deal. Your woman Coyle applies for the tenure-track under the first consideration clause in the contract. The department does what it wishes on her application. I follow the department's recommendation."

"I think I have no problem with that," Newlund admitted. "But I'd have to check first with Linda T."

Cowley and Hayes nodded. "That's a good idea."

Schneider saw a small problem. “My problem is that right now Coyle is an administration problem. A bad teacher is your problem, Andy. You’ve got the authority, under the contract, to resolve that problem, and that’s what you’re paid to do. So just fire the bitch. Your tenure-track scenario puts the problem back in the department, where I don’t feel it belongs.”

“You hired her,” Olsen pointed out. “Then you made me give her a second year.”

“No, Andy, administration hired her. The department recommends, the VPAA hires. That’s in the contract. We’ve had plenty of cases where administration has hired against the recommendations of the department.”

“You were the guys that said hire a minority or don’t hire at all,” Lloyd reminded the vice president.

“Andy didn’t conduct the search that resulted in this woman being hired,” Hayes reminded Schneider. “That wasn’t administration’s doing.”

“You didn’t hire Virginia,” Jack agreed. “But administration produced the directives which . . . well, they didn’t make us hire Virginia Coyle, but they certainly nudged us in that direction. We passed up a few men that I thought looked very good.”

“The whole thing was a crock,” Lloyd insisted. “Just a fiasco.”

“Brad has put his cards on the table,” Olsen said finally. “Now I’ll put mine on the table. My position is, I can’t fire without a recommendation. Somebody will have to write a letter. That is in the contract too, Virginia. If I request recommendations, the department has to provide them.”

“May, if requested, provide,” Newlund corrected him. “The contract reads ‘may, if requested, provide. . . . ‘ ”

“Whatever,” Olsen told the group. “My bottom line is that without a recommendation from the department, I have no reason at all to do anything except rehire Virginia Coyle for next year. I’d suggest you

get together, talk this through, and have Charles rough out a letter. He's a better writer than I'll ever be, and he'd do it right. Without a letter, I'm doing nothing. And the way your union is arguing, this Coyle woman will probably be here permanently. I'm an administrator, and I can live with anything. We can keep her, we can cut her."

"That's not what you were saying last fall," Schneider reminded Olsen. " 'If it's a management problem, I know I'm going to solve it. If you don't want it resolved that way, straighten it out before it becomes a management problem.' "

"I've got your union man to deal with now. I refuse to renew Coyle without a departmental recommendation, your union man here grieves the process. I say he wins his grievance because I didn't follow procedure."

"May, if requested, provide," Newlund repeated.

"Don't fuck with me, young man. If I thought you had an honorable bone in your body, we'd cut a deal on this. But I know you're duplicitous and confrontational. I've been talking to you for a year and a half now. I know what you're going to do before you do it."

Hayes chuckled.

"I'm not acting without a departmental recommendation. As long as there's a departmental recommendation, we'll do this any way you want: for cause now from her fixed-term appointment, or my way in a search for a tenure-track position. Now you tell me how it's going to be."

"Andy's way gives us a tenure-track appointment," Cowley pointed out.

"I want to say this," Jack broke in finally. For some while he had been lost in thought, his fingers pressed together before his face, his eyes lost in some distant corner of the Silver Dollar. "I'm no fan of Virginia Coyle. That's pretty well known. I have had an earful from students this past month or so, and I've looked over her grade

rosters and watched the registration and preregistration numbers. But it really goes against my grain to be sitting with three other people determining the fate of somebody who isn't present. Virginia doesn't even know this conversation is going on. It's like we're deciding whether to hit her with the 2x4 on the right side of the head, or the left side, or on the top, or maybe full in the face. She doesn't even know she's going to get whacked."

"I have spoken with Professor Coyle on a couple of occasions," Marilyn said. "Anyone with an ounce of sense. . . ."

"No one from administration has spoken with Professor Coyle, on or off the record," Jack noted.

"How stupid can the broad be?" Cowley wanted to know.

"You ready to talk to her, Andy?" Marilyn wanted to know.

"A union representative would have to be present at any such conversation," Newlund objected. "For the record."

"The point of the conversation, asshole," Jack said, glaring at his president, "is to be off the record. To give this woman some clear warning. 'Look, you might see things this way, but we see things this way, and unless this and this and this change, you're probably going to be looking for a new job next year. You make up your own mind.' I think people deserve that kind of a clear, unequivocal warning before they get axed, no matter how obvious the situation looks to everyone else."

"Suppose somebody told you that," Newlund wanted to know. "Wouldn't it be construed as a threat? Especially if the person telling you that were the vice president of the university?"

"Better a threat than a bullet," Jack asserted. "People have a right to at least one warning."

"I gave her one," said Marilyn.

"Two."

"I gave her two."

“She’s entitled to one from administration. From the people who are going to do the firing.”

“You’re the acting assistant dean,” Hayes told Jack. “And you’re the one who wants a warning. Maybe that’s your job, now that you’re officially part of administration.”

“I’m not going to beat up on other faculty members, including Virginia Coyle. If that’s my job, I quit.”

“You can’t quit both union and management in the same night,” Cowley told Creed.

“You’re not beating up. You’re delivering a warning,” Hayes reminded Creed.

“An off-the-record warning,” Newlund said.

Charles pressed. “It stays off the record. It’s absolutely confidential. We are all clear on that?”

“Okay by me,” Newlund agreed. Olsen, Hayes, and Cowley nodded.

“I don’t know why you’re doin’ this, good buddy,” Cowley said, scratching his head.

“Just make it soon,” Marilyn added.

Charles came home in a troubled mood that evening. “I don’t know why you’re doing this. She’s a bitch,” Kelly told him. “Everyone at school knows that. Let them fire her. She deserves it.”

On the morning of February 8th, with winter term drawing to a close, Jack reluctantly summoned Virginia Coyle to his office, and in so doing set in motion the events which precipitated his own death.

“Would you prefer the door to be open or closed?” he asked before the discussion began. Much thought had gone into that question.

“It makes no difference to me,” Virginia told him. “Whatever you prefer.”

“Would you prefer a third person to be present?” Jack wanted to know.

Again Virginia had no preferences.

“For several reasons, I would prefer the door to be open and/or a third person to be present,” Jack told her. “However, I would like to preserve your confidentiality. I think you’re entitled to confidentiality. I want what I have to say to be confidential, which is why I’m not committing it to paper.”

“I have no preferences.”

“Perhaps I could tape record our discussion.”

“I would hope our relationship is not so acrimonious that such precautions are necessary.”

“Perhaps I’ll just ask our secretary if she’d mind joining us. I’ll ask her not to take notes.”

“If she’s not taking notes, a secretary is not necessary. Perhaps a representative of SUUFAMP should be present.”

“As soon as someone from the union is present, our conversation becomes part of your official record.”

“Is that bad?”

“The best way to insure confidentiality,” Jack explained, “is to erase all records, or to keep no records to begin with. I’m not going to take notes myself. You may take notes if you want, but I hope you’ll just listen carefully. Here is a list of the main points I want to cover. I’ve made a copy for myself, and I’ll give a copy to you.” Jack handed Virginia a very brief outline: (1) grades, (2) enrollments, (3) complaints, (4) AY 1991-92.

“I cannot begin to explain how unhappy I am about this meeting,” Jack began. “I have always considered myself a faculty person. I have always detested college administrators. I have always preached that the first and perhaps the only duty of a conscientious college administrator is to protect the faculty against the combined

attacks of self-serving students, ignorant politicians and trustees, and a very unsympathetic and frequently hostile public. I can't tell you how much I want to be on your side. All I can say, without violating confidences similar to the confidences I want to extend to you, is that I have sat in your chair, not to be admonished, not to be advised, not to be asked for an explanation, not to be offered time for the amendment of life, but to be judged. No, not even to be judged, to be sentenced. I'm not going to go into that, except to say that I want to treat you more fairly than I consider myself to have been treated."

Virginia Coyle registered no reaction. Jack continued.

"As you are aware, a very large number of the students who registered for your classes last fall did not complete them. Also, a large number of those who completed your classes did so with grades below passing. I believe you and Professor Schneider have discussed that matter."

"We had words to that effect."

"I don't know how this term is going, and to be frank, individual grades are not really my business."

"That would be my position as well."

"Collectively, however, all of us have to be concerned when most students who enroll in a class cannot or do not pass that class."

"If their work is substandard, they have no right to pass the class," Virginia pointed out. "Surely you're not directing me to accept substandard work. I'm not aware that there is a set departmental standard for grades."

"There is no set standard for grades, and I'm not directing you to accept substandard work. I would suggest, however, that C is, by definition, 'average,' and B usually means 'above average' as D usually means 'below average.' The commonly accepted definition of a failing grade is 'no redemptive social value,' as the commonly understood interpretation of an A grade is 'outstanding.' I'd be the

first to admit that grades have become a little inflated lately, so that if anything B now represents ‘average’ and C seems to represent something below average. At least my students are unhappy with a C grade. My point is that over the broad run, a majority of students should not be below average. By definition they can’t be.”

“Are you directing me to change my grading scale? Are you directing me to change grades?”

“I’m not directing you at all,” Jack answered. “I just want to suggest a possible explanation, and see if we can’t follow certain cause-effect relations to their logical conclusions. In fact, I’d like to suggest three possible explanations for the fall grades. One is that last fall you had three abnormally substandard classes, with the result that you had three sections of abnormally substandard grades. That would be a remarkable coincidence, I’m sure we’d agree, and one which would probably not repeat itself this term.

“The second possible explanation for this phenomenon is that your definitions of ‘standard,’ ‘substandard’ and ‘above average’ work are not realistically suited to your students’ capabilities. In this case we’d probably agree that they need some redefinition.

“The third possible explanation is that your definitions of ‘standard,’ ‘substandard,’ and ‘above average’ are realistic, but you have trouble teaching to your own standards.”

“Are you implying that I’m an incompetent teacher?” Virginia wanted to know.

Jack thought for a moment. “Let me set you an analogy. Say I’m a track coach. Because I am a good coach and concerned with my athletes’ well-being, I want them to succeed. I know, however, that the only real growth comes in meeting a real challenge. If I set the high jump bar two feet off the ground, they’ll all clear it, and I’ll tell them all ‘very good, great, really good job,’ but my praise won’t mean anything because they haven’t met a real challenge. So I set the bar at a height which offers a legitimate challenge. Then I coach them in the proper techniques of jumping, and help them meet that

challenge. When I say ‘very good, great, tremendous job,’ my praise means something.

“Now let me point out some things about this analogy. First, the students have to be willing to work to clear the bar. If they don’t work, they don’t clear it, and they receive no praise. That’s okay.

“Second, I too must work. I have an obligation to show them how to clear that bar. I don’t just set it up, let them practice, and then cut from the squad everyone who can’t teach himself how to meet my minimum standard. If I can’t show them how to clear the height I have set—I won’t say if I can’t clear it myself—then I have been unfair to them.

“Third, the height at which I set the bar depends partly on my own coaching ability, and partly on whom I’m coaching. If I’m a college coach, I expect my athletes to clear a higher bar than I might if I were a high school coach. And in high school I set the bar higher than I would in grade school. If I’m a grade school coach and I set that bar at six feet, nobody’s going to clear it no matter how well I coach them, no matter how hard they try. I’m setting them up for failure.”

“I don’t understand the analogy.”

“I’m suggesting that you set challenging but reasonable standards for your students,” Charles said, “standards they can reach with good effort on their part and good teaching on your part.”

“I believe I am doing exactly that.”

“Many people here, including students and faculty and administration, believe that the fall grades show you are not. Either the standards are too high, or the coaching is inadequate.”

“What people are these?” Virginia wanted to know. “Have people said I’m an incompetent teacher? Is that what you’re trying to tell me?”

“I would suggest your grades speak for themselves. What conclusions would you draw from the data presented? The

conclusion I would draw, and others have drawn, is that the abnormally high number of withdrawals from your classes last fall and this winter might have something to do with your standards or your teaching techniques. If that's not the explanation for the problem, you might want to provide another. If it is the explanation for the problem, you might want to review both your standards and your teaching methods."

"I don't see a problem," Virginia said distractedly.

"I see a problem."

Virginia's eyes lost their distance. "I'm not sure," she said slowly, "that I can accept these as valid criticisms of my professional performance coming from a man who persists in behavior his personal experience should have taught him was inappropriate and dangerous."

Jack, who understood he was being threatened, chose his words carefully.

"I am voicing here the collective opinion of several of your colleagues. Let me ignore for the moment your gratuitous and utterly irrelevant argument *ad hominem*, and refocus our attention on the subject at hand. Whatever you think of me personally, I am merely an individual selected by the Novum State administration to express its collective reasoning."

Virginia thought a moment.

"Let me rephrase my position," she said at last. "I cannot accept this as valid criticism of her performance coming from an administration which tacitly approves the behavior of one who persisted in actions that his personal experience should have taught him was inappropriate and dangerous."

"This is another logical fallacy, Virginia. It's called shifting the burden of proof. You are entitled to your opinion of me, but it's not relevant to this issue. It's your behavior—your *professional* behavior, not your personal behavior, since we were interested only in your

professional capabilities here—it is your behavior which will be evaluated at the end of this year when you seek reappointment. It is not up to me, or the department, or the institution, to prove ourselves worthy of employing you."

"I hope I have made my point, Professor Creed. If not, perhaps I need to see President Weber."

Jack sat back in his chair to clear his head and refocus the discussion.

"Virginia, you were not invited here to deliver a message to me. I asked you here because I have been delegated to deliver a message to you. Off the record, and for your benefit, not mine."

"If you're suggesting I give easier grades to make students want to take my classes . . . I wasn't aware that I was on commission."

"Look, Virginia, granted, we're not salesmen, we're teachers. Granted students, like most people, resist change and challenge. It's hard for them to give up comfortable preconceived notions and move to different levels, different mental geographies. Still, teaching is a seduction."

"A seduction?"

"A seduction. A teacher has to find a way to make students want to try something they don't want to try, in the belief that, though initially painful, this new life is ultimately more rewarding than the old. The teacher has to bring the student through that pain and doubt and resistance. It's difficult, I'll be the first to admit. Especially in this system where students, and their parents, and politicians, and even administrators tend to view education as a consumer commodity. But that's the new reality we all live with. If the student is not satisfied, she or he can just walk out and go elsewhere.

"Part of me is on your side here. I don't like this numbers talk. I myself have had students drop my class because, and I'm quoting, they could get a better deal elsewhere. Another part of me knows that teaching to an empty room, or to four or five students, is not

satisfying. I have known cases where that happened, an older person at Busiris where I once taught: four, five, maybe six students a term. I used to weep for her. You don't want that to happen."

"Dr. Creed," Virginia told Charles, "I don't want your tears."

"Let me put it differently," Jack offered. "Let me offer what we might call the Argument from Professional Courtesy. If Professor Jones consistently teaches sections of 12, 13, and 14 students, and Professor Green consistently teaches sections of 25, 30, and 35 students, a certain inequity exists. You may not see that inequity, but I think you will see how some animosity might develop in the mind of Professor Green, who carries 90 students each term, who grades 90 sets of 6 or 8 composition papers, who grades 90 sets of mid-terms and finals, while his or her colleague Professor Jones grades only half that number. I think you will see how a department might become collectively dissatisfied with a colleague who returned 66% or 75% of her students to them to be retaught.

"And I am sure you will see how a department, or an administration, or an institution, given a choice between Jones, who will carry 35 students a term, and Professor Green who will carry 90 —or even between Professor Jones and unknown Professor Smith who will carry who knows how many students a term—is probably going to be prejudiced against Professor Jones. If and when Professors Jones, Green, and Smith apply for the same job, who do you think is going to be hired?"

"Is that all you have to say about enrollments?" Virginia wanted to know.

"Let me suggest that maybe the problem is attitudinal . . . which would bring me to the third item on my list."

"I am very open to my students," Virginia asserted. "Many are in my office every day discussing their projects and assignments."

"Virginia," Jack said in an entirely different tone of voice, "my office—my other office over in the department—is in the upper tower. Every time I climb the stairs to or from my office, which is quite

frequently each day, I pass your office. I have on maybe two occasions seen students talking with you. In the doorway, not in the office. The overwhelming majority of times your door is closed and the lights are out. Some of those times are during your posted office hours. Other colleagues and other students have had the same experience."

"Are you keeping some kind of record?"

"I'm telling you what I know so that you can do something about it. Your students do not find you in any way approachable."

"That's an overgeneralization."

"It's a generalization based on the people who have been to Marilyn's office and to my office—this office here—to complain about their experiences in your classes, about their grades and your assignments and your attitude. And to the offices of Dean Hayes and Vice President Olsen."

"What people are these? I would need specifics before I can respond to any charges."

"I'm not making charges. This discussion is off the record. It's off the record for your sake. What I'm trying to tell you is that there is an attitude problem, or a problem with the perception of your attitude. Maybe that's all it is, a perception. Maybe my advice is just to be more accessible. More friendly."

"You would appreciate more friendliness?"

"I think that would be a great help."

"Is that what you called me here to tell me? If that's your message, I have received it, and I will feel free to go."

"The message is this," Jack concluded. "There is some potential trouble. The trouble lies in the areas of grades, enrollments, and student complaints. I'm trying to warn you of the trouble, because I think it might have an impact on your colleagues, the school, the students, and you. What I'm trying to do is warn you."

Virginia rose. “I thank you for this talk,” she told Jack. “It has been so illuminating, and I appreciate being, as you put it, warned of potential trouble. I shall try to remember that teaching is a seduction. I shall try to be more friendly, more—how did you say?—accessible.”

# Chapter 18
# **Prelims**

Jack sensed trouble with Virginia Coyle from February 1991. He knew for certain a battle was in the offing when, in April, he reviewed with her as acting assistant dean the letter which he himself, as a member of the Department of English, had written, giving the department's reasons for not appointing her to a tenure-track position. Still, Jack never expected a State Board of Human Rights investigation. He never expected a law suit or a public trial. He never expected to see Virginia Coyle appointed to a tenure-track position at Novum, never expected to see Virginia Coyle collect any money from him or the University, and he never expected to die.

What Jack did expect is unclear. There would be some sort of complaint against the school, against the department and probably against him personally. Both Newlund and Coyle had made that much clear. Jack regarded the complaint as a ploy, one more maneuver in the knee jerk antagonism between Newlund's union and Olsen's administration. Coyle's remarks suggested that she hoped to leverage Jack's personal life into reappointment at Novum State. This was a dirty trick, well outside the bounds of labor-management politics. Jack's relationship with Kelly had no bearing on the department's collective assessment of Virginia's professional competence, as any mediator would see. Both faculty and administration were friendly to Jack, fed up to here with Virginia. Coyle and Newlund could only look cheap.

In any case, bad teaching was not to be rewarded with good money. Although Jack was vaguely uncomfortable at Virginia's innuendoes, on this point he was determined. Not until Novum State, as he put it, "cast him adrift" in 1996, did Jack lose faith. Then came the intrusion of Victoria Nation, and the threat she represented, into Jack's problems with Virginia. Jack fell into a deep depression from which only Jenny Lynn and Kelly rescued him.

Virginia Coyle played her hand with the finesse of one who had been there before, which, in fact, she had. She understood immediately that Olsen's tenure-track gambit was being used to lure her out of a position which, theoretically, offered permanent employment without evaluation. She and Newlund filed a formal grievance over the conversion of the fixed-term into a tenure-track position. This was merely a delaying action: SUUFAMP expected to lose its grievance, and it did. Quickly.

Aware that her application for the tenure-track had been rejected even before it was made, Newlund and Coyle did their best to maneuver the department into appearing hostile and prejudiced in its consideration of her application. Their prejudice might be finessed into a position or a cash settlement, either through a negotiated compromise with Novum or an arbiter's award.

Olsen's offer of a tenure-track English position for AY 1991-92 came hard on the heels of Jack's February chat with Virginia. Newlund's grievance was denied toward the end of the month, which coincided with the end of winter term. SUUFAMP's contract gave part-time and fixed-term employees the right to "first consideration" for permanent positions, a right which all parties agreed applied to Virginia Coyle. The contract specified no time frame for this consideration, however, and the first week of March was spring break. "Virginia is not legally obligated to work for Novum State between February 22 and March 3," Newlund reminded Marilyn Schneider. "Come March 4, she will be very busy with spring term classes. As you know she's teaching a new course this term, the novel."

"To six students," Schneider observed wryly.

"Two students or thirty-two, the preparation is the same."

"I'll expect a letter of application by the end of the first week of class."

"I can't promise anything. The candidate will do her best."

"I'm sure she will."

On March 19, Marilyn Schneider found a typed letter in her mailbox:

March 11, 1991

To: Dr. Marilyn Schneider, Chair
Department of English
Novum State University

Dear Professor Schneider,

Please consider this letter my formal application for the tenure-track position of Associate Professor of English at Novum State University, beginning in September 1991.

Yours,
Virginia Coyle
Ph. D.

Marilyn scheduled a department meeting for March 27, and requested in writing, on the afternoon of the 19th, that Virginia provide “whatever materials you might care to provide in support of your application for a tenure-track appointment at Novum State University.” Virginia’s response, in a note of the 25th, was, “It will take some time to assemble the material you requested, and I will, as you know, be out of town during the first few days of April at a professional conference, for which I will be preparing this week. So I cannot possibly have anything to you by the 27th.”

“It is customary for persons applying for positions to offer such support materials as they deem necessary and appropriate without being formally invited to do so,” wrote Marilyn in her formal response of mid-afternoon. “I would have expected any candidate to provide materials with her or his letter of application. You have known of the department meeting to consider your application for the past eight days. You’ve had my request, a professional courtesy, for a week. I will discuss the issue with the department, but my guess is we’ll proceed with our action on your application as scheduled, on Wednesday, basing our decision on whatever materials you have by then provided.”

In lieu of application materials, Virginia sent her union president with a message. “She says she needs more time,” Newlund told Marilyn and others gathered in the department office. “Our position is she deserves it.”

“She’s had since mid-February,” Marilyn pointed out.

“What ‘our’ position?” Jack wanted to know.

“The SUUFAMP’s position.”

“I am SUUFAMP. Marilyn is SUUFAMP. More time is not our position at all.”

“Don’t get yourself in trouble, Charles.”

“Don’t get yourself in trouble,” Jack told Newlund. “Most of your membership is pissed enough with you already.”

“We’ve been through this before,” Newlund warned. “The contract clearly defines conferences as professional activities. Virginia is within her rights in saying the conference prevents her from meeting your deadline on providing materials.”

“She hasn’t been conferencing since the middle of February,” Marilyn pointed out.

“Much, but not all,” Jack added.

“That’s SUUFAMP’s position,” Newlund told her.

“That’s your position.”

“Some members of this department are beginning to sound very prejudiced against the candidate.”

“Forming evaluative judgments is our job.”

“Not until you see the evidence.”

“This isn’t a law court, Brad. We both evaluate and collect evidence. And we’ve collected enough evidence to fry your client, which is obviously what Virginia has become. Of course we’ll give her a fair trial first, then string her up.”

“You shouldn’t have said that, Jack.”

“I didn’t. Marilyn didn’t hear me, and I didn’t say it.”

“Hear what?” Marilyn wanted to know.

“You guys watch your toes.”

On March 27, 1990 the department of English voted to reconvene on April 3 to review Virginia Coyle’s application, and informed her in writing that it “anticipated receiving materials on or before Tuesday, April 2, 1990.”

“There’s nothing to review,” Marilyn told Jack when, late Monday afternoon, he asked to review the Coyle files. “I haven’t seen her all day, either.”

There was nothing to review on Tuesday, April 2, a day when Virginia canceled all three of her classes. “Conference lag,” Haley suggested.

“Even as we speak, Virginia is writing out student evaluations,” Jack joked. “Now one with the left hand. Now one with the right. Now one in pencil. Now one in green ink.”

Wednesday morning brought more nothing. Marilyn phoned Virginia’s apartment: no answer. She posted a note in her mailbox: “The committee meets at 4:00 p.m. to consider your application for a tenure-track position. I anticipate receiving the materials you promised before that meeting.”

“I haven’t got a thing,” Marilyn announced at 4:00. “I suggest we go ahead.”

“We don’t want to give her any opportunity to claim she was discriminated against,” Ed Haley cautioned.

“We’re losing good candidates,” Lloyd Cowley argued. “The longer she stalls us, the more likely it is that our top choices from outside will have jobs by the time we get to them. That’s probably her plan.”

“I say give her one more week.”

“Virginia has had extensions aplenty,” said Marilyn. “I think we should proceed through this vote. And then move on with the search.”

“I didn’t hear that,” said Jack. The department voted one week’s further extension. Marilyn Schneider returned to her office to find a hand written note from Virginia: “I received at 4:15 your message announcing a meeting at 4:00 p.m. today, requesting material from me for that meeting. It’s obviously impossible for me to meet your deadline. This act is but one in a pattern of harassment I have experienced over the past year. My union president will be informed.”

This time even Newlund had to admit Virginia had been allotted time enough. By the time the department met as scheduled on April 10, the candidate had forwarded to Marilyn Schneider the materials she’d been two months in assembling. They consisted of one typed cover letter, one copy of her vita, three conference programs, one of which contained her name, a photostat of one typewritten article and a letter indicating it had been tentatively accepted for publication in *Irish Studies Today*, and a photocopy of a paper-in-progress.

“Not a single student evaluation,” Ed Haley noted.

“She writes worse than she talks,” Jack noted. “Pure salt water taffy. Try twisting this second paragraph around in your mouth.”

The department discussed Virginia Coyle for nearly two hours, although the actual vote on her application came after thirty minutes. Most of the discussion concerned the amount of detail to offer as reasons for rejecting her application, such as it was.

“If we’re not specific, we sound capricious, discriminatory, prejudiced, irrational. She’s got a law suit,” Jack thought aloud.

Marilyn thought otherwise. “You get sued for what you say, not for what you don’t say. Every time we get in trouble, it’s for offering too much, not for offering too little. If administration wants to elaborate, let them.”

“You mean, let me,” Jack joked nervously.

“You’re in an odd situation,” she agreed.

“I’m a big tough guy.”

“You’re just Olsen’s spokesman. As associate dean you’re covered under their liability insurance. We’re not covered, and firing people is not our job. Let’s keep our letter vague to cover our own asses. And to protect Virginia. This letter is part of her permanent record.”

The department’s best writer was delegated to frame the department’s letter. At first he objected. “I’m not entirely comfortable with this. Virginia has been hostile since last September’s party. I had the talk with her in February. I’ll probably have to talk with her next week. Now you want me to write the letter that sends her down the toilet.”

“I’ve spoken with her many times,” Marilyn said. “I have written her as well. I’ve carried the full brunt of this business so far. She has as much cause to suspect me as you.”

“Lloyd?”

“I’d just say somethin’ that got us all in trouble. You know how I am. And how I feel. I been opposed to her from even before we hired her, and she knows it.”

“Ed?”

“I’d as soon not. You’re the writer, Charles. And the big tough guy.”

Jack’s letter complimented Professor Coyle on her “persistent efforts in the direction of professional development”; moved on to express some concern over student perceptions, “or misperceptions,” of her intentions and methods, to which it attributed their reluctance to remain in her classes or enroll in other classes she taught; and decided, with apparent regret, that Virginia was “a luxury the department could not afford.” Jack wrote the letter in several drafts, each reviewed and edited by the full department. The

final draft was indeed a collaborative effort and pleased all who signed it.

“It’s a good letter,” Lloyd Cowley concluded.

“Extremely prejudiced and prejudicial,” Coyle decided, demanding that it be withdrawn from her personnel file. Jack’s union further demanded that the department explain in writing what was meant by “student perceptions or misperceptions” and “a luxury the department could not afford.”

The department did not elaborate on its letter of April 10, 1991.

A week later, at Vice President Olsen’s request, Jack found himself explaining that letter to Virginia.

His speech then was a replay of his talk in February. “Once again,” he told her, “I’d like to keep the specifics off the record, but I’ll spell things out, and we can let them be a part of the record if you wish.”

“Once again, I reject your criticisms of my performance as unfounded in objective fact,” she told him.

“You’ve been through two grade appeals since February alone.”

“Trouble-causers, as I explained to the committee. Their grades were not changed.”

“In both cases, you were directed to reconsider your course grade, which is the most student-friendly verdict an appeals committee can render. At the very least, you cost me, the students, yourself, and your colleagues a great deal of time.”

“I do not apologize for my integrity, Professor Creed.”

“I have prepared here a chart of your grades for fall and winter terms, Professor Coyle: number of A’s, B’s, C’s, D’s, No Credits, Withdrawals, and Incompletes.” Jack handed Virginia a chart of grades, including a column marked “percentage of total.”

“Let us compare your grade charts with these charts for both the English department and the University. These are computer-

generated from grade sheets and include every grade given in every class taught by the English department and every class in the University. Both totals include your grades. You will notice a remarkable discrepancy between your profile and the department and university profiles in every category: far fewer A's, B's, and C's in your profile, and a much higher percentage of D's, NC's, and Incompletes. The percentage of students withdrawing from the class is also significant. I believe we've discussed the matter before."

"The data here are inaccurate," Virginia insisted.

"Could you point out the inaccuracies?"

"I shall when and if the occasion for doing so arises."

"This is the occasion."

"Perhaps there will be future occasions."

Jack settled back in his chair. "I think these charts will become part of the record," he announced finally. "If you have specific objections, make them through Brad, and we'll work through the problems."

Virginia said nothing.

"As you know, the grade appeals are confidential and will not become part of your file. I'm not going to go into the various stories we've all heard: they too are hearsay, and do not belong in a personnel file.

"Here is something which is part of that file." Jack handed her a photocopy of a letter:

Dr. Andrew Olsen
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Novum State University

Dear Dr. Olsen,

Last fall my son had the unfortunate experience of taking a writing course from one of your professors of English, Dr. Virginia Coyle. He worked very hard all term, and received

B grades on his first two papers. However, one day he challenged something Professor Coyle said in class, and then he received a D on his next paper. Her explanation was that she did not think he had written his own work. He explained that he did, and pointed out that he had received B's on his first two papers. Professor Coyle did not change his D.

On his fourth paper, he received another D, also because she did not believe he had written it himself. She did not suggest any source for his material, only that his work was not his own. She told him that she could have given him a failing grade for plagiarism, and suggested that he admit to not having written his papers.

As a result of this experience, I went to see Dr. Coyle myself. I had to make two trips to your campus. The first visit I waited by her office for the full hour of her posted office hour, and she never came to her office. The department secretary did not know where she was. When I did meet Dr. Coyle on my second visit, she was hostile and rude and ended up accusing me of writing my son's papers. I was so angry and disgusted, I left her office.

My son received an F from Dr. Coyle and has transferred to another college. I cannot believe you allow a woman like this to teach at your institution. If you have many other professors like Professor Coyle, I am sure you will close due to a lack of students in a few years.

Yours,
Sallie Collins

"I verified the story with both the mother and the son," Jack told Virginia.

"This was a clear case of plagiarism, and I caught the little devil red-handed," Virginia fumed.

"Did you have the original from which he plagiarized?"

“I recognized the source.”

“Did you show the source to him or his mother?”

“I didn’t have to. He knew what he had done.”

“These are the kinds of things which lie behind the department’s decision on your application,” Jack explained. “The department kept them out of its letter, and I’d as soon keep them out of your file. But if you insist on confrontation, the stories will be told. They do not make you look like a very professional person, Professor Coyle.”

“I am an extremely competent female,” Virginia told Jack. “This institution has historically had difficulty dealing with strong, competent women. I am the most professional person on this faculty, far more professional than any of those who acted on my application.”

“I understand the threat you are making, Virginia, but it’s not going to hold water. I’ll put my vita against your vita any day of the week,” Jack told her.

“One’s vita tells . . . so little of one’s story.”

“I’ll put my professional record against yours any day.”

“I would advise you not to, Professor Creed.”

It was Jack’s turn to sit quietly for a moment.

“Fire away with whatever you think you’ve got,” Jack told Virginia Coyle on April 11, 1991. “Whatever you do, I doubt the department or the university is going to change its position.”

“I have already scheduled a meeting with President Weber,” Virginia told Jack. “You may prevent that meeting if you wish.”

“I am, in this case, speaking for President Weber. Or for his agent, Vice President Olsen. I say what NSU administration has told me to say. You have been talking to President Weber for the last half hour, Virginia.”

Coyle went not to Weber but to Newlund, demanding he file a grievance against the English department, collectively and as individuals.

“Faculty can’t grieve faculty,” Newlund told his client. “We went through that last fall.”

“They’re hostile and prejudiced,” she persisted. “They can’t handle a competent woman. Not even Marilyn Schneider. Especially Marilyn Schneider.”

“A grievance is filed against an employer,” Newlund explained.

“It’s Creed and Schneider. And Haley. And Cowley. They’re all terrified of me because I don’t play their little political game.”

Newlund needed nearly an hour to convince Virginia that any grievance would have to be made against administration, not faculty, and it would have to be procedural. “Let’s focus now on keeping some of that material out of your personnel file, and then grieve the hiring process after it’s complete. I’m still very hopeful of winning a permanent appointment as part of an arbiter’s ruling. That will take time, but I think our chances are good.”

Virginia Coyle’s grievance was still pending when she emptied her office, packed her belongings, and disappeared into the dark of a June night. She had missed most of her spring classes and left without turning in final grades . . . the result, her SUUFAMP president claimed, of stress and mental anguish caused by students, the English department and Novum State administrators. After telephone calls to her 22 students (four in the novel class), Marilyn Schneider filled in grades on Virginia’s three grade rosters.

Despite the stress and anguish which prevented her from meeting classes, and even while badgering Brad Newlund almost daily about her grievance, Virginia Coyle found time to visit the Wisconsin Human Rights Commission in Madison. This was in May, and the visit was unknown to Brad Newlund. Precisely what went on at the Human Rights Commission in the fall of 1991 is confidential. Neither Jack’s lawyers nor the University’s could or would reveal

details. “I can say only that she apparently did not present her case well,” the University attorney told Vance Hayes. Another source intimated that Virginia so antagonized the human rights officer that she nearly threw her down the stairs. Virginia kept insisting she’d been grievously mistreated at Novum, and the officer kept insisting she had no case. When Virginia threatened to file a gender harassment complaint about the officer, the woman decided to get Virginia out of her office as expeditiously as possible. “If you are reinstated to your employment at Novum as a result of a labor decision,” she told Virginia, “you will have a weak human rights case. If your grievance at Novum fails and you lose your job, your human rights case will be stronger. Come back after the grievance has been decided.”

At least that’s one story.

The record shows only that Virginia Coyle attempted to file a human rights complaint in spring of 1992, and that she returned two years later, after a ruling on her labor grievance.

The grievance stumbled through stages of hearing and appeal throughout 1992 and 1993, ending up finally in the hands of an arbiter. Taking his own sweet time, the arbiter ruled in October 1993 that Vice President Andy Olsen had acted within his contractual rights in awarding the English department a tenure-track position and concurrently declining to award them a concurrent fixed-term position, and that, despite Virginia’s year of service, both department and administration had followed correct and unbiased procedures in rejecting Virginia Coyle’s application for the tenure-track position.

“Thus it was,” Jack observed with an appropriate appreciation for the irony, “that a case which seriously weakened the union position arose out of the state-wide president’s home school, out of her home department. The ‘right of first consideration’ clause was dropped from our 1994-96 contract, thanks specifically to Virginia Coyle. I liked Linda. I still admire some qualities of Linda. But she let Newlund mishandle the Coyle situation. SUUFAMP would have been

just as well off to let Olsen bounce Coyle for cause. Saved us all a lot of trouble."

"Then Newlund would have had a law suit instead of you," DeLotta reminded him.

"A most deserving fellow," Jack observed.

Her grievance lost, Virginia returned in February 1994, to the Human Rights Commission. For whatever reasons—perhaps former Professor Coyle was more persuasive in her presentation, perhaps she had a more sympathetic audience, perhaps the loss of her job had indeed strengthened her case—this officer agreed to investigate the matter. In April 1994 President Weber was informed that the Wisconsin Human Rights Commission was conducting a confidential investigation, and specific charges of human rights violations might be forthcoming regarding Novum's treatment of one of its former employees, a Dr. Virginia Coyle. The bases for her complaint were both harassment and gender discrimination. President Weber promised the University's full cooperation.

Jack knew of the 1994-5 investigation, although no specific charges were leveled against him. He was questioned briefly by the human rights investigator in Olsen's presence. "I told them both that I was quite familiar with harassment regulations and that I had never sexually harassed Virginia Coyle in any reasonable definition of the word. Moreover, I had never seen anything I considered sexual harassment of Virginia, and I had not heard indirectly of any episodes that might be considered sexual harassment."

One more time Jack reviewed what he remembered to have been the department's discussion of her tenure-track application, and its reasons for passing negatively on it. He recounted his February and April meetings with Virginia, although he failed to mention the Silver Dollar Bar discussion which had produced the February meeting. He went over the letter he had helped compose on April 10, 1991. He assured the investigator that his reservations about Virginia Coyle's teaching abilities stemmed entirely from his

assessment of her as an individual, and had nothing to do with her being female. He pointed out his especially cordial and professional working relationships with a number of Novum State women.

“Dr. Coyle claims you don’t know how to interact with a competent female.”

“Me personally?”

“She mentioned your name specifically.”

“Tell her she’s begging the question.”

Jack later admitted to having been very upset by the episode. “I thought we had laid the ghost of Virginia Coyle to rest with the labor grievance. I had the notion once again that I was being used as leverage to squeeze some financial settlement out of the institution, because I knew that one way of proving harassment was to demonstrate a pattern of behavior. I figured I’d come out of any Novum State investigation looking like a cradle-robber because of Kelly, and out of any report from Busiris looking like a racist sexist anarchist. My essay on Women’s Lib would be dragged in to prove my difficulties in ‘interacting with a competent female.’ My known friendships with Kesey, Bly, Farmer, Etter, Blei and Dylan weren’t going to help much either. I was very upset about it all. Didn’t sleep well for a month. Ask Kelly.

“I still couldn’t believe Virginia was playing these cards, though, because the more the investigator asked, the more of an earful he got on Virginia Coyle’s teaching history. All the things we’d been trying to keep out of her record, for her sake, were all going right into the record. I couldn’t believe Virginia was doing this to herself.”

Lloyd Cowley was also questioned in this investigation, as were Jack Haley and Marilyn Schneider.

“When the investigation was finished, we held our breath,” Jack remembered, “but I personally figured what the fuck, this is a gender discrimination thing. If there’s a settlement, it will be with the University or the State System. It pissed the shit out of me to think

that Virginia might use me—might use Kelly and me—to squeeze some dough out of Novum State. But I didn't see it as a personal threat.

"When Olsen announced informally in March 1995, that the Human Rights Commission investigation had found no violation of Virginia Coyle's human rights, we really figured we were out of the woods. Everything was coming up hollyhocks and strawberries. *Songs of the North Country* was still selling well, and I was a hot item again on the scholarly talk show circuit. Bob Dylan himself wanted me to do his authorized biography. Timm had completed flight school. Jenny Lynn had seen the light, pulled out of Women's Studies at Bryn Mawr, completed a degree in history at U.W.-Madison, and begun graduate studies at Northwestern. On a fellowship. The kids were independent and so was I. Kelly had finally found a good job in Lake-of-the-Woods. I had the Dylan project. Marilyn, Lloyd, Ed, Kelly, and I went out to The Silver Dollar for a big damned steak dinner. Talk about premature!"

The matter lay dormant and forgotten for half a year, while Coyle went door to door in Madison looking for a lawyer to plead her case. At least five rejected her, including Scott and Daneman, the most prominent Wisconsin specialists in harassment litigation, who told her she had no case. Then she found Roger C. Barclay, new to Madison and to harassment law, a little green, with plenty of time and no reputation to lose. He took Virginia and her non-case on a cash basis.

The suit hit Jack—and the rest of Novum State—like the proverbial ton of bricks.

"I thought we were done with that," Schneider fumed.

"I didn't even know you could file a civil suit for human rights violations," Kelly complained.

"You couldn't until two years ago," Lloyd Cowley grumbled.

"Isn't that a little *ex post facto*?" Haley asked?

“The new law offers a window of opportunity. To those whom the earlier absence of a law disempowered.”

Not only the fact of the suit itself, but the nature of Virginia’s allegations stunned the defendants. “I can guarantee you there was nothing like this in the 1994 complaint,” Andy Olsen assured Jack. “Items 22, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 35, 37—all new here. None of this was discussed in my presence when the human rights officer talked to you, Ed, and Lloyd.”

“And we never talked to anyone except that day with you.”

“Funny it should come up now,” Ed Haley mused.

“That’s what’s meant by ‘recovered memory,’ ” Jack suggested.

“Convenient, ain’t it?” Lloyd Cowley fumed.

“Of course it never came up before,” Jack told me on the telephone. “She’d threatened to drag me in before, but her accusations were not specific. My guess is the Human Rights officer was smart enough to sort through Virginia’s bullshit and keep her focused on Novum State. The human rights officer was conducting an investigation, not representing Virginia the way Barclay was. Trying to discover facts, not trying to leverage dough out of Novum. Nobody from the human rights office said anything about me and Kelly. Or about me and any other students, past or present. None of that ‘long history of unprofessional relationships’ routine. All that shit is new.

“Well, if you’re going to lie, lie big time. That must be what her hotshot lawyer told Virginia. Or maybe she figured it out when her 1992 complaint wasn’t hot enough, and then her 1994 complaint wasn’t hot enough. Better go for it big time.”

“You do seem to attract the beauties and the bitches,” I told Jack in sympathy. “Sometimes I envy you, and sometimes I do not envy you.”

“I’ll tell you this,” Jack admitted. “I’ve gained a lot of respect for Justice Thomas.”

“Thomas?”

“Yeah, Clarence Thomas. I’ve always figured, sure, yeah, okay. Whatever you say, Clarence, shuck and jive and save your black behind. We all know you were hitting on her. I figured he hit on her, she turned him down flat, then he quit. When he moved to a new job and she accepted his offer of a ride in his new car, he thought she was interested. So he started hitting on her again, and she turned him down, and he let her drop like a stone of her own weight.”

“That’s about what we all thought.”

“But we all figured all the things she said he said were true, right?”

“Yeah, mostly.”

“Like you and Lou and everyone figure all that shit about me at Busiris was mostly true. Right? Come on, now, Tucker, you can admit it. This is your old buddy Jack you’re talking to.”

“Jack, . . .”

“Say no more, Tucker. I’d have thought the same thing about you. Everybody does. That’s the insidious nature of the charges. You can’t shake them.

“Well, shit, I now believe the Judge told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Me offering Virginia Coyle my support in exchange for sexual favors? Calling her up to announce I’m balling some student and would she please change the kid’s grade? That’s a bigger stretcher than Long Dong Silver’s dong. I honestly doubt Thomas said anything at all about Long Dong Silver or public hairs on Coke cans. I would bet the mortgage to my house Hill made that shit up. Women are absolutely, self-servingly vicious. Or they can be when they want to be. I should have remembered.”

Virginia’s civil suit precipitated a meeting of all Novum State defendants in President Weber’s office on November 24th. “The University is represented in legal matters by the Attorney General’s Office in Madison,” Weber announced. “Their lawyers will be

representing the University and the State System, and the A.G.'s office will represent all permanent Novum State University administrators. It is our belief at this time that it will also represent faculty members named individually, and Novum faculty who were employed part time in acting administrative positions in 1990-91. Happy Thanksgiving."

"What do you mean 'our belief'?" Lloyd Cowley wanted to know.

"I mean that we have every reason to believe the state A. G.'s office will represent you, Jack and Marilyn and Ed," Weber told him.

"And I asked what do you mean by 'have every reason to believe'?"

"If you have in fact done something criminally wrong in this case, then . . ." the President's voice trailed off.

Cowley finished the sentence. "Then we're shit out of luck."

"The A. G.'s office is very strong on human rights issues," Weber told Cowley. "They'll be talking to all of you, Lloyd, and if they feel they can't defend you, then . . . you're going to have to . . . retain your own attorney. Only insofar as you're named as an individual."

Lloyd's face flamed, the red not of embarrassment but of anger. "I'll tell you something you can tell the A. G.'s office. The only reason any of us had to have anything to do with that bitch was administration's orders to hire a woman. I said right then that directive was a crock, and nobody believed me. This is where it got us. If this damned school is going to put me in the position of having to deal with a bitch like that—pardon me, Marilyn—then this school can defend me when I get in trouble for acting in the best interests of its students, staff, and administration. If this place—if you, Charlie Weber—can't do that much for your faculty, then fuck you and the horse you rode in on."

"I was acting on Andy's request, as administration's representative," Jack reminded Weber.

Cowley charged ahead. “And I’ll tell you another goddamn thing. You can defend all of us from Coyle’s law suit, or you can defend yourself against mine. Mine is going to make hers look like small potatoes. If you want to talk about creating a hostile working environment—you, my friend, have done it.”

President Weber tried to calm Cowley, who was, in truth, an old friend. “Lloyd, if it were up to me, I’d say we’re all in the same ship. I can’t make promises for the A. G.’s office.”

“Lloyd’s right,” Marilyn told the president. “Administration is 100% responsible for Virginia Coyle. We picked her pretty far down a pool that Andy Olsen mandated.”

Jack supported Marilyn. “The only reason we became in any way involved with Virginia Coyle is through our employment at Novum State. The only reason any of us is involved in this action is Novum State’s deep pockets. She can’t get anything out of me: what there was, Rose Marié and Bryn Mawr already took. She’s not going to get much out of Lloyd or Marilyn or Ed, either. We’re in this because of Novum State. Okay, I’m employed by Novum and I’ll admit Novum has taken good care of me. So I’ll help Novum out. But Novum better help me. *Quid pro quo*. If NSU’s *quo* disappears, my *quid* disappears. And Novum will not win any suit without my testimony, because Andy Olsen put me right at the center of this mess.”

“I can’t make promises,” Weber told the group.

So Roger C. Barclay began his investigation of Creed, Cowley, Schneider, and Haley, and the Attorney General’s office began its investigation of Creed, Cowley, Schneider and Haley to see if they could defend the foursome from Barclay’s investigation.

“I’m being investigated by my own lawyer,” Jack told Kelly that afternoon. “Sounds like some of Paul Lewinski’s Russian stories.”

“How many investigations does it take?” Kelly wanted to know.

“Some swords hang over your head forever. From the sounds of things, they’ll be getting into you and me. Either our lawyers or theirs.”

“You and me is none of their business. Linda Tholen said so.”

“I’ll try to keep us out.”

“You ought to sue Coyle. She did nothing but harass you ever since she set foot on campus.”

“Men don’t sue women for harassment.”

“I should sue her.”

“Yeah, you could sue her.”

“If she sends her lawyers snooping around my man, I’ll shoot her. I grew up with a 22 in my hands.”

“Don’t get yourself in trouble, honey. This too shall pass.”

For two months the defendants heard nothing from either Virginia’s lawyer or their own. Two months of suspension and anxiety. Then the A.G.’s office sent an investigator to Lake-of-the-Woods to interview defendants preliminary to depositions. Not ten minutes into his interview, Jack made a strategic error. The investigator was asking for specifics on the conversation of February 11th. “Did you keep any written notes?” she wanted to know. “Contemporaneous written documents always carry more weight in court than memory.”

“The conversation was off the record,” Jack pointed out. “Neither of us took notes.”

“Did you write anything down immediately afterward?”

“There might be something in my diary. I’d have to check.”

“You keep a diary?” the woman wanted to know.

Jack’s diary, of course, led to Kelly Ayers. Nobody in Madison knew Kelly Ayers from Eve. They knew nothing of her perspective on the student-teacher romance, and they certainly didn’t know that

Kelly was in 1996 the second Mrs. Charles Creed, and had been for some years. She was merely a troublesome name in Jack's diary, a student with whom one of the defendants was obviously involved.

On February 13, 1996 Jack received a registered letter from the Office of the Wisconsin State Attorney General:

> Dear Professor Creed,
>
> Thank you very much for your assistance in our preliminary investigations of the allegations against yourself and other State University System defendants by Professor Virginia Coyle. Your full cooperation has been very much appreciated.
>
> It is, then, with real regret that I must inform you that, based on some of the apparent behavior described in your 1990-91 diary, the Attorney General's Office feels that it cannot represent you in this case. Possibly your behavior has seriously jeopardized your position with Novum State University. I have made photocopies of appropriate entries and shared them with my immediate superior, who will decide what action, if any, ought to be taken. Meanwhile, I urge you to seek council of your own at your earliest convenience.
>
> Yours,
> Karen Kerr

Jack ranted. Kelly raged.

"I can't believe you gave them your own diaries. Even I can't read your diaries. You don't let anybody read your diaries. How could you give your diaries to a lawyer?"

"She asked for them."

"They're personal. There must be all that stuff about us. . . ."

"I gave them only spring of 1990 to summer of 1991."

"That's us."

“It should demonstrate clearly that I acted without malice toward Virginia. And certainly without sexual interest.”

“You violated confidences with me to appease Virginia Coyle?”

“Look, Kelly, I don’t need a lot of shit on this. It’s not like I published them in the newspapers, you know.”

“So this bitch has photocopied ‘appropriate passages,’ and is passing them around Madison. Maybe she’ll send them to Weber. Maybe she’ll share them with Coyle’s lawyer. Maybe she’ll publish them in the *Capital Times*.”

“I thought it would help the case.”

“It didn’t help you. I wish you’d be more selfish sometimes.”

“You got that right.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I don’t know.”

“One thing you do, you get your diaries back and all the copies. That’s a start. Then you hire yourself a good lawyer.”

“Who has money for a good lawyer?”

“Who can afford not to hire a good lawyer?”

“I hired a good lawyer once. All he did was fuck me over and charge me for it.”

“Well, you get the diaries back.”

This much Jack managed on his own. “The diaries were provided voluntarily in the spirit of client-lawyer confidentiality,” he wrote Karen Kerr. “What you have done violates that confidentiality. Possibly it violates copyright law. You will return originals and all copies to me immediately.”

A month later, Jack’s diaries were back in his own hands. The originals at least. How many copies circulated around Madison he had no way of knowing.

The problem was that Roger C. Barclay got wind of the fact that there were diaries, so naturally he wanted diaries. And he wanted diaries all the way back to the 1970s.

Barclay's request for diaries, with the threat of a subpoena, prodded Jack finally to seek legal council. He had gone March, April, May and June of 1996 pretty much on his own, confident in the justice of his own cause and more confident that once he was cut from deep-pockets Novum State, Virginia Coyle's interest in him would evaporate. "I will walk into the court, raise my hand on a Bible, and tell the jury what I know. I really don't think any jury is going to award Virginia Coyle very much of my money."

After the request and the threatened subpoena, he drew a line. "Virginia's paranoid fantasies, or malicious inventions, are not an invitation to you or anyone else to rummage through my entire private life," he wrote Barclay. "The answer is NO."

"Why didn't you say they were lost?" Kelly wanted to know.

"The A.G.'s office just had them.

"Tell him they sent them back, with all copies, but they got lost in the mail. Tell him they got thrown into Lake Mendota by that crazy carrier last month. Tell him the others were stored out in the old chicken shed, but it burned down. What the fuck does he know."

"I've always been such an honest man," Jack lamented.

"There's a time for honesty, and a time for dishonesty. Learn from your sweetie."

The question which haunted Jack, and the real reason he went looking for a lawyer, was the extent to which Virginia Coyle could move, or already had moved into his years at Busiris. In seeking a lawyer, Jack was protecting himself, but he was also protecting Kelly . . . and Lily Lee.

Jack's quest for legal representation took him first to SUUFAMP.

“Not a thing we can do in these cases,” Brad Newlund told Jack. “I’m really sorry. I’m a male too. But sexual harassment—discrimination in general—is just one thing the union can’t defend its members on. We’d be setting ourselves up for a law suit. SUUFAMP has a definite policy on this.”

“Entirely self-serving policy. Probably saves you big bucks.”

“It’s never come up before, to my knowledge. The law is less than a year old now. You and Linda and Ed and Lloyd are the test case.”

“So this union, into which I have paid big bucks for the past decade, which worked very energetically in support of possibly the most incompetent teacher I ever knew, a woman whom we all agreed was a disaster . . . this union now tells me it can’t defend me against slander and libel that could easily ruin my career and will absolutely end any plans I might have had for advancement? Is that what you’re telling me?”

“It’s all procedural,” Newlund told Jack.

“Procedural my ass. This harassment shit has you yuppie liberals shivering like hares and scurrying like cockroaches. You’re despicable. And from now on, I’m fair share in this union.”

Rebuffed by the union and suspicious of Lake-of-the-Woods lawyers, Jack looked to greater Wisconsin and, finally, out-state. “When people in Wisconsin heard the A. G.’s office had cut me loose, they would have nothing to do with the case. Then I thought of Minnesota, because people there are so much into harassment law. Minnesota inflicted upon us Catharine MacKinnon, the later-day Volstead. Populism and Puritanism are Minnesota’s legacy, and I thought people would have more experience dealing with that shit in our good neighbor to the west. Everyone I talked to there was a full-tilt feminist victim type. All I got from them was the sense that I—we—were in serious shit . . . and the growing conviction inside myself that some stand had to be taken.

“Then somebody at Alley Press—which is really tied to Robert Bly—mentioned a New York outfit called the Coalition of Free Men who might, they thought, offer legal advice and maybe financial support. You could have knocked me over with a feather when C. F. M. mentioned the name Marcus DeLotta.”

DeLotta took the case immediately, *pro bono humanitatis*. “We are going to take this case right to them,” DeLotta promised his old friend. “And the minute anybody opens his or her fat yap about Busiris, we are going to shove a lawsuit so far up their ass they’ll be able to spit turds. I see megabucks in this situation. Not to mention an opportunity to settle some old scores and do American men some good in their on-going battle against feminist assholes. I personally have had it up to here with fundamentalists, fuddy-duddies, fruit cakes and feminists. The counter-attack on the 4-Fs starts now.”

DeLotta’s counter-attack had actually begun some years previous, upon his departure from Busiris in 1971. He’d kicked around college teaching for a few years, growing like the rest of us increasingly frustrated with America in the 1970s. Unlike the rest of us, including Jack, he had the courage to opt out of the education business. “Law is clearly where the power lies today,” he told me and Jack one evening. “Step back from the picture three and a half steps and you’ll see it clearly. Law governs education. Law governs business. Law governs sports. Half the sporting news you read is legal news. The new laws of victimology and affirmative action determines what books get published and taught; what businesses will pay how much to whom for remarks made, accidents suffered, or posters displayed on their premises; even what major league baseball owners will or will not be allowed to exercise control over the teams they own. In America, law is now the supreme power.

“And if you want the money and the power to rub off on you, you have to hang out where the power and the money are.

“Besides, I promised myself that if there was ever to be another Busiris Tech, I was going to be in the power position. Once around

as the fuckee is plenty for me. You'd have been a real chump to walk in there alone. The law would have eaten you alive."

DeLotta arrived on the scene in July 1996 with the zeal of a man on a mission. On two missions, really. By the end of the month he had written the Attorney General's office demanding that Karen Kerr be fired and disbarred for unprofessional behavior. Representing Kelly Creed, DeLotta had filed suit against Roger C. Barclay for invasion of privacy and harassment. Representing Jack he had filed suit against Novum State University and the State University System of Wisconsin for harassment and violation of civil liberties. Against SUUFAMP collectively and Newlund individually he had filed a suit for breach of contract. "I don't think these suits will amount to a hill of beans," he confided in Jack, "but my arguments are more cogent than hers against you, or the cases against either of us back at Busiris. Besides, they might set some things up for someone else three, five years down the line. Why should you take all the hits?"

In August, DeLotta turned his attention to Busiris. His long, accusing finger winged its way south into the darkness of the American heartland. "I don't mind telling you how much pleasure I took in introducing myself as the attorney of their former Pulitzer Prize-winning associate professor of English. I was very low key. At first nobody in administration recognized me, but they all knew your name, and they were walking on eggshells. It's like, 'He's come. Didn't we know it was only a matter of time.'

"By the second day they knew my name as well, and a more terrified bunch of Yahoos you have not seen. People tripped over each other to assure me they 'had not been at Busiris during the Creed years.' They are so absolutely full of righteous shit, you would not believe.

"Incidentally, your woman—Martin, Olivia—is no longer there. She left under some cloud—I'm not sure what—related to those letters. Her replacement is, you'll love this, one Francine Fitzner, Ph. D. Bryn Mawr, 1986. Francine is a grad school chum and probable lover—although I would deny in court having ever said as much—of

your former colleague and still director of a conspicuously under-enrolled Busiris Women's Studies Program, The Victorian Nation herself.

I did not speak with Vicky. She's reportedly as full of venom and spite as ever. I thought she was a preacher's kid."

"Preacher's kids have a lot to deal with."

"Might be using feminism's attack on patriarchal Christianity as a means of rebelling against her father," Marcus mused.

"Feminism should go easy on Christianity," Jack said. "Christianity takes women half way to feminism: frees them from sex. Christianity allows women to birth the godhead without having to fuck a male. Think of that, Marcus. A significant stride, eh? And when the godhead is born, he's everything a woman would want: kind, sensitive, gentle, loving, nice to his mommy. And a virgin. Christianity relieves women of all sexual obligations. It marginalized blue-collar men, real men, the carpenter man, while elevating the sexless female. It's about as proto-feminist a religion as the world has to offer. All that's left for feminism is to eliminate the godhead altogether and let women bond with women."

"That's Francine and Vicky. Ms. Fitzner is also in some terms, I will not describe them as intimate, with the plaintiff, whom she met back in 1987 at one of those NEH-funded summer institutes for college professors on 'Women of the Revolution(s)'."

"Son of a bitch."

"In other words, Jack's old pal, Virginia Coyle, Francine Fitzner, and Miss Vicky have been talking about you ever since Novum State interviewed Virginia in the spring of 1990, and you, foolish fellow, mentioned your book *Age of Faith*—remember now?—which indicates under "notes on the author" that he lives in Riverton, Illinois, and teaches English at Busiris Technical University. Hand it to Virginia: she did her homework. Took the book out of the library, read up on you, and recognized Busiris as the school which

employed her friend of the summer previous. The rest you may surmise."

"Son of a fucking bitch."

"You may also surmise that Francine Fitzner has leaked every document in your file to Virginia Coyle and Roger C. Barclay. You didn't notice some uncanny similarities between Reich's letter in your Busiris file and Barclay's complaint of last November? Wake up and smell the horse turds. I don't think you'd be much wrong if you surmised that you've been set up from day one, before Coyle was fired—excuse me, not hired—and years before Barclay ever arrived on the scene.

"Because here's the other part of the news. Your woman Coyle is far more adroit at scheming schemes than she is at research or teaching. If she put into teaching or research the energy she puts into law suits, she'd out-publish you. Except she's a one string fiddle.

"The degree comes with one huge black ink spot, which I probably can't erase without spending a few days in the United Kingdom. What it amounts to is a very suspect examination record at University College-Dublin and a thrice-rejected dissertation (from what I can gather, one outside examiner wanted her dismissed from the program), followed by a law suit or the threat of a law suit (I'm unclear on this) over (get this) 'unwelcomed sexual advances by her advising professor and one other member of the examining committee.' Interestingly, a virtually unaltered dissertation was accepted almost without challenge upon the next presentation.

"Another enormous cloud obscures the woman's career in Los Angeles. Seems she left Mt. St. Mary's before the end of her first year in a tenure-track position. I think she was already unemployed when you folks interviewed her on the telephone. She left with a string of student complaints long as your left arm. Apparently the kids were ready to lynch her. I mean, this woman was universally hated. 'And anoder ting, Stella, about 'bout your sister': immediately after being dismissed by her previous employer Dame Coyle filed

suit against them for, you're never going to guess so I suppose I'll have to tell you, sexual harassment and sexual discrimination. This woman just can't get enough of other men not getting enough of her! That suit was going on throughout 1990-91—you wondered why she was so often out of town—until it was settled out of court, for a sizable amount of cash. $250,000 plus lawyer's fees to be exact. In March 1991. The reason Virginia Coyle had trouble assembling materials to support her application for the tenure-track at Novum State is that she was wrapping up her six-figure settlement in California. Probably she was setting you guys up for the suit here while she was billing you for the meals and motels there. $250,000 kind of gave her the taste. Without any shadow of a doubt, it is money from that settlement which is paying Barclay's fat fees as Coyle goes for the gold once more.

"Didn't you people do any background check on this woman before you hired her?"

DeLotta's revelations left Jack ecstatic, anxious, relieved, troubled.

"How many times does it take before I begin to learn?" Jack wondered aloud.

"She's been setting you up—you personally and the whole school—since she arrived in Wisconsin," DeLotta told Jack. "I personally suspect your union and your administration set you up too.

"You want to know what I think? You're a big boy, you can take this. I think Coyle has already spilled the Busiris beans. On the QT. I think the beans were spilled way back in 1991, when Coyle left your office for the President's. Maybe even before. I think that's why you were assigned to write the negative recommendation on Coyle, and you were assigned to do all the talking to her. I think Olsen, possibly on instructions from Weber, used you to trash Coyle. If things get ugly, he'll use Coyle to trash you. With the acquiescence of your man Newlund and possibly with the approval of your woman Tholen,

although I haven't been able to figure out yet where she stands. Weber and the State System boys are pressuring Judge Mortland to cut you from the herd and schedule your trial ahead of theirs. Depending on what comes out there, they're going to save themselves by cashiering you."

Jack could only shake his head.

"The funny thing is, Coyle and Barclay don't understand any of this. They're not in cahoots with Olsen. Barclay thinks he's going to destroy you, collecting nickels and dimes, then go after big bucks from Novum, claiming they were criminally negligent in visiting such a known menace to society on his poor client. I'm not sure Barclay knows his client's background much better than you folks did when you hired her. Barclay is a very sloppy lawyer, and he takes much of what Coyle tells him at face value. He thinks once he's done with you, Novum will settle quick and easy. Olsen will watch you go down, then defend Novum to the general public by blaming all Coyle's problems on you. In dealing with Barclay, Olsen plans to wait until your trial is finished, then confront Barclay with Coyle's background, and offer a cheap settlement he figures they won't be able to refuse.

"Of course he could expose Coyle before your trial, but he's afraid the cloud will hang, and he's looking for a fall guy. You go down, she goes away. Then, with tremendous regrets of course, he'll have to discipline you."

Jack sat silent.

"That's a lot to digest," he told his old friend.

"It is. I could be wrong on some of this, but I don't think so."

"I'm not sure I'm up for this one."

"It might get very, very messy. Or, if we get a few good rulings from a sympathetic judge, it might not."

"I don't know if I'm up for this."

"It's a fight that somebody has to fight."

“I’m fifty years old. You’re fifty years old. We fought our battles in the sixties and seventies, when we were young men who could drink and fuck all night and march all day and then do it all again and again. I can’t do that shit no more. Ask Kelly.”

“This is very doable.”

“It would take ten years to see things through. We both know how the law works. A young man comes from the country seeking admittance, spends his entire life and fortune, and never gets through the first gate. When he’s completely exhausted and ready to croak, the gatekeeper tells him, ‘You had a perfect right to this gate. It was made just for you. Too bad, buddy.’ Fuck that shit.”

“This is your battle. It’s been your battle for fifteen years.”

“It’s the young ones’ battle. Fuck: I got two good books. Pretty soon I’ll have a third, a huge book. I have delivered Timm and Jenny Lynn safely to their maturity. They don’t need my dough. I cave in, settle for peanuts with Virginia, which they take because they think they’re getting big bucks from Novum. And I better settle quickly before they figure out otherwise. I take whatever settlement Novum offers me, which will be okay, $60,000, a year’s salary. Maybe two. Enough to pay the farm off. Hell, all we owe is about $10,000 now. Kelly works. I write. This Dylan biography is going to make me a million dollars. Not to mention famous again. If academia is going to hell, let the Newlunds of the system inherit the mess they’re making. If the country is going to hell, that’s the young people’s problems. If they’re too damned lazy, or stupid, or distracted, or spaced out, or busy making money to know somebody’s sticking a needle in their arm, then fuck ‘em. I’m tired of fighting people’s battles for them and being kicked in the balls for it. I am tired.”

“At least hear me out, okay?”

“I am listening, comrade. I am listening.”

“The key to the whole business is Busiris. That’s where Coyle thinks she’s got you. That’s where Nation is foaming at the mouth. That’s where Olsen thinks he uses you as fall guy. At Novum you’re

squeaky clean: Mr. Nice Guy, not a student complaint to his name—I've checked your personnel files: they're exemplary. People kill for files like yours. You're a damned saint. In the Busiris files you're this insane racist, sexist, anarchist with the long beard and Molotov cocktails in each hand. The Novum Creed nobody touches. Unless they get to the Busiris Creed, they're done.

"If we want, and notice I am saying if we want, I think we can keep Busiris out of this one of three ways. First, we might get Mortland to rule anything related to your past or Coyle's inadmissible evidence, on the grounds it's prejudicial, or irrelevant, or . . . well, I can think of a dozen arguments. Right now Barclay would fight that, because he's naive about Coyle, but he might lose. He should hope he loses. I might add that this kind of a ruling would be a great victory for harassment law in general. You're the perfect person to establish that precedent: a golden record here, long before Coyle showed up, a known record of supporting women, Blacks, etc. The cause—and my future clients—would benefit from such a precedent, if we can set that precedent. I remind you I'm defending you gratis for the good of the cause.

"Or maybe Mortland does not rule our way. Brings us to option two. Option two is we confront Barclay with his client's history. I'm betting he hasn't a clue, because no lawyer in his right mind would knowingly take this kind of marginal case from a psycho like Virginia Coyle. Take a case like that and you're guaranteed to lose in court, and you won't get any meaningful settlement out of court, as Barclay has already seen. Even if she pays him cash up front for his time as she goes—which Virginia is apparently doing—he's undermined his reputation. So we confront him on Coyle's past and cut a deal: your history is untouchable, her history is untouchable. Case goes to trial on its own merits.

"Fifty-fifty Barclay takes that deal, because left to its own merits the case collapses even if you did offer to trade support for sex. She's just too bad a teacher. But that's option number two.

“Third option is we let him bring all the Busiris he wants. Nation, Fitzner, personnel files, police investigations of your merry pranks if they can get them, the works. They have their shit, we have our shit. And we have plenty of shit. We line up all the guns and shoot them off and see who’s standing when the smoke clears.”

“Then everybody’s covered with shit.”

“Everyone is covered with shit, but you win this one, Jack. You win very big time, and here’s the reason. You ready for the reason? Here’s the reason.

“Number one, all the police records clear you of every damned thing that went down at Busiris. I saw a dozen reports, Jack, a fucking dozen investigations. Did you know these were going on? And thorough? You can’t believe how thorough. Man, did they have a hard on for you! The FBI investigated the letters. Every fucking one clears you. You got a sterling endorsement from the Riverton Police . . . also a tremendous police harassment case, which Barclay would generously reclaim from the statute of limitations by bringing them into the open in 1996. So I think Barclay is shit out of luck there.

“Reason number two. I talked to some people in Riverton when I was there. Yvonne Gayle about died when I called on her. I mean, she literally nearly died of a stroke. You don’t remember her. Why am I not surprised? Yvonne Gayle wrote the letter that stipulates her name not be released without her permission! I found her name, and I found her. She’s married now. Has three kids now. Not a good looking woman. She wrote the letter because she flunked out of school and needed a good story to tell her parents. You never fondled her tits. You never invited her to bed.”

“Shit.”

“She still thinks she didn’t get a fair shake in your class and she wasn’t exactly sick when they canned you, but she’s feels very bad about having written the letter. Said she watched the whole Hill-Thomas hearings and had nightmares, and not out of sympathy for

what Hill claimed to have gone through. What's really got her upset, of course, is that Busiris leaked her name. She's terrified of a suit from you, and she's probably ready for a suit against them. For breach of promise. We're talking. So this woman doesn't testify. Guaranteed.

Alonzo Jackson was ready to write out a check for your legal fees. I shit you not. There is a man who feels really, really guilty. Alonzo might be our most useful witness if we need him. Even in Lake-of-the-Woods, people have heard of the Chicago Bulls. If Barclay ever talks to Jackson, he's going to stay away from the whole business down there just to keep Jackson off the stand.

"I also caught up with your old friend Blondie Robertson. Yessir, I talked to Leanna. She too is married. She too has a kid. She too is sick. She didn't love you, she loved the Polish kid, Paul what's his name. Robertson trashed you to trash him . . . well, it's not that simple, but that's what it boils down to. Maybe she liked you too. I got that impression. Anyway, she's a lot more mature now than she was in 1985, and she feels absolutely sick. They paid her off with a position in Admissions, in case you didn't know that. It turns out she became a great fan of your Lily Lee Martin, and left when Martin left. Or right after. She, incidentally, did not stick the knife in Martin's back. Blame Jones-Nation, who went on a bit of a power trip, savaging Reich and Hauptmann along the way. Robertson does not testify.

"The others, I don't know. What they've got to say is not going to hurt you. You know where they were coming from, and when the whole truth is told, they look like jerks.

"Conversely, I talked to a dozen people who can help you and want to help you. You can't believe the friends you still have down there. If they want to open Busiris, we can bring in people to testify, we bring in depositions from as many people as give you depositions. So help me, I will bet my three years' fees to your three years' salary you come out of court looking like a damned martyr. I

further bet that Barclay, once his bluff is called and he really looks into your history, folds like a poker player with a pair of treys.

“Your problems with Virginia, incidentally, end there as well.

“But here is the best part, the part that has them shitting their pants in Riverton. Once we’re done in Wisconsin, we go to work in Illinois. Slander. Defamation. Negligence in compiling a file. Negligence in maintaining the file. Negligence in leaking the file. Breach of contract in maintaining the file. I talked to your man Stella down there. Not a bad guy, actually. Good Sicilian. For a cut, he would be very useful to us. And, as regards old BTU, he too has seen . . . the error of his ways.

“There is a ton of money in this for you, Jack. If the cards fall right, you’d never have to teach again.”

“I love teaching. I draw a tremendous energy off students, even the young ones. Especially the young ones.”

“They seem to think you give them something in return.”

“So once again The Kid finds himself at a crossroads,” Jack mused aloud. Once again. Last time The Kid turned around and walked away.”

“Not without . . . leaving his mark, Jack.”

“You know, looking back I think that even Novum State Associate Dean Charles Creed would have called Busiris Assistant Professor Jack Creed in for a little talk. Of course it would have been a different kind of a talk. But I think that I’d have had a chat with both of us.”

“How come a decent fellow like you has all these problems with women, Jack?”

Jack thought a minute. “Because I give them a lot, but it’s never enough. They always want more. Does that make sense?”

“Absolutely.”

“Our most righteous crusades were always against the liberals. Most people don’t know who their real friends are.”

Jack looked over DeLotta’s shoulder, as if staring through the wall to some invisible point four hundred miles and a million lightyears distant.

“Tell me something,” Marcus asked Jack. “Off the record. Was it you?”

“Marcus. Buddy. Don’t tell, don’t ask.”

“Lawyer-client privilege.”

“Well, I’m not going into all that, Marcus.”

“Off the record, Jack: was it you?”

“Off the record, Marcus . . . it was not. I didn’t do a damned thing after February 1985. Maybe I know who did, and maybe I don’t. I’m not saying, even to an old friend like you. I will say I had friends. Apparently I taught them well.”

“I’ll accept that. Although I don’t entirely believe it.”

“You’re a smart lawyer, Marcus. You’d have made one hell of a college professor.”

“I got another one for you.”

“Confidence time.”

“Just when did you make up your mind you were leaving Busiris?”

“Well. That’s another one of those things.”

“What a fuckin’ place, eh?”

“We pulled some shit.”

“You remember the ‘Free John Sinclair’ concert in Ann Arbor?”

“John and Yoko Ono.”

“John Lennon, the Beatle, seven years on.”

“And Stevie Wonder.”

“You remember the gymnasium construction boycott?”

“The Fucking *Outsider*.”

“The Melvin Laird visit?”

“You wanted to see slick shit, you should have been around when Lily was president of B.S.A.”

“We pulled some shit.”

“Time it was. I have a photograph.”

“So are you fighting, or have you already made up your mind to sneak out the back door again?”

“There’s no underground service tunnel this time, except for Kelly.”

“Then you’re going to fight? There’s a ton of money in this, Jack. Pull the lever, watch the tumblers come up cherries, see a ton of good come out of the machine.”

“Let me sleep on it,” Jack Creed told his lawyer friend.

“And I want to talk to some people.”

# Chapter 19
# **Trial**

The people Jack talked to were his wife, his son, his daughter, and me. I'm not sure he opened all of his options entirely to any of the four, but he did indicate turbulence ahead and he asked each of us for advice.

I have to believe he took it.

Kelly, who was closest to the case, was the most direct. "You been hang-dogging around here for over a year now," she told Jack. "That woman has you so tied up in knots you can't think straight about yourself or about Dylan, or about us. You don't sleep, which means I don't sleep. Ever since that Human Rights thing, that bitch has been standing at the foot of our bed watching me sleep. 'I consider your relationship exploitive, unprofessional, and demeaning to women. I'm so emotionally devastated I can't perform my job.' Fuck! For five years I've been waiting for you to kick Virginia Coyle in the cunt. Now you want to hand her a few thousand of our money?

"In two years it'll be some other up-tight bitch with another paranoid fantasy tryin' to get her a hand in your pocket. And not to jack you off, either. 'He looked at me cross-eyed. He said a dirty word . . . and you know he has a history.' You fight this thing through now, or it will haunt you for the rest of your life. Me too. And I don't think I can live with that bitch in my house."

"She's a whiner," Timm told his father. "We had them at the Academy, and we've got them in the fleet. We even had them at flight school, and that's a pretty elite place. America's full of them these days: losers looking for a free ride. If you try to unload them, they whine some more. I'm with you. I lived with you for years. I know what kind of guy you are. I know the advice you'd have given me. Do what needs to be done. By all means necessary."

“Marcus is right about Busiris,” I told Jack. “People here credit you with bringing down the Third Reich. You can’t try Busiris up there, though. I don’t think a judge would allow it. Busiris would stonewall everything—if they could. On the payoff, Marcus may be right. You might end up with a lot of money . . . plus the vindication you seem to need. Then again, you might end up in a real mess. There’s been no talk in the English department, even if Vicky is up to her old tricks. She’s been generally wigged out lately anyway, and we all try to keep our distance. The real action would be in Administration, and I don’t know anyone there now. Whatever you do, I’ll stand with you. So will your old friends.”

It was Jenny Lynn, however, who most steeled Jack’s resolve. Jenny was his main concern, the person whose affection he most feared losing. “That whole statutory rape bullshit was hanging out there. And my general absence from her life, and the divorce, and whatever her mother had or had not said, and the bad feelings over Bryn Mawr. Our relationship had been through the mill. Then came this fucking law suit with more outrageous allegations. I sounded like Andrea Dworkin’s Predator Male incarnate.”

“You ever hear of Camille Paglia?” Jenny Lynn asked Jack. Jack could not make a connection.

“I got her ‘Endangered Rock’ essay pasted on my door.”

“I’m gonna send you a book, dad, and you’re going to love it. You ever heard of new wave feminism? Katie Roiphe? Christina Hoff Sommers?”

“I’m the wrong guy to ask about that, Lynn.”

“Don’t feel bad, dad. None of the people at Bryn Mawr had either. Well, they had but they hadn’t. The women’s studies types knew what new wave feminists were saying, but they were too stuck in dead ideologies to listen. That’s one reason I left there. Feminism has, like, gone beyond seventies ideas. You’re stuck in the sixties and early seventies, and you don’t understand academic feminists. They’re stuck in the late seventies and the eighties, and they don’t

understand what's happening today. What have they got to say to Madonna, and women's sports, and dance line? The old feminists are just as irrelevant as you, if you don't mind my saying so, I love you lots. Maybe they're more irrelevant.

"Paglia is one of the new ones, although she's also a sixties freak. You'd love her.

"Listen, I got to read you this. 'An enlightened feminism of the 21st Century will embrace all sexuality and will turn away from the delusionalism, sanctimony, prudery, and male bashing of the MacKinnon-Dworkin brigade. . . . Let's get rid of Infirmary Feminism, with its bedlam of belly achers, anorexics, bulimics, depressives, rape victims, and incest survivors. Feminism has become a catch-all vegetable drawer where bunches of clingy sob sisters can store their moldy neuroses.' That's Paglia. She wrote that for *Playboy* magazine. I heard her talk once in Philadelphia. There were demonstrators all over the place, waving placards and chanting slogans. Old women's studies types. The losers' club. That's what this Coyle woman is. The whole East Coast was full of them. Blow her off, dad. She'll just make your life miserable. Camille is great. I'm going to bring you her book myself. I'll be there tomorrow."

"I'm not sure what's up," Jack warned his daughter. "They're trying to make something of Kelly and me. They may go back to Busiris. They're interviewing all kinds of other people, including all my former students."

"Get with it, dad. I spent two years in college dorms and four years with undergrad college girls. Even you can't begin to imagine some of their fantasies. We'll have a long talk when I get up there."

This was late August 1996 before classes began. I drove north and spent a week in Lake-of-the-Woods with Jack, Kelly, Jenny Lynn and Marcus. The week was warm, comfortable, even optimistic, one of the high points of my life. I left with confidence in Jack's future, deepened respect for Kelly and Jenny Lynn, and sincere regret that I had not known DeLotta during his Busiris year. I also left with an

assignment: recruit, as confidentially as possible, Busiris witnesses to neutralize testimony from Victoria Nation.

Fall 1996 should have been an especially painful period in Jack's life. Virginia's most recent charges were general knowledge around the university and the town. As was the fact that Jack had, presumably because of his enormous guilt, been cut out from the herd for a separate, early trial. Barclay had requested copies of Jack's grade rosters from 1984 through 1991. Although DeLotta had argued that the university was violating student confidentiality, Barclay had been given what he asked for and was reportedly interviewing all Jack's former students—especially Jack's former female students, and especially those with low grades—regarding harassment and sexism. Meanwhile, of course, DeLotta was examining Coyle's grade rosters for purposes of his own.

Every other day Jack's phone would ring. "Professor Creed, this is Amy Larson, from Contemporary American Lit. three years ago. I got a call from a Mr. Barclay yesterday asking about you. Some of my friends have received similar calls. I told this man I've got nothing but good things to say about you and the class. I thought you should know about this."

There were preliminary interviews of friendlies and hostiles by both camps.

There were depositions and rumored depositions.

Jack persevered, all witnesses report, with grace and aplomb. Together Jenny Lynn, Kelly, and Camille Paglia had redeemed women in Jack's mind and provided him with enormous energy as he entered the fall term. He ignored the distractions as best he could, and dove into teaching and Bob Dylan. He still mentally rejected the possibility of a trial.

December 9, 1996, brought plaintiff, defendant, and their respective counsels to Lake-of-the-Woods for a day of pretrial maneuverings and motions. Some seemed to Jack mere posturing or demonstrations of power. Most seemed without substance, but

Jack was no lawyer, what did he know? He tried to follow DeLotta and Barclay, but dropped after a couple of hours into a reverie regarding the mind of this person who had come so inconsequentially into his life half a decade earlier. What kind of a childhood had brought Virginia Coyle to this insanity? What Hoosier darkness had she fallen into in Women's Studies at Indiana U? Or had some chromosomal abnormality predestined her to malice and paranoia? What went on behind her gray eyes and porcelain face? What were her expectations? Hopes? Fears? Was she really as calculating as DeLotta suggested?

The thought of Virginia, Victoria Nation, Francine Fitzner, and Roger Barclay pouring over entries in his personal diary and materials in his Busiris personnel file made his skin crawl.

At day's end, Jack had to ask Marcus for a recap and an assessment.

"It went fine," DeLotta told his client. "And it's going to be fine.

"They've added no names to that earlier list of potential witnesses, and I've deposed all the people I think they're going to use. You've read Virginia's complaint and her deposition. Nothing has been added. I don't think they'll subpoena Kelly: she'd be a very hostile witness, and they really wouldn't get much from her. We're conceding your relationship, saying, in essence, "So what? Jack and Kelly broke no university rules. If their relationship posed a problem for your woman, that's her problem.' "

"Kelly won't be asked to testify?"

"We concede her. There's no point in denying the obvious: you and she were seeing each other while she was a student and you were her teacher. Now you're married. So what? We won't call her either. As a character witness for you, she's too obviously prejudiced to be convincing. As an example of your predatory relationships with women, she's not exactly the example they want. Kelly is out.

"They've got relevant passages from your diary, of course, and they might try to make capital of some of your language regarding

Virginia, especially that February 11 entry. Nothing serious, though, and your diary is full of profanity. You weren't picking on Virginia. Barclay will look a little mean spirited, snooping through a man's private journal. We can make more capital off that than he gets out of the entries. I think dragging your diary in would be a mistake on Barclay's part.

"He might go into your published works. He provided Judge Mortland about a hundred photocopied pages. He might want to use the women's movement essay, especially the sections on gender differences as applied to career trajectories and work ethic. He's got your belt. He's even got some sample comma splice from some grammar exercise you handed out five years ago: 'Bright Kari was not, a good time she was.' Virginia reads a sentence like this as clear proof of sexism. Of course she'd never read it before this year, so God alone knows how it contributed to a hostile environment when she was at Novum.

"Barclay is still trying to get into the Busiris business, what he's calling your 'long history of sexism and racism,' but also your 'life of duplicity and guile.' Mild-mannered college prof by day, Anarchist Extraordinaire by night. The Busiris file is his case, and he knows it. He's entitled to that letter in the *Republican-Standard*, but he'd like to use the student complaints. I doubt he's actually talked with the students, though. They're not on his list of potential witnesses, which figures. Maybe he has talked to them and knows they'll retract their previous complaints on the stand. At least Gayle, Jackson and Robertson would. They're my witnesses if he brings any of the others. I did not mention that I've lined up Gayle, Jackson and Robertson, and when I saw no Busiris students on his list, I substituted an alternative list of my people which does not contain Gayle, Jackson and Robertson. In a couple of months we will provide each other with updated lists. I'll see what happens then.

"Before today, Barclay thought he could use letters without authors, but I got him to understand he could not. What he'll do next, I'm not sure.

“He’d like somehow to get to Lily Lee, and maybe a few others, to establish a pattern of behavior that antedates your present wife, but that stuff is so buried and so hearsay. . . .”

“I’d like to keep Lily Lee out of this,” Jack told Marcus.

“Kelly, as I said, is no problem. Lily might be . . . another matter. You have denied Barclay’s request for access to your Busiris files, although Judge Mortland is familiar with their contents and could order them opened.”

“Where did he get them?” Jack wanted to know.

“Fitzner and Nation, beyond any doubt. They were leaked long ago, although old BTU wishes to god they hadn’t been. Fitzner and Nation are both in hot water. As much as Barclay wants to use those files, Busiris wants him not to use those files, because therein lies a good portion of your potential law suit against Busiris. Technically, of course, neither Mortland nor Barclay has seen a document dated before 1990, except for your Novum personnel file. I’ve objected to the introduction of anything from the Busiris files on the grounds they contain false and unsubstantiated allegations and would be extremely prejudicial to the jury. I had to object. Otherwise you’d lose any potential lawsuit against Busiris.”

“Why the fuck should Virginia Coyle collect for Blondie Robertson’s or Alonzo Jackson’s pain and suffering?” Jack wanted to know.

“She doesn’t. Not directly. The other letters establish a pattern of behavior which makes more probable your alleged sexism and harassment of the plaintiff. That’s the usual argument. The real purpose is to make you look like a creep.

“I tried a new argument. Strictly as an experiment, and in addition to arguing that the Busiris stuff was irrelevance and prejudicial.

“I told Mortland, ‘Look, my guy is married to his former student. They were seeing each other, in public, while he was a teacher and

she was a student. It's fair to surmise they were sacking out together at the time. He admits it, we admit it. The school accepted it, the world accepted it. So he admits he was sexually active with at least one student. Maybe there were others, before or after, in whom he consummated or expressed an interest, but he doesn't admit that. It might be logical to assume there were. So how many coeds was my man involved with? One? Five? Ten? A hundred? We're not saying, except we admit, at least one.

" 'Let's for the sake of argument say it's a fifty. Let's say counsel for the plaintiff can bring to court a veritable parade of fifty women who will testify that Jack Creed hit on them some time in the last ten years. He cannot, of course, but for the sake of argument, let's say my colleague can present the court with fifty women who were hit on by Professor Creed. This, my esteemed colleague would argue, demonstrates the likelihood that my client hit on his.

" 'Fifty seems like a very large number, but in fact the testimony of even fifty women would not demonstrate the likelihood that my client hit on Virginia Coyle. The testimony of *only* fifty women would, statistically, prove an overwhelming *unlikelihood*. Jack Creed teaches on the average 90 students a term, or 270 students a year. Half of them are women. Some are returning students—a group conspicuously absent from the rosters of the plaintiff, incidentally—but Professor Creed meets at least 120 new female students a year. He also meets probably fifty more women who are not students. Per year. In the last ten years Jack Creed has interacted with 1,700 women. Fifty harassed women would still represent only 3% of the women Jack Creed has met. 3 in 100 is less than your odds of cutting a deck of cards to a one-eyed jack. It would be far more likely that the plaintiff belonged to the 97% my man had not harassed, than to the 3% my colleague would have shown Professor Creed to have harassed. My esteemed colleague would need the testimony of approximately 850 women to make it even odds that Jack Creed harassed his client. Of 900 women to establish even a marginal likelihood.

“ ‘My colleague cannot provide five women, let alone fifty. Over a period of twenty years, not ten. And he’s been looking, now, for the better part of a year.

“ ‘Therefore, all testimony not specifically related to the specific alleged harassment, discrimination, and libel of Virginia Coyle by defendant Creed is irrelevant to this case.’

“I’ve been waiting three years to make that argument to a judge. I don’t know how Mortland is going to rule on my motion, but it’s a big one. I don’t even know how we hope he rules. If he disallows my objection, we have a long and sensational trial, followed by a juicy law suit on which we collect a huge settlement from Busiris almost without arguing the case. If he allows my objection, we have a short trial. Most of Barclay’s case goes right down the toilet. As does most of our suit against Busiris, incidentally.

“I don’t want to be cocky, Jack, but I’d say you’re in a win-win situation.”

“So what do I do for the next three months?” Jack wanted to know.

“Teach your classes, and enjoy your wife. Read Bob Dylan. There’s nothing else to do right now. The Judge has it all, and I do mean it all. Your diaries, your personnel files from Novum (now open) and Busiris (for the moment closed), Virginia’s files from Novum State and Mount St. Mary’s (if you’re worried about yours, you should see hers . . . although I, again technically, haven’t seen them), lists of witnesses, depositions, preliminary arguments, her little published article and another she’s working on, excerpts from just about every book or article you ever wrote, her files from the Human Rights Commissions, even two hundred pages of her medical records. Mortland also knows about her lawsuit in California, as does Barclay, who has kissed goodbye to his dream of a quick and easy Novum State settlement. Mortland also knows about the police investigations at Riverton and their findings.

“Now the Judge is going to mull all this over and make some rulings. You might as well forget the case and leave the lawyering to me.”

DeLotta left Lake-of-the-Woods “to do some work to pay our bills,” as he put it.

Jack met his classes, read his Dylan, and tried his best to enjoy his wife.

The long northern winter ground on, a bitter cold winter in 1996-97, lows of minus thirty, highs of minus fifteen. Snow everywhere, and ice, and not a thaw the entire winter.

The days weighed more than the layers of heavy snow on Jack’s roof.

On February 3, 1997 Judge Mortland summoned Barclay and DeLotta to his chamber for rulings on pretrial motions. Jack waited nervously at school with Lloyd Cowley, Marilyn Schneider, Ed Haley, and a dozen or so potential witnesses, all of whom would, if asked, tell what they knew . . . all of whom would gladly have given a month’s salary not to have to say a word.

“They’re cutting a deal even as we speak,” Lloyd Cowley predicted. “My brother-in-law is a lawyer. He says none of these things ever come to trial. Both sides posture and huff, and then they settle on the courtroom steps.”

“Tell that to O. J. Simpson.”

“That’s a murder case.”

“DeLotta’s in no mood for settlement,” Jack told Lloyd, unsure in his heart of hearts just what he himself hoped for. “How would we settle, except to have the thing dismissed?”

“That would surprise me,” said Marilyn Schneider. “Judge Mortland has a reputation for being fair, and something of a reputation as a woman’s judge. I’m sure he wanted to give Virginia every opportunity to present her case, to be fair.”

“Marcus says he hasn’t seen a case yet,” Jack said. “Which is also my opinion. But I’m prejudiced. Anyway, I do not anticipate a dismissal at this date.”

Having given Virginia Coyle every opportunity to present her case, and having weighed a veritable mountain of evidence, Judge Mortland chose to allow VC to do her thing, but to draw a tight circle.

“For the mutual benefit of both your client and yours,” he announced to Roger C. Barclay and Marcus DeLotta, “I am going to rule inadmissible all evidence and testimony on matters material before the moment of Dr. Coyle’s application to Novum State University. I am also going to rule inadmissible all evidence and testimony material to investigations of either the plaintiff or the defendant outside of the complaints presented in the plaintiff’s complaint of 22 November 1995.

“In short, fellows, this trial will focus on three central issues: was the plaintiff sexually harassed by the defendant? Was the plaintiff sexually discriminated against by the defendant? Did the defendant libel the defendant in her profession? Evidence or testimony not materially related to those three issues is out.”

Judge Mortland also announced that, since the plaintiff seemed convinced she had been wronged, as evidenced by her repeated efforts before the Human Rights Commission and his bench, he was allowing her the trial she sought. “This is a new area of law,” he explained, “and we must explore it carefully. The charges are not, therefore, dismissed. Although the plaintiff retains the option of withdrawing her complaint.”

“He drew a very close circle,” DeLotta reported to Jack’s supporters. “This will be a sharply focused trial and a short one. Most of you will not even testify. At least not at this trial. Jack should have pretty smooth sailing. A sane person would drop the case at this point, but one thing I’ve concluded: Virginia Coyle is not a sane person, and Roger Barclay is going to go as far as she pays him to go.”

Jack breathed, he thought, a sigh of relief. Kelly was safe. So was Lily Lee. The ghosts of Shirley Friedman, Anne Brower, Sandy Chase and Alonzo Jackson disappeared like melting snow in April.

Jack sailed confidently through the balance of winter term and, on DeLotta's advice, spent the last week of February skiing with Kelly in the Black Hills.

On March 6 they returned to Lake-of-the-Woods for a few days of final consultation with DeLotta. They were joined by Jenny Lynn, who left Madison to be with her dad, and by me. I had no official leave from Busiris—I just didn't give a damn. Timm could not get leave from his duties in California. "In an emergency, I'll be there," he promised his father.

Roger Barclay and Virginia Coyle arrived in Lake-of-the-Woods on March 8.

Victoria Nation arrived on March 9. As did Rose Marié Creed.

So the players assembled for what, after all the huffing and puffing, shaped up as a neat and tidy trial. There was no national press in Lake-of-the-Woods during the second week of March 1997.

On the afternoon of March 9, the day before his trial began, I had the longest, most intimate conversation with Jack I'd had in several years. Marcus was buried in paper and strategy. Kelly and Jenny had rented *Reality Bites* for a little eighties-generation bonding. Both Jack and I were restless, and both of us were having trouble following the film's cultural references. Jack was beginning to show his contempt for its confused, neurotic characters—and thus for his wife and daughter's generation. The atmosphere inside the house was becoming brittle, and, although clouds hung low and a snow storm threatened, I suggested a walk.

Within two minutes we were trudging across the snowy Wisconsin landscape on County C, Jack in his steel-toed Red Wings and a black ulster that dated to his days in Wales, I in a borrowed down-lined parka that Kelly had bought him for Christmas.

For a couple of minutes we walked in silence, down the dry center of the road, our breath forming short clouds in front of us. Jack seemed lost in thought, which I mistook for trial anxiety.

Finally he said, “One generation abandons the enterprises of another like stranded vessels.”

“Henry David Thoreau.”

“I didn’t get it, Tucker.”

“Jack?”

“The film. I didn’t get any of it. I felt no empathy with the protagonist or her wacko friends. Utterly fucking hopeless. I wouldn’t lift a finger to help any of them. Go to the barricades with those assholes? They don’t know what a barricade is.”

“That’s the new breed, old man. You don’t see as many of them here as we do at Busiris.”

“I’m one of the Old Ones, Tucker. Me and Dylan. I don’t know what happened.”

“It all seems to go around. We’re a generation removed by now. Maybe two. Your daughter was right about that.”

“I’m so far from home right now, I wouldn’t recognize my own living room if I walked through it.”

“If two people travel far enough in opposite directions, the meridians on which they travel begin to converge.”

“Meanwhile the moon goes on unattached through the heavens.”

“You’ve done a lot of things for a lot of people, Jack.”

“Mostly women,” he declared flatly. “Virginia’s right: I’m a ladies’ man. I spent my life earning money mostly for women. All that happened was that they hit me up for more. Or hit me on the head. Or hit the road. Timm, on the other hand, has never asked me for a

thing in his life. Or you. Or Marcus. One of the many significant differences between men and women."

"That is not something you'd want to say in front of a jury."

"Not something you'd have to say to men. Women? They wouldn't understand if you spelled it out in six-inch letters."

"Jenny's not that type. Or Kelly, from what I've seen."

"When we started in the seventies, everything was similarity. 'Anything you can do, we can do as well.' Now it's all differences. The emphasis has shifted. Having bought their way into the league with an argument based on equality, they petition immediately to alter the rules to allow for inequalities."

"Another generation of women is doing the arguing."

"There are two fundamental differences between men and women," Jack declared. "One is that women take sex more seriously than men. I mean the physical, mechanical act of sex. They believe the gift of their bodies is the greatest gift they can make a man, and any man who accepts that gift owes them forever. Sex to a woman is the culmination, an end. For a man sex is urgent, even more urgent than for a woman, but for men, sex is just a beginning. The gift of her precious body gets a woman inside his front door. No further. Once she's banged a guy, a woman thinks she's in the bedroom of his life, when she's still sitting in the front parlor. Because she misunderstands, she goes no further and remains forever locked outside the empty bedroom of his heart.

"Because he underestimates her gift, he never understands how callous he looks running off on adventures with other people. She fills the emptiness with a child and withdraws. He gets jealous. The child grows up and moves away. He can't understand her emptiness and her anger, and his role in it."

I nodded agreement.

"The other difference is that women talk and men act. This difference results in two misunderstandings. One is that women

figure that if a man hasn't talked something through with her, she's been left out of the decision. A second result is that women assume that men who aren't talking aren't thinking. I know women who honestly believe that when they ask a man what he's thinking and he says, 'Nothing,' he's really thinking about nothing at all. Kelly's better at that, and Jenny Lynn. But all women like to talk."

"A third difference is that women make better storytellers," I added. "And words and looks, which seem too trivial to a man, can seem harassing to them."

"No woman really understands what a man gives up for a relationship," Jack said.

We walked a minute in silence, birch and pine to either side, and the silent snowy fields. A truck pulled up to a distant intersection, turned left, its red tail lights the only color in the evening sky.

"We create so much guilt for ourselves," Jack said finally.

"Beginning with our parents."

"With mothers. More mothers than fathers. Mothers understand intuitively that guilt is the mainspring of Western Civilization. Family, church, school. It starts early, and it never ends. Women are geniuses at making you feel guilty about doing what they wanted you to do in the first place."

"Or one woman hauls you into court for complying with the wishes of another woman. Quite a system."

"It's our fault for letting them get away with it. American men have lost control of their women. The culture is shot."

"Something else we might not want to say on a witness stand."

"I couldn't explain it anyway, Tucker. Not in a week of testimony. Better I don't even try."

"You're the defendant. You're entitled to a trial in front of your peers. Even the radical feminists agree, when it suits them, that women and men are different. You should have an all-male jury."

Jack just chuckled.

We walked again in silence.

“What happened to Lily Lee?” Jack asked finally.

“I don’t know,” I said. I didn’t.

“DeLotta says she left Busiris under some kind of cloud.”

“Andy lost his job at the bank. She lost her job at Busiris. Sound odd to you?”

“It wasn’t me who mailed those letters.”

“The only way to know for sure is to pick up the phone.”

“I’m with Kelly now.”

“You’re a proud man, Jack.”

“And a discrete man. Even when it costs me.”

“You’re not through the woods yet.”

“Oh, there are ways of pushing it,” Jack said wearily. “And there are ways of not pushing it. I’m a pretty contented guy when I’m left to teach and write.” He slowed to a standstill in the middle of an intersection. The toe of his Red Wing pivoted on the macadam. “The kids are okay at this school, Tucker. I draw a lot of energy from them. I’ve got the Dylan biography. I’ve got work enough to last a lifetime,” he said dreamily.

We turned back toward the farmhouse.

“So it really wasn’t you in 1985?” I asked him.

“It really wasn’t me. Oh, maybe a couple of things relevant to the basketball investigation, but I didn’t go burning libraries or smashing innocent buildings. If it makes you happy, I’ll take the credit.”

“That’s just one thing you get credit for. In Riverton you grow larger each year. By now they think Lumberjack Creed was seven-foot-two inches tall, dined on railroad spikes, and snacked on

tenpenny nails. And the number of his women . . . 'like the stars, my friend, like the stars'."

"Of his women, a man should not speak. Even to his best friend."

"You mentioned one. No others."

"And I apologize. To you and to Lily. And to Kelly, who is a very fine woman. Which is all you, or the court, or Marcus DeLotta, or Thought-and-Action Police Person Virginia Coyle will ever, ever hear from me about my women."

Jack fell again into silence, then spoke only studied irrelevancies. As we reached the drive, he looked one last time down the road to the west. "Well," he said quietly. "The women are inside eating popcorn by the fireside. We are out here in the snow. And somewhere out there is Timm, flying his F/A 18. You plant acorns, Tucker, you're gonna get oaks."

After a rollercoaster year of sensational allegations and rumored wars, the trial itself seemed almost anti-climactic. Most of the 11th was devoted to jury selection and opening arguments. Jack, wearing a gray suit and a paisley tie, sat respectful and attentive in the defendant's chair. Virginia Coyle sat stiffly in the plaintiff's. She had limped dramatically into the room on crutches, having injured her ankle, the court was told, taking indoor ice-skating lessons in Minneapolis. She tried to look hurt both physically and emotionally, but appeared to me, and several others, oddly triumphant.

"She must know something she's not sharing with Barclay," DeLotta observed following the afternoon session. "He's worried. He knows he hasn't got a case, and he knows he hasn't prepared what he does have. He's just collecting Coyle's money. I wouldn't be surprised if Mortland cited him for contempt."

"Maybe she's just happy to be having her trial," Kelly thought aloud.

“Virginia always did like to be the center of attention,” said Marilyn Schneider.

“She’s a bitch, dad,” Jenny told Jack. “You can tell just by looking at her. Too bad she didn’t get hired at Bryn Mawr. She’d have done real well there.”

“What I want to know,” Jack wondered aloud, “is what your mother is doing here. And what Victoria Nation is doing here.”

“I honest to god don’t know, dad,” Jenny told Jack. “We haven’t talked since she got here. I know she’s sore at me. She knows I’ve been up here lots, and we haven’t been getting along too well lately. Maybe she’s come to watch the execution.”

“Barclay has listed as a potential witness a Ms. X,” DeLotta mentioned for the first time.

“Who’s that?” Jack wanted to know.

“I don’t know. This happens, not often, usually in cases where revealing the witness’s identity might threaten him or her with harm or harassment or intimidation. The person would have to be someone from the list of potential witnesses we reviewed last year. Could be your ex-wife. Could be Miss Vicky. It could be somebody else entirely. But anything this witness might have to say would have to pertain to the 1990-1992 time frame set by Judge Mortland. It could also be there’s no ‘Witness. X,’ and Barclay is just trying to make you sweat.”

“I’m not saying a word about your mother,” Kelly told Jenny Lynn, “but that Victoria Nation certainly does not like me. I could feel the bad vibrations clear across the courtroom. I think she had them focused like a laser beam, right at my head.”

“Yeah,” Jack said a little sheepishly, “it was kind of like the front portal of one of those European cathedrals: the elect on the one side, the damned on the other.”

DeLotta looked tired. “I’ve lost a lot of my enthusiasm since the judge gave us such a narrow focus,” he admitted. “I should have

expected as much. No judge in Lake-of-the-Woods, Wisconsin is going to go for the big picture and possibly set major precedents."

"The law, in its majesty, rises above all substantive issues," Jack said. "We can open the focus if we want, Marcus. Fuck, we can do anything we want."

"If you're the one to lift the lid on Busiris, Jack, you blow your Bucks bucks. There's nothing Barclay would love more than for you to mention Busiris. He'll be all over you in a minute. That's one topic to avoid."

"What a revolutionary idea. Forcing a jury of ordinary men and women to deal with ideas. How totally rad!"

"We did force one thing, though, and if it stands through appeal, it will be a major precedent."

"The previous history?" Jack suggested.

"Exactly. Wide and deep has been standard procedure. This is a new game. Her background played into your hands a little bit, but I think an appeals court will let this stand. That's a big ruling to take from this case. The decision, and the argument that got it."

"What do you think of the jury?" Jack wanted to know.

"We got a good jury. Barclay likes it because it's all women. He went for gender because he thinks they're going to be sympathetic to Ms. Coyle.

"I went for class. Every one of those women works an eight-to-five job. Most of them work for pretty low wages. Two are divorced. I'm betting that they know real harassment, and they know real hunger. Virginia Coyle, Ph. D. is not going to impress them with her tale of suffering. Did you see them when she said she'd broken her ankle ice skating? This case is over. They're not even listening. I'm going to keep her on the stand as long as I can, just to keep her in front of them.

“And you, Jack, when your turn comes, keep your answers short and businesslike. I’m even going to ask that you be excused for Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons so you can meet your classes. I don’t think Mortland will go for it, but it’s a good ploy. Creed is the worker. Coyle is strictly leisure class. Class is more significant than gender. This jury is not going to award her a penny. You heard it first here.”

Virginia Coyle began her testimony on Tuesday. She spoke slowly and with an accent foreign to the northern Wisconsin ear. Nor was her vocabulary the jury’s. When her attorney asked her to explain terms, she did so with a sneer which offended the working-class women judging her case. She made a great to-do about her broken ankle. She wore a very fashionable dress and a heavy gold chain. Her attorney dressed well also. Too well.

On Wednesday, Virginia repeated the errors of Tuesday. True to his word, DeLotta kept her on the stand a long while, nearly expending the judge’s patience and nearly, Judge Mortland warned him in a recess, losing his jury.

The plaintiff rehearsed her versions of the conversations of February and April 1991, of her first and subsequent encounters with Jack. She did not testify that Charles Creed had offered to trade his support for sexual favors. Under cross-examination she even admitted, “I didn’t get the impression that Professor Creed actually wanted to go to bed with me!” The attempt to be humorous, or realistic, or simply to admit graciously the obvious, fell flat. Virginia spent nearly half an hour deconstructing the multiple symbolic statements made by any male who wore a belt buckle in the shape of a pig. The more she sought to transform a Jack’s ear of corn into a penis, and thus a symbol of male chauvinism and contempt for women, the more obtuse and divorced from reality she became. Finally the jury began laughing, and Judge Mortland had to remind them to maintain decorum. He was chuckling to himself as he spoke.

Under cross-examination, Virginia seemed deliberately evasive on dates and particulars of the harassing telephone calls. She

backed off her story of Jack requesting a grade change.

“Did Professor Creed name the student?” DeLotta wanted to know.

“He did.”

“Did you recognize the name?”

“I did not.”

“How did you know he was having a sexual relationship with this student?”

“He told me.”

“He volunteered that information to you over the telephone.”

“Yes.”

“This was a telephone conversation.”

“Yes.”

“How did you know the voice on the telephone was Dr. Creed?”

“It sounded like him.”

“Did the voice on the telephone identify himself as Dr. Creed?”

“No.”

“So this person, whoever he was, called you to announce that he was having a relationship with a student and would appreciate your changing the student’s grade?”

“That’s correct.”

“You have testified that the relationship between Professor Creed and Ms. Ayers made you uncomfortable ‘from the moment I arrived at Novum State’?”

“I considered it improper.”

“You would, then, at the time of the phone call, have recognized the name ‘Kelly Ayers’.”

“That’s correct.”

“Did Kelly Ayers ever take one of your classes?”

“I don’t remember her being in any of my classes.”

“I can tell you, Professor Coyle. She did not. Would you like a moment to examine all of your class rosters?”

“That will not be necessary.”

“So the relationship announced in this phone call could not have been Kelly Ayers, since she was not in your class, and you would have recognized her name.”

“I accept that.”

“If the voice on the phone was the voice of the defendant, Professor Creed, then Professor Creed must have chosen to reveal to you on the telephone that he was involved with another student, at a time when everyone else in the university, including yourself, knew he was dating Ms. Ayers?”

“I am merely reporting the conversation.”

“Could you speculate on why Professor Creed would choose to reveal to you of all people the fact that he was two-timing his future wife?”

“Objection”

“Sustained.”

“Ms. Coyle, did the person on the telephone specifically identify himself as Professor Creed? . . .”

By Wednesday afternoon it was clear to everyone in the room that unless DeLotta really blew his case, Coyle was roadkill.

Newlund testified on Coyle’s behalf, mainly on contractual matters relating to the difference between a fixed-term and a tenure-track position, and on the role of departments in advising the Vice President on hires and renewals. He described Virginia Coyle as a “competent” teacher and a “valued” colleague. Newlund said nothing

about the illegal meeting at the Silver Dollar Bar. (“If he had,” Marcus pointed out, “I would have made him tell the jury how Jack objected to settling Virginia’s fate in Virginia’s absence and volunteered himself for the February 11 warning. That testimony would only have hurt Barclay’s case.”) Barclay introduced two affidavits from former students who claimed to have benefited from the classes of Professor Coyle, whom they found “tough but fair.” He produced not a single student or colleague who could testify to receiving or witnessing sexual harassment or gender discrimination from Professor John Charles Creed between spring of 1990 and summer of 1992.

Barclay did not call as witnesses either Rose Marié Creed or Victoria Nation. Rose Marié disappeared on March 9, after Jack had finished his testimony. During her days in Lake-of-the-Woods, she never explained the reason for her presence, except to tell Jenny Lynn, “I’m not here to testify. I just thought I ought to be here.” She made no effort to contact Jack, and she did not hang out with Victoria Nation. Jack thought she was trying to unnerve him. My own suspicion, unsupported by anything Rose Marié ever said, is that she felt Jack had endured more than enough and wanted somehow to show support, and possibly to move toward reconciliation.

Victoria Nation, on the other hand, had definitely come to make a statement and to watch what she hoped would be an execution. As Tuesday passed, and Wednesday morning wore into Wednesday afternoon, and Roger C. Barclay rested his case without calling her —or the mysterious X-rated Witness—Nation began to understand that not only would the trial end without her having her say, it would probably end with Creed fully vindicated. In the courtroom she became increasingly agitated, drawing the attention first of Judge Mortland, and finally of several jury members, who, seated with their backs to the public, turned around more than once to determine the source of a whisper or a gasp. Her first intrusion was a rather staged gasp of sympathetic horror—an audible “Ohhhh!” or “Poor thing!”—when Virginia recounted the story of Jack’s “That’s cute!” remark at Schneider’s party. His Honor reprimanded Victoria with a very severe

look directed right at her. On the occasion of her second outburst, he stopped the trial and addressed the public collectively, reminding everyone that the decorum of the court was to be preserved, and that violations of that decorum would not be tolerated. When Barclay announced shortly before 4:30 on March 12, “The prosecution rests, your honor,” and Nation let fly a very audible “No!” Judge Mortland barred her from the courtroom.

“The court will recess until 9:00 a.m. tomorrow morning,” he directed. “The jury is dismissed. Will the bailiff please detain the woman responsible for that last outburst.”

Victoria seized this opportunity to take her case directly to the judge and to the jury, which had not yet left the courtroom. “Your honor, a terrible travesty of justice is going on in this court. I can’t remain silent in the presence of this gross miscarriage of justice. The sins of a very wicked man are being deliberately concealed from this jury. . . .” Vicky was quite dramatic, something right out of cinema.

“The bailiff will clear the courtroom,” Mortland ordered. “Persons material to this case are directed to return at 9:00 tomorrow. Persons who are not material to this case will absent themselves from the courtroom.”

As the jury, ushered by the bailiff, left the room, Victoria moved toward Judge Mortland to plead her case further. He cut her off with the raised finger of a stern father: “Madam,” he told her, “I have no idea who you are, but you are not, to my knowledge, a principle or a witness in this case, and therefore have no necessary presence in this courtroom. This is a public tribunal, but your disruptions are intrusive and contemptuous of court. I do not expect to see you in this room again, and if I do, basing my actions on your past performance, I will direct the bailiff to remove you.

“This is a kangaroo court,” Nation insisted. “I myself have provided you with damning evidence that this jury is not being allowed to see. I’m sure Mr. Barclay has shared my evidence with you. The women on this jury must understand this man is a male

chauvinist pig who has spent his life protected by the patriarchy. His abuse of women must not be allowed to continue. Oh, Virginia, honey. . . .” Victoria turned to Virginia Coyle, then back to Judge Mortland. “Your honor, I have known this man for twenty years. He is a wicked, wicked man. . . .”

“Remove this woman from this room,” Judge Mortland directed the bailiff. Then he turned his attention to Roger Barclay. “Is she one of yours, counselor?”

“I had no idea, your honor.”

“The woman is out of control. If she shows her face in this courtroom again, she’s cited for contempt. You’re this close to being cited yourself. You are directed to explain during recess to her and to your client that she has just given me more than ample grounds for declaring a mistrial, and Mr. DeLotta more than ample grounds for filing an appeal should he desire.” Thereupon His Honor retreated to his chambers, and Barclay left to search for his client, who was in the hallway comforting a nearly hysterical Victoria Nation.

“Too damned much!” Jack told Marcus over dinner. “I can’t follow that act!”

“You want to know why I left Bryn Mawr?” Kelly asked rhetorically.

“You’re such a wicked, wicked man,” Kelly twitted Jack.

“You think that she affected the jury much?” Cowley wanted to know.

“Sure she influenced the jury. If we didn’t have it already, Miss Vicky just handed us the case. The jury already considered V.C. some kind of mandarin. Now they know she’s got a bunch of wacko friends. After that ‘Oh, Virginia, honey,’ they’ve probably pegged her as a dyke. Jesus! If Bailey could bring Victoria Nation to California, Simpson would walk. I’m just afraid Mortland will have to declare a mistrial. Vicky set Jack up perfectly. You know, I have begun to feel a little sorry for Barclay. The schmuck!

“Jack, tomorrow is kill-the-clock time. I get you on the stand. I ask you very succinct questions. You give me very brief answers. Just the way we rehearsed. Same when Barclay cross-examines. You get off the stand. And stay away from Busiris. Same tomorrow, Lloyd. Simple questions, simple answers. Lloyd, I’m not sure I’m going to call you or anyone else. I want the jury to remember Virginia and her insane sob sister.”

“Sound bite justice,” Jack said.

“Trial law is a performance art,” Marcus told Jack. “Like teaching. Only in this business, you get paid better.”

Victoria Nation did not hear Jack’s testimony on the 9th. Barred from entering the courthouse, she had got up a cardboard placard and was picketing on the front sidewalk. “Kangaroo Court” read one side; “This Way to Miscarriage,” read the other. We saw her when we arrived at 8:30.

Barclay nearly had a stroke.

“Who is this insane person?” Kelly wanted to know, “and what did you ever do to her?”

DeLotta seemed concerned. “I don’t want a mistrial now,” he said. “I think we have this locked.”

Jack’s testimony went well, although to DeLotta’s succinct questions he offered rather expansive answers. His lawyer might have been trying to kill clock, but Jack—always the teacher—was trying to help the jury focus and analyze issues. On the whole, Jack’s gamble paid off. Whereas Coyle came across as a cold and calculating Mandarin, Creed appeared the perfect Boy Scout: warm, concerned, patient, sincere, thoughtful and helpful. For three hours, with one fifteen-minute recess, Jack recited his version of Coyle’s dismissal, portraying himself as a reluctant agent of the collective will of Novum students, faculty and administration, as one who had risked great vulnerability out of consideration for the plaintiff . . . as one whose patience—like that of the jury and judge—had worn finally to the breaking point.

Barclay began his cross-examination around 3:00. It lasted only seventy-five minutes. Unfocused to begin with, Barclay started bad and went downhill from there. Either he had no strategy other than to undermine the defendant's credibility and break, somehow, into his history at Busiris, or Jack's repeated retreats into contextual philosophies interspersed with sudden forays into very specific anecdotes frustrated his plan.

When Barclay introduced parts of the diary, Jack readily admitted, "Yes, I did refer to Virginia Coyle 'a ditz.' I was writing in my journal. I did not expect my journal to be made public. I doubt any of us expect our journals to become the subject of a public discussion. If we did, I suspect we'd all lie like carpets. Because diaries and journals are private affairs, we can be absolutely honest with ourselves." Big points for the defendant.

At some moments, Jack was more the attorney than the witness.

"Prior to the department meeting at which Professor Coyle's application for a tenure-track appointment was considered, did you prepare a chart reflecting her grades as compared to departmental and university grades?"

"I did."

"And is this that chart?"

"It appears to be."

Barclay entered Jack's grade chart as exhibit 31.

"Now in preparing this chart, did you consult with Professor Coyle?"

"The charts were prepared from Professor Coyle's grade rosters, a copy of which was on file in the department office. For the department and the university figures, I simply asked the registrar to ask the computer to tally totals and percentages of A's, B's, C's, D's, No Credits, Incompletes, and Withdrawals. I thought the computer would be more accurate than I. And more disinterested."

“I didn’t ask how the figures were arrived at, I asked whether or not you consulted with Professor Coyle.”

“The manner of collection is important, because it explains the chart’s inaccuracy. Your client has asserted that my figures misrepresented her grades, and, I have discovered, they do.”

“Misrepresent?”

“These figures are tremendously inaccurate in one regard,” Jack admitted.

“Inaccurate,” Barclay repeated.

“On the number of withdrawals,” Jack continued. “As I said, I prepared the figures for Professor Coyle from her grade rosters. Students who drop a class during the first week of the term do not appear on grade rosters, although they do remain in computer memory. First week drops are not included in Professor Coyle’s totals, but they are included in departmental and university totals.

“How significant is the difference, this jury might wish to know,” Jack continued, questioning himself.

“Last week I requested the registrar to retrieve the record of first-week withdrawal from all of Professor Coyle’s classes, if she could, and give me an accurate number of withdrawals from each class for each term. She could and she did. In every case the chart I prepared underreports Coyle’s withdrawals by at least 50%. In the fall of 1990, for example, where the chart reports 15 withdrawals, the actual total is 34. For winter the chart records 17. The actual total, including first-week drops whose names did not appear on the grade roster, is 42.

“The bottom line is that the percentage of withdrawals from Virginia Coyle’s classes is five times the departmental and university average, not twice the departmental average, as this chart shows.

“Otherwise, I believe the figures are quite accurate.”

Although he perceived he had been had, Barclay persisted with his own line of questioning. “Professor Creed,” he wanted to know. “Were these figures shared with Professor Coyle at any time before the department meeting? Was she given any opportunity to respond to them?”

“I discussed grades and withdrawals with Professor Coyle on February 1, 1991. Marilyn Schneider had discussed grades and withdrawals with Professor Coyle before that. And of course Professor Coyle had prepared her own grade rosters. While Professor Coyle did not see the chart, she had been confronted with the point they were making. Which she has consistently chosen to duck.”

“It’s correct to say you knowingly prepared materials which bore heavily on the plaintiff’s future employment, but you did not share those materials with her?”

“Virginia did not see the charts,” Jack admitted. “Perhaps if she had,” he added, “she would have corrected my inaccuracy.”

Several members of the jury smiled.

“This meeting of February 11th,” Barclay proceeded. “Were any records kept of that meeting?”

“Except for a brief four-item agenda, a copy of which I provided Professor Coyle, the meeting was off the record.”

“Was that at the plaintiff’s request?”

“It was at my suggestion. I thought it best that our discussion not be part of her record at that time. Especially our discussion of student complaints, but also the business about grades.”

“The plaintiff has testified that she found your suggestion for an off-the-record meeting threatening. Did it occur to you that your suggestion might be perceived of as threatening?”

“Mr. Barclay, by February, 1991, we all knew we had a problem with your client. Part of the problem was that she refused to admit

there was a problem. Several members of the department thought she had been warned sufficiently. I was the one who argued for one more warning. As a faculty member and acting assistant dean, I saw three options. The first was no meeting and thus no warning. The second was an off-the-record meeting with a very clear warning. The third was a formal meeting with union representative, documents and minutes. All three options had advantages and disadvantages. I just thought at that particular time, Professor Coyle was entitled to a clear, off-the-record explanation of problems and possible consequences."

"Was there perhaps something in your own personal experience that made you especially sensitive to Dr. Coyle's predicament?" Barclay wanted to know.

"Objection," said DeLotta.

"Overruled."

"Well," Jack said thoughtfully. "I think probably all of us here—including members of the jury, his honor Judge Mortland, and even you yourself Mr. Barclay—has at one point in our lives been in a situation where we're not seeing things quite clearly and we're getting ourselves into trouble. At this moment we need objective advice, but being what we are, we usually don't actively seek it. Even friendly criticism is threatening. In retrospect, if we're fair, we appreciate somebody taking the time to tell us, 'Look, you might want to step back a little and take a look at yourself.' Especially if their advice has helped us avert serious disaster. I thought Professor Coyle was in that situation, and that's the courtesy I was trying to extend to Professor Coyle."

"In your discussion did you use the terms 'seduction'?"

"I believe I told her that teaching is a seduction, which it is: an attempt by the experienced teacher to bring reluctant and naive students from one position to a more advanced position. Not by force, or threats, but by attraction. Teaching is the art of winning hearts and minds."

“Did you suggest Professor Coyle be more friendly and more accessible?”

“I suggested she be more religious in keeping her office hours. Friendlier would not have hurt either. You catch a lot more flies with sugar than with vinegar.”

“Dr. Creed, you’re a professor of English. Would you agree that ‘seduction’ and ‘accessible’ are sexually charged words?”

“Like most English words, both ‘seduction’ and ‘accessible’ have several denotative meanings, and many connotative meanings. Like the words ‘rose’ or ‘blue.’ Maybe the rose signifies love. Maybe it signifies the Tudor monarchy. Maybe it signified the Lutheran church. Maybe ‘blue’ means someone is sad. Maybe it means something is pornographic. Maybe it means ‘true blue.’ In a specific context ‘seduction’ is sexually suggestive, and ‘accessible’ could be sexually charged.

“In other contexts they are not. Even your client has admitted that she did not believe I was trying to get her to go to bed with her. In that situation I was certainly not using ‘seduction’ or ‘accessible’ with any sexual charge. In the context within which I used them, ‘seduction’ and ‘accessible’ are no more specifically sexual than the word ‘religious’ is specifically Christian in the context in which I used it a moment ago.”

“You’d agree, however, that in someone else’s mind those words might have been sexually charged.”

“Not in that context. Dr. Coyle is a professor of literature. She knows she can’t take a word or a symbol out of context and mean whatever she wants it to mean. If communication depends solely on the listener’s or reader’s frame of reference, anything any of us says can be interpreted any way anyone wishes. Communication becomes impossible. I’m perfectly willing to let this jury decide whether ‘I suggest you be friendlier and more accessible to your students’ and ‘try more to seduce your students into learning’ are hitting on the plaintiff.

Jack continued.

“Intention is really the core of this case,” he said. “And of the issue.”

Marcus stretched himself ostentatiously in his seat, hands clasped behind his head, in an attempt to attract Jack’s attention and remind him “short and to the point.” But Jack was off into a philosophical analysis.

“If anything, I tried my best to treat Virginia Coyle as I would treat anyone else, as I would have wanted to be treated myself. I feel in this case like . . . let me tell you a story. When I was a little kid in elementary school, maybe second grade or third, I was not very good at sports. I wasn’t athletic, and I didn’t know the rules. Especially I didn’t know the rules about baseball. We’d play baseball in the fall and spring during gym class, and I was always striking out. This didn’t make me very popular with the other kids.

“One day I noticed that some kids who didn’t swing at the ball got to go to first base anyway. I figured that since I couldn’t hit the ball, I would not swing, and get to first base that way. Then I would be a hero.

“But the umpire kept calling strikes on me anyway.

“So I figured I must somehow be moving the bat in a way that looked like a swing. Maybe I was anticipating the pitch and somehow twitching my arms. I figured if I didn’t know when the pitch was coming, I couldn’t flinch. So I stood up there with my eyes closed.

“And the umpire called strikes anyway, and I was out.

“In this case I feel like I’m standing up at the plate, trying my best not to swing, and Virginia Coyle is still calling strikes on me.”

The jury smiled.

“Professor Creed, did you ever describe Dr. Coyle’s attire as ‘cute’?”

“No.”

“Can you be absolutely certain?”

“Absolutely. I would never use the word ‘cute’ to describe a woman. I had been sensitized long ago to the fact that baby chicks are cute, but women are not cute.”

“How did that sensitizing come about, Professor Creed?”

“I saw the movie *Bull Durham*.”

“Might any other events in your history have helped to sensitize you?”

“Objection,” DeLotta said.

“Sustained.”

“Was there a point in your life when you might have used the word ‘cute’?”

DeLotta objected again.

Mortland asked where the questioning might be headed.

Barclay pointed out that the defendant’s published works, from the period relevant as well as prior to 1990, gave ample evidence of sexism and insensitivity on language far less delicate than “cute.” This insensitivity, he argued, contributed materially to the hostile working environment which caused the plaintiff’s poor performance and resulted in her unemployment.

Mortland allowed the question to stand.

Jack, who could see Barclay’s direction, answered simply, “I do not now apply the word ‘cute’ to women.”

“I asked whether there was a point in your life when you might have used the word ‘cute.’ ”

“And I said, ‘I do not apply the word “cute” to women.’ ”

“Shall I repeat my question?” Barclay wanted to know.

“Only if you want me to repeat my answer.”

Mortland looked slightly irritated. DeLotta looked worried.

Jack pointed his index finger at Barclay. “The rules of this procedure, Mr. Barclay, are simple. You ask the questions and I answer the questions. As much as I might want to, I can’t ask questions. If I have a problem with your questions, there’s nothing I can do about them. Likewise, you can’t answer questions . . . and if you have a problem with my answers, there’s not really very much you can do about them.”

Judge Mortland sat up in his chair. “The witness is warned he may be cited for contempt for refusing to answer counsel’s questions. However, the court feels that this area of questioning is leading nowhere, and directs counsel to move on to other areas.”

Barclay tried once more.

“Dr. Creed, you testified, in a deposition, I think, that in all the time Virginia Coyle taught at Novum State, you heard only one person say anything good about her. Only one person complimented her performance in any way. Only one single person who appreciated what she gave to that institution as a teacher. Is that correct? Only one person at Novum State had anything good to say about Professor Coyle?”

Jack thought for a moment. “Well,” he said thoughtfully, “there were probably more than one on Virginia’s side.”

Barclay beamed with the pleasure of finally winning a point.

“I remember talking once to the vice president of student affairs,” Jack continued, “and Peter told me that, as far as he could determine, student opinion was about 80% against Coyle. Now that would leave 20% uncommitted or in favor. There must have been more than one person in that other 20%.”

Barclay’s jaw dropped slightly. He paused. “I have no further questions of the witness,” he announced abruptly at 4:15, March 13, 1997.

“The defendant may step down,” Judge Mortland directed.

And Jack was finished.

“What a schmuck!” DeLotta chortled over dinner. “Rule number one in law school—okay, rule number two, after ‘get the money up front’—is always never ask a question in court when you’re not absolutely sure of the answer. That was beautiful. 80%. Where did you come up with that?”

“It’s a true story,” Jack told him.

“We’re in very good shape,” DeLotta assured Creed. “Although you nearly blew it a couple of times. Short and to the point. Remember? Obviously you’re a teacher and a writer. I’ll never make a trial lawyer out of you. Absolutely hopeless.

“Tomorrow morning I’m going to call Marilyn because she’s a woman and, depending on how things go, Ed Haley and Paul Resinski. I think the morning will go very quickly. We start 9:00. I expect an 11:00 luncheon recess. Judge Mortland talked to us this afternoon and indicated he would not like to begin summary until tomorrow afternoon. We all expect this case to be to the jury by tomorrow night. Barclay is just going through the motions, hoping to find something for an appeal, but we’ve got more basis for appeal than he does. He knows he lost this case when the judge drew a tight circle. He knows he’s lost his jury. Hell, he’s lost his client. She’s off somewhere with Victoria.

“Worst of it all, he’s lost his case against the university and the state system. He knows, and I know too, that once this jury comes in with a ‘not guilty’ verdict, Judge Mortland is going to dismiss the balance of Coyle’s complaint. His position is completely hopeless. Jack has just saved the state of Wisconsin, literally, hundreds of thousands of dollars. On this case alone. On other cases for which this will set a precedent? Millions. I do not exaggerate. Believe me, my esteemed colleague has experienced these past three days a lawyer’s worst nightmare.”

“You must feel pretty good, dad,” Jenny said. “I thought you were great.”

“Me too, me too,” Kelly mimed.

“I can *do* this shit,” Jack whooped.

“Steak dinner,” Cowley announced. “On me.”

“Tomorrow,” Jack said. “I have never in my life trusted the American judicial system. Why start now?”

We went, as a group, as had become our custom, to dinner at the Silver Dollar.

“How do you feel?” I asked Jack later that evening after he, Kelly, Jenny Lynn, and I had returned to the farm. He had been, I thought, in a mellow mood, calm and even confident.

“I had a few things I wanted to say that didn’t get said,” he admitted. “On the other hand, a whole lot of things didn’t get asked that I’m just as pleased didn’t get asked.”

He smiled for a second. “You know, Tucker, I fought this whole thing through, and managed to keep Kelly out of it entirely. I think that was the main thing.”

“And other people, and other things,” I reminded him.

“Yeah,” he said quietly. “And other people. That seems like a very long time ago.”

“It was.”

“For part of me, that was only yesterday. For another part of me, it might as well be something I read in a book. Or dreamt. That’s what is meant, I guess, by ‘the modern dissociation of sensibility’.”

“So how do you really feel?”

“Pretty good. Marcus is a smart cookie. He’s called every shot right so far. Let’s hope he’s right again.”

For the first night in two years, Kelly reported, Jack slept continuously for eight hours.

Marcus correctly called all Friday's shots except the one that mattered.

Beginning at 9:00, Marilyn Schneider described the party at which Jack's "pattern of overtly hostile and sexist behavior" allegedly began. Then, invited by DeLotta, she recounted her visit to the plaintiff's class and her warnings and suggestions, formal and informal. Finally she gave her version of the events which led to the end of the plaintiff's employment at Novum State. She finished at 10:30. Ed Haley testified that in voting on the tenure-track he had not felt prejudiced by any remarks Jack or Linda might have made outside the meeting, that he had made up his mind based on evidence, and that he believed the rest of the department had done the same. Paul Resinski testified that, as far as he could determine, Jack Creed had "bent over backwards" to be fair to the plaintiff and had "given her every possible warning that her performance was substandard and every possible opportunity to improve her performance.'" The defense rested at 12:15. When we left the courthouse for lunch, Victoria Nation was nowhere to be seen. We later learned that Judge Mortland had issued an injunction forbidding her from appearing "in or within 500 yards of the Chippewa County Courthouse."

Summary presentations began at 2:00 and lasted until 3:30. DeLotta asked for full acquittal. Barclay asked for $100,000 in punitive damages on each count, $65,000 in legal fees, and "such compensation for pain and suffering as the jury feels appropriate."

The court recessed from 3:30 until 4:00. At 4:00 p.m., March 14, 1996, Judge Mortland delivered his instructions to the jury. "These are complicated, and I want you to understand them," he told them. "I have prepared three sets of eleven questions each. The questions on each set are nearly identical, but you must go through the eleven questions three times each, answering every question, every time, 'Yes' or 'No.' The first time through the eleven questions, you will be considering the matter of harassment. The second time through you

will be considering the matter of sexual bias. The third time through you will be considering the matter of libel.

“You will answer the three sets of eleven questions. That’s a total of thirty-three questions. Then you will proceed to one set of four questions. Answer these four questions no matter how you answered the previous thirty-three. These questions concern monetary awards. You are to write in the blank after each question the amount of money you feel should be awarded the plaintiff for each of the four considerations. If the amount is $0, your foreman should write $0. If there are any questions, I will be available in my chambers to answer them.

“Should your deliberations continue past 6:00, the bailiff will bring you a dinner provided by the county.” With a wry smile he added, “It’s a pretty good dinner, too.”

By 5:00 p.m. on the evening of March 14 the jury was sequestered, and Jack was in the Silver Dollar Bar munching popcorn and drinking a beer with his wife, his daughter, his lawyer and his friends.

“You should call Timm,” Kelly suggested. “You didn’t talk to him last night, you know.”

“After the verdict is in,” Jack said. “California is two hours earlier than we are anyway. How long you give them, Marcus?”

“They have to elect a foreman. It’s a complicated set of instructions. They’ll want dinner—it’s the least the county can give them, and one of the few perks of jury duty. My guess is 7:30, maybe 8:00. If they’re not back by 9:00, we’re in some trouble.”

“That was a hell of a lot of money,” Lloyd Cowley observed. “Where would Jack ever come up with that kind of dough?”

“Barclay can ask for anything he wants,” Marcus pointed out. “What the jury gives him is a whole other thing. And if we don’t like what they give him, we can appeal. Hell, we’ll appeal anything other than full acquittal.”

“I got a brother-in-law who’s a lawyer,” Lloyd Cowley said. “He says sometimes you end up paying $20,000 in legal fees on a jury award of $100.”

“Thanks for the news, buddy,” Jack laughed nervously. “Maybe I should call Timm now, before the verdict.”

“Wait, dad,” Jenny advised. “You’re going to be a happy man. I can tell.”

The group ordered another round of drinks. “Might as well whoop it up,” DeLotta told them, looking at his watch. “We can’t get ourselves into too much trouble now.”

At 7:45 Marcus received the phone call he’d been awaiting. “Judge wants us back,” he announced. “The jury has reached a decision. This bodes well.”

At 8:10 the plaintiff and her lawyer, the defendant and his lawyer, and interested friends (excluding Victoria Nation) and, now, members of the local media, gathered in Courtroom B of the Chippewa County Courtroom. The jury returned. Judge Mortland requested that the jury foreman return to him his series of questions and began to read to the plaintiff and the defendant his questions and their answers.

“Was the judge’s explanation of sexual harassment law clear to you?”

“Yes.”

“Do you understand the State of Wisconsin law prohibiting sexual harassment?”

“Yes.”

“Did you understand the testimony presented by prosecution and defense related to the matter of sexual harassment?”

“Yes.”

“Was the evidence presented in this trial sufficient to permit this jury to determine whether the plaintiff was sexually harassed by the

defendant?”

“Yes.”

“Is it the determination of this jury that the evidence presented indicates the plaintiff was sexually harassed by the defendant?”

“No.”

Marcus DeLotta looked at his client and shook his clenched right fist briefly above his lap, just below the level of the courtroom table. Jack smiled slightly. “Yes,” cheered Jenny Lynn, below her breath.

Virginia Coyle’s face betrayed no emotion at all.

Roger Barclay stared dreamily into space.

“Was the evidence presented in this trial sufficient to permit the jury to determine whether the plaintiff was sexually discriminated against by the defendant?”

“Yes.”

“Was the judge’s explanation of gender discrimination law clear to the jury?”

“Yes.”

“Do you understand State of Wisconsin law prohibiting gender discrimination?”

“Yes.”

“Is it the determination of this jury that the evidence presented indicated the plaintiff was sexually discriminated against by the defendant?”

“No.”

Jack gave Marcus a quick punch in the arm.

“Was the judge’s explanation of the State of Wisconsin law on libel clear to you? . . .”

“This jury finds the following sum adequate and full compensation to the defendant for sexual harassment.”

“Zero dollars.”

Virginia Coyle’s face remained frozen.

“This jury finds the following sum adequate and full compensation to the defendant for sexual discrimination.”

“Zero dollars.”

‘Go, dad,” cheered Jenny Lynn.

“This jury finds the following sum adequate and full compensation to the defendant for pain and suffering.”

“Zero dollars.”

Roger Barclay pursed his lips.

“This jury finds the following sum adequate and full compensation to the defendant for legal fees.”

“Zero dollars.”

Marcus and Jack embraced quietly. Jenny Lynn and Kelly high-fived each other.

Judge Mortland asked the jury if the statements he had just read accurately reflected their deliberations. The foreman indicated they did. His honor declared the court recessed.

Virginia looked in disbelief at her attorney, who whispered something to her, packed a few papers in his briefcase, and rose to leave the room. Jack’s friends, wife and daughter, and a local reporter rushed to congratulate a defendant nearly, at last, on the verge of tears.

“Go dad!” cheered Jenny Lynn.

“Just great, just great,” Lloyd kept repeating. “Steaks are on me.”

“It’s enough, almost, to restore a man’s faith in American justice,” Marcus suggested.

“Yeah . . . almost,” Jack retorted. “What’s three years of my life tied up in a non-case, as long as I don’t have to pay any money.”

“Now you can phone Timm,” Kelly told her husband.

“I want to phone Timm,” Jack told the crowd.

“There’s a pay phone right out the door and to the left,” the bailiff said.

Jack was dialing the number when Victoria Nation accosted him from behind. “You’re a male chauvinist pig,” Victoria announced, “and you’re going to hell.” He turned as she spoke, and her first bullet caught him just above the left ear. Her second bullet caught him full in the face. Her third bullet hit his foot.

She was headed for the judge’s chamber when the bailiff brought her down.

# Chapter 20
# **The Funeral**

John Charles Creed was buried in Resurrection Cemetery, a gently rolling uplands on the edge of the northwestern Wisconsin woods just south of Lake-of-the-Woods on US 63. Interment took place on March 17, 1997, following a closed casket service in St. Stephen's Lutheran Church.

Of the days between March 15 and March 17, I remember little more than walking numbed through a blur of chaotic events. "Sound bite ceremony," Jack might have called it. Only two images are now sharp in my memory: the face of Kelly Creed as we heard the gunshots—that suspended instant before ecstasy transformed itself to anguish—and the picture of Jenny Lynn stepping forward at the grave site to toss a softball into the vault atop her father's coffin. I will never forget the faces of those two women. The rest is fuzzy.

I cannot now picture Jack's crumpled body by the courthouse telephone, although I certainly saw it. I remember no details of the scuffle between Victoria Nation and the bailiff, although Lloyd and I helped bring her down, at some personal risk to ourselves. I do not remember the single bullet all accounts report Virginia firing in our direction, and I don't remember "plaintiff Virginia Coyle restrained by male police from comforting her hysterical female colleague," as the *New York Times* reported. To this day I remember nothing of the sixteen-minute interval between the murder and the arrival of an ambulance. Newspaper reports are more accurate than my memory. The stories in *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Milwaukee Journal* strike me in rereading as the truest. (The one-page article in *Time* magazine is also accurate.) I do recall being driven to the hospital in some ambulance or squad car: Kelly, Jenny Lynn, Marcus, Lloyd, Marilyn, Ed, all of us whisked off in the entire Lake-of-the-Woods fleet, which, unlike the ambulance, had been parked conveniently beside the Court House that late Friday evening.

I remember looking at all those cops and wondering where they were when we needed them, how Victoria had managed to walk unrecognized and unchallenged into a courthouse she was barred from entering. With a loaded gun. I remember hearing, even as I asked, Jack's own voice of a decade previous: "I figured nobody in Security was going to stop me, and nobody from Riverton P.D. would recognize me. I was right."

I remember a glimpse of Jack's red Mustang in the courthouse parking lot as we rode away in the squad car, and wondering how it would get home.

Jack was dead on arrival at La Follette Memorial Hospital. I think we all secretly hoped he would be. The thought of Jack Creed as a drooling invalid in a wheelchair, as a brain-dead acute in some Midwest Cuckoo's Nest, as anything less than 100% of Jack Creed was too monstrous to entertain. We all wept, our heads ringing with recriminations, should-haves and could-haves. "I told him to call Timm." "I told him to wait until after the verdict." "I sent him out into the hall." "I should have gone with him." "I'd rather have lost the case and saved the life."

"Look," one of the cops finally told Kelly. "Quit blaming yourself. This dame was coming after your husband wherever she could find him. On the phone, off the phone, in the courthouse, out of the courthouse. This afternoon, next week, next month. She was going to get him sooner or later. It didn't matter."

His consolation didn't matter. There was guilt enough for us all.

In an odd way, however, those hours at La Follette Memorial were the calm before the storm. Jack's body was off in a room somewhere. Kelly and Jenny Lynn spent more than an hour by the cold body that had a few hours previous been their father and husband. I never saw Jack again. There was nothing to be hoped for, nothing to be done. Victoria was in a cell downtown. I never saw her again either. We sat, twelve or fifteen of us and half a dozen police officers, in the lobby of La Follette Memorial, an antiseptic

atmosphere of blond furniture, month-old magazines, and buzzing fluorescent lights. At intervals some member of the Novum faculty or student body would arrive to offer support or satisfy curiosity, only to be repelled at the sliding glass doors by Lake-of-the-Woods police. We were not asked to return to the courthouse, nor did anyone suggest leaving the hospital. Quietly, still in shock, in distant corners of the room, we repeated our stories to investigators. Occasionally Lloyd or Marilyn or I would wander down a silent corridor, to return ten or fifteen minutes later and slump into a chair. None of us slept. None of us read. We spoke little to each other.

In a small building in a small town in the northwestern reaches of one of America's less significant states, we stared into the American darkness and shared, briefly, the peace of our intimacy.

Even before the sun rose, however, media people began arriving. Minneapolis-St. Paul's WCCO broke the story of Jack's murder on the 10:00 news and had a reporter and cameraman in Lake-of-the-Woods by 2:00 a.m. Print journalists from both Twin Cities newspapers were not far behind. *The Milwaukee Journal*'s Pete Lindsay, who had written one of the earliest and best reviews of *Age of Faith* and was something of a Charles Creed junkie, heard the news shortly after 11:00 p.m., jumped in his car, and made Lake-of-the-Woods before dawn. Likewise Curt Goodwin of the *Chicago Tribune*. In the dark morning hours, reporters from newspapers and television stations around the country jerked from their beds to answer an insistent telephone, then dragged themselves to airports to catch the first flight to St. Paul. More than a dozen found themselves reassigned from Clinton in Washington to Creed murder in Wisconsin. They spent the groggy in-flight hours digesting hastily constructed briefings, arrived in St. Paul around 7:00 or 7:30, then raced each other in rented cars north and west across the St. Croix River, up the snow-packed back roads of Wisconsin. A whole convoy of ice- and salt-rimed Barettas and Tauruses arrived in Lake-of-the-Woods around 9:00. By 10:00 that Saturday morning in early March, *Time* magazine reported, Hertz, National, Avis and Budget Car Rental had booked everything available at the Minneapolis-St. Paul

Airport. By that afternoon they were negotiating short-term leases with local car dealerships on anything with an engine and four wheels. By Saturday evening, motels as far away as Ashland, Duluth, and Eau Claire were full up.

And so the deluge was upon us. We were then no longer our own persons, and Jack's death was a media event.

Marcus appointed himself director of media relations. I resented his decision at first, but came quickly to understand that his status as a lawyer was, among largely unprincipled reporters, very much in the best interest of Jack and his loved ones. Victoria's plan, which Marcus perceived immediately, was to provoke a media investigation into the past sins of the wicked, wicked man whom male chauvinist Judge Mortland had protected. By controlling the flow of information on the one hand, and pointing out the opportunity for law suits on the other, Marcus exercised what has come to be known in other circles as "damage control"—at least with the major newspapers, magazines, and television stations, who require on-the-record verification before printing off-the-record rumors. As the days wore on, I became increasingly grateful to Marcus DeLotta for his role in handling the media, and increasingly respectful of his skill and intelligence as a lawyer.

Even Roger C. Barclay, who knew trouble when he was in it, behaved with a certain degree of class. Barclay put a gag in his client's mouth which has not, to this writing, been removed. Pleading her obligation to the police investigation of Jack's murder, Barclay kept Coyle sequestered from the moment of Jack's death to noon on Saturday. Barclay was not exaggerating: he and Virginia were in fact busy with police most of that time. By 12:00, Lake-of-the-Woods police had finished questioning them both and indicated they were free to leave town. They met briefly with Judge Mortland and, by 12:45, Barclay and Coyle were fleeing Lake-of-the-Woods and Wisconsin, bucking heavy traffic all the way, probably the only vehicle headed south on US 63.

Locked in solitary confinement, Victoria was permitted contact with no one except police and a court-appointed lawyer. She refused to speak even a single word to the lawyer, a male, writing messages on a pad of paper. She also spoke not a single word to police, male or female. Victoria did phone her friend Francine Fitzner, and by Saturday evening Fitzner had arrived in Lake-of-the-Woods, out of Riverton by way of Chicago, where she had picked up a female lawyer acceptable to Nation. Speaking to reporters, the lawyer attributed her client's actions to "temporary insanity triggered by the enormous injustice of the verdict in the Creed trial and Victoria's painful awareness of the historic subjugation of women in America." To their many questions, including requests for clarification of "wicked, wicked man," she offered only a prudent "no comment." "No comment" remained Victoria's position until her ill-advised "exclusive interview" in the October 1998, issue of *Ms. Magazine*, an interview which has resulted to date in four law suits against her and the magazine, and promises to do Victoria Nation precious little good in her own upcoming trial.

DeLotta and Barclay were less successful with reporters from the tabloids. While mum was the word from Nation, Fitzner, Barclay, and Busiris, Jack was not yet in his grave before outraged feminist ideologues had barred what they considered the sins of Charles Creed to anyone who would listen. Pretrial interviews and depositions with Marcus DeLotta had quieted Robertson, Brower and friends, and most of Busiris was sympathetic to Jack, especially in his death, but Nation, or Fitzner, had apparently disseminated details of Coyle vs Creed throughout the country before Judge Mortland drew his close circle. The feminist press had been gunning for Charles Creed ever since "Women's Lib: The Conservative Revolution." Inevitably the old BTU gossip surfaced, if not the old personnel files. The gossip was more slanderous than the files. In the pages of *The National Enquirer, Star* and other pulp newspapers lining the grocery store checkout counters, feminist scholar Victoria Nation, Ph. D., presented her case against Charles Creed.

“Tabloids are tabloids,” DeLotta pointed out. “From pulp journalists you expect things like ‘SERIAL SEX AND THE SINGLE COED’ or ‘CRAZED FEMINIST FELLS COLLEGE PROF WHO SINGLE-HANDEDLY DEMOLISHED CAMPUS.’ Charles Creed is too juicy a story for us to control assholes like them. Sex and murder: he’s almost as good as O.J. I’m afraid Jenny and Kelly are going to have to deal with tabloids for a long time. Probably until the defense opens up in California.”

What was said on the internet shamed even the tabloids.

This book stands as a factual answer to the unsubstantiated, sensational, irresponsible, and wildly inaccurate allegations that have surrounded Charles Creed in the feminist and tabloid press.

During the dark early hours of the 15th, and on into mid-morning, Kelly, Jenny Lynn, Marilyn, Ed, Lloyd, Marcus and I did our best to accommodate the requests of the most intrusive reporters and television cameramen. Then the number of reporters became overwhelming and their assertiveness more than a little offensive. Marcus and Novum State Publicity Director Toni Barbour put together a crude press release on her Macintosh, which Toni updated and expanded hourly, while Arnie Marin’s work-study students researched Creed materials in the library and Toni’s work-study students photocopied. Toward noon, as Barclay and Coyle escaped Lake-of-the-Woods, Kelly, Jenny, Lloyd and I retreated into the necessities of funeral arrangements, shielded by Marcus, Toni, Arnie, and other Novum State friends. Initially we returned to the farmhouse, which sheriff’s police had cordoned off when television cameramen began converging on the place at the first light of dawn. By Sunday evening, however, even the police were having trouble protecting us from reporters who snuck like illegal aliens behind the snowbanks and through the forest to come popping out of the barn a hundred feet from the house. Police finally evacuated Kelly and Jenny Lynn to Marilyn Schneider’s place on the opposite side of Lake-of-the-Woods, and drew a tight ring around Jack’s house, abandoning out-buildings and acreage to strangers. Lloyd and I

spent the day with Kelly and Jenny, retired that night to Lloyd's Cowley's place on Elm Street.

Kelly, Jenny, Lloyd and I spent most of Saturday on the telephone, calling those with whom we wished to talk.

"I've been trying to get hold of you all day," people told us.

"That's why we called you," we answered.

And the weeping began anew.

In retrospect, I do not believe I personally was useful. However Kelly Creed, like Marcus DeLotta, demonstrated great intelligence under pressure . . . and the weight of grief lay heavier on her than on anyone except Jenny Lynn. It was Kelly who understood intuitively that reporters would leave Lake-of-the-Woods only after Jack's funeral, that only after a funeral would we be freed from public duties to confront our private sorrow. "Autopsy this afternoon or tomorrow, if the coroner or police demand one," she decided firmly. "Funeral Monday afternoon. By Monday night I want all these people out of here. I've got nothing to say to them. Neither does Jenny. My husband is not coming back."

"Funeral Monday," Marcus announced to reporters.

"Funeral Monday," we told friends over the phone, one by one.

"Funeral Monday," Jenny Lynn told her brother. And her mother.

"I'll be there for the funeral," Timm promised.

"It's crazy," Jenny told him. "I'll find you a place to sleep."

Somehow it got done. Cemetery plot. Casket. Memorials. Service. Music. Programs. Minister. Mortician. University personnel. Police investigators. Reporters who found their way around DeLotta and intercepted Kelly at the church, at the cemetery, at the school. While the tornado howled around us, she walked her way through a surreal landscape with a calm borne of desperation.

Somehow it got done. People rise to the occasion—especially small town people. And Jack Creed's funeral was certainly the most

remarkable occasion ever presented to Lake-of-the-Woods. Out of a series of hourly revisions and re-revisions emerged a simple plan for a memorial church service at St. Stephen's, Monday morning at 10:00, to be broadcast on Radio WLOW, family and invited friends only, please; reception at Novum State University Student Center, 12:00 until 2:00, public invited. At 3:00, Service for the Burial of the Dead, St. Stephen's Lutheran Church, simulcast into Novum State University Field House and broadcast on Radio WLOW and Radio Busiris. At 4:00, internment in Resurrection Cemetery. 5:00-7:00, press conference. After 7:00 p.m. on Monday, silence.

"Jack always liked flowers," Kelly noted. "Tell people flowers are fine. We'll set up a memorial scholarship too."

"And tell people to dress however they feel like it," Jenny Lynn suggested. "Dad hasn't worn a suit in years. Except for court."

John Charles Creed, the man whose only real goal in life was that his children would look back at him and say, "My old man was an okay guy," would have been astonished at the people who attended his funeral. Jack had rather accustomed himself to living a quiet life in the backwaters of the educational and literary world, his Pulitzer far in the past, the positive critical reaction to *Songs of the North Country* a pleasant but unnecessary recent distraction. He had come to appreciate the delicate flavor of unspiced food, and the subtle sounds of silence in the snowy fields. His friendship with Robert Bly was rewarding, and the prospect of having the definitive say on Dylan, but in 1997 Creed and Bly and Dylan were keeping well out of the limelight. Jack had looked with mixed emotions to publication of the Dylan biography, which he expected to gain him a lot of international attention. "No talk shows," he had told the publisher. "I don't want them, and Dylan wouldn't want them."

"We'll see," was all his editor, Marcie Grossman, said. "For now, just write the book."

"I don't know as I'm ready for a lot of attention," he had told me the weekend before his trial. "Kelly and I live a pretty pleasant life . . .

or we will, once this business is over." Part of Jack had always sought anonymity.

Anonymity was not what he was receiving on the weekend of March 14-17. Drawn by Jack's reputation as a writer, the press coverage of a sensational crime, and the now nationally debated Coyle harassment case, 4000 people poured into Lake-of-the-Woods, Wisconsin, on March 17. Most of them were strangers to the deceased and his survivors. Most knew Jack only by his words.

Many came with copies of *Age of Faith* or *Songs of the North Country*, or some small magazine with a Jack Creed story or essay which, in a bizarre scene out of Heller or Vonnegut, they sought to have autographed by the author's wife and daughter. When they found Robert Bly in Lake-of-the-Woods, he too became a target. So certainly would have been Robert Dylan, had Dylan not hid in the background most of the day. The manager of the Lake-of-the-Woods B. Dalton store told me that people were pouring into her bookstore to buy anything with the name Jack Creed or Robert Bly on or in it: books, anthologies, even magazines. On Monday morning her Twin Cities supplier delivered its entire stock of *Songs of the North Country*—six hundred books—to Lake-of-the-Woods. By noon they were gone. "I could have sold three times that number," she told reporters. The Novum State University Book Store was experiencing a similar run of what can only be called souvenir items.

Other writers went unrecognized in rural Wisconsin, except by literature professors, some reporters, and each other. They included Jack's old buddies Dave Etter, Norbert Blei, Phil Farmer, Bill Holm, Linda Hasselstrom, and even Ken Kesey and Norman Mailer, who presented themselves to Kelly and Jenny Lynn at the 12:00 reception. "I can honestly say I read your books," Kelly told Kesey in awe. "Jack had read them all. *Cuckoo's Nest* and *Sometimes a Great Notion* several times. I think you were a great influence on his life."

"I read his stuff," Kesey assured her. "Creed was a good writer and a good head. The country could use a million more like him. And

a million fewer like that dingbat who offed him." I hope Jack, wherever he was, heard the remark.

This influx of notables necessitated continued revisions in the funeral service, which grew in length as persons who had come to honor Jack or the occasion were invited to add their eulogies. Lloyd Cowley had assumed responsibility for coordinating Monday's events, with the help of Toni Barbour and other NSU personnel. Throughout the reception Lloyd kept coming up to Kelly and Jenny with one message after another: "Kesey wants to say a brief something about Jack at the funeral service. Is that okay with you?" "Okay if we add Mailer to the eulogies?" "Alonzo Jackson is here. One of Jack's former students. Played for the Bulls. . . ." "A guy named Paul Popowski, says he was an old friend of your dad. . . ."

St. Stephen's, not a large church, was packed. Sitting in the second pew with the other pallbearers, behind Kelly, Jenny, and Rose Marié, I was not in a good position to notice who was in the church and who was not. With me sat Lou Feracca, Lloyd Cowley, Ed Haley, Marcus DeLotta, and Paul Lesinski, a last-minute replacement for Timm Creed. Much of the Busiris faculty and administration was in Wisconsin, because of either Jack or Victoria Nation. Many of Jack's former students were in town as well, including Popowski, but I doubt they received seating in St. Stephen's. Did it matter?

Despite his promise to Jenny Lynn, Timm had not arrived by 3:00 on Monday. He had talked with his sister for over an hour on Saturday and again on Sunday. He said he was having some transportation problems but promised to be in Lake-of-the-Woods by Monday afternoon. The whole schedule was designed in part to allow the presence at Jack's funeral of the son he so loved.

When Timm had missed the 10:00 service, Jenny Lynn had phoned Mirimar. "He's on his way," an officer had told her. At 3:00 Timm Creed was nowhere to be seen, and his absence upset both his sister and his stepmother. Already more than one reporter had struck on the same sidebar story, which ran in several of the nation's

evening newspapers. Even the *New York Times* story plays misleadingly on fancied father-son conflicts which propelled the son of a sixties radical hippie into a service academy and a career as a Navy pilot. Other reporters had picked up on Jenny's year in Women's Studies at Bryn Mawr, and were playing variations on the theme of a generational conflict. The Philadelphia *Inquirer* discovered that Nation also had a connection with Bryn Mawr, and played that angle. "They're having a field day with Jack and his kids," Lou whispered to me.

"That's the American news media.

"It's the fucking American public. Simpson. Clinton. Lady Di. Charles Creed. The country is fucked."

"Still, Timm is not here."

"They loved each other more than anything. We both know it."

"Timm should be here."

"I'm sure his absence is not voluntary."

Charles Creed's funeral oration was delivered by Reverend John Anderson, who had been Jack's pastor at St. Mark's, Riverton. Anderson had baptized Timm and Jenny Lynn, and had known a side of Jack Creed that none of his other friends had seen. He was the man whom Anarchist Jack had once thanked for saving his life. That story Rev. Anderson related as an example of the enormous capacity of the deceased for Christian forgiveness. "Our Lord himself exhibited moments of righteous anger and decisive action," Anderson pointed out, "but always that anger was followed by forgiveness. To hate the sin and love the sinner is the essence of Christian charity. Charles Creed, a man of strong passions who aroused in others equally strong passions, was also a man of great forgiveness. And even Charles Creed had not yet reached the limit of seventy times seven."

Other speakers played variations on the theme of Jack's capacity for understanding, courage, and forgiveness. Robert Bly

described Jack as a man with strong interior warriors, who had the knowledge of how and when to wield a sword, and the courage to swing it. “Like all of us, Charles Creed grew through stages,” the poet pointed out. “At the time of his death, Jack had ripened to wisdom, but the arc of his history reminds us once again of the old truth: the road begins with red. If there’s no red, there will be no white, and no black. Neither the male nor the female can skip directly to wisdom.”

Mailer described Jack as a gutsy and talented writer familiar with the full range of language and passion, unafraid to truth and ideas, not one of those one-trick magicians popular with commercial houses these days. Kesey described Jack as a straight-shooting truth-teller and a friend. Alonzo Jackson described Jack as a man who always did what he thought was right, even if he knew it would get him into trouble. “I think I might have caused him some problems once, because I didn’t do what was right,” the Bulls star admitted. “I feel pretty small about that, and I’d like to ask his forgiveness. I was just a kid then. I understand now that Professor Creed was bigger and badder than most guys I played against in the NBA.”

“Jack lived outside the law and was honest,” Dylan said. “He was a friend to the poor, and always lent a helping hand.”

“He always did for others,” I added mentally. “Sometimes he let others do for him. Not very often, though. Not very often.”

“My old man was an okay guy,” Jenny Lynn Creed said. “I guess he’s famous, and he’s been famous for a long time, even when I was a kid. His bigness never meant less time for his kids, though. When I was a kid his being famous wouldn’t have impressed me, and probably it doesn’t matter now. I love dad because he was a good man and a good father. Timm and I told him that lots of times. I just wish we could have said it to him one more time.”

To the words of “Children of the Heavenly Father” Jack’s casket moved from chancel down the nave. The man who so detested sing-song ditties like “Love Me Tender” and “Silent Night,” who so

admired the complexities of rock and Bach, had always loved this, the most sing-song of simplistic Scandinavian hymns. That was something Rev. Anderson knew that the rest of us did not. Jenny Lynn confirmed the fact later, and Kelly. “He used to walk around the house humming that tune,” she remembered. “I never knew what it was until today.” Charles Creed was a man of infinite contradictions.

In that regard, Bly and Dylan probably understood him better than I.

The funeral cortege was very long. By police count, over 250 cars left St. Stephen’s, to be joined on the outskirts of Lake-of-the-Woods by nearly 500 more coming from the NSU Field House parking lot. Others must have fallen into line later, since police counted a total of 852 vehicles entering Resurrection Cemetery. By their estimates 5,000 people, most of them students, gathered at the grave site. Two hundred of these were journalists. I wasn’t sure whether the rest were friends of Jack or just celebrity seekers.

Lou, Lloyd, Ed, Marcus, Paul and I carried Charles Creed from the hearse to his grave. Then Lou and I left Kelly and Jenny Lynn, and drifted to the rear of the crowd. I was tired of impertinent reporters jostling each other and everyone else for a front-row position. Their cameras caught relatively little of significance anyway, except for the coffin. Shock, exhaustion, and a little bit of anger had sealed Jenny and Kelly off from true grief, and the few notables that had driven to Resurrection were not standing in the front row. From my position more toward the rear, I noticed Kesey and Mailer in quiet conversation. Dylan’s white stretch limo was parked on a hill some distance from the small knoll where Jack was laid to rest. I don’t think anyone else noticed it. The rear window was down, and a face, Dylan’s I imagined, stared silently at the scene in front of him. I didn’t hear or see the limo depart.

Also ignored by the reporters were the faces they did not recognize, the faces which had played such important roles in Jack’s life: Ted Jones and Percy Thompson, Morie Kaufman and aged Virgil Cutter. Phil Steiner was at Jack’s funeral, as were Joe Rausch,

Marcie Grossman, and three or four other people from Scribner's. The new crowd was there: Marilyn Schneider, Linda Tholen, Eric Syverson, Charlie Weber and Andy Olsen and even Brad Newlund. Paul Popowski was at the grave, with a woman I took to be his wife, and a couple of kids . . . and Terry Cunningham. I saw Deirdre Williams, May O'Hara, and Carolyn McQuillan, with whom I spoke briefly afterward the ceremony. Perhaps my imagination, fatigued and distracted, was playing tricks, but I thought I recognized Annie Brower and Billy Jo Allen. I am sure I recognized a middle-aged Blondie Robertson, who, upon seeing me seeing her, ducked out of my line of vision and disappeared.

One player, of course, sat in police custody back in town. Another had last been seen with her lawyer heading out of town.

I did not see Herman Hauptman or Bert Reich.

Lily Lee Martin too was missing from the scene, although her son introduced himself to Marcus and to me.

"You probably don't recognize me," he began, and he was right. At Busiris, I'd seen very little of his mother and father, nothing at all of him, especially after 1985. "I'm John Oliver. Jim and Lily's son." He extended his hand.

You could have knocked me over with a feather.

"You knew my mother back at Busiris. And my dad."

"Are they here?" I wanted to know.

"No. She's in Tangier, actually. On vacation." The young man's eyes shifted uneasily. "They're not together anymore."

"It happens to most of us these days," I said sympathetically.

"I guess she got tired of playing the role."

"That too happens."

"I was visiting the University of Minnesota," young John Oliver explained. "I might go there next year on one of those Kirby Puckett

scholarships. Then this happened and I remembered mom talking about Professor Creed. I thought I would drive up."

I nodded.

"Mom said she knew Professor Creed when she was a student at Busiris. Said I'm named after him. It made no sense to me. His name is Charles, and my name is John. Although she always calls me Jack."

"Professor Creed's first name was really John, not Charles. John Charles Creed is his full name. Or was. His friends did in fact call him Jack."

"Hey, man. Ain't that a story? According to mom, they were pretty close."

"You could say that."

"Well, mom. You never know with her. I mean, I love mom, but she does get some strange ideas. I guess she's just . . . a mom."

I had no idea how much of her relationship Lily Lee had told, or intimated, to her son, or how much Jack or Lily would have wanted her son, a high school senior, to understand.

"My good man," I said finally, "Whatever she might be now, your mother in her youth was possibly the most remarkable woman I ever met. Probably she was the most remarkable woman Jack Creed ever met. You didn't know her then, and I don't know what stories she's told you, but in the 1970s your mother was somethin'. The boys fell out of trees at her feet."

"Wow."

"We'll just let it rest there, eh, son? Good luck with the U. And with the scholarship."

"I'll say hello."

"Kiss her once from Charles. From Jack."

"I'll do that. What you told me just now is . . . totally weird!"

My thoughts on that gray, chilly March afternoon were not profound. I had spent a long three days—a long two weeks, really—with a lot of highs and lows. My thinking was far from coherent, and I made no effort to focus. Life, obviously, was meaningless anyway. Fragments of history swirled through my head, little vignettes triggered by a face or a word.

I remember thinking that something very large had passed through my life, a great mysterious presence, like some enormous fish that passes beside the bow of a canoe, its bulk betrayed only by a fin that slices the surface, by the roil of water around it. You catch your breath in awe and fear, playing mentally with portents and dangers. But even in the moment of your recognition, it has already moved beyond you. A few seconds of dark chaos, and it's gone.

I remember scanning the tombstones around me—Krause and Kreuger, Nielsen and Anderson, Kubiczewski and Ortegas. Peltier, Deremo and Jones and some Irish name I have since forgotten. Nemo, the name Nemo stuck in my mind.

I remember thinking, "What a melting pot this America is! And this is where it all ends up."

I remember thinking that Jack had picked the right place to die, here among the commingled ethnicities of working Americans, far from the centers of ambition, in a forgotten corner of rural America, in some quiet, peaceful place.

"And now Creed. Now this has happened to Charles Creed. One day it will happen to Lou Feracca and Lloyd Cowley.

"One day to Andrew Tucker."

I remember scanning the crowd that gray, chilly afternoon and deciding I was tired of people—"Ashes to ashes, dust to dust"—and what I wanted more than anything was time alone with some natural, organic thing.

The thrum of jet engines brought me back to the present, a sound not organic or natural, a sound foreign to Wisconsin as the

buzz of fluorescent light bulbs in La Follette Memorial Hospital.

Not commercial air liners, but a row of fighter jets rumbling low across the western horizon.

“Those boys are a long way from home,” I whispered to Lou. “I don’t think there’s an Air Force base within two hundred miles of here.”

“There’s Fort Willey McCoy,” Lou pointed out. “But you’re right. Those boys are a long way from home. Those are Navy jets.”

The mechanical cranking of a winch, lowering Jack’s coffin into the snow-covered earth.

Jenny Lynn tossing a softball into the vault atop the coffin, inside of which, beside Jack, lay a pair of her ballet slippers, Timm’s Navy football jersey, and Kelly’s volleyball sneakers.

The explosion of one, two, three, four U.S. Navy F/A 18s flying low across the grave, dipping a wing as they passed, each in turn, before disappearing, as suddenly as they had appeared, far, far, far into the great gray amplitudes of the North Country.

And then silence.

We all spent a long, long while staring after those jets.

Monday night brought a kind of silence to Lake-of-the-Woods, and closure to Jack’s story. Timm’s plane broke from his squadron and touched down at Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport. A buddy returned the craft to Ellesworth Air Force Base whence the squadron had taken off that afternoon, and ultimately to Mirimar. Timm signed out a military car and was in Lake-of-the-Woods by 8:00. He visited his mother and spent most of the evening talking with Jenny Lynn. Rose Marié invited both her children to return with her to Riverton that evening, but both begged off. Timm had a car to return and a flight to catch out of St. Paul. Jenny told her mother she needed a few more days in Lake-of-the-Woods to sort things out before returning to Madison. She felt closer at this point to Kelly than to Rose Marié.

We slept that night, most of us, for the first time in days.

Tuesday morning Timm spent three hours at his father's grave, shedding a few tears, making a few promises, adding a small bouquet of blue and gold chrysanthemums to the mound of flowers already there.

Then he got into his government Buick and drove to St. Paul. Jenny Lynn stayed awhile in Lake-of-the-Woods.

I too lingered through a series of discussions with Marcus DeLotta, Lake-of-the-Woods police, and federal investigators. There were more private discussions with Lloyd Cowley, Kelly, and Jenny Lynn. I talked with Marcie Grossman, about Jack's literary estate and about this book. I spent a morning tidying up Jack's office. The thick gold band I found in his top desk drawer I put quietly in my pocket. I could never have explained it to Kelly.

Finally I spent an afternoon alone in Bayfield, pondering Madeline Island and the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore, searching to make some sense out of what made no sense, searching to find justice in the American system of justice.

The day of the 21th Jenny, Kelly, and I returned to the farmstead, sorting through the rich complexity of Jack's life. Arnie Marin, Novum State's librarian, had agreed to accept whatever of Jack's books and papers his heirs chose to donate to the collection, and I agreed to sort and value the donation for tax purposes. I spent the rest of the week inventorying Jack's library and papers, setting aside several items, including the Audubon folio and various autographed editions, for Jenny Lynn, Timm, and Kelly. I took, I admit, a few items for myself, including an Abraham Lincoln autograph letter. I also photocopied about 2,800 pages of correspondence and manuscripts.

On the morning of March 25 both Jenny and I left Lake-of-the-Woods, Wisconsin, traveling south out of the land of water and birch and pine, toward Madison and Riverton, toward our respective futures, toward life without Charles Creed. By a strange twist of

events, Lake-of-the-Woods had become not Jack Creed's, but Victoria Nation's town.

I visited Resurrection Cemetery only once after the funeral. In May of 2000 I was in St. Paul, Minnesota, interviewing for a position at the College of St. Thomas, and after two days of the city—although a very fine city—I needed some rural distance to consider my future . . . and the shape of this book. I needed also to see Kelly Creed, to refresh my memory of Lake-of-the-Woods and Novum State University, to discuss some details of this present manuscript with Kelly, Marilyn Schneider, Ed Haley, and Lloyd Cowley. I rented a car, drove east across the river, and headed north.

On the drive up US 63 I was haunted by the ghost of Charles Creed. I could feel his presence in the passenger seat, although I said nothing to him, and he said nothing to me. I was as close to Jack then as I had ever been, having spent the previous year reliving the stories told in this biography, studying his journals, untangling fact from tabloid fictions, attempting to reconcile conflicting testimonies. I had re-established contact with Jack's old friends (and some enemies), including several long telephone conversations with Lily Lee Martin herself. During those twelve months I had come to know Charles Creed intimately. It seemed to me I knew the man better after his death than before.

Still, some intangible mystery remained. I was missing a key to Jack's history, some perspective on the larger picture. Loose ends and unanswered questions abounded. Something was not there in the journals or the interviews. Driving north up the highway down which Roger C. Barclay and Virginia Coyle had escaped in March 1997, I found myself looking for closure, replaying old scenes, thinking about Jack and Lily and Rose Marié. Thinking about America. Thinking about the law. I kept bouncing questions off the ghost of Jack Creed, aloud, almost as if we were having a normal conversation.

But Jack wasn't giving me the answer I needed. Possibly I hadn't even framed the right question.

The closer I came to Novum State University, the slower I drove. The answer wasn't going to be there either, I felt . . . although I still wanted to see Kelly and Lloyd and Marilyn.

On my way into town, a thought crossed my mind (or maybe Old Jack himself directed me): Resurrection Cemetery. I turned around in the Novum parking lot and headed out of town again. Maybe I was stalling for another hour of meditation, time to clear my unsettled head. Maybe I sought subconsciously to bring the ghost home, to use his own bones to conjure an answer or two out of him.

Maybe my visit was less mysterious than all that. Paying respects was the appropriate thing to do, a first item of business, not a last.

In any event, I let Kelly and Marilyn and Lloyd wait, and returned to Resurrection Cemetery.

The place was country quiet: no crowds, no voices, no traffic. No jet airplanes this May afternoon. No heaps of flowers, either, and no black and white striped tent sheltering the casket from storms that never materialized. I think I was the only person there. The absence of tire marks in the muddy road suggested I was the first person to visit Resurrection in several days.

Since the day of Jack's funeral, three years of grass had grown and seeded and withered. Three years of autumn leaves had fallen and been swept away to the wooded thickets. Three years of winters' snow had blanketed the sod, and frozen to ice, and melted to water. Now the land was flushed with the tentative yellow-green of spring in the North Country. In the maple trees, a swollen expectancy. On the willows, the first suggestion of leaves. A woodpecker whooped from one tree. A couple of squirrels chased each other up and down another.

"I picked a good place to die, Tucker," Jack seemed to be telling me. "Life is a small and quiet thing, and you don't get much. A few words. A few trips. Good music and good talk. The love of a couple of children . . . and a few good women, if you're really lucky. That's

all life is. Stay out late tonight, because you're going to be dead for billions of years, Tucker. And when you go home, be good to Linda."

I nodded in agreement with the silent voice.

"At the end, little is best. This little place has absorbed me. It's okay here. I'm okay here. You'll see."

I nodded again.

So well had Jack been absorbed into this small and quiet place, I had trouble finding his grave at first. There were more gravestones, for one thing, and the foliage was different for another. Three times I returned to the cemetery gate attempting to reorient myself. Finally my vision cleared. I placed Dylan's limo on the road over my right shoulder and the trees into which Timm's jet had disappeared ahead of me. I looked to where Jenny Lynn was tossing her softball on Jack's coffin.

Then I recognized names.

"Kubiczewski."

"Ortegas."

I walked forward.

"Nemo."

Then a rectangle of green sod noticeably darker than the surrounding grass. A gray marble slab, newly set, newly carved.

"John Charles Creed 1941-1997," the stone read. "FURTHUR."

And lying across the monument's base, withered in the damp spring air but clearly a recent placement, a single red rose.

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