

I Track Down Freaks

A Novel by

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Chapter 1.

One of the mutant children was spared by its child-mother, who was at the time of its birth living in Venice, California, in the region known as "the canals." She knew she was supposed to bring it to the hospital, where it would be painlessly killed, but she did not obey the law.

She was thirteen years old when her child was born. She was named Katherine Casey. She had run away from her home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with a boy who had been in a small band whose origin was in that city and whose dispersal was in Los Angeles. The boy walked out barefoot over the stone bridges of the Venice canals every morning, looking for a job in the body of Los Angeles, shuffling slowly away and home, his yellow hair nodding back and forth around his face. Then he was beaten by three drunken thieves in Santa Monica in the beach parking lot when he came out of the bus where a friend of his was living, who turned on the headlights, which even then did not encompass the place where they were beating him. He died several days

later, weakly smiling, making no effort to speak. His parents came to take his body. Katherine did not inform them of the coming birth. She spent two weeks alone in her room.

The room was an attic. She looked out the window over a peaceful canal, where ducks were sitting on the water and chickens walked in the yards of her neighbors. She had always been a good reader, and she read piles of used books and magazines that were given to her by the boy and girl who lived on the lower floor of her house. The walls of the room were painted a restful color, and she had the knack of making her surroundings comfortable, although she had no money. This restfulness, reading and solitude, and the effect of the community where she lived, where musical instruments could be heard day and night, all made it possible for her to develop from the tragic, unlucky elements of her life, a sense of herself that was independent and strong. She brought herself to a state of moral scrupulousness without any conceivable use to her at the time, but which was soon to come into play, as she was faced with a situation requiring a difficult choice. The boy and girl from below began to dote on

her, took pride in the thing that the world had left over, began to brag about the white flower, and although they were older than she, came upstairs nightly to hear her examine the questions that occurred to her, which seemed somehow to illuminate their lives for them.

As the birth of the child approached, Katherine obtained medical books and pamphlets of advice wherever she could, and studied them. She then sought to examine herself internally, closing her eyes and calling forth images from her body, especially her womb, and willing them to fulfill the ideal of the medical drawings upon which she meditated.

The child was born as she knew it would be - a male cylopean. The girl from downstairs, dressed in a white waitress' dress, with a paper cap pinned in her hair, pulled him from Katherine and gave out a short scream. Katherine's eyes were comfortable on the face of the infant and she loved him instantly. His face was in other respects similar to others of the human race, except for the ears, which were lower and longer than the ears of other infants. She poured her attention into the eye, which was like a long blue fish above the

center of the nose. The pupil was actually the result of the overlaying of the pupils of two eyes not completely separated from one another, the hemispheres of the brain to which each was attached not having sufficiently distinguished themselves from one another. Katherine was amazed to see the piercing quality of the eye, shining up and searching the area.

The people of the neighborhood soon knew of the child. Dust-covered trucks gathered in the yellow dirt before the house. Men, women and children stood in the low haze like a field of wheat around the house, as the ashes and pollen of the sky settled upon their hair and skins. Finally, the boy from the lower floor came to the front steps and without looking at the crowd, but only staring at the sheet of white paper he held in his hands, he read, "On this day our own Katherine Casey, of this place, has given birth to a prodigious child, whose name shall be Raphael. It is the mother's wish that no one give news of Raphael's birth, or of the form of Raphael, because she is afraid of the state authorities."

He turned the stooping shoulders and bloated belly of his malnourishment up the stairs. Some people followed him to the papered attic room, and were momentarily blinded by one or another of the strokes of sunlight originating in the wood's knots and broken corners of the room. The mother and child were in a corner, below a blanketed window. Beside the bed was a wooden crate covered with a piece of white lace. Although they had expected their eyes would immediately seek out the infant, they could not remove their gazes from the mother, who was so thin and pale she was almost transparent.

Everyone who passed during the first day and night did claim to admire Raphael, but they were not telling the truth. Some had nightmares that would not leave them for the rest of their lives. Even after Raphael was older, and could be seen playing in the area with the other children, with his melancholic mouth and the searchlight beam of his eye, and they knew and did like him, still the memory of the first seeing was terrible...

In Katherine's time, as in our time, it is near to starvation that stands anyone who is forced to depend on the State for his food. Unlucky is the unlucky one, because the State, through all its programs, funds and loans, will not sustain him and will tend to reinforce his fate rather than to help him forestall it. A few bills and coins were shoved across the counter every month for those such as Katherine and her neighbors. Such a few that the old woman who stood on the Government's side of the counter, a short woman, who stood on a platform of wood in order to see the line, when she saw the face of Katherine, so lethargic and complete suddenly materialized before the counter, reached into her own pocketbook, that she kept on a lower shelf, took out five dollars and pushed it with the rest to the young girl.

Now, in order to continue to receive even her small monthly amount, and to have added to it the sum required to feed and clothe her new son, it was necessary for Katherine to inform the State of Raphael's birth. But she could not let the State know he was a mutant. She wanted Raphael to live as long as possible.

She knew she was wrong. The law was clear concerning the mutant births. They must be handed over to qualified members of the medical profession, who would see to it that they were disposed of in a safe, humane manner. She would not be blamed for the birth, if she simply obeyed the law. At first, when the monstrous births had begun, a few years ago, the mothers and fathers were thought to be the parties at fault. Articles were written suggesting that the drug-taking, unmarried sex, and slothful lives of the poor were the causes of the mutations. Of course, the parents of such children became afraid to bring them to the hospitals, fearing the shame of association. Therefore, new causes were suggested, one after the other, each cooked up in the public relations departments of the National Institutes of Health. Terrorists were blamed for poisoning the already undrinkable water of the cities. Witches and satanists were blamed. Chance, then Heaven, then China, then television (it was thought that the viewing of disgusting sex and violence throughout the day might somehow drip the forces of monstrosity from the eyes down into the wombs of TV-watching women), then various

types of food were all in their turn blamed for the plague of freakish births in America.

In fact, the cause was not with the women, nor with their husbands, nor was it even with their Government, but rather with the ones who came before them, their forefathers, those victorious generations who left behind them many records of their existence and victories, and evidences of their thinking very highly of themselves, the many arts bearing forth their lighted images, but had also, by their harder, more technical doings, (and largely unknown to themselves, truth to be told) left behind them the unhappy causes of monstrous births, by evil actions taken during a war in Asia.

There, in the sea, in the air, coursing through the mouths and flesh of animals, adding to the weight and cell walls of the stiff capillaries of the growing plants eaten by men, or by the animals eaten in turn by men, America had used the chemical denuder of trees called Agent Orange, cacodylic acid 2,4,-5,T-, which contains the impurity 2,3,7,8-tetrachloro-dibenzo-p-dioxin.

This chemical was sprayed down with generous abandon by a nation so long fruitful with the blessings of agriculture that it did not think to modify its actions through a memory of any economical contingency when it came to matters of the land, but spread the cacodylic acid over three quarters of the farmland of Viet Nam, and poured it into the rivers, the result there being monstrous examples among all the species of that place: crooked trees, grasses, fishes, rice, water buffalo, and so on and on. There were children there whose tear ducts were placed in their throats in such a way that when they first cried they were strangled, there were cyclopes, there were twoheaded children, and children who did not fully separate from the formless home of all matter; and all were seen, or heard of, by an expedition that went from Harvard University, led by the scientist Matthew Meselson, and made its report in Nature Magazine, but it was too late, and so it happened that after not too many years, that poison came on the tides, back to the place of its past manufacture, and the monsters America had caused to be born in Asia soon had brothers and sisters in America itself.

Then, laws were passed, whose object was the early detection and killing of the freaks.

These laws were generally considered to be just, and were for the most part obeyed. The birth of children became tied to public policies and controls. The Institutions and Agencies that had it as their job to cover the land with words, made no mention of the cacodylic acid, for it was felt this knowledge might cause embarrassment in certain inviolable crypts. All well and good -- but as a result of the withholding of the true cause of the monstrous births, there were many theories, legends and prophecies that sprang up, carried forth by crackpots and men claiming an education they did not possess, and believed by the poor. And, as it has been whenever monsters seem to be advancing numerically over a place, the foremost thought soon became that the Government would fall, that the world would change hands...

It then happened that, despite the law, there came to be women who did not take themselves to hospitals, but gave birth at home, and if the children were

freaks, did not bring them to the hospitals, but hid them, in order to preserve their lives.

Of those in the first noticeable wave of monstrous births, most did not survive past the first year or two. Some died of diseases unknown to those around them, some from more commonplace illnesses which they had no chemical ability to combat, some by the action of the Government, which had made the decision to strike forcefully against the new freaks. The freaks were becoming objects of veneration for the poor; around the core of their love for the freaks, they leaned all their hopes, for they were superstitious, believing in signs, studying events from a religious standpoint, as opposed to a historical one, and therefore believing that the cause of things follows its effects in time.

The Government, seeing the people in a mood of rebellion, launched an attack against the symbols of the rebellion, the freaks, no matter how innocent the freaks may have been (none of them was over 2 years old when the program was approved) of themselves harboring rebellious thoughts. Innocence often suffers for the hopes of the guilty, and against the lives of a few

freakish births - the kind that until recently all right-thinking parents had prayed against - how could you measure the peaceful continuance of American society? Therefore, assassins were chosen and trained to kill the freaks and those who protected them, for it was illegal to have one and not to have turned it over to the Government...

Thus, when Katherine Casey's son Raphael was three weeks old he was taken across the street to another house. The child of another woman, who had been born without much fanfare at almost the same instant as Raphael, was placed in Katherine's arms. This child was also a boy, but his features were usual. The other woman had made the suggestion herself. This was a thing the women of the canals did for one another, to preserve the lives of the mutant children.

Katherine placed the normal child's head against her breast when she heard the footsteps of the man from the State. He was a gray man, wide, with a mustache and beard. His shadow moved across the low bed. "Katherine Casey?" he said, without first introducing himself. She said yes. "Is this the child?" said the man, touching

the normal boy under the chin with a plastic pencil.

"His name is Raphael, he is three weeks old," she said.

She turned her face from the boy so her words would not touch his face.

The man touched the boy lightly on the ear with the eraser of his pencil, and said, "Welcome to the dole." Then he wrote on a clipboard, which he carried at his hip. Katherine found it difficult to look up at the generalized form of the man. "How much can we get?" she asked. He replied with a number that did not surprise her but made her heart sink in her bowed chest, for it was an amount of money that would not assure her and Raphael even the most basic needs of their young lives. Before he left, the man threw a bill on the bed, saying "Your emergency funds." Then he tore five tickets out of a book and they wafted to the small table. They were food stamps, yellow, with a drawing of abundant fruits, grains and one or two edible animals gathered together in the center.

When he was gone, Katherine replaced the boy on the bed, and removed herself from contact with him. She was already thinking of Raphael, and of the moment when he would return. For this reason, she was not attentive

to the other woman's child. No one came to her room for a long time. She fell asleep. Later, they woke her to tell her that the child had fallen from his side of the bed, and had been found there crying and screaming, when his mother and several other people entered the room.

This boy's mother was a woman older than Katherine, who dressed in the bleak clothes of someone who long ago was a college student and continues to sheath herself in those days. Her fury worked its way through the levels of her sociality like an animal hurtling itself through a maze, until it flashed from her eyes and throat, and louder than she had ever spoken, she screamed at Katherine, she would never forgive what she took to be Katherine's contempt for her child's life.

"Every day I will ask for the death of your monster," she said.

Her child's skin was broken and he was bleeding. The woman took him to a doctor in Santa Monica, who said his cranium had been damaged in the fall.

In the years that followed, Raphael and the other boy grew up among the other children of the area. The other boy was not able to move his legs or speak, and for years the enraged face of the mother was seen at the bay window of her house, looking out at the street, watching Raphael and the others playing in the street.

Katherine made every effort to win the forgiveness of the other woman, whom she had wronged by placing her longing for her son higher in her thoughts than her responsibility to the neighbor who had been kind to her. The other woman refused to be comforted or aided by Katherine. However, the woman was also full of many beliefs, and conducted her life without the principle of vengeance, and she never reported Raphael to the State, and only lived quietly in her house with her crippled son.

Six years later, Raphael heard in conversation among friends about the woman who had cursed his existence. His eye, never still in the head, darted and glanced down the streets of the town looking for that woman's house. When he was led there by his friends they found the paralyzed boy rocking in a hammock that

hung between two trees beside the black and silver canal. Raphael looked down on the other boy. The other was not startled to see the cyclopean. The woman, however, saw through the window that the cause of her son's misery once again had crossed the path of her son. The fears that illuminated her mind when she dreamed joined her now in broad daylight. She had always had it in her to burst forth in one moment of violence, given half a chance, to revenge herself and to convey her anger to the spiritual beings she felt watched over her, and whose testing her, she felt, was the cause of her sorrows. She ran into the yard with a flat pan, holding it as if to strike the head of Raphael. When she arrived at the place where they were, she saw that Raphael held her son's head cradled in his hands, and she saw that a huge tear dropped from the tip of Raphael's nose onto her son's forehead.

Then, to see his mother standing there was so funny to the boy that he emitted the first vocal noise, a low growl, that she had heard from him in almost six years. While Raphael watched, sitting in the gravel and glass of the untended white dust, the woman reached into the hammock to manipulate her son's legs, as she

often had done before, to find now, for the first time, that the muscles offered resistance, in the form of weak tremors from some distant center. Within a week, the boy was walking in and out of the house, up and down the street, laughing and shy, congratulated wherever he went. His mother sat up that first night, and in the morning she told another woman that Raphael was a miraculous healer.

CHAPTER 2.

John Cade parked his car and stood up in the openair parking lot. He walked to the front of the car and touched the long scratch in the paint. Then he turned and walked toward a low building made of cinder blocks painted green. There was a small sign of wood with the words, "Government Records" to the side of the red iron door. When he reached it, it opened from the inside and he entered. An old man wearing a grey uniform with a white belt crossing his chest said, "Good day to you, Mr. Cade." Cade went down the corridors he knew so well.

There were many others in the corridors, and they all knew Cade. But Cade and they did not speak. He did not look at the people who passed him by, for he had long ago learned there was no use in it. They would not look him back, although for all the time he was not looking at them, they looked him strongly up and down. They knew who Cade was, although theoretically they didn't. They didn't know the full story but they knew that even among the asssssins, he was a special case. These were the same people, whom Guttman called Cade's

"colleagues," who lived in the apartment complex where he lived, but there, as here, they had no exchanges with Cade.

Still, he loved the physical attributes of his organization. He loved that here there was no smell. Even in the cafeteria there was only the heaviness of the steam, but the steam had no smell. The people had no smell. Only the women, who sometimes smelled like flowers. Everyone in a great organization knows the pleasurable and terrible sensation of being on the immense platform, either in the sky or under the ground, with all the others of the organization going around at their work. He loved the sound of the computers. Electricity and fluorescence were all around. Cade remembered at the beginning -- the beginning of what, he could not remember -- when he had asked Guttman if he could sleep here at night, possibly on a couch in Guttman's office, but Guttman had said, "Your apartment has been set aside for you. Don't be afraid to be alone." Here it was different than the apartments. Here was less foliage. Instead there were furniture and carpentry-work, carpets, pools of paperfiltered light, and the dusty air of a former

century. On the walls were maps, charts, tables, lists of names, lists of specializations, instructions and announcements, with only the rarest illustration, to break the tedium of reading, and these not pleasant, but sad to see. He would rather have been spared such pictures, but for Cade it was part of his job to study them, and to make sure of seeing them all, each morning when he came in. Today there were one or two new additions. Cade went up to them and began his looking, into which he threw his whole back.

Dr. Guttman came up behind Cade. He had been in his office, behind pebbled glass, when he had seen the unmistakable shadow of Cade in the corridor. "This is your next," said Guttman, about a picture. Guttman was Cade's mentor. He rubbed the back of Cade's neck as he and Cade studied the photograph. Green-gowned medical corpsmen went by behind them. Cade felt proud to be so publicly the one nearest to Guttman, although this was not from any sense of a hierarchy, according to which he may have been considered to have surpassed any of the others who went by, by the favor in which he was held by Guttman. Cade was well aware of his position's constancy. It was a position outside the

Governmental tables of organization, one with no advancement and no diminishment, and as far as Cade was able to remember, he had always held his present position, and done this job. No one was above him except Dr. Guttman. He barely knew anyone but Dr. Guttman - and the idea of his taking over Guttman's job had never occurred to him, nor could it, any more than the body could think of taking over the job of the mind, which it knows to have been there before itself, and even suspects to have created it.

"Does it have a name, Doctor?" asked Cade.

"This is called Raphael," said Guttman, his face much rounder than Cade's. His eyes were almost hidden among coppery mounds and creases. "It is a cyclopean" he continued, almost needlessly, thought Cade, although it wasn't up to him to pass judgment on Guttman's choice of when to speak and when to be silent, when to teach and when to refrain from teaching, and he did not pass judgment, although he could see for himself the child was one-eyed.

Behind Cade and Guttman, came all the other Agents in Cade's section, and all went into the door of

their classroom, where they sat waiting, until Guttman came in with Cade.

"There we go, said Guttman." "Time to begin the class."

In they went, Cade with his erect posture, and Guttman with his stooped scraping-along style of walking that Cade sometimes wished were also his. Cade went to his seat and put his notebooks down. He lost track of things for a few moments, then there was an increase in the level of noise, or perhaps it was a decrease in the temperature, and a wind blowing through, but whatever it was, something drew his attention from the void and returned it to the classroom.

A pamphlet taped to a page in a ring-binder was passed around the classroom from employee to employee:

"I want you men to read this carefully," said Guttman, standing in front of the blackboard: Cade took it from his neighbor's hand:

THE CURRENT RISE IN MUTANT BIRTHS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND ESPECIALLY IN AMERICA IS A CLEAR SIGN, AND A PORTENT THAT THE EARTH IS GOING THROUGH A PERIOD OF

UPHEAVAL, AND IT IS SEEKING TO THROW MAN OFF. MAN IS OVER!

MAN HAS HAD HIS DAY!

WE ARE SPECIES - DEAD, SPECIES UNWORTHY! MUTANT REVERENCE! MUTANT ENRAPTUREMENT!

Cade snorted with a low crackle and said to himself: "What dizzy characters run around in this world," and he thought of them, writing pamphlets, defending the wide assortment of mutants which Cade had come to loathe, and he was grateful he had escaped the fate of a simpleton and had instead been born with the native intelligence required to work for the Federal Government at the high level he had recently attained. As he passed the pamphlet to his left, to the man he knew as Agent White, a mean-looking, stocky man of approximately forty years, Cade attempted to attract White's attention with a contemptuous sneer.

White took the binder in both of his protuberant hands. He did not catch Cade's friendly signal. He took the book as though it were a hunk of meat and he were starving. Looking around him, Cade thought it was pleasant to be among a group of such attractive men,

and in the case of four or five, women. He knew, for they had all been told on the first day of the briefings, that one of the primary reasons for which he and the rest of them in this Section had been chosen, from all the people working for the Government in the various capacities, was their physical beauty...

Guttmann went on to say that the pro-mutation forces with foreign funds were increasing their propaganda and organizing efforts by leaps and bounds. That by the date of the present lecture the mentation of a large number of the nation's poor had been contaminated with the sentiments of this and similar publications. Cade felt sorry for the poor and the ignorant. This sorrow resulted in his laughing, something he didn't understand, but accepted.

While the man in front spoke, Cade touched the contours of his own face with his fingertips. That he was himself. That his bones were perfectly proportioned and delineated. That his flesh was firm. Putting one hand before his face, he stuck his tongue out of its place and touched its tip to the skin of his face, and looking around the room he saw that many of the men and women, on the tiers of the theatre, were also touching

their own skin. Some of them tried to hide their self-fascination, to have private moments. Cade was like a beach over which the beauty of his fellow employees washed in waves.

Sardonic Guttman walked back and forth as he spoke with his spine bent forward and his head cocked so that the right ear rested on the right shoulder. While still attractive, of course, in an expensive wool suit and pale grey shirt, it might be said that he was the least beautiful person in the room, possibly because of his crane-like walk, possibly because of his bent expression, sarcastic and self-pitying simultaneously, possibly because of the constant wandering of his eyes in their sockets, conceivably, for a combination of these attributes, but still, no employee in any class would ever have thought of Dr. Guttman as "unattractive," but rather the opposite, for which reason he found it necessary to instruct his students not to emulate him too closely, flattering as their mimicry may have been to him. Still, the success of the program itself was more important. It had been decided by Guttman and the inner circle of senior officials, that when finally it was evident to public

knowledge that the mutant children were being systematically assassinated and kidnapped, which stage they expected would be reached within two years, then it would be a clear-cut contest between the deformed mutants, and the Government forces, who would therefore have to be attractive and worthy of emulation. In preparation for that future publicity, all members of the squad who were likely to become famous for terminating mutants were given "exemplary biographies," which the assassins themselves believed to be the truth. The hideous mutants would be repudiated; the handsome assassins would earn, through their obvious sincerity and patriotism, a celebrity status from which some would go on to politics, some to show business, some to industry, and some would remain in the field of law enforcement, englamourizing it with their presence. Guttman was proud of the husbandry of humanity's emotions of which he deemed himself capable. The President of the United States had personally requested Guttman to draw up a system for extermination of the mutants that would be palatable to the citizens in general, and it had taken Guttman two weeks, sitting in his characteristic position bent over a low desk

scribbling on a yellow pad, leaving the office only when he was hungry to walk disheveled through the daytime or nighttime streets of Cambridge, Mass., and sit in a bright cafeteria laughing to himself and watching the other people who might be in the cafeteria, also eating, or working there, and yearn to share with them the details of his plan, as it unfolded, which was actually just another scheme based on a low interpretation of man, and no better than any of them, but of course aesthetically perfect to its creator, Dr. Guttman, who, on being passed the ring-binder by Thom Dentone, thus indicating that everyone in the room had looked at it, now continued the short class.

He juggled with a switch on the table before him. A holograph-movie in the empty area between Guttman's blonde-wood podium and the theatre of seat-modules gathered into existence. Out of the wisps soon was visible the figure of a small, thin child sitting on a patterned blanket. The holographic image was directly between Cade and Dr. Guttman, and the Dr. appeared to Cade as a colorless ghost through the child's form.

This made Cade unhappy, for the first time during the class, but soon his attention was fully on the bright image.

One of these projections was shown every day of the course, and he had learned to look for each child's qualities of strangeness. With this one, he thought a mistake had been made, for the boy had both his eyes, regularly proportioned and situated limbs, and a straight posture. Nose. Mouth. Then he saw it, at first only a vague suggestion that something was wrong. Then, nausea went through him like a crease in a wind-blown shirt, and straightened his spine. He realized - this child looks like an old man! - the naked body was covered with deep leathery folds, sags and wrinkles - thick black veins stood out on the face, neck, arms and legs. The boy sat with less than full energy and seemed to have no muscles except in slack plaques falling heavily from his bones -

"Pirogeia!" said the Doctor through the brightly colored holograph. "Until the late 1960's this condition was almost unknown. Rather hilarious actually - " The Doctor's eyes watered and his nose dripped.

"Those born with pirogeia appear at parture normal, but age so quickly that most pirogeiacs die of old age diseases by the time they are fifteen years old. By the fifth year they are growing body hair and beards begin to show. The intellect also matures at an astonishing rate. Before he was ten, this boy, who now resides at the Government installation in Alamagordo, New Mexico, where he is under constant observation, this boy had completed most of the One Hundred Great Books, and had written a book himself, "The Autobiography of a Pirogeiac"." Dr. Guttman walked around to the left of the three-dimensional film carrying his rubber tipped pointer in his fingers, and stabbed through the image here and there to direct the class's attention to the shoulders' stoop, the eyes' sadness, the ears' smallness. Cade wrote in his notebook concerning these things, in order to study and memorize. The image of the child rotated around the axis of the spine leftward seven times. The first time, from face-forward to face-forward, the Doctor spoke of the skin, the second time, the bones, the third, the nervous system's idiosyncracies, the fourth, the child's mental characteristics, the fifth, the history

of former pirogeiacs as far as it was known, the sixth, the legends which concern them, the seventh, the Doctor was silent, and the class closed its eyes, and each one saw against the black walls of his own mind's cave the child's rotation, finally each one having the feeling that each one was the boy himself. Cade in his mind's eyes shrivelled. He felt the cells catabolize. Much faster, much faster. He felt his brain grow brilliant. His teeth fall out. Juice drain. This final rotation of the holograph, in the mind of each one, was done so that each one would be able to kill such a pirogeiac when it happened that in the course of his work he met one. Soon after this, class was over.

Cade went back to his car, and took it out, through the hedge-walls of The New Century section of the city.

The interior of Cade's car was like the inside of a mouth, he thought. Just a certain amount of giving to pressure, as well as other things. The thoughts in his brain were all of that kind any man might have who has attained a middle status before his middle age, thought Cade. Thoughts about things which the main herd didn't have the time, or the attunement, even to notice, let

alone to let drift, which gave him an idea for his diary. He hoped he'd remember it later, when he sat on his great bed, with the pages of his diary open on his legs. It was a private moment in his car, provided by the Bureau, as it crushed its way to the little town, then through the town, to the church itself... He thought his superiors must appreciate him very much to give him such a car, to give him a .50-.50 that took zero-eights and did a five ninety, so much so as to have provided him with a 360, a 490 point 7 with double liners, an Em-Three, and so on, as well as his clothes, the outfit on his back and the ones that hung in bags, and the taped songs that lullabyed him on the long drives from town to town... Sometimes he would become lonely, on the road so long, or despondent over the nature of his work, which he found to conflict with the meditative and sentimental nature of his personality, as he knew it from the evidence of his face in the mirror, and those eyes that had so often caught, and reproduced, his gaze. Cade wondered how it could have happened that he did murder, after having known himself in childhood, but, as he explained it to himself, he would not do it if he were not paid to do it. Being

paid to do it made it almost a thing he didn't do, but was done through him, by others.

He drove through, observing the residents. Cheap labor (not to mince words with himself) nourished on a diet of beans, (since the flight of our cattle to Japan) the poor were less and less energetic and even Cade, who did not make it a habit to lecture himself on the things he saw around him, was forced to notice that the people here were spinelessly fluttering, like leaves of paper, on the stairways and porches, so weak were they.

He passed a field of dust and then came to the green square of a church's lawn, where hundreds of people were either on one of the spiral lines, at one of the food tables, or pacing in the gutter and sidewalks near the church's white fence. Cade was surprised that among all those people none of them was acceptable, none of them was normal, and there was not one with whom he would have wanted to have a conversation. He wondered if any of these people would know a mutant from a member of their own species.

Many eyes followed the rear of his car as he turned down the hill and disappeared to their seeing. Then Cade pulled up beside a brown telephone pole, and parked in the shade of a crooked tree. He did not change his clothes or disguise himself, but he did wrap his gun in a woolen jacket. He was using a shot gun with the barrel sawed to 18" and bullets whose noses had been hollowed out and filled with mercury. When he stepped from the car he squinted up the hill at the church. He said to himself, "Count your blessings, count your blessings," and this gave him the impetus to go up the hill. All around him the air was warm and fragrant. He stood under the bough of an apple tree, with his back gently touching the white boards of the building, and black and yellow leaves dry beneath his feet. For a few moments he listened, hearing a man sobbing and then a crowd moaning as one, and then shuffling, talking in low voices, all above the low noises of several radios throughout the crowd. He threw his jacket onto the ground below the white window sill. Then, touching the knee of his trousers to be sure it was not snagged, he lowered himself to the ground on that knee. He sat facing away from the church, down the

hill at his own car, meticulous and perfect, luscious as a fruit, although he could not prevent himself from regretting the scratch he knew was on the hood, even though it was invisible from this distance. In the center of the blue sky stood a white steeple. Trees were around it like billowing hair. Cade noticed the warm light, and the lens-like tones of the birds that flew around and stood in the bell tower.

The lines of people were partially visible to Cade, down the stairs from the church all the way to the pavement, then following the border of the lawn, around its corner, to the hedge, where it turned again, so that the people were lined up in two spirals, in such a way that the ones who came later had to go through the layers of one or the other spiral to the very center of it, and these centers were tightly packed like the springs of a watch. The front of each line fed into one or the other side of the church's rows of pews. A minister distributed pieces of yellow cake from a large tin box. Three women stood at a long table set up on the pavement beyond the area of the lines, giving away plates of chicken and white potatoes, still in their translucent skins. Further

down the street several street merchants with pennants, buttons, booklets and post cards, all with pictures of Raphael, and various phantasmagoric biographies, sold their souvenirs to the crowd.

Cade peered into the dark place. Soon he could make out the form, and finally the face, of the child. Raphael was standing before a packed house. Behind him there was a vast empty area. He stood near a podium of old, whitewashed wood. He was wearing a white cotton shirt with the sleeves rolled up on his thin arms, and a pair of khaki trousers. His feet were bare. He did not slouch down, but searched the crowd with great attention, the lone central eye casting its strength from person to person in the church. One and two at a time they approached, and Raphael touched them. He always smiled, in a way that appeared to Cade to be a sign of an idiocy that had no shame of its own idiocy. Not always, but often, when a person approached, Raphael grabbed him, or her, and gave that one a loud kiss, that aroused the crowd repeatedly to applause and laughter, helping them forget their illnesses.

An old man wearing a nylon shirt that floated around his body, held high his fist almost horrified to

be staring at it. "He gave me a new hand! A new hand!" and his wife transferred her handbag from right to left forearm and with right hand then tentatively reached toward the reddish emanation at the end of his sleeve.

The child laughed and gestured with his thin hands in such a way as to mock his own presumption. Katherine was 25 years old, but as she sat to the right and the rear of Raphael, she seemed still to be a child. The eyes of Cade rested on her for a long time. She was white and the outline between herself and the walls that surrounded her was dim to the point that she appeared as a cloud to the people who must wait for such a long time and always were looking forward. There was a weary smile on her lips, for she was to some extent bored with the miracles of her son, and impatient with his growing importance to the sufferers, and his obvious self-satisfaction.

Of course, every day she sat with him, whether it was in those early notorious days when he healed without interrupting the daily course of his life, when she would spend the days leading the ill to the places where Raphael was playing, fishing, or lecturing to his peers, gaping fanatics; or in the latter days, after he

had first happened to enter this white church, in the dramatic and nostalgic bifurcations of the afternoon light of that warm day, and had gone without any invitation, directly to the podium, as though he had decided, in his tenth year, to begin his life's career in all seriousness. She had never taken up any activity, as a result of the welfare payments, and therefore there was nothing else she could think of to do. She observed every healing, filled with tranquilizers, smiling in a way that she imagined was reassuring to the endless faces, increasingly to her like infinite species of small birds, weak, full of sorrowful cries, in large flocks.

A woman carried an infant toward the cyclops and said, "L'il Raphle, ah cum all th way frim Arkansas." Katherine smoked cigarettes and stubbed them in a can labelled Crosse and Blackwell's Date Nut Roll, infuriated for some reason she could not understand. "I am still Katherine," she thought, retrieving the words from something she had read, "who wakes up indignant every morning."

Cade left off looking at Katherine, and lifted the stock of the gun to his shoulder. He fired a bullet

that tore the miraculous child's head from his shoulders so that it flew upward through the air like a parrot. Several witnesses, including a formerly blind surgeon of Los Angeles Hospital, seeing now for the first time in some years, thought they saw the face of the child chewing the enormous bullet which had been forced into it...

Cade, in the bright day beyond the congregation, watched with fascination. Raphael's body fell to its knees, then flat on the floor. After a few seconds it crawled along the floor, then planting its palms, it began to raise itself up... the body got to its knees and rocked unsteadily left and right. The people covered their eyes and drew themselves back from Raphael, his mother rising from her seat in a fountain of energy, allowing to slide down the gingham of her dress the book she had been reading.. the body tilted and almost fell forward, but did not, and raised its right knee, putting the foot flat on the floor, then standing on its feet and stumbling a step backward. Cade watched the body through the window. He didn't understand this phenomenon. He was certain the child must be dead. He should escape...

Forward the small foot, forward the other foot, over the rug and boards of the stage. A dog rubbed itself against the child's side for affection, and to the surprise of the witnesses the right hand descended and fondled the face of the dog and was licked by the tongue... Then the child began what was probably a mere effect of the dead body's inertial staggering, but seemed to be some kind of a dance. It was slow, and the effect seemed to be of pushing upward, upward, all up the body to the place of the separation, the tendrils and stalks rising from the well of the neck, which continued to float and encircle, as though they were suspended in a liquid solution... The head had been de-systematized in the extreme, Cade could see that; and it adhered in different sections to the walls and ceiling... Any other body would have fallen by now. Should he fire again into the body? The child was twisting around and around the small table on the podium, twisting among the fallen figures of the guests of the church. Always the hands pushing upward as though to force what was into the area of what wasn't.

Now the body, with its hands held before it, took two steps toward the mass of people. Some in the crowd

uncovered their eyes as though they were looking into a fire.

"He's walking." The Minister fell to his knees saying, -- "A miracle!", but Katherine, looking from her son to the minister, hesitated in judgment.

It was then that she saw Cade at the window, seeing clearly only the dark shelf of his brow, but detecting a glint from below that ledge which would allow her to believe throughout the coming year or so, until she happened to see him again, that she had looked into the killer's eyes...

The body turned decisively and walking as though with conscious purpose, with hands feeling the air in front of it, moved toward the window through which the bullet had come -- Cade lifted the shotgun again and squeezed the trigger. Another tremendous blast. The chest of the shirt was torn open, the body went backward, and fell to the stage. Cade turned and walked to his car. Katherine went to the window and stood on her toes, to look down the green slope. Her fingers held the side of the window to hold her up higher. His broad back disappeared from her vision, then the black smudge of his head, and then she turned away.

The body of Raphael was spread from the podium to the eastern wall, and everywhere along its distance those who had not run away now looked for bits of his garments for remembrance and those curative powers, for which they had been waiting patiently. Katherine saw a head of dark hair, and thought it was Cade, but it turned out not to be. Soon the local men, who had followed Cade as far as his getaway car, but had left the chase to a smaller group of themselves, came back to the church and surrounded her, assuring her that they would assume the responsibility of burying Raphael.

CHAPTER 3.

On the highway, going back to his home, Cade met a young girl.

She was a beautiful girl with long hair and the uniform (unsuccessfully disguised as civilian clothes by the girl) of some school. She stood stoop-shouldered by the side of the road with a stack of books pressed to her stomach. Her head tilted away from the highway. She held her thumb out as though her hand was so heavy it was about to fall off. She squinted down the road. On her feet were brown shoes and gray socks that ended just below her knees.

Cade pulled over to the side of the on-ramp. She had to run up to where he was, and he watched her in the rearview. She had brown hair. She seemed to be a student, about 19-20 years old, and wearing a look of concentration and seriousness. She had a hard time with the door. Cade did not turn his head toward her, but after a while he reached down on the dash and touched the electric switch that controlled it. The door clicked and sat in the midair away from the car. As she scrambled onto the seat Cade could not help himself and

turned toward her. He could not take his eyes away from her - her face, her throat, her hollow arms, her long hands. He could not hold his vision still on any part of her, and he could not remove it from her. She endured his long gaze. Her pink lips, however, soon separated over her blue-white teeth, the better to breathe. She felt herself grow hot, tears welled behind her eyes, blurring her vision. The fact that a man of Cade's age had stopped for her had been, even before his appreciative staring, a matter of great apprehension to her.

"Where are you going," Cade said, in an even voice. His voice was devoid of most of the characteristics of speech. It was toneless, without emotion, and without color.

The girl, whose name was Sarah, felt herself attracted to this man when she heard his voice. It seemed to her she could almost read his words upon the air, so much were they like the words in a book.

"Sacresty," she said.

Cade pulled off the freeway at the next exit and turned down a tree shaded street. "What are you doing?" she asked him.

Cade stopped the car near a tree that was dense with branches, stubbed the cigarette he had been smoking, and said "Look at this." He pressed a button on the dash and the windows clouded over with a sepia gas that seemed to be trapped between two layers of glass in each window. Now the world outside the car was obscure and distant. Cade opened the fly of his pants.

"Please mister," she said.

Cade pushed the material of her skirt higher on her thighs until a white point of cotton was visible. Her legs were pressed together. She continued to plead with him in a voice that drifted off from time to time. His face, his eyes, were completely expressionless, Sarah observed. There seemed to her to be great honesty in Cade. He communicated absolutely nothing. Like his voice, his face appeared to her as the purest in the world of humanity.

Why?

Because long ago she had learned to hate the facial expressions of the people she met. Every one was a lie - every smile, every look of yearning, of listening, of pain, of disappointment - every one was a purposeful arrangement designed to make an appearance.

But this man had no facial expression at all. Having no emotion, he expressed none. She took from this the idea that he was an honest man.

Soon their position had placed her face above his. She looked downward at him, and there flooded through her a force beyond her controlling - tenderness, the desire to protect Cade, the sensation that he needed her love - seeing the curls of his hair, the white ledge of his forehead, the tip of his nose, all facing the softness of her breasts and moving silently, pushing into her.

Meanwhile, Cade's feelings were those of a dead man. His teeth clamped around one of the girl's nipples. His hips rose and fell for a long time. He was in a dream that he was flying through space, flying into different scenes. When he had ejaculated, he took his mouth from her breast and lifted her immediately from his lap. They then sat side by side. He was smiling but soon turned down his lips.

After a few seconds, the windows of the car cleared, the dark smoke being drawn to a place below the bottom of the glass, and they went on in silence.

Sarah wondered what Cade was thinking about. He forgot for a long time that she was beside him.

Sarah and Cade, each in his or her own way, were falling in love with one another.

As for Sarah, it went like this: she had not been surprised when he had raped her. After all, she had known before she got into his car that he was a man of the Middle Class, and that it was understood a Middle Classer had the right to expect any Underclass female to have sex with him in return for a favor such as Cade was doing for Sarah by allowing her into his beautiful car, and giving her a lift to Sacresty. Often the Underclass female was lucky, and the Middle Classer gave her some money after the sex, or she was able to steal some. Or some food. Sarah looked around the floor of the car for food, and she turned to search the back seats for anything she might be able to take. But at the same time, (how could she control it?) her mind was already making up stories and painting pictures in which she could see herself beside this man, a part of his life, having drawn from him the tenderness that would cause him to ask her to live with him, and to join him as a member of the Middle Class.

For Cade, it was like this: a few minutes ago his whole mind and body had contracted to a single point of concentration, and he had pieced together from vague memories and former readings of books and magazines the idea that he loved the girl whom he had raped; he had come to the point of concentration an assassin must come to when the moment of the assassination is at hand; he was alert, he was intelligent, he was accounted-for. The reason for this, unknown to him, until months afterward, when he had read those pages containing the secrets of his existence held back from him by his superiors, was that he was remarkably susceptible to mental suggestion. They had fallen in love through two entirely different mechanisms. She had fallen in love with him through thoughts of what life with him, in his world, might be like, and the love she felt she did not disguise. Her face, her eyes - her feelings could no more have been hidden than if they had been a torch she set afire in the enclosed space of the car. But his love was nothing more than a copy of her own, for copying was his way of learning, and, thanks to what had been done to him in the past, (about which, more later) the way of most of his being.

Now he looked out the window of the car, alert to the needs of driving, and he had almost forgotten he had ever met her, although it must be said that he was still in love with her. That is to say, the intense feelings of the moment when all his attention was upon her were still with him, but now he directed them toward the road before his eyes. His affection for the road, for the pane of glass between himself and the road, for the tail of the black car in front of his, was a feeling he had never had before. Also, some of his love was distributed to the sphere of his aural life, and the voice of a singer entering his ears through the speakers in the headrests and roof of the car, skimmed off a certain amount of Cade's love.

Sarah stared at the profile of Cade.

She said finally, "This car must have run you a bundle." Cade made no response. She cleared her throat. She wondered if, after satisfying his sexual hunger, Cade had fallen asleep at the wheel.

"What do you do?" she asked. There was no answer from Cade. "I mean do you have a job or something?" Nothing from Cade. Then she touched his jacket,

grabbing a section of the arm's material, pushing and pulling it. He turned with a startled expression played out over his features and in a short while focused on Sarah. "Do you have a job or something?" she said again. She laughed to see him so confused. This quality he had of seeming to be submerged in the sea made him all the more wonderful to her, and she rubbed his jacket back and forth with her palm while he talked.

He told her briefly the story dreamed up by his superiors at the Agency, according to which he was a "troubleshooter" for an insurance firm. She had no reason to doubt him, or to think any more about it.

They entered the Boundary Area over one of the treelined highways, and turned down a wide street where, fifty yards from the highway, was a high, vine-covered wall... A candy striped guard house stood at the side of the road and two metal gates hung in mid-air over the center. She knew they were entering one of the exclusive neighborhoods of the Middle Class. Twice before she had been allowed to come into one of these areas. In her family there was an uncle who was in the Middle Class, and when he had died, she was

among the ones who had gotten special permission to enter for the funeral. The second time had been when she applied for a job as a waitress in one of the sumptuous Middle Class Dining Rooms, massive halls where the citizens feasted like one family each night beneath the concrete structures of their homes. The place where she had applied for the job was called The Lodge Door. Sarah remembered now, as she entered the neighborhood, packed with trees and shadows, and with white tall buildings shooting up on either side of the passing car, that the maitre d' of the Lodge Door had seen on her hand a small glass ring, a ring that had been given to her by her mother, at that time already dead, and he had assumed immediately that she had stolen the ring. Without a word, he had pulled it roughly from her finger, and walked her through the door holding her upper arm higher than her shoulder. All such indignities were now in the past as she rode into the preserve, confident beside Cade.

This area was beautiful and rare to her eyes. Allowed in only twice, Sarah had often secretly entered The New Century, to steal, but always late at night, when the streets and underground malls were almost

entirely dark and empty of people. They drove down long boulevards where the sidewalks glittered with arrows of gold and the red and white dashes of the curbs were covered with luminous clear wax. All of the tall buildings were steel and glass. Many of their walls were massive mirrored surfaces of gold, silver and brown. The store windows were like bright beams and their goods were displayed gigantically with distorting lenses, so that bulb after bulb of merchandise rushed forward to the eyes. The people striding from store to store Sarah recognized as Middle Class because of their shapes, which she had often seen in magazines that hung by chains in the Reading Room at her school. The people had determined by the mechanism of fashion through the use of creams and hormones, to arrest the development of their backsides at the age of ten. Thus, their legs emerged from their middle-areas like powerful tubes, as did the upper body, ballooning out from the incredibly (by some standards) tiny waist. She saw a young girl go nervously from one doorway to another - a thief studying the older women who shopped here. Sarah observed the people's figures with admiration and envy, and wondered if she would ever be able to have her

shots. She knew they were expensive. She also knew that if she didn't have hers by the time she was 21, no matter what her accomplishments might be through the rest of her life, she would always be less than equal to her fellow citizens. This thought lay over her mind as Cade drove the moving sac they shared through a low gateway, the entrance to a tunnel.

"This is where I live," said Cade. "This is the parking lot," he said, unnecessarily, she thought. He drove into a space marked out on the concrete, between yellow lines. They stepped from the car into the vastness of the underground lot. Sarah walked to the back of the car and waited for Cade to indicate the direction. When they were standing together at the fin of the car, they both saw for the first time how large he was. She stood well below his shoulder. With his muscles and age, he was much wider than she. They both laughed at the disparity, she putting her hand over her mouth. They went through the doors of the basement floor. The green corridor. Yellow rug. Mural paintings of various cartoon heroes of the day: "There's Beverly Everly!" said Sarah. Never had she seen this idol so large, with the red hair so familiar to millions of

children. The murals seemed to stand out from the walls. "Textured projection," said Cade, with the obvious self-satisfaction of anyone who finds himself in a position to explain anything to anyone, especially a technological thing, whereby he feels he has gained ownership of that thing for a few moments.

Next, into the forest-like elevator. To the thirty-third floor. To Cade's apartment. To the balcony. A white slab that stands in the air. Below them the city. The lush green starfish of the Middle Class Neighborhoods all connected and living amid the larger, rust and black, organism, that was the rest of the city, filled with houses worn to their skeletons. Cade's balcony had a plant. "How beautiful," said Sarah. She thrust her head among the long leaves to see a gray rat that was trapped in the tiny needles where the fat base of each leaf was joined to the plant's thick trunk. The rat lay there pinioned with a look of exhaustion on its face.

"How did this rat get all the way up here?" she asked, speaking directly toward the rat, so that Cade received her words couched in the tones of the plant's leaves, which made them sound somewhat harsh and

querulous to his ears. By this purely mechanical accident, their first argument was initiated.

He, joining the words she had spoken to the tone he imagined, came to a sum, in a sense, which represented Sarah. He then compared that sum to the sum of his possessions and found that his possessions, the greater sum, had been challenged by the lesser sum. He watched her with annoyance as her head failed to return from the leaves, and he found that her posture made him furious.

He laughed: "You have a back like a camel."

Did she mean to mock him by sailing through his apartment without a single word, only to call his attention to a rat on the balcony? Did she mean to level their positions by withholding her approval from his home? He did not realize that Sarah had not meant to offend him in the slightest. She was still at the age, however, when living things can excite an interest that can blind us to our other interests.

Then, to make matters worse, she continued to pay attention to the trapped rat instead of smiling at Cade. She tried to part the tapering leaves with her small hands, in order to reach in and extricate it.

Cade stood apart. He tried to regain her attention with insults -- but she made no response, and soon, soon he could not believe that Sarah was not purposefully avoiding him, purposefully disguising her responses by hiding her face.

"I found you in the gutter!" said Cade. He spoke to the back of her skirt, that shimmered as she struggled with the rat. Finally he grabbed her by the waist and dragged her backward.

During their struggle Cade pulled her hair, grabbed her breast, pushed his hand underneath her skirt, lifted her straining form and turned her toward himself. For a moment she could not understand what he might actually have in mind. But then she saw Cade's cloudy look. "What is it, what is it?" she said, pressing her ear to his chest.

Cade was silent at first. The rage that had welled up so fast when her back was toward him ebbed slowly now that she was facing him for the same reason that a cell will give up a liquid only with the greatest reluctance, once the liquid has attained the shelter of that cell, unless it is driven out by the strength of another liquid's inflowing.

It would have required a forceful effort on Sarah's part to inject her apology through cells swollen with rage. However, she did not know what she had done to offend Cade, whose rage grew. The seconds ticked by. Still no soothing words.

Finally, knowing somehow what Cade needed, she said, "I'm sorry." Again, more distant, more lost, "I'm sorry." He was satisfied. He put her down, and went out to the balcony. He broke the trunk of the plant and grabbed the rat around its middle. The rat strained and paddled its feet. Sarah stood back as Cade passed her with the rat. He opened the door of the apartment, and put the rat down in the corridor. He watched it walk away, down the carpeted corridor. Sarah joined him and touched his shoulder as the rat went around the corner, toward the center of the building, and the banks of elevators.

"Where will he go?" she asked Cade.

"Hopefully, into someone else's apartment," said Cade.

Sarah laughed. Why, he knew not.

Sarah had been on her own for the past two years, since the death of her grandfather, her last living relative. He left her in possession of two rooms filled with collections of things he had picked up from the street. In order to support herself, she had taken to stealing, a profession it was not worth working at except inside the foliage-covered walls of The New Century. She dressed herself in stolen clothes, and stole what she could in the streets and corridors of The New Century. She was able to enter and leave through secret spaces in the walls, known only by the children who earned their livings in ways similar to Sarah's. She sometimes grabbed a purse that would enable her not to steal for several months, during which time she and Mrs. Lena, who had been a friend of Sarah's grandfather, and who lived in the floor above Sarah's, illegally practicing her art of seeing the future, would eat well and discuss Mrs. Lena's future observations. However, one day Sarah was caught, having broken the window of a luggage store on the Concourse Drive, to steal a briefcase with gold latches. She was grabbed around the neck, and the briefcase pulled from

her bent-back fingers. The man smashed the side of her head until she was unconscious.

She had been put in a reform school outside the city.

At the time of her meeting with Cade, she had just run away. She was a girl of great intelligence who hated her guards and the teachers of the reform school. She had some quality, probably instilled into her by her beloved grandfather, that boosted her above the general docility of the inmates, a docility that was shared by the guards and teachers too, and not only by them, but by the society at large. In the city, in the nation itself, there was no impetus for action on the part of anyone, imprisoned or free, no matter of what class, and there was much less jostling even among those who could always be expected to jostle among themselves, in any case where there was enough food for daily life. Any motion to alter such a case would only be a senseless hazard, and few citizens would have thought of it. In places like the reform school where Sarah was kept, where for the most part girls only had to endure the docile, infrequent caresses of the

caretakers to assure themselves of a healthy feeding schedule, there was little reason to escape.

Sarah alone was willing to traverse the dark forest and sewage area that surrounded the school. It was not that the others were cowards, for they didn't mind laying in wait for the much larger women who guarded them and engaging them in battles that often left the girls badly injured, battles fought with no hope of freedom, only for the pleasures of the fighting. But why would they think of escaping, when they had no image of improvement before their mind's eyes, they were indissolubly bound moment to moment with fate? Whatever happened to them they acknowledged but nothing more, as though anything at all except the most absolute, irrevocable calamity was as normal as any inward or outward breath. Not so with Sarah. Something told her that if could escape the school, she would find a better set of circumstances. Perhaps this was the result of the two years she had spent, after her parents' death, travelling the highways with her grandfather; perhaps, in some way, she had run away to find her grandfather again, (at least, someone like him) somewhere on the road.

Well, she had already improved on her situation, although Cade, except for his taciturnity, was nothing like her grandfather. She liked the apartment. It made her think of Cade as competent to handle the problems of life, and she trusted him all the more when she saw his bedroom, the largest bedroom she had ever seen. The huge bed where he soon laid himself out did not cover one tenth length of the room. Its vastness was broken up by four small islands of furniture - each a round table and two chairs - and everywhere were magazines, large, rubbery, stacked against the walls, bulging out from shelves and niches in the walls, thrown everywhere on the rugs, narrow sliding roads of magazines wherever she looked. How did they achieve that quality of a compulsion greater than life with their cameras and film, printing, and presentation? She did not know. She only knew that she, like all people, was grateful for the existence of magazines.

Cade had a magazine on his knees. He had a halfsmile on his lips. He looked up and said, "Not bad the way they treat me, is it. I've got a wall-screen in every room. Since I made G44 last July, I even got the Guide. You know what the Guide is? Every half hour it

tells you what's on. It comes through the speakerphones." Sarah was not able to respond, but noticed that Cade looked at her for a long time with his half-smile. Then he returned his gaze to the magazine. She thought, Other men wouldn't have been so open about their love for their home, other men might have held back rather than to appear to be impressed by things they must already be used to, but not Cade. He is like a child. He is completely honest. His tastes may not be my tastes, but his were formed in a state of abundance, and mine were formed in a condition of need.

She left that room and went to the others.

Soon the speakerphones spoke up, sharply: "Bob Casperson, Deep Sea Detective, guest appearance by Sally Smith...Manny the Cop gets in a scuffle with one of his old enemies, thought to be dead..."

In the refrigerator there was no food, except for a white juice she had never seen before. There was a stove in the kitchen, but no cooking utensils. The mystery of this was soon solved for her when there was a soft knock on the door, such as no one would have heard who hadn't been standing next to it, then it was opened from the outside, and she was face to face with

a black man. He wore a light green uniform. He smiled at her. From the bedroom, she heard the sound of Cade's voice call out, "Dinner!"

Dinner was served from a metal cart covered with a white cloth; but first, Cade instructed Sarah in the practice of washing, in the way it was done in The New Century, by scraping the hands on both sides with a metal brush and applying alcohol. It was painful to Sarah, as she had often heard it was. The waiter smiled more and more openly as he worked, and to Sarah it seemed he held Cade in high regard, although neither man said anything to the other one.

They sat at a square table set on a thick carpet.

They looked out toward the terrace and the two walls behind them were mirrored. The carpet was red and black, in a pattern of borders and vines. To Sarah's left were the three carpeted stairs and the black rail that separated the dining area from the living room. The living room had a couch, two armchairs, a cane chair and two small tables, on which were lamps, ashtrays and glasses. There were a series of niches in the walls of the living room, some containing shelves for books and trophies that belonged to Cade. Hanging

down from the ceiling of the dining area over the door to the terrace was a giant screen. Cade's head was almost motionless, and he didn't bother with his food as it was served to him.

He watched on the screen the image of the cyclopean he had murdered. First the child was seen (thanks to footage provided by the police) playing in the street, and in the action of his illegal healings; and then as he looked after his death.

Sarah gasped at the bloody image, and bent her eyes toward the inescapable sight of her full plate. Cade heard her gasp and looked at her, then he too examined her plate.

The waiter went out of the room to wait until Cade and Sarah were finished with their meal. When Sarah had recovered from the sight of the cyclops, she began to eat her food, and soon was able to enjoy it. There was food of the kind she had never before tasted, cooked vegetables covered with melted butter, and a loaf of bread from which Cade cut slices with a glass knife.

"All we ever get in school is recon two," said Sarah. Recon two was the standard square of food sometimes served as a watershake.

After their meal, Cade was helped into a long robe by the waiter, who then took Cade's clothes out of the apartment. He came back with a robe for Sarah, and she allowed him to place it over her shoulders, after she had taken off her clothes. He took her clothes as he had taken Cade's. Cade curled up with a magazine, very shiny, that looked and smelled like rubber to Sarah. She sat on the huge bed in Cade's bedroom. He was lost in his reading. The magazine was called "Voices from the Place Where There Are No People," ("This is the last issue of your four year free trial subscription.") and was filled with startlingly colorful pictures of flowers. As he read, a giant wall screen flickered, like the one over the terrace. Soon she was drawn to it, until, relaxed (although she realized there were many things she had not settled with Cade, and much to know about her future before she could have any real peace) she drifted off to sleep.

Her soft breathing told Cade she was asleep. He looked up from his magazine, and then down at her face. He reached out, and touched her hair. He touched the velvet skin of her cheek.

Then he went to the wall opposite his bed, and took from the second shelf a notebook, with a black cover.

He returned with it to the bed, and lay down beside Sarah. He ran his fingers over the surface of the binding. He opened it and began to write, using a thin-leaded pencil on an empty, white sheet.

"Today I met a girl named Sarah. Now she is here, as I write, which I do because I have resolved to continue my written record. This meeting with her, when I have written it down, will be the start of a series of daily records that will finally, I hope, lead me to discover the cause of certain things that have been bothering me, as see previous pages..."

He paused. The page began to swim before his eyes. Soon, his head fell heavily onto his chest. Weariness was overtaking him, although he tried to fight it, to continue, now that he had begun what he really hoped would be the telling of the story of his life, with evidence concerning his feelings from day to day, collected over many days.

With that in mind, he raised his head. The colors of the immense wall screen battered against a suddenly sensitive Cade, like the wings of a bee.

"At the side of the highway..." he wrote, before his head again fell forward, and he was asleep. The notebook fell to the floor. In a few minutes, a bent figure entered the room and approached the large bed. It stood looking downward at Cade and Sarah, then it took the notebook in which Cade had been writing and put it back on its shelf. Then the figure returned to the bed and covered Cade and Sarah with a blanket, switched off the lamp, then it went into the living room, where it encountered the figure of the waiter, just getting a glass from one of the tables and putting it on the metal cart. "Go. Hurry." said the figure to the waiter. They both left Cade's apartment.

"I am John Cade. I track down the freaks. I am from The New Century. I have won many awards and been presented with plaques, and from the beginning of my employment in the job I now hold, I have been assured that one day my name and face would be made known to

many millions. So far, this has not happened, but it means little to me."

This is the first entry in the diary of John Cade.

He wrote with an eye toward publication. He was aware of the glamorous aspect to his experience, which he hoped the public would seek, probably bringing him a fortune. However, there was another reason he took up the pen each day, beginning with this unnumbered one in what month... He was beginning to experience the sensation of a divided past; that is, he found himself remembering a number of memories that could not have been his own. That these shadows were memories and not imaginings, was clear to Cade by the feelings they aroused, and by their tendency to link dendritically of their own accord, until, lately, they had formed themselves into something he could see as a complete past, a total life history, none of which Cade could claim as his own. He saw himself as a young man, carrying his books, riding the bus to his campus with a book in his hands, and he could smell the evening air, and see the grey sky over a row of two-story houses, or argue with some strange girl or boy, all in a city where he never had lived; not to mention the college,

entirely foreign to his actual experience, to his own technical past.

He also had memories of a set of parents, that stood as equal in their reality to the memories he actually deserved - those of his uncle, whose orange face and red beard, and whose white hair should have been sufficient guardians to recollect, but seemed to be losing out to this completely new set of recollections, those of the set of parents. His real parents, as he knew from his uncle, had died when Cade was born, as though there had been a plague. Now, in his 37th year, to have pop into his thoughts these aristocratic parents, and to see himself among them, cared for as an infant, as a child, as a young adult, and even as an adult of working age, by the two personages, was upsetting to Cade, and even more so because he was normally opposed to looking inward, where he now was forced to look, by this mystery.

In a second short entry, he wrote:

"I have thought about the possibility that I am remembering a former life, when these pictures of that un-lived past come over me. However, I do not believe in re-incarnation, for it would mean that even though we

are alive, we are also dead. It would make the percentage of death's influence on our living world a very high one. But then, what are these imaginings that feel like memories?"

The truth of Cade's existence, which he did not know, was that he was a man who had once been dead and had been brought back to life by the one who was now his superior, Dr. Guttman. Guttman had been experimenting many years with his theories of reanimation, supplementing them with prayers and imprecations to unscientific spirits, before finally succeeding in the creation of John Cade, after which he expected many rewards that were not to be his. The recollections Cade had were of his former life, when he had had a different name. He was not supposed to have any memory of that life. He was supposed to be fully occupied with the almost two thousand sensory images (mostly derived by Guttman from his own memorable moments) that had been implanted into Cade for the purpose of his entertainment in self-speaking, but Cade's true past had begun to seep through, as an area of soda might seep through a sheet of paper, and while

the name of the one he had once been had not yet come into his thoughts, Guttman dreaded that event's coming with every reading he made of Cade's diary. Guttman was well aware of the danger to himself if the family from which the young dead man had come were even now to realize the actual fate of his corpse, no matter how well it was serving the Nation, or that its occupation was not so different from the military career for which that other young man, the preCade, had been trained for many years to follow.

CHAPTER 4.

Sarah awoke to the sounds of the metal gears that seemed to be behind the walls, and under the floor of Cade's bedroom. As they shifted and groaned the room opened to the light. Shortly thereafter, the wall screen facing Cade's bed came to life with all its colors, that did not suffer from the pouring sun, but stood out more brightly than anything else in the room, including Cade himself, who lay beside her. She observed him in the veil of great-moleculed sunlight that made him an amorphous thing, impressed with the stiffness of his posture. He was a solid board from head to toe. She touched his chest. It was as hard as marble, until the voice of a woman, mellifluous and sweet, came over the loudspeakers, saying, "Time to wake up...Time to wake up...Time and tide wait for no man..." The voice repeated until after Cade's eyes had opened, after he had sat up in a single motion, until he had swung around in the bed and placed the weight of his feet on the floor. At that moment, the voice stopped, to be replaced by the quickly mounting sounds

of the television screen. Cade looked to his right, at the wall screen, and Sarah was drawn to do the same. What had caught Cade's attention was a news item..."These people are among the thousands who've come to see the famous twins..." said the disillusioned, deep voice of a newscaster. The camera swept the crowd, and then showed the Bains Brothers, joined back to back at birth, lying in their own blood on a plastic shower curtain in a parking lot under a dark, drizzly sky in Baltimore. A row of men with their arms interlocked held back the weeping crowd. Cade walked to the bathroom, shuffling through the magazines. Sarah's eyes remained on the screen. The bloody corpses were held on view for a long time.

She watched as Cade, in the bathroom, stood inside a contraption of metal pipes and glowing hot wires, such as she could not remember having seen before, with his back pressed against the mass of the pipes, that were set into an alcove in the tile wall of the bathroom. He remained there until a spitting sound was heard from the wires, and smoke rose from Cade's back. Sarah wanted to call out, to tell him to take himself away from the red heat, but the expression on Cade's

face stopped her. He did not seem to be in pain. He seemed to relax, to be gradually returning to a state of calm, after some long period of anger or fear.

His blue eyes, which were open and staring, looked in the direction of Sarah, but without appearing to rest on her. When he finally let go of the pipes that he had held onto, he went to the toilet and sat down to urinate. Sitting there, he put his trembling hands into a space in the wall and pulled out a glass syringe with a long needle on the end. He then pushed the needle into a green rubber circle in the wall, and pulled the plunger back, filling the needle with clear liquid. He looked at the full syringe, then, squinting his eyes, he put the point of the needle against a blue spot in the crook of his elbow. He stuck the needle through the blue spot in his flesh and pulled the plunger out a small way, filling the syringe with dark blood, that swirled among the clear liquid; then pushed the plunger back, and sent the mixture through his veins. He groaned deeply, closed his eyes, and opened them. Then his eyes comprehended what they beheld. Sarah, the girl he had met on the day before, was looking at him with a look of wonder, which he returned to her. He replaced

the syringe in the wall, stood up, and walked toward Sarah. Her expression changed to one of affection. He recalled, he recalled...more and more. Finally, she bit her lip, closed her eyes tightly, and reached up for his neck, which she encircled with her thin arms. She pressed her face against his. She prayed he was not dying. There was a bustling in the dining area. A young waiter went back and forth. Cade wrapped a terry cloth towel around his waist, and called Guttman. He told Guttman about the assignment's outcome of the day before, and then about his meeting with Sarah. He told Guttman that Sarah was with him at the moment, to which Guttman replied that he had been aware of the girl's presence.

He asked Cade if Cade intended to keep the girl with him, in his apartment. Cade said he would like to. Guttman said, "That will be all right, but we'll have to train her in certain things."

Cade thought about what Guttman had said, but the words went to a black place away from his view. After a while he said, "There's a scratch on the hood of my car." Guttman said, "That will be taken care of." Cade said, "Should I come in this morning?"

Guttman said, "No, go to the home of the Fish-Girl." Cade said, "Yes, sir."

"Take care," said Guttman. You know how we admire what you're doing.

"Thank you," said Cade.

Guttman clicked off, and so did Cade. To Sarah, he said, "That was Dr. Guttman. You'd like him."

An old woman knocked on the wall beside the doorway. She entered the room and walked across, behind Cade, to the closet. She went into the closet, and came out with a white shirt on which were red horses galloping. She approached Cade, and put the garment around his shoulders. She came around to his front and buttoned the shirt. She helped Cade into his pants, but when she turned to Sarah, on her knees in the center of the bed, she seemed not to know what to do about her. There was a look of fear, or so Sarah interpreted it, in her eyes, as she looked at Sarah. Soon she went out, holding her hands folded on her stomach. Cade went into the dining area and sat down to breakfast and Sarah followed.

Breakfast consisted of eggs, scrambled, surrounded by triangles of cheese, ham and butter. There was a

silver bowl filled with plain biscuits, with butter, jam and honey to cover them. They drank coffee, which Sarah had with sugar, but so much sugar, since they didn't have it at the school, that she felt sharp pains shooting through her skull. Cade told Sarah that she could stay in this place if she wanted to. She did not respond, or look up. He made a telephone call, saying, "This is John Cade.

I have someone here who needs Credidentifax Marking. We'd like you to get someone to do it, this morning, if possible."

"It is possible," said the representative of Credidentifax.

Cade hung up, and explained to Sarah the credit system of The New Century.

Soon he returned to his bedroom, leaving Sarah alone. She watched the wall screen. He re-entered the living room, fully dressed in a grey suit and brown leather shoes. His hair was combed back, and was wet. Sarah was struck once again by his great good looks. After saying a garbled phrase of farewell to her, with a look of nervous worry on his face, and his foot pawing the carpet, he left.

She watched the door close. When it opened again, a young girl entered. Her uniform was gold with white rope braided around her shoulders, hanging in three loops. The girl smiled and walked directly over to Sarah. She was clear-eyed and beautiful. Sarah immediately liked her.

She had with her a metal box painted green with one side open and a mirror visible inside the box, placed at a 45 degree angle to the open side.

She put Sarah's right hand inside the green box. Then she looked through a lens at the top of the box, adjusting two dials, or knobs. Soon a bright flash of blue and white light pierced the box and Sarah felt a sharp pain throughout her hand. It was immediately over. The girl took her right hand and rubbed a white lotion over the spot. "Now you have your number," she said. Sarah couldn't see anything. "Do you know the shopping areas?" she asked kindly, knowing Sarah was one of the outside girls who frequently were taken in by such men as Cade. Sarah saw no reason to let it be known that she had been inside The New Century before, to this girl or anyone, and so let the girl continue to direct her to the shopping center in the basement of

the building they were in, and beyond that, to the one that ran out in the open streets.

"My name is Corey," she told Sarah. Sarah said she hoped to see her again, before Corey left the apartment, carrying the green box.

Then Sarah left the apartment, as much to escape the relentless brightness of the wall screens, which were across her path in every room of the apartment, unable to be turned off, as to see the lower areas. She went into the hallway outside the apartment, and was impressed by the painting that covered it, making the walls appear to be full of green grass, tall trees, falling leaves, blue skies, storm clouds and distant small buildings and cars. The illusion of the vast landscape was reinforced by wheat stalks and grass stuffed in the corners of the hallway, stapled to the bottoms of the walls. She took the elevator to the basement.

The shopping area, except for a low ceiling, was full of light. Well-dressed women, along with a few men retired from work, or who didn't have to work, walked

back and forth. Stores were lined up in a glass corridor, with dresses, shoes, make-up, food, cards, books, rugs, vases, briefcases, flowers, sports equipment, wall screens, cars, men's clothes, toys, perfume, hardware, plants, appliances, and bicycles, for example, on sale. Cade had told her to buy clothes, but she only did buy one yellow dress and a pair of white shoes. What she liked best was being able to sit in the coffee shop, order coffee, and pour sugar into it until it overflowed and drink it as she watched the women go by and enjoy the chance for leisurely observation. A man sat down at the small table where Sarah was. He smiled, his eyes beamed, he ran his hand over his hair many times. She didn't understand most of what he said. Soon, he grabbed her hand and turned it over. She pulled it away and left the table.

Following no plan, she soon came to a store and went in. On the wall was a photo of an infant looking out at her, from where it sat on a blue-painted sheet of paper. Around the room were other such pictures. There were also the pictures opposite to those - of the

freaks - and orange strips covered with slogans.

"Normalcy is the Strength of the Nation,"

"Protect the Maternal Imagination,"

"Beautiful Surrounds Make Beautiful and Sound."

Sarah was in a place that represented the Appian Term-of-Pregnancy Retreats, a chain of farms, located on hillsides chosen for their beauty where the Middle Class women were supposed to go as soon as they discovered they were pregnant. It was believed that the freaks might have their origins in the maternal imagination, rather than in any chemical conditions present during their early lives. Those who could afford it, following the custom of the ancient Romans, in order to protect the minds of their wives from hideous thoughts that might become manifest in the flesh of their children, sent them to beautiful areas, where they were surrounded by statues of well-formed men and women, so as to direct their meandering reflections along the most pleasant possible routes during the crucial months.

The atmosphere of the retreats was very strained, with the women attempting to appear as though their minds were filled only with the loveliest thoughts,

while actually, their fear and apprehension at the knowledge that they would be blamed for any deformities in the children they were to bear, made the thoughts of the women dwell on the very things they sought to drive from their minds, and when the husbands would visit them, on the few days they did, wearing pale green visiting sheets, they sometimes could detect, beneath the brave joy, the growing terror. Many of the women went mad - many killed themselves before the fearful day of birth arrived, that might reveal to everyone the contents of their secret thoughts. Most of these unfortunate women, who did not see it through to the end, would have given birth to normal children, for the incidence of mutation was much less than it had ever been, but the anticipation of the possible shame, most of which was brought about by the current association of that form of birth with the despised population that worshipped it, and the certainty that they would be accused of having had relations with dogs or other animals, brought them to their ends.

Sarah, as a new arrival to The New Century, had an interest in the brochures of the Appian Company, and she took some with her. Then she roamed in the narrow

corridors a while longer, and then boarded the elevator that took her back to Cade's apartment, opening the door by placing her hand in an indentation lined with plastic, allowing a light to go through it.

CHAPTER 5.

Cade was seen for many hours standing outside an apartment building in a poor area. Not on the street of the building itself, but watching it from the perpendicular streets, loafing in the sharp shadows. He made mental notations of the guards deployed around the building. The most obvious were the two stationed at the front steps, a mammoth pale-skinned black man and a more normal sized yellow-skinned black man. The yellow one wore a t-shirt with no sleeves. Neither of them would Cade have wanted to fight. There were also two men whose job it was to walk around the block in opposite directions. When they crossed they winked or made some other gesture that all was well. Cade could also see a man on the roof of the building, and, as far as he could distinguish among a group that was to him somewhat resistant to immediate particularization of its members - the non-freaks, there were five others who hung from the three windows of the apartment where they were keeping the mutant. Sometimes one of these

would appear at the narrow entrance of the building to take the place of one of the stoopmen or streetmen.

It would be hard to get an assassin into the child's room. That was obvious. Of course, the special Tactical Squad could attempt to take the building by force, but Cade knew the blacks would put up a fight. It was certain they would be armed with an arsenal of automatic weapons, stolen, or bought by their nameless backers. Cade knew that if there was a battle, the Tactical Squad would soon be surrounded by the hostile poor, and if they were forced to retreat it would certainly be bad publicity for the mutant extermination campaign, and in fact the poor would probably ascribe their defeat to some great power of the child itself. What we need, thought Cade, is a soft in. I don't care if the out is hard, as long as the kid is already dead.

Next, he stepped out of the shadows and into a taxi. The taxi would seem to any observer to be cruising the street, but it was one of the Agency's. "Just drive three or four blocks," said Cade. "I'll walk back."

In the back seat he removed the blackface with tissues from his face, neck and hands. He took off the

white shirt and blue pants he had worn for his disguise.

His change of clothes was a grey repairman's coverall. It was uncomfortable getting into this one-piece suit in the cramped area of the back seat. The suit indicated that its wearer worked for the Britannia Heat Company, and the name Bradley was sewn in red thread over the breast pocket. To complete the picture, he held a mirror before his face and combed his hair into a style not so recent as to attract attention although sufficiently current to be believable on a man of Cade's age. This style boasted of a double part, one over each ear, with the hair in the center gathered to a peak and tied with a ribbon. Once the ribbon was knotted, Cade inserted a long needle with the letters BOS on a white shield soldered to one end in the center of the gathered hair and it was held erect by the tight ribbon. Most of the workers in the city would be wearing similar sets of three letters in their top-knots. Cade's indicated that he was a fan of the Boston Bruins. To himself, of course, the needle with the letters looked absurd. "No wonder these people are poor," he informed himself.

The taxi pulled up to a curb and Cade pretended to hand the driver money. While he was leaning forward, he told the man which strategy he had chosen for the kill. He made a final examination of the case he would carry with him. Everything he needed was there.

He walked the four blocks back to the building, this time strolling onto the street directly opposite the windows of the mutant's rooms. He went into a candy store and sat on the stool closest to the door, from where he could see the windows. He drank coffee and read a newspaper. The man who owned the store was Puerto Rican. When he first got there the place was full of characters eating their morning rolls and danish. He watched the blacks enter and leave the building. Finally, there were no blacks hanging from their windows, and the two who circled the block were both out of sight, beyond their turning off.

He threw a quarter on the counter, picked up his case and crossed the narrow street. Having drawn the attention of the two on the front steps, he waved to them. He walked into the super's entrance, a narrow doorway next to the main entrance of the building. He saw why the two guards had not stopped him. There was a

black man sitting in an arm chair next to the dumbwaiter, leaning back with his feet on one of the garbage cans. The basement smelled like wet chalk and had a low ceiling and close walls. Hearing Cade, the black man had drawn his gun and it was pointed at Cade's groin when he reached the intersection of tunnels where the entrance tunnel met that of the dumbwaiter. "Hey, hey, friend," said Cade.

"Who you?" asked the man. He was not suspicious, because his attention was on the contempt he felt for the white man's coiffure.

"Here to fix the boiler, friend," said Cade. He held the case only by his thumb. With his other fingers, he was pressing his pistol to the side of the case invisible to the guard.

"Drop that thing and come over here," said the guard. Cade let the case slip from his thumb's grasp, brought the thumb down to grab the hammer of the gun, twisted his wrist and fired into the man's chest.

Cade passed the man's fallen body and climbed into the dumbwaiter, lowering the door once he was inside. He lifted himself up by pulling the rope, raising the small box he was sitting in.

On the third floor he heard a voice say, "I hear the dumb waiter, man!" And then, another said, "Well, get the garbage!" then as he arrived at the floor, the door opened and a teenage girl was there ready to stuff a bag of trash toward Cade -- she was surprised when the giant bag encountered resistance and flew back in her face, falling to the linoleum. She peered into the doorway but the box was already above her floor. She saw a piece of Cade's shoe, screamed for her mother and slammed the door.

When Cade saw the lines of light around the edges of the fifth floor door, he gave a final hoist upward, and then, moving fast because he knew the people in the apartment must have heard the noises in the shaft, he threw himself against the small door. It stuck for a moment like a juncture of dry lips, then flew open. Cade could feel it hit some obstacle, the hand of a man who had been waiting, gun drawn. This man was knocked to the kitchen floor. Cade leaned into the airspace of the kitchen, holding the side of the dumbwaiter door with his left hand, his head and chest following the right arm into the room's narrow space, as levelling the .45 in his right hand, Cade in the follow-through

of his first push against the door, straightened his right leg and pushed the steel-reinforced toe of his right shoe against the floor, which was covered with linoleum so old it conformed to every bump and indentation of the wood below it. He came down at a spot where the shoe of a probable adversary also was pressed, with its toe at a right angle to that of Cade's. The man was hidden by the wall of the hallway outside the kitchen, but Cade was able to determine, from the direction in which the shoe was pointing and the pressure of its push, the position which the other man's body must momentarily be in, the approximate weight and height of the man, and the range of possible futures. Noting the smallness of the foot, compensating for the height of the heel and toe, Cade directed the muzzle of the .45. When the adversary's body followed his shoe, twisting through the grave-shaped doorway of the kitchen, where Cade in the kitchen and himself in the foyer must face one another, Cade's .45 was placed almost against the left eyeball of the man, almost as though he were being shown a different world in a microscope... Cade squeezed the trigger, lifting his pinky an instant after the shot, an idiosyncrasy of his

murderous style, which, had the other man lived, he would have likened to the gesture a woman might make as she raises a tea cup to her lips, and this thought had almost come to words in his brain when he saw the gathering rounded darkness and glint of the bullet's nose, and saw the muzzle of the gun lick out with a round tongue.

Cade knew he had to swivel on the toe of his right shoe even as his left leg was still unfolding itself from the box, and had to fall against the foyer wall opposite the doorless kitchen doorway fast enough that the body of the man he had just shot, which first had been upraised and slammed against that wall, would now fall against Cade's own body, to provide some shield in the position which Cade must accept as his next stopping place. He knew the man floored by the opening of the dumbwaiter was still there, in the kitchen's interior, almost certainly by this time recovered from whatever shock or pain had knocked him down. Therefore, Cade let the knee of his right leg bend, and still flowing forward after the right foot, he went through the doorway. As he had planned it, the dead body fell across him and the live one shot three times into the

dead one, which protected Cade. Cade fired over the body and caught the live one in the throat, causing him to open his eyes in astonishment. He was a thin man with long arms and legs. When the first bullet hit he was raising himself with the help of a wooden chair to achieve a different angle of fire, but he was hampered by the closeness of the low cabinet doors that did not close completely because thick layers of paint coated them, so that each stood slightly open, entrapping the heel of his foot. The force of two bullets snapped the boy's body upward through the air. The arms and legs, when they were free, flew around and fell to rest, all beneath the white sink. The shattered head of the other was beyond Cade's hip. The right arm was extended beyond the head and lay on the floor with an open palm. The left hand was wedged between Cade's neck and the wall. Cade's maneuverability was limited by the body, but it was a solid mount for his pistol, and he was still protected by it.

"Holy Jesus, Holy Jesus," said the voice of a woman, whom Cade could see was standing further down the hall, where it must lead to the living room. She was a young black girl. She turned and ran away from

him. He threw the body off his lap, lifted himself to his feet, and ran after her. Soon catching up with her, he lashed out with the barrel of the pistol and hit the back of her head. Her arm lay outstretched. It pointed to a narrow doorway. Cade pushed aside the plastic curtain covered with painted yellow flowers in black outlined pitchers, that separated the room he was in from another, smaller room. Into it stepped Cade.

Alone in the far corner of the room was a basket suspended from the ceiling by three cords that converged at a large steel hook embedded in the ceiling. Cade stood still. Over the rim of the yellow straw basket rose a child's face. The lips of the eyes once visible, the head fell back again. Cade could hear the sounds of the black men as they approached the apartment, having heard the sounds of his gunfire, or having called upwards and having received no answer. Still, he did not rush.

He approached the dangling basket. As doctors are relaxed in the presence of the dead, so Cade was at ease when he saw any mutant. A mutant to him was like the cowboy's cow, a known and beloved inferior. Now he approached Johnny Jones, famous throughout The New

Century, and the country, as "The Boy With No Skeleton." Cade did not take seriously the superstitions of the poor. He did not fear the vengeance of the mutants, but felt himself strengthened every time he killed one of them. There was the child, whose eyes were huge and blue in a giant brown dome of a skull, and whose lips were translucent and seemed to leave a space between their outermost translucency and the substance of the lips, like link sausages. A few wisps of hair were on the top of the head. The body was as flat as a plate descending below the funnel-like neck. Fingers, wrists and arms without volume, chest one-half inch from the soft cartilage spine, feet folded up over the lower legs like cards... As Cade approached, the child opened his lips in sad fear... "Meep, meep, meep," he said, in a high voice, through his lips. Huge tears welled up and flowed to the sides of his head onto the sheets. Cade stood over the basket, which was about at the level of his belly. He thought, "Look how this child looks in my eyes. They always look you in the eyes. How do they know where your eyes are? The nose is shinier than the eyes, and nearer, but they don't look at the nose."

As often as the children performed the miracle of looking him in the eyes, Cade had these thoughts, but each time there was no addition from previous sessions of the same, just the same self-saying. "Dogs always look into your eyes, too. Even birds look in your eyes. How is it that every animal will look into your eyes? How is it that these mutants all do? And they know they're looking at my eyes. Look at this boy. I know he's thinking. He's thinking about me. He knows me, just like a dog, just like a bird. They tell you the animals aren't intelligent, but they are. They're human. Just like this boy..." and so on, as he pulled the blanket from the child's body.

"Really," he said to himself, "everything is something else. And it's all the same thing. And that thing is a thing with eyes." Cade and the tiny infant stared into one another's eyes. Around that infant's eyes were thoughts, or so it seemed to Cade.

He felt as though he were shot in the heart when he shot the child in the heart. That heart had been a blue area beating in the translucent chest. The lips closed and a bubble of water was caught in one corner that Cade wiped away. He heard the sound of shooting

in the street below the window. He leaned out into the currents of cool air.

The rest of the operation seemed to be going on as Cade had instructed before he got out of the cab. Having waited long enough to be sure that either the child or Cade was dead, his squad was attacking the building. The bodies of the two men who had been guarding the stoop were on the sidewalk like figures on the face of a vase.

Before Cade left the apartment he looked at the child once more, this time noticing not the eyes but, "How dense the face is, compared with the body... Look at the features, closely joined together, so many different things, while the body is only a few things, far apart. That is the way childhood is to the rest of life, which comes out of it like the body from the neck," but Cade did not remember this a moment later, or have any thoughts, as he made his escape, as he had arrived, in the dumbwaiter.

When he arrived in his own apartment, Sarah was there, and placed herself in his path, but Cade went to the wall of his bedroom as though he didn't see her. He

removed the black notebook from its place and sat down at a writing table. He opened the book and wrote, "I have killed the Liquid Child on the Southern Border. In his eyes, before he died, I saw a possibility for my own life. I have been, or so it seems, becoming a certain kind of man. I cannot remember ever having been different, but I must have been. All I see now is the black heart of every pleasure, and the weakness-based quality of every affinity. I give to everything a low interpretation, as though every thing were not simply itself but something else, pretending to be the thing at which I am looking. It is this that I would like to change."

The pen fell from Cade's hand. Sarah, who was looking timidly at Cade, took two steps forward. His skin was gray. His limbs began to shake. His eyes were closed and his jaw was clenched. She ran to him. She touched his shoulder. It was cold and hard. Then Cade opened his mouth and let out a scream. It was low and ended in a sputter. "John..." she said. She was terrified to see him this way, afraid to touch him again. He got up, kicking over the chair on which he had been sitting. Moving with unnatural nonfluidity, he

made his way to the bathroom, where he hit the switch that brought to life the heat grille. He stood within its system of pipes with his clothes on. Sarah watched, as Cade, holding the pipes, returned to a calm state, which did not happen before black separations had been burned into his shirt and pants, and she could smell his burning.

It was a few seconds before Cade was through with the heat; then he repeated the operation of the glass syringe which she had seen that morning. Finished with that, he stood still, breathing deeply, until, seeing for the first time Sarah's expression of terror, he went toward her. Relieved to see him thus, she cried and threw her arms around his waist.

Soon, Cade sat down. He explained his attack, as it had been explained to him by Guttman, as having its origin in a disease of his childhood, the same disease that had also ruined his memory, causing the upsetting confusion he felt about his past, and the reason for which he felt compelled to keep his written journal. He said the seizures were likely to continue, but he didn't mind them, they were a function of the sugar

level of his blood, and the heat grille, the clear liquid of the syringe, along with eating an egg or two each day, were all that was necessary to keep his health at a reasonable level.

After a short while, an old woman came into the room and changed Cade's costume from that of the day, to the kimono. She didn't say anything about the burns in his clothes. She was prepared for Sarah, and gave her a particular look of welcome, although she said nothing, when she took Sarah's clothes off and replaced them with a green robe. Cade and Sarah were served their dinner before the open terrace, obliterated, as it had been the previous night, by the wall screen.

CHAPTER 6.

Cade gained weight in the coming weeks, thanks to his happiness with Sarah. He wrote in his journal a few times, but all in all their life together diminished his need to write. He noticed a new quality to the familiar rooms, brought by Sarah. The flowers, her drawings taped to the walls, the neater stacking she did of his magazines, placing them in lower piles, and pushing them to the walls, and the fact that she covered the wall screen in the bedroom with a blanket. Especially, he liked her drawings. Her favorite subjects were ants (inquisitive, smiling, with long eyelashes), shoes of all kinds, and glamorous girls dressed in the latest fashions. She tried to explain to Cade the theories behind her fashion designs, but he didn't really understand. Still, he listened attentively, so she was encouraged in it. A few times Cade copied her motions and was able to create drawings similar to hers. But they didn't have the quality that hers had, which they shared with Sarah herself, of making Cade want to look at them.

Cade took Sarah to the shops in the basement of their building, and to the other shopping areas. It was apparent to Cade, from the admiring glances Sarah received everywhere they went, and the poise with which she grew to accept his generosity, lacking in all humility, and finally inspiring humility in himself, that although Sarah's most recent home may have been a reform school, he felt sure she must be a member of the Middle Class by blood. He was proud to be seen with her, and could not deny her anything.

Soon she was indistinguishable in dress from any of the other women of The New Century, the envy of many.

As for Sarah, the more time she spent with Cade, the less did she know what to make of him. His moods were infrequent upward or downward, but whenever and in whichever direction they occurred, they were for no reason. He often sighed dreamily, putting in mind the idea she had that he was really remarkably immature, a child in many ways, and she worried as though she were his mother and had somehow failed to equip him with the qualities of a man that he would need in order to face the world... How does he hold his own when he is out

among the people he works with, or are they all the way he is, like helpless babies? And what could his value possibly be to anyone that they would give him this home, these servants, that car, the life of a wealthy, idle man? What did Cade do, so necessary to the interests of his employers, she wondered, to merit such rewards? Not that she thought of Cade as a fool. He was sometimes very funny, and she felt that was a sign of good intelligence if anything was, since she guarded her laughter, and she considered anyone who could pry some of it out of her had outwitted her. His eyes, she also felt, could not be so clear and beautiful, and also deep, and sad, and whatever they were, that made her want to do everything for his happiness, if he were not intelligent; and yet, what ability of his was it that was his value to others?

Sarah asked Cade, "What was your life like before I came here?"

Cade said, "Just average daily life."

"But what did you do? How did you spend your time when you weren't working?"

"Well," said Cade, "you know, I don't go to work like most people. I only work two hours a day

sometimes, sometimes I work day and night for a few days. But most of the time I'm not working at all."

"I know," said Sarah, "that's why I was wondering what you used to do all the time?"

"I'd go through different periods," said Cade. "Sometimes I'd go out, down to the basement, sometimes I used to stay in and watch the screens..." He smiled. "You know, I like to lay around, watch the screens, and order up from room service. In that way, I lived the way we do now, except now you're here, and that makes it better."

"Did you always get room service?"

"Most of the time. Room service is wonderful. Don't you think so? I like the way the waiter takes the tops off the plates and all the steam comes out. I also like the fact that after you're finished, he comes back and wheels the whole thing away, but you can keep the rolls and butter, the cake, or whatever you want. Also, there's something good about calling them on the phone, the Irish accent of the woman who usually answers at night, the quality of the food, which is excellent, better than most restaurants, better than most people can cook for themselves, at least the people I've

known. I like the roast beef most of all - well, you know what I mean - it's so thick, so juicy, with horse radish sauce, and those round rolls you can dip into the juice. I have had periods when I would have the roast beef ten days in a row, twenty days in a row. I love the coffee, too."

"Yes, but what else did you do, besides eat?" asked Sarah. This was another thing about Cade, the way he seemed to dote over the most insignificant pleasures to the exclusion of everything else. "Did you ever used to drive around the streets, go to shows or anything. You must have! Did you ever have any other women here, before me? What were they like? Did you ever love any of them? Did any of them stay here a long time?" Cade was beginning to look around the room in a distracted manner. He looked at her naked legs, surrounded by magazines, crossed at the ankles and rubbing each other slowly in his sight. Impatiently, he pushed his hand through the thick forelock of his hair, and he soon would have been writing in his diary, holding it open on his knees, but since she was there, instead he put his hand on her legs and rubbed them up and down. Whatever thoughts he might have written down, which

were concerning that pair of illusory parents he had often in the past found himself imagining, the father who painted lacquer over violins and the mother who wore a yellow sweater, were soon dispersed before the powerful desire he felt for her.

Of course there were things that troubled her. The long hours Cade worked, and the journeys he was forced to make, left Sarah alone. At night, when Cade was not there, the apartment's frightening characteristics came out. Its height from the ground made it seem she was on a platform in the middle of the air, and the crypt-like structure of the place, was not diminished by the carpeting, nor did she think it would have been by all the carpeting they may have cared to stuff it with. The never-endingness of the wall screens, which could never be turned off within certain hours of the day, but were always babbling away, even when their volumes were at the lowest possible level, and flickering in her path no matter which way she turned, robbing her of concentration, making it impossible to establish any plan and see it through. The smiling waiters that served her every meal, and brought her drinks when she

was thirsty, for there were no simple bottles of soda kept in the apartment.

Sarah found that none of the women in the building were friendly to her.

The men looked at her with intense concentration, but they, like the women, said no words to her.

All this was the result not of any feeling they might have had toward Sarah, but of the rumours concerning Cade, that made the rounds of the building, and were stirred up whenever the luxurious car of Cade was seen, or when Cade was seen with a suitcase, or when some man took a liking to a suit of clothes Cade might be wearing, and that stimulated him to talk about Cade to someone else, with that knowledgeable and grisley grin.

Naturally, Sarah was added to the articles of Cade's realm, in the minds of the others, thereby being both exalted and doomed to loneliness.

One day, Sarah went looking for the girl who had stamped Sarah's hand with her credit machine, but the girl showed her no interest, and even moved her arm

when Sarah tried to touch it during the act of telling the girl a story.

Dr. Guttman was aware of the attitudes growing up against Cade and Sarah in their home. But what could he do? He had tried to get Cade a permit to have his own house, on separated land, but such things took a long time, and in the meantime, he knew Sarah would be made unhappy by the daily experience of her neighbor's isolation of her. As for Cade, it didn't matter. Cade didn't look to the left or right when he walked, or into the faces of others, unless there was some reason for him to do it. Guttman was the same way, as he never tired of telling Cade, and perhaps that was the reason Cade was that way. Neither of them depended much on others. They preferred to go about their business. But Guttman realized, even if Cade was not able to, that Sarah was not made that way, and so he did what he could to move them to a place where Cade was not known.

He did this for Sarah, because, although he was an old man, he was as fond of her as Cade was. He loved her independence, her beauty, her heart, as he watched her playing out the scenes of her love on the spying

screens of his office. Each of Cade's rooms could be viewed by Guttman on a series of screens on the desk in his office. Now, for the first time since he had perfected Cade's new identity, and was at last sure he had the assassin the Government had ordered, he found himself staring at the screens for hours on end, at night, and early in the morning, before the other agents came to work. He was much in love with Sarah, and loved to watch the drawing she did, and watching her draw, which he did very often, marvelling each time, as someone who is old will do when observing the natural movements of the younger members of his species. He could watch for hours the concentration of Sarah, and almost seemed to be drawing the careful lines along with her, and to hold his breath along with hers when she had to stop looking at the thing she was drawing and commit her line to the page, and to expel his breath simultaneously with Sarah's, when a line had to be erased and rubbed with the side of her hand.

Guttman had never found love, but he found it in his observation - for he had never met her, of Sarah.

It was the effect of her beauty. Guttman didn't try to fool himself about that, but neither did he feel

ashamed of it. He had lived his life with certain moral standards now difficult to put into words, and had devoted himself entirely to his work. It was his work, finally, and not any effort of his to arrange things, that had placed him in the position of being able to watch, unseen himself, the full privacy of a woman, a young girl after all, for as many hours of the morning, afternoon or night, as he desired. The cameras in the walls of Cade's apartment and the screens, and console in Guttman's office, had not been installed there by him in order that he would be able to spy on women, but in order that he would be able to keep a complete portrait of the daily life of the other one there - Cade himself - who had up till now always been a bachelor there. Even the infrequent times when Cade did bring a woman there, and Guttman, alone or with his assistants, watched, it was not the woman they had been watching, only Cade. To learn the ways in which Cade was different from men who were alive.

Sometimes one of his assistants might make a remark about one of the women Cade had brought there, but really the woman wasn't even thought of, except when Guttman wondered at the attraction the dead Cade

seemed to hold for them, which he, Guttman, put down to Cade's good looks and let it go at that, assuming there was nothing more to it. So the woman wasn't really considered, but in the case of Sarah, everything was different. He did not allow his assistants to enter his office at any time, or use the screens. He took their keys away from them. He lost interest, for the most part, in the campaign against the freaks. He no longer cared about the daily discoveries of new freaks being hidden among the population, or about the successful murder of those that had already been tracked down. He had never wanted to have any part in the campaign anyway.

No belief of his was behind his role as the Chief of Biological Studies for the Agency. All he had ever wanted to do was to achieve the re-animation of a man who had died, which had been his goal since his days in school, and which was known to be his one concern, by those whose business it was to know, the funders of research. This he had at last achieved in the person of Cade. He had expected at the very least to be raised to the light of the public eye, after the publication of his story, but his superiors vetoed publication. They

didn't want Cade. For one thing, the soldier taken by Guttman to create Cade, whose name was not Cade, had come from a family with two men prominent in the Government. Their permission had not been sought by Guttman before he sent for that body, one of the many which he had had to order from the morgue, to pursue his research, under the privileges of his charter, and when it turned out to be that particular body with which success was achieved, that which became then the path of Guttman to his light, it was soon after learned that the path could not be taken, because the former identity of the corpse had been too high. He and his family were too important; the public knowledge that he had been the subject of such a weird experiment would almost certainly affect the political course of the Nation. Making known the existence of Cade, to a population obsessed with the religious significance of every medical or scientific advance might have given the precarious Government just the push it needed to topple forever, so the political parties decided secrecy would have to be maintained in the matter of John Cade. Guttman's only victory was in getting his superiors to allow Cade to go on existing at all.

Their first instinct had been to order Cade's return to the world of the dead, with as little delay as possible, and with no further grants to be made for research in the field, either by Guttman or anyone else. It was only Guttman's resourcefulness, fixing itself on the then-new problem of the freaks, that changed the minds of his superiors in favor of his creation. His sense of political events told him the freaks would have to be slaughtered by the Government as it was then established. The ignorance of the general population, which the Government had fought to achieve, had been too great a success, while at the same time, this ignorance had not turned out to be the fool-proof road to docility that those in former Governments who had headed up that program had promised it would be. They only threw their innate rebelliousness into the service of causes that were less and less easy for the Government to foresee, causes that changed with the seasons, on the east coast, and without them on the west coast. The Government learned of the frightening prophecies attached to the births of the freaks, and of certain committees of correspondence which had sprung up among

the poor, who wrote their messages to one another in the white borders of newspapers and magazines, no other paper being available to them, and wrote in languages they had begun to make up, which the code-breakers had studied but were not yet able to read.

Guttman had offered the services of Cade in killing the freaks. He had no interest himself in what became of the freaks, or of the Government, but he argued effectively for them to use Cade, under his new identity, to rid them of the infant freaks. His loyalty was more assured than that of any live one, said Guttman. His thoughts would all be placed in his brain by Guttman himself, and all he would have of his former self would be the unusually quick reflexes, reactions of the muscle-system and the eye-hand coordination that had made the former self of Cade a great soldier, which attributes were suitable for the new job, of killing the freaks. There would be no problems arising of divided loyalties, as might with the living. He, Guttman, would be able to observe the life and actions of the resurrectee, and report on the advisability of re-animating others for jobs that had to be done by someone, but that would cause problems if

done by any member of any class or group then existing, for one reason or other, and so would be perfect for the new breed of the reborn envisioned by Guttman, of whom Cade was only the first.

However, events had moved too fast for Guttman, and before he had done with his complete study of Cade, the freak problem had increased, and other agents to exterminate them were needed. These, by some quirk of organizational structure, were also placed under the directorship of Guttman, and it was to his office that came every report of the existence of every freak. These other agents were subjected to electrical, chemical or surgical alterations of their brains, as Cade had also been, but they were not men who had been dead. They had only been taken from other services. Guttman didn't care about them. They and their jobs only wasted his time that should have been spent studying Cade. Why, for instance, had Cade started to keep a diary? That was no part of him whose origin Guttman could trace. Even the one Cade had been before his death had not kept any sort of diary.

Now Sarah had replaced Cade as the object of Guttman's interest. Unlike Cade, she had never been

dead. How did life, without thought, produce such as she was? It was that which Guttman thought about as he spent long hours watching her, taking no notes, forgetting even Cade.

CHAPTER 7.

A sundrenched alley. The white cement curving in to a central gutter, the cinder block garages with red tin doors... Cade stepped through the gate of a back yard of gray cement enclosed by a mesh fence...he passed the laundry, white sheet after white sheet strung out under the sun... He was humming to himself, the song on the wind in the alley, coming from the open windows where young poor housewives were cleaning the houses on Saturday... I'm guilty, guilty, of loving you too much... Someone's trash can has fallen and the packaging has drifted down the alley into all the partitioned yards, the different colored cement with aluminum poles planted in mounds of cement. The trash, the cardboard and paper packages, are covered with the most beautiful pictures, as though they were for use by the people of paradise... The yard is in bad shape, and the sun is shining from directly overhead, so that everything is exploding with light and the aura of everything's shape and size streams forth from everything into Cade's eyes... A pickup truck with two

black men in it comes down the alley, and Cade feels instant hate for the two men, for no reason, immediately wanting to kill them... Other than that he feels all right, he likes looking around, he loves the warm day...

Up the green steps to the green porch, all splintered wet wood busted steps soggy bannister...rubber bucket on the porch with mops and rags in it..cloth washcloth covered with rust... familiar daytime smell of wet bacterial slime...

Cade pulls his gun from his shoulder holster, burst of machine oil smelling professional to his nose. The porch of wood is hardly big enough to turn around on. He tries the doorknob of the weak door, he presses his weight against it, it does not give to his pressure, he twists the knob, there is no response, he pushes harder... There is a curtain covered with the pictures of chickens and eggs that covers the small window in the door... This curtain is moved, lifted leftward to the side, and Cade sees a suspicious eye behind the clean glass staring into his... He pulls his body from the door and stands a little removed, facing the house as though he has not even bothered to think

of what to do in this situation, but this is not the case and as he can determine the location of the body from the position of the head he stands correctly and fires through the door, blasting the greenpainted plywood to splinters, the bullet smashing into the woman's stomach and spine, lifting her off her feet and carrying her backward.

Cade kicks in the door, and seeing the husband seated at a metal table in the kitchen, rising in a lunge toward the doorway that leads from the kitchen into a dark narrow hall, Cade fires again, decimating the man's face. The husband's body proceeds along the vector of his previous self-willed motion and the motion of the bullet and comes to rest on the tiles of his floor outstretched and in some of the area which must be traversed by Cade in his rush into the small hallway and the other rooms, in the carrying out of which one of his shoes comes down upon and then pushes itself off from the man's chest.

Cade is in the hallway, then in the larger room that opens from this, where he turns on the light. The room has been extremely dark for this bright afternoon.

When the light goes on he can see an old woman and a child lying on a mattress on the floor of the room.. there is no rug. Dust is under the furniture and around the old woman and child. They are asleep. A cover is drawn around their necks, the necks of the old woman's giant head and the child's small head that are next to one another on a single flat pillow which has no pillow case and tiny white feathers are on the faces of them both... There are magazine photos decorating all the walls, all of the child who lies on the bed, whose head resembles that of a fish... They date from the day of the child's birth, The Fish Girl, on that day photographed alone and unattended by her parents, beneath a plastic tent where she struggled for her life... Cade shoots the old woman first, who has pretended to be asleep, and then the Fish Girl.

He comes to the next room, a room unoccupied, where there is some pale light... The next room, following a straight line from the others, is the front room, where the light streams in the windows and the small window over the door... Cade pulls open the door and is outside on the front porch... His gun is away, his jacket is buttoned, and he turns toward the door as

he pulls it closed behind him. He is out in the street, on a block of row houses, all the same height with the same front porches and sets of four steps to the street... There is Cade's car, parked in front of the house. He gets in, it is warm inside the car. He starts the engine of his car, and he is gone...

He drives only a few blocks, to a restaurant-bar called the Blue Jay and parks. He goes inside, to the rear of the long, dark restaurant, where he sits at a booth facing the faraway window... The booth is all formica... In the far distance, at the front of the restaurant, is a color television... Golfers are in the sun on the television... A waitress in a white dress, white stockings and white shoes, a young girl with a heavy figure, comes back to Cade's table and gives him the menu, with a picture of a Blue Jay on it, clutching a branch... Cade orders a club sandwich with potato chips and a bottle of beer... She wipes off the formica table with a wet cloth and Cade feels that slime has been spread in front of him... He pulls a small piece of paper from his inside pocket and lays it on the table. When he presses down the water seeps through his

sheet of paper. Cade feels something is crawling beneath his skin, his teeth begin to chatter...

Cade had wanted to put down some notes on the day. These notes might have indicated that, in the strenuous tug of his coming marriage and his recent murder, Cade has felt there to be an absent area within himself. All that it will take is two very different aspects of one's character to show their existence at the same time, and that one will lose itself, or rather, discover an abyss at its center, which it often will attempt to fill with words, which, as they sit before one, always seem to have come from within... "Here I sit, sipping a glass of beer!" was the extent of his writing, however. Then the water of the table seeped through the tissue of the page. Cade left some change for the waitress, paid his check at the cash register beneath the TV, to a poor man, and returned to the hot sun. He got in his car. The door closed quietly.

Back in his apartment, calm, Cade more and more imitated Sarah's affection, which he soon found all around him, in the arrangement of each thing, in the taste of his food, in the smell of his apartment, until

it could be said that, if it were not for the necessity to leave as often as he did, in the performance of his duties, Cade would have stayed with her all day long.

CHAPTER 8.

After a few months' living with Cade, Sarah thought she might be pregnant. Could it be true? She walked through the luxury where Cade had brought her to live, with a new sense of belonging, confident in the knowledge that by giving birth she would separate herself and exist twice within the rooms, thereby becoming more fixed. She sat on Cade's lap and encircled his head with her arms as they watched the giant screen, she cooked for him as often as he would allow it, usurping the place of his beloved "room service."

She began to feel Cade out on the question of children. "Children!" she screamed enthusiastically, when one would appear on one of the wall-screens.

This was more likely to cause Cade to flinch than say anything, but Sarah was determined not to let this bother her. She felt he, like all people, must have a secret love for children.

On a day when she couldn't see anything through the fog, Sarah put on a raincoat bought for her by Cade, quickly scribbled a note too Cade on a piece of

paper cut in the shape of a dog's smiling face, and went from the red carpets of their apartment to the long hallway. The hallway's floor was cleverly designed to look like a small country road, black, with the images of pebbles here and there, and the signs that would appear on such a road, and the life-like sculpture of a doe, always a surprise to Sarah although she knew it was only a work of art. She touched and smoothed the tan hairs on the doe's beautiful face, above the glistening black eyes. So much like a kind dog, she thought. With the look of concern which a dog always has when it looks into your face... Almost unbearable to her was the feeling of love she felt for all life, as though her pregnancy were a growing bond between herself and everything represented by these pictures.

She rode down in the elevator singing a popular song of the day, "The street is like a broken scimitar/From my hotel to Andrew's Bar..." A few floors below hers the box stopped, the doors opened, and a woman boarded, accompanied by a small boy. The woman was about thirty years old. She was voluptuous and

white. The boy had his hands around two of her fingers. Sarah's heart beat faster. "What a beautiful boy!" she exclaimed, touching with her fingers the boy's thick, golden hair. "I'm on my way to the fortune teller right now," she said to the woman. The woman, whose skin looked as though a magnifying glass were passing over it, eyed Sarah with some discomfort. Being from different levels of society, the two women may as well have been from different centuries. Sarah had forgotten that the Middle Class did not go to fortune tellers, but to doctors, to determine whether or not they were pregnant, although fortune tellers were less expensive and were able to provide other information concerning the child's future. Sarah's experience with doctors was limited but she did not trust them. The Tom Demavie Reform School quacks had always prescribed the same treatment for whatever the girls and boys complained of, the standard of medical opinion of the day, which was distributed on yellow slips of paper, "Cake - Coffee - The Amended Shot." (The Authorities had finally admitted to certain flaws in the original shot.)

And Cade had taken her, guiding gently with his arm gripping her waist as she strained to escape, to the Federal Employee Doctor for the series of shots any person was required to have before he or she could legally wed a Federal Employee. The shots were made into her entire back, from just below the hairline to the backs of her knees, by rows of needles that were set in a rubber mat. She was given instructions on how to clean house, wash the self, clean a chicken before serving it to a Federal Employee, to brush the teeth, to scrub the bathroom at the end of each three days, all as though she could not keep anything clean through her own reasoning. Now, thinking about it, she wondered how this mother had raised her child with the help of doctors. The woman's family must have had a lot of knowledge of its own, to help her with. However, she could not remove her eyes from the boy, and she soon began to wonder if doctors knew something after all. Didn't they deserve some of the credit for the wonderful perfection of her husband? This thought remained with her on the bus that took her through the gloom of suddenly appearing trees and signs, through

the white gates of New Century, to an area of The Boundary, where she had lived as a child.

In front of a candy store, in the same place she had seen him seven years ago, Sarah saw the old man who had once beat her for no reason that she could understand, then or now. As in that former time, he was slouching on the two nozzles of a fire hydrant that came out of the sidewalk touching as it rose a red brick wall in a large pipe and split into a double pipe that curved away from the wall at a height of two feet. He sat with his mudstreaked face resting on the knees of his trousers; and Sarah, in the excitement of seeing someone from her former neighborhood, even before she had gotten off the bus, banged on the window. Luckily, he did not hear. Sarah continued on to the stop of her childhood, with her knees on the seat of the bus, propped on her elbows against the lower tracks of the long window, watching the bleak houses, streets, stores, stands and trains unchanged and unimproved from the days when she had lived with her grandfather on Figuerosa and Bridge Temple Streets, in two rooms, each with a narrow bed, a nightstand, a lamp, a wooden

bookcase, a soft chair, a hard chair, and a bread box where food was stored. They had had a small television. She remembered that her grandfather was always watching television and writing, with a plate of the cold food that was all they could have in their rooms, beside him on the nightstand.

She noticed that other girls of her age were not dressed as she was. Their clothes were faded, dull and raglike, of course, but beyond that, they were - (what was it?) - more youthful. Her feet were in shoes with very high, pointed heels, that were almost bare at the arches, while they wore canvas shoes. She wore a tight woolen skirt with a tight jacket whose buttons were open to reveal from certain angles of vision, her small white breasts, while they wore white men's shirts. She could not see any girls whose nails were long. She felt a little strange, although at the same time proud, to have evolved so rapidly from her former self; like "the horse that strays from the team," as they said of anyone who rose above those of his or her own kind. Seeing them all, however, made her fearful that somehow she would return to that situation exemplified by their

pale lips and stooping shoulders. She turned around in her seat to see that everyone on the bus was staring at her, without attempting to hide it.

Gradually, while her back had been turned and she was lost in the revery of girlhood, these spectral beings had floated onto the bus, and sat on their seats. They reinforced one another in their rudeness to her. Finally she was able to leave the bus, as their eyes followed her hips, her legs, her neck where the hair was upswept, and the black glass purse she held under her right arm.

Her purse Sarah clutched more tightly as she traversed the necessary streets to reach the fortune teller. Strange and hungry were the people she saw, who seemed to live outdoors, so many of them were gathered, even in this fog. She passed a group fighting violently for a few pieces of newspaper, as this was one of the rarest things in such areas as these. Sarah saw one of the men in the struggle stagger from its mass. His hands were at his groin, isolating it, to alleviate the pain of a kick. She wanted to help him, but she was afraid her purse would be torn from her hands and the clothes shredded away leaving her naked on that street.

Black windows, black concrete, tar, the constant noise of helicopters in the sky, like the panting of running dogs, the regular sound of blunt pounding steel-covered trucks not like the reserved sounds of The New Century.

Then, just when she was beginning to wish she hadn't come to this place at all, she saw on the back of a busstop bench, faded after all these years, but still there, white letters against the blue board, surrounded by the primitive drawings of a silver cup, the four aces of the deck, a crescent moon and scattered yellow stars, the words: Madame Lena, Reader and Adviser, and there, looking up to the long window of the square structure behind the bench, and looking farther down its length, she saw, as she had hoped to see, the awkward section of a giant globe of flesh protruding not from beneath the open window, but from a jagged hole in the glass itself. This section was the color of light coffee. As she approached she could discern the familiar indentations and irregularities in its form caused by its having been squeezed through a hole that was not quite large enough. It was Madame Lena's elbow, that looked out like the forehead of an elephant eyeless at the street, and giving the

impression somehow that it could see. "Thank God, she's still alive," said Sarah.

Past El-Mo Greeting Cards. Past the Sam Woo Fan Club, where young girls were giggling over photos of that screen star, who looked up when they heard footsteps on the metal stairs, and smiled at her as she went past. Past the office of Bob Garrity, who addressed envelopes for a living. The young girls looked up after her through the center of the stairwell. Finally the slightly-open red iron door of Madame Lena. Sarah pushed it inward, and the loft laid out hollow a hundred feet to a single round table in the corner by the window. The table was adjacent to, but untouched by, the long bars of dull light that entered through the window and fell on the floorboards.

Mrs. Lena looked out - above the jeweler - at the rain - parked cars - passing cars, headlights in the rain wheels crashing through the water in the gutters - toward the elevated train, a small section of whose tracks stood in the air between her building and the buildings across the street - a half block - no light upon her eyeball she saw the lights of a train come uptown and disappear, car after car, behind the

tremendous golf ball that stood out from a billboard, because extra wood and paint had been added at the top and one side of the sign, to give the ball its prominence - after an interval blank to her, a few men descended the metal stairs from the elevated black raincoats gliding down. Mrs. Lena studied the lay. No clients would come from that train, she thought, then standing beside her the thin ankles and legs of a young girl. Mrs. Lena pretended not to be surprised at the presence of the girl.

Sarah was so happy to see her friend and adviser, to whom her grandfather so often came, humbly with his Morning Telegraph folded in four, in the old days, saying, "Ah, Lena, I'm no sportsman. I admit it. Who do you see in the fifth, soon beginning at the track?" Mrs. Lena would take the thin pages in her chubby hands and read them close to her face, moving her head up and down, side to side, a beautiful fat face that sat in a red cloud of hennaed hair, with lips like two plums, eyes like blue sky through the wrong end of a telescope, and so on facially, giving her advice not for a fee but a percentage of the man's winnings, that Sarah's grandfather was happy to give her. And then,

when the races were over, and the number for the day determined, they would sit in Lena's loft, listening to the music from her old plastic radio, while Sarah made tea and spread yellow margarine on round sea crackers. She was so very happy now to see Mrs. Lena, remembering all at once the frightening streets she had crossed to arrive here, and even these only a representation of the far places and dark happenings of the intervening years, that she fell to her knees before Mrs. Lena's chair and began to sob, with her white sorrowful face deep in the woman's skirts. Mrs. Lena whispered the girl's name softly.

When their initial exchange of information was completed, Mrs. Lena took her elbow from the hole in the window. Sarah could see the familiar red collar printed in the flesh, and the indentations that she remembered were deeper than they had been years ago. The round table was covered with a cloth of gold. Mrs. Lena told the future with the aid of broken glass. Sarah was still on her side of the table. She had her hands folded. Mrs. Lena got out of her chair with a wrenching groan and hobbled to a darker part of the

loft. Sarah noticed a smell of coffee that snuck up on her when she wasn't expecting it, and ran away when she tried to pin it down. Mrs. Lena returned carrying two empty soda bottles, a brand that used Christ as a trademark. The bearded face was embossed in white on each one. Mrs. Lena reached under the table and felt around, biting the inside of her mouth as she did this. She brought to the surface a plastic bag that had obviously been the wrapping of a loaf of bread many years ago, before the Government had put plastic on ration and propogandized that the people use willpower for the purpose of keeping things fresher. Sarah's eyes were delighted to see the old plastic. "Stone Ground" "Fresh." "Good For You." and other terms leaped into her eyes, while Mrs. Lena paid no attention, but slid the bottles into the bag. Then she held the bag aloft, looked at it closely for a few seconds, and twisted it around, closing it. She placed it on the table cloth so that the bottles were on their sides. She then picked up a dark red brick and brought it down on the bottles. She untwisted the bag and poured the pieces of glass onto the table. "Yes," she said, "I see you will give birth in six months' time."

Sarah, in her excitement, did not notice the exceptional stillness of Lena's voice and face. She stood, arched forward, and reached to embrace Lena. Lena put two fingers gently upon Sarah's lips and stimulated her slowly back to her seat. "There's more."

"What," said Sarah.

"This child will be a boy," said Lena.

"A boy !"

"A mutant male," said Lena, lifting a shard like a long tongue, that had the white face of Christ and a piece of his white cloak, and the lower section of the letter "K", to the lower lines' angle.

Sarah almost could not alter the forward-rushing joy of a moment before. For a short time she had the sensation that if she continued to feel that all was well, it would all be well. She was like someone trying to remain asleep and not descend to the upward-rushing pavement of wakefulness.

Immense flies were beating their wings in her brain. When this died down, she noticed that Lena was not in her seat but was walking somewhere in the dark loft.

"Mrs. Lena, is this good or bad?" she asked.

"Well," said Lena, "no number has been assigned to this thing. There are no systems of telling to guide us concerning them, because they are not like us, not of ours."

"But the future is the future whether it is the future of a man or a dog or a horse - isn't it? Or anything. It's the future of that thing, isn't it? whatever it is. Why can't I know the future of a child, just because it will not be the same as other children. It will be more like other children than a pumpkin, won't it? I'm sure you could tell me the future to happen even to a pumpkin, so why can't you tell me about this child? What about me?"

Mrs. Lena said, "You don't understand. I've tried, do you think I haven't. You're not the first, or even the twentieth. Of course, the glass gives me an answer to every question. There is no way for it to fail to give me an answer. But so far, a configuration that will mean one thing in one context and another in another context. You see, it's the context ... With the mutants, I have no context. I'm building the context with experience, day by day. I'll understand - one day."

"But what will happen?" asked Sarah. She saw the truth in what Mrs. Lena had said, but it didn't make her feel any better, and her importuning was not motivated by the search for any greater truth, but for greater comfort.

"Many people kill them, others have them murdered by agents of the Government, others wait for some sign of miraculousness. Who knows? These children are coming into the world, but they are a species without adults of their own species, therefore, their early survival rate will be low. It is expected a leader to be born among them," Lena said.

"In times as bad as these, anyone who can think clearly might be a messiah. However, as much as I would do a mythology for you, I cannot tell what will become of your child."

She had cut her arm, reaching into the sack of glass, and now she put her arm around Sarah, and the blood from her arm flowed down over Sarah's shoulder, down her chest, pouring in a rivulet between Sarah's breasts.

Sarah held her palm against the bones of her chest as she went down the stairs and through the streets.

She wondered what Cade would say about this news.
"He'll kick me out," she said to herself.

CHAPTER 9.

"I'm going to have a child," said Sarah. "A freak."

He was silent for a long time, as was she. They sat in the triangle of themselves and the large video screen. Most of their neighbors had video sets whose volume automatically increased when anyone in the room began to speak, a technological advance much awaited before it had arrived, enabling the members of a family never to miss the thread of the video entertainment. Cade's apartment, however, so long the home of a bachelor, had not been equipped with the automatic volume supremacy retainer. On the screen in bright colors was the news of another mutant death. "Pirogeiac Peter Turner today shocked and stunned his small group of followers by diving from his window with a rope tied to his neck."

"See?" said Cade, sighing, although it had been himself who threw the pirogeiac monster into the air, on his rounds of that day.

Cade was as always pleased to be one of those people who can watch the news and see the effects of their own work.

He finally said, "What you have told me makes it necessary for me to tell you that I am a Federal Employee, working in the Genetics Agency." Sarah watched his beautiful face in the sunset sea light of the video and could see his eyes were soft toward her face. "I am called a Civil Defense Administrator. I terminate freaks."

The television came again to the foreground as, to avoid talking, they both watched it.

When Cade was soothed he continued. "You have to realize these children are not children, they are other creatures. You have to realize we live in different times, people need one nation to look up to, one nation where the Promise is Kept (a phrase having such meaning for Cade that his voice became softer and at one point fell into a crevice, like a mountain hiker).. and that means... we've got to keep our National Beauty, or rather our National Normalcy. We must have a genetic consensus for Unity."

Cade was a faithful repeater. The knowledge that he tapped for his speech was standard medical knowledge. Cade was not a propagandist. He had no desire to fool his wife. He wished there were some way to make her happy, but it was obvious that there was not.

Sarah said, "Do you mean our baby is going to be killed? Will you be the one to kill it? Oh no!" and she rolled in a ball to the floor. "Oh no! Oh no!" She crawled, rose and ran at Cade with her fists bunched to beat his head and face. He grabbed her wrists and held them. She screamed but he said nothing. He was thinking.

Finally he said, "You have the wrong idea. Most freaks aren't killed. They're just kept in the hospital so doctors can watch them. It's hard for them to live on the outside, that's all. Some of them we do kill. The subversives. They have followers, cults, organizations, whose purpose is to overthrow the Government. Usually it is the parents who start these organizations, even before the kids can talk. I'll talk to my superior about it in the morning and then I can

tell you definitely, but I can already tell you definitely your -- this --freak won't be killed."

This made Sarah feel much better, and they embraced. She wanted to make love, but for Cade, the fact that he may have fathered a freak cast a shadow over sex in his thoughts. Also, he could not avoid the possibility that Sarah had, after all, created the monster without him. Either the images of her brain, while awake or asleep, had shaped the twisted form, (a theory held by most religious leaders) or she had lain with an animal of some kind. Cade remembered, as she lay over him limp from her expenditure of anger and her anticipation of love, Sarah's excessive concern with the well-being of the rodent on the balcony those three months before. Love for animals is not far from desire for animals, as Cade had learned not so much in the classrooms of the Agency as in the lunchrooms, among his co-workers. Now he could not fight back the feelings of anger. Had she made love to a dog?

With his voice cracking he asked her.

"No," she said. Cade believed her.

The next morning Cade felt all those emotions of a man on a fixed salary whose wife has just informed him of an addition to his responsibilities, except to a greater degree.

He was uncomfortable. He felt threatened. He looked upon Sarah with a new and colder eye. She walked through the column of his vision back and forth to the stove and the table. Her thin little figure and face seemed to be hiding ironic undertones that made him furious. She was meeker even than usual, but he could not be satisfied. He complained in a low voice of how ugly she was. She did not hear what he said. He refused, at first, to repeat what he had said, but he soon did, screaming at the top of his lungs. She was careful. He threw his food across the room. Finally, she cried. He demanded that she stop, and she tried to, but the brutality of her husband had pushed down and compacted her emotions, and now they spurted out in spasms that racked her small body and shook it. More and more she knew her marriage would soon fail. The child was never mentioned. In fact, Cade did not have any idea that his fury was caused by her pregnancy. The child only occurred to him as he was about to leave the

apartment, in such a way that his feeling was: "Along with the unsatisfactory conditions in which I am living, along with the unsatisfactory woman who is here, along with sharing my apartment with another, when before I was happy alone, now she expects me to lose my job because of her freak." Cade rued the fact that he had been called upon by life to go to his superiors, and his colleagues, those with whom he had most in common, his comrades, those of his organization, and tell them of his misfortune. He rejected the implication that it was his misfortune, anyway. He disclaimed it. He wished he did not even have to admit it in order to disclaim it.

Should he kill her and get out of it that way? He looked at her again. Strange and brittle she appeared, but still some scrap of his love for her opened a corridor of warmth and humanness between his perceptions and the surface of his wife. He felt himself pulled down to her suffering place. He could not open his jaws to shout, or raise his hand to slap her. He knew he owed her at least to ask his superiors what could be done with the child. He hoped this would resolve itself, and transmogrify into peace, so he

could lay, once again with his face buried in her white flesh, and her mild smell. But, before he left he was again rushed through by self-pity, and he kicked her in the leg, and like a dog, she slid away. Then he slammed the door.

In the early afternoon Sarah went to the bedroom, and lifted herself onto the high bed. She put in her mouth a small brown egg-shaped stone of plastic, the remote control unit for the television, operated by putting the tongue into a slot in the egg and applying pressure in varying degrees. The purpose of these remote control units was to increase the sense of well-being of the one who watched. Sarah felt the terror and sadness of events drift from her thoughts like a fed animal from the family table. Onto the screen, long and high with the leaves of plants slightly obscuring its lower corners, in an image that was pumped with color and looked like a tourniquet had been wrapped around reality and color was straining and bursting into the eyes of the viewers, came an old film. Soon she almost had forgotten the violence of Cade, and the fact that her fate would be decided by

the men he had called his "superiors" over and over on the previous night.

She saw a film called To Hold Back the Dawn. In it, a man named Iscavescu, from Europe, had waited a long time at the border of the U.S., in a little Mexican town, to get into America, where he and his girl-friend planned a series of con jobs. Their methodology was to make people fall in love with them and then to take their money. A teacher, taking her class on a trip to Mexico, arrives in the town. Seeing an opportunity to win her love, get her to marry him, and thereby end his waiting, Iscavescu steals a piece of her car's engine. She is forced to stay overnight, she does fall in love with him, they do marry.

Then, the newlyweds go to a festival in another town and the teacher picks up three mariachis seeds, shaken from a pinata. The three mariachis signify that they will have three children. "This one will be Robert Iscavescu! This is Helen Iscavescu! This is John Iscavescu! Two boys and a girl!" and this monolog develops into a short statement on the future lives of their children -- that they will be lawyers, doctors, maybe even a Senator - because - they will be

Americans. The nature of childhood, the need of the nation for people of all types, told by the teacher to her new husband. These ideals come to life in her beautiful face. He grabs her and kisses her, as two guitarists start to play.

Sarah watched this scene, where goodness earns love for itself, and cried.

Her dilemma was that any expression of her own desires concerning her child would not coincide with the beliefs of the people of her time. It was impossible for her to imagine talking in such a way as she saw on TV, sincerely, deeply, beautifully, to Cade, earning his love and support. Rather, it seemed that anything she said would be the opposite of all that was sincere or good, and she wondered if her desire for this birth was a sign that she was evil.

CHAPTER 10.

Cade entered the reflective lobby-cube of the office building. He felt much at home here, although it was the center of his career and not his leisure. The glowing pods of light to him were like big dogs licking his face. He went past the wall of small names typed in black upraised letters on white, silver and gold strips of stiff paper, to an elevator. He waited at the black doors. They parted. Cade entered into an elevator which was designed as a forest. There were leaves covering the floor and birch trees in three rows of three each, continued by paintings of further birches which covered the walls to draw the mind to a forest-mentality. Not piped-in music but the songs of birds, and the laughter of children, the giggling of young girls, and the low suggestive phrases of young boys were piped into the elevator. The entire enforcement apparatus of the Government was ecologically-oriented as, in fact, naturalness, the primitive and the unspoiled, have, in the time of Cade, become the theoretical basis for all the great waves of Law, that sweep over the crooked backs of the poor... Cade rested himself on a bench and

gazed at the wall of the elevator, knowing he must present himself in a few moments to Guttman. A bird was opposite him, that had been stuffed to display the spread of its earth-toned wings, while painted on the wall behind the bird, which was eggshell blue between the trees, was a low-flying helicopter, lower even than the bird, to give the assemblage a dramatic thrust into the eye of the observer, and in the helicopter was a man crouching and firing at the bird, with a lick of flame coming from the barrel of his rifle... Cade stood behind one of the birches, taking a piss that crackled in the autumn leaves on the floor.

The doors opened and Cade stepped into the section of his Agency's hallway taken up by posters. He rushed down the hall. As he went, Cade spotted Dr. Guttman, huddled and walking, holding a clipboard.

"Dr. Guttman, could you help me?" asked Cade, putting his sincerity and ingenuousness in little baskets and lowering them from his eyes into Guttman's own darting screw-eyes.

"What can I do for you?" asked Guttman.

Cade bit the inner ledge of his lips. In his face it showed he expected to be punished. "Dr. Guttman,

it's my wife... I mean it's that girl I picked up three months ago... That hitchhiker..."

Guttmann paused, quivering, and strained his ear upward toward Cade's mouth, saying, "Well, what's the matter, Cade, I'm sure it's nothing we..."

"She says she's pregnant, sir!" said Cade.

"Really!" said Guttmann. Actually, he was pulling Cade's leg, for he already knew about Sarah's condition.

"You don't understand," said Cade, "she says the child is going to be... one of.. them!"

"Of whom?" asked Guttmann.

"Of the freaks ."

"That," said Guttmann, "is no problem. Just bring the child to us when it is born -- or better still, bring the mother and she can give birth right here. There's no charge to Government employees --"

Guttmann was already walking down the hall.

"Wait," said Cade. "What will you do with the child once it is born? Do you kill them all?"

"No" said Guttmann, "most of them we do not kill They live pleasant lives at special retreats."

"But sir," said Cade, made bolder by the Doctor's bland acceptance of the situation, "I think she wants to keep the child at home, is that all right? With proper supervision?"

"No, no, sorry, no," said Guttman, growing a little angry, feeling the perspiration of his fingers and palm against the clip board's textured tan. "Just bring it to us and we'll worry about it."

"Yes sir," said Cade.

"You see," said Guttman, pretending to be taking time off from his busy schedule, which in actuality was a blank except for these hallway meetings with men in exactly Cade's situation. The reason for this was that the Agency had impregnated the wife of each agent with the cloned cell of a murdered mutant, because in that way the cloned offspring of each might be captured as it entered the world, and safely delivered to the labs of the Government without the knowledge or objection of anyone. All part of Guttman's plan. Like all the products of his own brain, his plan caused him to be loquacious, as he was whenever he was either elated or depressed.

"You see," said Guttman, "these monstrous births reflect badly on our civilization. You can understand that. People all over the world respect us because we are so beautiful. It makes sense. We're well fed, we've got a lot of tall people, plenty of sun in the summer, plenty of money for cosmetics, cosmetic surgery and so forth. These monsters could make us the prime laughing stock of the World, instead of the prime breeding stock we now are. The laughing stock. Up to now we've been dishing out the mutations, in layman's terms, calling the shots. We made one third of the animals and plants mutated during that war. We did the same for Africa. Get it? They were the laughing stock. We had a bad reputation for cruelty, but a bad reputation for cruelty is a good reputation to have. They had a reputation for being circus freaks. That kind of a reputation we don't need. I can see you show an active interest. You're bright. Come into my office and I'll tell you something very important."

He walked ahead and Cade, almost tripping over the Doctor because of the latter's idiosyncratic pattern of progress, followed close behind.

They entered Guttman's laboratory-office.

"You are about to be told what all the Agency's prospective fathers are told," said the Doctor.

"So it happens to us all, said Cade, to himself, thinking of the others.

Guttmann slid bent into his chair. It was obvious to Cade that Guttmann's bends had been made for that chair, or vice versa. "John Cade," he said, "you may never be a father, in the traditional sense of the word, but you will be immortal." His eyes glowed black fire. "You are a member of the first group of people in history, and hopefully the last, that has, at its exclusive disposal, the secrets necessary for Immortality. Some of these secrets were discovered by myself, but most have been drawn from the granite rock of ignorance by many University Groups and Foundations. "Immortality." He rocked himself in his chair.

Cade lit a cigarette and spat out a piece of tobacco. His legs were crossed so that his right ankle sat on his left knee.

"Now, as I am sure you know, this Administration, that is the President, was elected by the widest majority in the history of American politics, thanks to the new Reasonable Thinking requirements for all voters

that has eliminated the massive numbers of the irrational who used to turn out at these elections and degrade them into circuses and racewars... So there's no question that we have the mandate of the electorate... I mean the electorate... And I am empowered to tell you right now, that you are well within the cutoff points, and that your rank, your tenure and the exemplary zeal of your service to the nation, entitle you and your wife to be among the first of the Immortal!

"We have defeated old-age, heat, cold, and that old traitor, since time immemorial, the heart, and even..." he beckoned to open-mouthed Cade... he whispered... "don't tell anybody, but we've had a cure for cancer in 2062! We don't want every yerm off the street hanging around forever, do we? Even the atom-bomb, can't hurt one of us unless it falls right on his head. Come here. Come here. Feel this."

Cade leaned forward and outstretched his arm to Guttman's also outstretched. Guttman with his left hand rolled back the white sleeve of the right arm and Cade could see the skin on the arm, like the skin on

Guttmann's face and neck, was the reflective hardness and texture of the skin of a date.

"Tap it," said Guttmann. Cade rapped on the forearm with his knuckles. It was rather hard. "Touch it," said Guttmann. Cade opened his hand downward and ran his fingers gingerly over the width of that crosssection of the forearm. It was slippery, hard and mica-like. "Like a cockroach!" exclaimed Guttmann. "Wouldn't you say? What's it like?"

"Like a cockroach," said Cade, when he was able to speak. He could not remove his fingers from the powerful slope of his superior's forearm.

"We took the best from each species!" said Guttmann, with a pride, undiminished even after so many times having told the story, that made his chin fly up spasmodically. "From the cockroach we took that skin. Immune to radioactive fallout. From the elephant we took the memory. We are going to be in power a long time, son, a long time, forever, possibly.

"And you can come along. You can come along or you can stay behind and die when your time comes, which I can tell you, will not be long in that eventuality. And your lovely wife too, she can come along. This is why

we have to keep these youngsters for observation. What if they are poison to us? We want to know that now. Why take a chance?"

He smiled his long smile. All seemed reasonable to Cade. "Right, sir," he said with the child-like loyalty of a dog-like man, soft-eyed and fearful, "why take chances?"

"So," said Guttman, "go and do your duty. This child is not yours, any more than it is the child of your beloved. This child is the property of the United States Government. It, too, has a role to play."

* * * *

"To protect ourselves against death," Cade later said to Sarah, "we have emulated the cockroach. I am optimistic. I think we should listen to Dr. Guttman. Don't you?"

Sarah wept on the soft bed, crawling away and further away from Cade, crab-like, with the video's brilliant light glancing off the shoulders of both she and Cade.

That night she did not commit herself to one course of action or another, either to Cade or to

herself, but the next day before he was awake she went back to Mrs. Lena's, in her old neighborhood.

When she arrived at the black hallway and the foot of the stairs leading to Mrs. Lena's loft, Sarah heard the sounds of a struggle above. She pressed herself to one soft wall and waited. Soon, around the corner of the stairway came a moaning and sliding group of three, who were Mrs. Lena and two officers of Cade's Agency, one of whom Sarah thought she recognized from the elevator of her own building in the Government complex. Mrs. Lena was twisting and straining her giant form. Her hands were cuffed together behind her. One of the men held her by her shoulder and by some strands of her gray hair... Sarah was unseen, flat as she was against the dark wall. When the struggling group was almost all down the stairs, she came out of her place, and grabbed one of the officers in the loose area of his trousers that hung around his groin, squeezing his scrotum until a blow from his hamlike hand smashed her to one of the walls and then down to the floor.

"Mrs. Lena," she called out, as the woman was being dragged further toward the door, and Sarah could not rise. "Mrs. Lena, I have to ask you one question..."

"Quick!" shouted the old lady. She planted the rags around her feet firmly on the floorboards and held the men back for a few extra seconds. They found it impossible to move her. One was behind her, attempting to lift one of her massive legs, while the other one pulled her by the hair, and then, that failing, hooked his hands around her enormous neck and tried to pull her head down, to get her through the door.

"Mrs. Lena, they want to take my baby away. Should I let them?"

Mrs. Lena's eyes were closed as a barrier to pain, but an observer in front of her would have seen that her eyeballs rolled upward behind her lids in thought.

"They will kill it," she said.

After speaking, she allowed herself to be stuffed through the narrow doorway and barrelled across the width of the sidewalk to a low sedan's door. She was squeezed in to the car and it scraped away.

I will tell John, thought Sarah, what Mrs. Lena said. Certainly he will believe Mrs. Lena, when I tell him about her correct predictions. He will think of some way to save our baby... She thought of him, for

some reason, speaking over the top of an open magazine. That was her sense of Cade. And even if it was not the way he was seen by anyone else, yet to her his dead, relentless face represented wisdom. "They will kill it," she thought. But Mrs. Lena hadn't said whether that would be good or bad. After all, the last time she'd seen her, Mrs. Lena didn't know whether the freaks were a good or a bad thing - so many people assumed they must be killed, but must they, or must they not? She thought, if the Government agents arresting Mrs. Lena, also killed the freaks, it might follow that Mrs. Lena's saying they would kill her child could be taken to imply that Mrs. Lena stood against the agents, with the child, and that to hand the child to agents could be assumed to be against Mrs. Lena, against the will of Fate.

But Mrs. Lena had not actually said that.

CHAPTER 11.

When, after a silent meal of room service roast beef, which Cade ate with eyes mostly on the giant screen that was lowered over the window, she told him what Mrs. Lena had said, he only smiled and reminded her that Dr. Guttman had assured him that the child would be well cared for. He also reminded her of what he had told her before, that their apartment was not big enough for a third occupant, although in her former neighborhood a place of this size would have been roomy enough for twelve to fifteen.

"How can you think of turning a child over to those people, who murder children?"

Cade became angry now. He was a man defending his home (some say the oldest instinct of our species) against his wife and child. "You come in here, in my place, and tell me to abandon my place -- because of this -- mess --" he spread his arms wide. "You must be crazy. I worked to get this," and so on. "And besides, don't you want to be Immortal? Do you think they're going to make you, or me, Immortal if we disobey one of

the most basic laws of society? We wouldn't deserve it."

Sarah knew now she could not count on him. The opposite. He was standing up from his chair now. All around his feet were open and closed magazines and newspapers covered with pictures of mutant children. He approached her. She pushed herself out of the chair and in one move had flattened herself against the door of the apartment. She flung the door open, stepped around its edge, and slipped into the hall. He was walking in an odd way, with his left hand raised and crooked, and his forefinger standing up, as though they were both members of a club, in whose hallowed, silent chambers, observed by conservative members, he was trying to gain her attention. Calling. "Sarah, let's talk this over." He was not nerve-wracked in any way, now that he had passed the hurdle of telling Guttman. He certainly was not angry with Sarah, whom he now called, "Darling, sweetie, honey," walking after her in the springtime landscape of the building's corridor, but at last lunging forward to grab her small round shoulder as she was sliding into the elevator's open

cavity. He was too late. The doors whispered to the shut position. He twisted her shoulder and attempted to withdraw her from the tube into the long rectangle. Now his face was twisted with annoyance. Now he squeezed her flesh in anger. The material of her blouse tore off the shoulder and down the arm, and Cade was left with a torn piece of white cotton, when the doors closed and Sarah fell purposefully to the floor to reinforce the descent of the elevator.

When she reached the lobby of their building and clattered over its cool marble in her high heel shoes, she looked over her naked shoulder and saw that right behind her the doors of a second elevator were opening and Cade, his face clouded by solitude, was standing still as the elevator clicked up from its mock descent below the floor. "Sweetheart," he called to her. "Come back to me, please," but she ran. Out the glass doors, up the sloping semi-circle of the wide driveway, then, leaping over a wall of red bricks to an island of greenery, to shorten the distance she would have to run to reach the thoroughfare beyond the property of the building.

Cade also leapt the wall. Their feet made deep prints in the brown loam of the landscaped area. Sarah reached the street ahead of Cade and dashed without looking to the left or right, into the traffic. She was not hit by a car, but Cade, close behind, was. His foot was caught beneath the center of a large car's bumper, so that when it hit his hip, at forty miles per hour, he did not fly up to the air, but collapsed beneath it. The car's front and rear wheels rolled over his outstretched palms, as the center of the car went over his face and chest. The driver screeched to a halt just past Cade. Cade lifted his head and could see that Sarah was outdistancing him. To his surprise he was able to lift himself from the flat position to his knees. He was also capable of speech, and he screamed, knowing that he could no longer catch her himself, "Stop that woman, she's a thief! Stop that woman, she's a thief!"

As he had counted on, the people of the neighborhood, hearing that word, and happening to be on the street at the time, or in the windows above the street, bent all their efforts to catching the lone young girl. The eyes of Cade's neighbors glittered as

though the lights of a nightclub were dancing inside them... A thief!...

The citizens were well armed with clubs and chains that folded away into purse or pocket when not in use, and many of them were adept in the various crippling arts. Long ago, they had given up meekness in favor of honor, although some pointed out that the rise of their fierceness had coincided with the walling of their areas, and the disappearance from their areas of any of those who might have wanted to hurt them. One woman in a white hat, face covered by a fashionable gauze veil, pulled from her handbag a heavy chain and threw it at the slim legs of Sarah, entangling her and causing her to fall to the ground. Now many people converged on her struggling form, with ropes, garden rakes, and swords. In the case of two or three, they approached carefully with shields of shining aluminum that unfolded from small plastic carrying cases.

Fortunately for Sarah, all this took place at a few minutes past five on a working day, and when she was lassoed and stopped, it was close to the twin benches of a bus stop, where the women who worked in this neighborhood as maids and cooks were waiting in a

tight group for their bus out of The New Century. It would be an exaggeration to say there was a white woman among them. Sarah saw the hobbling and self-righteous residents in disorganized advancement toward her helplessness, and she raised her face in supplication to the maids.

"Please help me," she said.

She lay at their white shoes. As the bus slid up to them, they surrounded Sarah, lifted her up the stairs, and all scrambled in the front and back simultaneously, telling the driver, an old man on a high cushion, to speed away and not to collect the fares until he had cleared the gates of The New Century. The bus ground away from the following crowd, which pursued it for a few yards and then stopped.

The vigilantes turned to Cade, gathering around him. Those not immediately engaged in looking after Cade clustered in cliques and knots, seeming to enjoy the evening air and the sense of roaming and freedom which they got from being in the middle of the street all together. Some stood with their arms crossed over their chests, looking at Cade. They shook their heads. The women came together to relive the events of the

past few moments. Over the scene, the buildings on the westward side of the street cast lengthening blocks of shadow, long, long, and Cade was on the tar road in the center of his neighbors, who advised him not to move. A girl opened a yellow door in the giant building cube from which Cade had run, after Sarah, and she ran over a corner of the green lawn, over the sidewalk, over the semi-circular driveway's black arch, to Cade. She was a girl no older than Sarah, who wore a pink t-shirt with the words Save Our City emblazoned and faded over her breasts. She was a neighbor of Cade's and she had often seen him, and had secretly envied the young girl whom she had lately seen with him. Now she had seen the occurrence through the slats of the small window in her bathroom. She was taking a shower when she heard Cade's voice screaming after Sarah. She shut off the water and dried herself in the cool breeze of the window, while straining to see through it. She quickly dressed and ran out. She crawled to Cade, through the legs of the others, and knelt beside him, dropping one hand to his shoulder and surrounding him with the hand and her face. She asked if he was all right. "I have to make a call," said Cade. None of the others would let him get

up. He couldn't understand their talking. Finally, Cade used the young girl for support and raised himself to his feet, gradually, feeling stiffness but no pain.

She helped him back into the lobby of the building. The crowd walked along, many talking. There they sat on enamel tiles that were laid in the form of a pallette around a fountain that came from the lobby's wall. The others were all around them, filling the lobby, but it was possible to ignore them. The girl's mother stood peering around the frame of their family's door, which was on the ground floor and gave her a view of Cade and the girl.

As he spoke with the girl, unburdening himself of his troubles by lying to her, Cade stretched and tried his limbs. The lack of pain, the lack of pain, continued to trouble him. He wondered. He searched for the pain that he knew must be there, after such an accident as he had had, but he couldn't locate it. He yearned with his senses like a man who listens to hear some distant sound. He felt at any moment the pain of having been crushed would rush over him, suddenly, as the car had, but it didn't.

Cade told the young girl, whose name was Corey Squire, that he had fallen in love with the beautiful Sarah and had taken her into his home, honorably, as his wife, dressed her in fine clothes, and altered his apartment in several ways to improve her comfort, and that she had at last repaid him by stealing certain valuable objects from him. Corey had long waited for an opportunity to invest her emotions, and now, in the face of this tortured man, her eyes poured forth the warmth she had always known she would be capable of if only she did not have to live with her family. Finally the sounds of Corey's mother, and the sight of her (for she had moved from the door-jamb and now stood openly in the center of the corridor) so disturbed their concentration, that Cade squeezed the girl's hand, expressionless in a way that held great meaning for her, (if not for him) groaned, and with difficulty, rose to his feet.

He took the elevator to the ninth, or Red, level of the building's basement parking lot and walked over the red painted concrete to his car. He was weary but still had felt no pain. Over and over he sighed, and

thought he would fall asleep from the exhaustion of his recent ordeal, but the soft, luxurious interior of his car held him buoyed up, and the cool air soon filled his nostrils and throat. He set the massive machine into motion, feeling, somehow, that his misfortune was of such a nature, and his well-being was of such a nature, that they enhanced one another. At least, he thought, I am alone again. My own man. My own car. This basement. In the street where the scene had been, a group of boys were playing football. Cade's car slid through them, and they went by silently, although their mouths were moving.

Cade went on, getting weaker.

He did reach the Bureau but there his car collided into the wall of the building. Some men came out and saw Cade laying across the wheel. Seeing who it was, they sent for Guttman, who came out with flaps of white lab coat flying, and dark glasses. Strangers were gathering to see the collided man and car, and Guttman was anxious to remove himself from their sight. Therefore he turned around, and left the carrying of Cade to others.

When Cade next opened his eyes he was on a table, looking upward at Guttman and two others he did not know.

"I was run over by a car, but I didn't die," said Cade to Guttman.

Guttman made no reply, but continued to touch Cade on the chest, ribs and arms, putting on something that felt wet, and almost like skin to Cade. "It ran over me. But I was able to get up and walk away. I wasn't even hurt. The skin on my leg was flattened to the bone, but I didn't feel any pain, and then, walking on it, it seemed that walking had nothing to do with the bones of my legs at all. It was almost as easy to walk as it has ever been."

The Doctor shuffled to the opposite side of the table. His hands reached out to touch Cade's leg at the calf. Then he twisted Cade's head on the neck, back and forth. He tilted the head upward and looked into the eyes, then he pushed his forefinger into Cade's mouth, touching the tongue, the roof, reaching into the throat. He said yes, yes, yes. "Bite," he finally said. Cade did so, pressing his jaws together until the Doctor slapped the side of his head. When Cade opened

his mouth, Guttman's orange finger had glossy indentations.

"Yes, yes," he said.

"Why didn't I die?" Cade waited for an answer, but none came from Guttman, and Cade thought he detected secretive looking from one of the others, the ones he didn't know, to the other one. After a while he said, "How come I didn't die? How come I didn't feel any pain?"

"Credit your health with that, Cade." said Guttman. "What would have killed other men you have survived. What would have been unbearable suffering to others, you have borne without a sign of suffering. But don't ask about it again. Now, I'm going to inject you with something that will allow you to sleep, because. Sleep is the key to recuperation, for us all, and especially for you."

Cade did sleep, he knew not how many hours. When he woke up, it was day. Guttman came into the room. Again Cade asked, as though he couldn't remember any of the previous conversation with the Doctor, "How is it

that I was able to be run over by a car and feel no pain?"

Guttmann was alone this time, but he looked around him. Then he peered down, saying, "Don't ask me about that." He checked the wounds on Cade's body, and injected him with the sleeping drug again. Cade closed his eyes.

Waking again, this time in the dark, Cade was alone. He felt weak, too weak to call out to anyone who might be near his room, but he found within himself a desire to write in his journal. Feeling around on the small table beside his bed, he couldn't feel either his journal, or anything else he might write on, or anything he might write with. He was still for a few minutes, then made a decision, out of restlessness. He picked up a steel fork from the table and with its points, he pressed here and there around the wounds on his chest and side, until, feeling with the other hand, he felt his blood beginning to seep out at the border of one of the wounds. Then, using the tine of the fork, he wrote on the sheet that covered the bed, having to return the fork to the wound many times to make each small letter: "Here I lay in a hospital bed. Sarah has

gone away. I don't know where she is tonight. I was run over by a car, but I did not..."

The door opened and the light of the corridor came in, around the small form of Guttman. Guttman turned on the lights and came to the side of the bed. There he saw what Cade was doing, he picked up the edge of the white sheet, and read the blood-written words. Then, putting his hand on Cade's forehead, he looked at Cade for a long time. He looked at the wound in Cade's side from which the small bit of blood was coming. Guttman left the room and came back with a rolling metal cart. From the cart he lifted a round section of material that he laid on the wound Cade had opened. It was wet and slightly oily. "This will become a part of your skin if you leave it alone," said the Doctor. He pressed it down carefully. Then, from the table, he gave Cade a black notebook with white, blue-lined pages, untouched, and a pen. When he left again, he didn't turn off the light.

Cade wrote first about his argument with Sarah. Then: "Dr. Guttman was just here, and he gave me this notebook and pen. He said he would tell me something about myself when I am better..." Cade became drowsy,

all his restlessness drawn off by the few lines he had written, and rubbing the palm of his hand over the words up and down, smelling the molecules of the page rise up from the new-opened book, he fell asleep.

In a few days, his wounds were healed. When he was going to leave the hospital, and go home, he approached the door of Guttman's office and went in, as he had been instructed to do. Guttman was sitting in the dark room, beneath the waxy golden light of a green lamp.

Cade sat down. Before he could say anything, Guttman looked up from the work he was doing and said, "Cade, you didn't die when the car ran you over because you are already dead. You were someone else, not named John Cade, who died six years ago, in this State, and I was allowed to do as I had been asking to do for a long time, that is, to bring someone back from the dead, for that was my desire. Since that time, I have entered your brain, with the help of some of the others here, filling it with whatever we thought it should be filled with, and it is the result of those fillings that is you, as you sit there."

Cade said nothing. Guttman said, "How does it make you feel? What are you thinking about?" Guttman's eyes darted over the surface of Cade's face. Cade, in the meantime, was looking inward.

"Dead," he said softly. He traced certain bits of evidence that he was alive to the point at which each one would disappear in darkness. Dr. Guttman went on for a while, explaining the ins and outs of re-animation. Cade wanted to argue, for the first time in his memory, with Guttman. He wanted to say he was alive. But, if Guttman had said he was dead, then he was almost resigned that this was true. He wondered what this should mean to him. The fact that he was dead. He could not, as he sat in the gaze of the scientist, gather his wits to figure his feelings out and explain the world, as it now stood changed to him, to himself.

He was relieved to find that although he was dead, Dr. Guttman smiled at him. This encouragement caused Cade to review his life once again, more optimistically. Dead, after all, he was much more a part of his surroundings. Whereas before he had had the sensation of having risen to, now he felt he had been

born to, his situation, and therefore it was more rightfully a possession of his, like the warmth and attention of Dr. Guttmann. Still, somehow he felt betrayed, fooled, more alone than before. Why hadn't he been told about this before now?

"Why me?" asked Cade.

Guttmann leaned against the desk in a spiral form, and said, "We needed someone handsome. A soldier, a marksman, and you were dead."

"We needed you, to provide the people with something for the spirit in case you were ever caught. In case there were ever a trial. We needed a hero that women would love, that men would envy... Cade, we needed the support of the women... Think about it. If you want to accomplish any change in the field of ethics, you must first convince women."

Knowing well that he held Cade spellbound, Guttmann delivered to Cade a long treatise, broken only by Cade's perfunctory and weak interjections, on the techniques of resurrection, developed, he bragged, by himself.

CHAPTER 12.

He told Cade about his early weeks and months, when they had studied Cade, but they didn't know what else to do with him. There were certain drawbacks attendant upon the resurrection, said Guttman. It was impossible to determine whether these drawbacks would accompany every being brought back from the dead, because after Cade the process had never worked again. The almost total absence of a memory, the silence when he might have joined in conversation, and the frequent physical breakdowns that made it necessary to construct elaborate heat devices and keep him near them at all times, all made Cade less than an unqualified success to Guttman or the agencies to which Guttman was responsible. "He is not exactly what anyone had in mind," said one of Guttman's colleagues, and it was true. His hard, judgmental stare sooner or later depressed and offended even those visiting scientists who started out with the most enthusiasm for Guttman's creation. Even after the first two or three years, when Guttman had filled Cade's brain with several hundred manufactured memories, giving him the sights, sounds

and smells of a past that may not have existed but was still better than that of almost anyone else, Cade did not use his memories to create for himself any sort of personality. That was the problem. He had no personality, and no inclination to acquire one. His face gave forth no expression, his eyes did not bother to modulate light and feeling, his body had no vocabulary of gestures. Soon, only Guttman himself would bother with Cade. All the others drifted off. Cade's existence remained a classified secret, and thus, a constant rumor, but all that was required was that a man make contact with Cade for him to lose his interest in Cade.

As for Guttman, he would have liked to repeat his victory over the flesh, but he was never again able to do it. Therefore, he poured the energy of his ambitions into Cade. Cade was taught to dress himself. He was taught to ask for what he wanted. He and Guttman after some time developed what might be called a friendship, except that if Guttman were to miss a single day of his sessions with Cade, on the following day Cade would have to be reminded all over again who Guttman was.

Still, it was not long before Cade had been taught to occupy, by himself, his own apartment, in a high-rise building, and to present, in the public eye, the image of not just a living man, but a successful one, and one who was neat, and tasteful. The magic trick, devised by Guttman, was routine.

Routine and repetition composed Cade. Guttman continued to keep a detailed record of Cade's days, and continued to insert via electricity and chemistry that rather small set of reminiscences he felt Cade would need for a fuller life, and all in all they were both satisfied.

The cost of Cade's upkeep was not slight, however, and periodically there was a call from somewhere in the vast bureaucracy to recommit Cade to the earth. Guttman was always able to defeat that particular motion, but it became more and more difficult when the volumes of his study, "Days in the Life of the Dead One," were finally circulated among the leaders of science and the Army. Then it was noted that the "Dead One" even after all these years, had never attained what anyone would claim was full "personhood," that he still found it impossible to recognize his creator

after only a day or two away from him, and that the few actions that characterized his daily life -- his exercises, his television viewing, his education, -- were not sufficient to warrant the continuation of his tenure.

It seemed, at one point, that the anti-Cade forces might succeed in cutting off Guttman's funds, but Guttman hit upon the issue of the freaks, and Cade was saved...

Cade, on hearing and half-hearing the story of his own fate, went further and further into his mind's departments to return to himself with some proof that he was in actuality, alive, and from time to time he did say, although more softly with each attempt, for example, "What about my emotions?" or "What about my memories?" meaning, Don't these prove that I am my own self? But Guttman then would explain in detail the injection of various memories into the mind of Cade and the provision of certain feelings, and so on. He even took a folder from a large filing cabinet and showed Cade his own charts, although he could not allow him to read them. "Let's see, said Guttman, "I'd say your

fondest memories include: autumn afternoons on an island of lawn between two streams of traffic where you are playing football with the memory of a brother and six other friends...also, there is a moment when, sitting in a classroom you drifted into daydreaming until suddenly the noise around you seemed to increase, and it seemed suddenly to get colder, and you thought something was happening that you were missing...one experience of cracking open a soft-boiled egg at breakfast, in a summer camp, and finding the unfinished form of the chick there, refusing to eat the egg, the counselor saying that if you did not eat the egg no one in your bunk would have eggs for the rest of the summer, you finally eating the unborn chick... Eh?"

Cade was astonished to have been read some of his most vivid memories from the page of a folder. "Dead," said Cade. He thought of a number of his own characteristics, one after the other, like his love of rolls, his love of metal, unimportant things, and wondered if they had come from the nameless person he formerly had been, or if they had been implanted with his new birth.

Guttmann took Cade then from the room where they were, down the green corridor, to another room, a larger, lit area, where he introduced Cade to two of his colleagues, two of Cade's superiors, Dr. Gerhardt and Mrs. Osawa. Gerhardt was a jolly and round German of red complexion and Mrs. Osawa held herself around the waist as she moved across the floor to greet him. Cade hardly saw them, as he was more and more deeply examining himself for a proof of himself. Finally, as they were speaking, but it was a burble to him, he blurted out, "But I keep a notebook. I have written down my thoughts!" At last, he was on firm ground. His diary. Whose was it if not his? No, there wasn't much of it. It was true he had never learned to discipline himself to write the great extended stories he had inside him, the stories of his killings as well as those other ones, the ones that had no points of origin in the real world of his experience, but came to him out of nowhere, the lines carried on by the endlessly talking beings of his mind; still, whatever few things there were in that book, he had put there. Of that he was certain. Only a living man could have written any

of it. Let Guttman talk! Cade knew he had discovered a proof that he was Cade.

He waited in expectation that his superior would speak. He did not.

"I said, 'I have written down my thoughts,'" said Cade. "Doesn't this prove I was thinking for myself? Doesn't it prove I am alive?"

"He is an artist, this one," said Guttman to Gerhardt, and both men laughed. As they did laugh, Mrs. Osawa sat herself before a control panel of steel painted camouflage green, as though its makers had intended it to be used beneath the branches of forest trees. She made a few adjustments. She turned three black knobs which had scalloped borders, and in response the thin needles that showed in three clear windows, one above each knob, moved suddenly with frictionless and excessive speed. The paper was white in each window and was printed with small black numbers, so attenuated for accuracy, that Cade's eyes could not see what was said by them. Mrs. Osawa stopped turning the knobs when the needles were all standing perpendicular to the base of each window. She then threw a stainless steel switch that made a sound of

broken suction and suction regained. She raised herself slightly from her seat and ran her palms along the undersides of her thighs to smoothe her skirt. However, as in the absence of Guttman and Gerhardt's attention, he moved to approach her, Cade was surprised when his body did not carry itself in her direction. Instead, he felt himself thrown to the carpeted floor.

What an incredible feeling! How could I have fallen so suddenly to the floor! thought Cade, seeing that Guttman and Gerhardt were still not paying any attention to him, but were standing together at the corner of a work-table, where a plastic pencil-sharpener was attached by a huge vise to the wood. Dr. Guttman held in his hand a bunch of wooden pencils. He was handing them one by one to Gerhardt, who sharpened each one, blew the dust from its point, and put each one on the table. Cade was so amazed by the loss of his balance (it had never happened to him before) and filled at the same time with a sense of such solitude by the fact that the other three had their backs turned to him, that he felt he must use the moment to quickly jot down the details of his meeting with the three scientists, including a description of

them, as he had them before him, and including their phenomenal opinions about himself and his own life.

He patted himself up and down in search of a pen or pencil, but he could not find one. Neither did he have any paper. He was disturbed by this, and the effect of this latest frustration was to throw his thoughts backward over the whole line of unfavorable events he could remember, memories of course implanted in him by the scientists, but painful to Cade. His life seemed like a chain of defeats and bitter losses.

Stop pitying yourself, John, he finally told himself. A great load was lifted from his thoughts. He realized there was no purpose in bad memories. Now, in the confident moment of this decision, Cade wanted to write his notes, even without a pen or paper. He started to do so. The time from the time he had fallen to the floor to the time he raised his arm to write was less than one tenth of one second. He wrote in the air with his hand cramped and curled. It was then that Guttman and Gerhardt turned around. "How's the writing coming along?" asked Guttman, and they both laughed.

Only then did Cade realize that he was in the posture and attitude reminiscent of those moments when

he wrote in his diary, when he had recorded his thoughts and feelings.

He looked at his hand.

"Dr. Osawa has been sending radio signals into your brain, Cade," said Guttman. "When she sends a certain type of wave, you find yourself with a desire to write in your journal. Another type of wave helps you when we send you out on a mission."

"I am not me," said Cade.

"Well," said Guttman, "try to be philosophical about it. You've still got your job, your apartment, a fine automobile. There aren't too many people I know, dead or alive, who wouldn't give their eye teeth to have your set-up. When I was a boy growing up in the slums we didn't have food to eat. We didn't have clothes to wear. We didn't have you should pardon the expression a pot to piss in. But you - you're on easy street -- and not only that I might add -- you're young. And not only that. You're always going to be young. Take my advice. Count your blessings." In which Cade could not help but to recognize the self-told sentiments so often crossing from his silence to his hearing when in the course of his activities events

would oppose his desires, and in this recognition he found the ironic interplay of memories and pictures that he knew would characterize his thinking for a long time to come.

While Cade was still seated on the floor of the laboratory-like room, one final hope appeared to him that he might not be dead after all, and this came from remembering the child Sarah had said was his. He had no education in the field of biology, but nevertheless it occurred to him that, unless Sarah had secretly lain with another man or with an animal, which she had denied having done, and he was now inclined, more so than at the time of her denials, to believe her, who after all had clearly for a long period been in love with him, that the very fact that she was pregnant was proof of his humanity. And even though the child might be a mutant, so what? Even this fault Cade now tended to look upon with some understanding and sympathy, as it resided in a being, a youth, who after all was the flesh of his flesh and, as far as Cade could see, in the face of the three doctors who stood above him, the best proof that he, Cade was an actual living organism.

"Well," said Cade, in a tone that showed a sarcastic and contemptuous side of his personality which he never before would have turned toward his superiors, but which he now felt was justified by the unhappy discoveries concerning himself that they had been a party to but had not shared with him, (in all the room only he was dead), thereby setting themselves up as the easy idols of a poor man's envy, "What about my kid? What about that? How can a man do that if he's dead?" He tried to speak with confidence but his voice cracked a little, and when he was finished with his speech he was dry, his eyes hurt, and he could no longer look in Guttman's face. He looked at Guttman's shoes.

Guttman corrected Cade. He smoked a thick brown cigar. Cade did not look at Guttman's face, or upward at all, where the three of them were. Guttman delivered another long lecture. Cade, whose attention was on the floor, in the direction of Guttman's shoes, which stood oddly in relation to one another, pointing almost straight at one another, the left bent at the toe, marked the passage of time by the falling blocks of the cigar's ash through the field of his vision.

Said Guttman, "I have always admired the ignorant. Ignorance is the source of courage. It seems that as the extent of your ignorance is put before your eyes, your courage is increasing..." Groaning, he paused. "Let me assure you that I am in complete sympathy with your efforts to endow yourself with existence, but I am forced to inform you now that you are, regrettably, for I know the child has had great meaning for you, and I know that its role as the solace of your state was in the midst of its fertilization, that you are, regrettably, not the father of the child. I am closer to filling the qualifications for that title than you, unhappy friend." He groaned through his smile. An ash fell between his feet, black and warm. Cade at first did not understand what Guttman was talking about, but Guttman, in the extended style he always used, told Cade about the technique whereby any organism could be duplicated from any one of its cells, by fertilizing an egg cell of the female of the same species with the nucleus of the organism's cell.

He explained that the Bureau, in order to have a supply of the mutated children for research while at the same time deriving all the benefits in terms of

effect upon the anxious and news-hungry public that each killing would accrue to the Government, had instituted a "rather imaginative" program. Thereby, Guttman took from Cade the last hope that he was alive. Cade knew it was useless to argue. He did not cry, but a certain sentimentality began to well up in Cade. This sentimentality exists in most people as a result of their having two distinct vantage points from which to see themselves at any moment that of the moment and that of their childhood past, which causes a stretching. Cade, until this experience on the floor, had had only one vantage point, that of his present. Now the two periods of his time were clearly delineated, as that time when he had thought he was alive, and that time when he knew he was not alive. Having this sentimentality was later to affect Cade's actions, in a way which Dr. Guttman could not have anticipated without first going through a long course to learn empathy.

To Guttman, Cade appeared beaten into a more slavish loyalty, and he imagined that Cade would have

an increased respect for him and his doings. Cade stood up and brushed the legs of his pants.

He was silent for the rest of the interview. Guttmann told him a few more facts of the things that had been done to Cade's mind and body, the reason for Cade's frustratingly imperfect memory, and he renewed his pledge of immortality to Cade. "I hope you won't hate me for what I've done to you, said Guttmann. "I've always considered you as my son. I don't have any children of my own, and you were, in a way, the first-born of my life's work. I've had no desire to hurt you. Ever since your coming to life in my lab, I have had to fight against many, many people to keep you alive. Even these two -" He indicated Gerhardt and Osawa - "they're only with me in this place to spy on me, or rather, on you and me, reporting everything about you to other agencies..." "Oh, no!" said Osawa.

"No, Dr. Guttmann, you're wrong!" said Gerhardt, "we've always been dedicated to this work. We're the ones who believe in you, your allies in the system. How can you say we're spies, after we've been with you all these years?"

"Come with me," said Guttman to Cade, putting his arm around Cade's shoulder and turning to sneer at the other scientists. "You two stay here," he said.

Then, taking Cade back into the corridor: "I only tell you these things now, because you must know you are not the father of the child. You must continue to do the work of the Bureau, for both our sakes. People are becoming suspicious of you, and me. We're oddities, John. We have to be more careful than anyone else. Do you understand?" Cade didn't say anything. "For now, just go home. Be by yourself. The Bureau is trying to locate Sarah. When they do, we will be faced with a decision. I don't want you to think about that now though. Go home. Rest. Write in your diary if you want to. Think of things you want to ask me." He opened a door and Cade went through it. He felt the light touch of Guttman's hand on his back, then he went alone to his car.

CHAPTER 13.

After the bus was through the gates, out into the city, and the women each had gone to the front and paid the driver the fare he had kindly deferred to drive her faster out of harm's way, then all the women turned to watch Sarah, where she lay, talking to herself, sometimes seeming to ask a question, or even talk back and forth.

"Honey," said one woman, placing her hand gently on Sarah's shoulder, "why were those people chasing after you?" The woman slid out of her seat, although she was old, to her knees in the narrow aisle and embraced Sarah. Soon Sarah found she was calm. She told the woman about her child, and what Mrs. Lena had said to her. They shouted hallelujah. They told her she was blessed. It was decided that the woman on the floor with Sarah, Marilyn Stone, would take her to a certain place and hide her until she gave birth to the child, who might be the one whom they had heard of, and waited for.

Thus did Sarah find herself a home among the poor people of Los Angeles. For several months, as her

pregnancy increased, she could not leave the house. The streets were criss-crossed by the police: armed, idle, grown men. A white girl would have been noticeable in this area. Sarah therefore sat in the shadows of the small room they had set aside for her and watched through the window. She spent her days talking to the people who visited her. Many of them brought her presents. Some left money that she would find when they were gone. One man gave her a gun, a short-barrelled pistol. At first, she wanted to throw the gun away but she decided to keep it. The other women, Mrs. Stone especially, were opposed to violence, and hoped she would not keep the gun. However, she grew impatient with their arguments. The clear idea of self-defense was preferable to all their theories. She expected the Government to come for her at any time, possibly in the person of Cade himself. She kept the gun in a rectangular cavity that she herself created by cutting a hole in the pages of a large book. Sarah carried the book wherever she went in the rooms. She was determined not to give up the child. After it was born, she became ever more cautious and as she lay in her bed, her hand

was always stuck into the book, grasping the handle and trigger of the gun.

Marilyn Stone and the other women who worked in The New Century returned daily with news which they had overheard in the apartments where they worked. They reported that the Police and the Federal Bureau were looking for Sarah. Cade had been removed from his other assignments in order to devote all his time to finding her.

The worldwide news occupied most of Sarah's attention, although those who were hiding her hesitated to expose her to those anecdotes of murder that could not help but to call her thoughts to her own situation. She took a fascination in just these stories. She read them in the newspapers that soon littered the floor of her room. She loved to walk through the stiff pages to fall on her bed or to exit through the hanging cloth that separated her room from the rest of the apartment, a series of rooms without windows that culminated in a final square room with only three walls, the fourth having been removed for the addition of a canopy of green corrugated plastic that made of the final room a

large sun porch closed off from the white alley. This room had no windows either, although a good amount of green-yellow light flowed into it during the day. It looked to Sarah like a bright aquarium. The family intended that she should live in that room, but she refused. She wanted to look out at the street. Only rarely did she visit the green room. There were beautiful plants in it, that exuded a warm smell, but she preferred the chalky moisture of the newspapers in her room facing the street. There was also a comfortable couch and a glass table with a lower level of bamboo on which were three stacks of magazines, which Sarah liked to look through and dream over, but only in her own dreary room. The idea that she might give birth to a messiah gave her an interest in the affairs of the world. She wanted to be better informed, be able to teach the child all he would have to know, although he might not have to know anything.

In the city of Seattle one of the freaks, a twelve year old female fish-child, was being hidden from the police by her parents and some of the people in the neighborhood when she had turned on them and murdered her parents, two sisters and a visiting farmer with a

kitchen knife, or so it was reported in the paper. This kind of report appeared at least once a week, and was Sarah's favorite reading matter. She read about a wolftype of 15 who came out of seclusion and raped a woman, and terrorized her family, finally breaking the spine of her husband. Sarah was attracted somehow to films of this adolescent, who twisted his head violently beneath the hand of a soldier, snarling, showing the fangs at the corners of his mouth. He squeezed his eyes shut when the cameras' floodlights hit.

"Reginald Miller, on his way to being booked at the Concord Police Station, had quite a night last night, cold-bloodedly murdering Mr. Hiram Wells, the revered and beloved President of the Praime Corporation, the man who invented the tensecond hologram. Quite a character, Reginald. Here he is through the window of the paddy wagon. There he goes."

Sarah watched the President as he made a plea to all citizens for information concerning freaks and those who might be harboring them. The telephone numbers of certain agencies flashed in white on the screen as he spoke.

Neither Sarah nor any of the ones who visited her were troubled in the least by the stories of mutant madness and crime. At first they refused to believe them, thinking of the extent to which the news was controlled by the Government. Soon, however, they learned the stories were for the most part true. Still, they did not lose their faith in the freaks. They accepted the murders as they accepted the healing. For those caught up in the dream of a changed future, meditation on the acts of the freaks usually produced a much more subtle idea of the world after the freaks began to be guilty of crimes, than they had ever had while the freaks provided only blessings. Furthermore, as the mutants did emerge and do murder, many of the citizens of the Middle Class began to find in themselves a desire for the final dominance of these beings who were of (whatever) new species. The murders were not limited to victims of the Middle Class, but when such a one did take place, then the well-to-do, drawn by the spectacle of themselves in danger, were won to the cause of the mutants. This was because their comfort had bred into them a sense of their own child-like qualities and especially the feeling that

they were as innocent as babies. While being a class of exceeding personal beauty, most of them despised beauty and welcomed its destruction. Thus a formless yearning for derangement entered the classes, each man or woman's degree of power determining his or her fantasies of helplessness, while among the few oligarchs who had recently made themselves impervious to change so as to avoid destruction, there now appeared a desire to die. Everywhere economic men thought that their qualities and particularities stood in their way, preventing them from finding the truth, or the true religion. The desire to lose, to give up, that came from too long a time without the feeling of envy, pervaded them privately. Necessarily, at first no one admitted to these sensations. They feared they would be laughed at. The men, puzzled by new thoughts, feared that they were becoming effeminate. The women dressed themselves to look older.

Yes, when the mutants began committing real crimes, the members of the Government were weakened in their willpower, some of them actively desiring to be slaughtered themselves. However, this did not cause the Government or any of its agents to slacken in their

pursuit and murder of the children. It made them more cruel, because an action of which one is ashamed, which has been discredited, one often wishes to complete faster.

Sarah, reading and watching constantly, could tell from the slight variations in the appearances of things, in faces, in the shots of the police and the mutants, and of the empty rooms, that the Government at this time desired, in the feelings of its organism, to wait, as she was doing, and to be passive in the face of the future. This was little comfort to her. She gave birth to a cyclops. She refused to be taken into the sunfilled room. By the time of the delivery hundreds of people were passing through the apartment every day. The family worried that so many would result in a loss of secrecy. Sarah, on the other hand, at least at first, appreciated their attention.

On the other side of the city, Katherine Casey continued to live in the area where she had lived with her son, before his death. Those who had been helped by Raphael saw to it that she was provided for, but there

was no freedom for her in their provision. Food, clothing, a place to stay, are not cash, which would have permitted her to go wherever she wanted to and if she had wanted to - as it happens, she did - to leave the memories of Raphael, his healings, and those grateful neighbors of hers far behind her. After all, there was the family she had left, years ago, when she had run away with her boyfriend - but her parents had no money either, to send for her travelling across the continent, and if they had, they might not have sent it. Katherine's mother was a member of a circle of correspondence such as then were popular among the poor. They wrote what one day would be the only true record of their era; and by those circles of correspondence Katherine's parents had learned with pride of their daughter's celebrated child, and of the dignity with which their daughter survived her son, and of the comfort she was to others.

Day after day came the followers of the freakish persuasion up the stairs to her attic. She felt there must be something she could do for them, but it was more than she could bear to talk to them. Most of the time she sat silently as they spoke to her, and when

they left she sat alone - or with the woman who lived on the floor below hers. At those times she found herself returning in her thoughts to the church where Raphael had died; she thought of the brow of the assassin, and his eyes. One day she heard from someone that another child had been born, to a white girl living down among the blacks. That same day she was taken there, and she met Sarah. She saw the child - like her own Raphael.

At first, Sarah didn't know what to make of this woman, who brought no presents, who wanted nothing but only looked at her with a distant kind of understanding. But when she heard Katherine's history, she felt here was a woman she could talk to. She told her the story of Cade, his job, her escape. They drank coffee, and Sarah didn't let anyone else come into the room for three hours, having the others take care of her child, whose name was Aqbal, down at the other end of the rooms.

CHAPTER 14.

By the time Cade was back in his home he was reconciled to the new information that he was dead. As he later wrote..."Dead or alive, what is the difference to me? I looked at my arm and let out a snort of pleasure. I touched my fingers with my fingers. There was feeling, sensation, throughout myself. All dead. The dead receptors sensed the dead impulses within its own dead places and I was myself, and within myself, but all dead. What did it matter to me? I was proud of myself. I took off my shirt and stood in front of the mirror. I breathed on the glass, to enjoy the physical form that something dead exchanges with the air...I thought about myself...I thought about myself...More and more...I did not feel alone...I did not feel unhappy... Dead? I had no sense of the word! Here was my body - it breathed - it was flesh, not clay - Here were my eyes - I could look into them as well as into the eyes of the Liquid Child, or the eyes of an animal...They dominated my face...They caught the light and threw it back in a lighted image of my personality...Or were they the eyes of the Liquid

Child, or the eyes of Dr. Guttman? After all, Dr. G. said I learn everything by copying. What if I was only copying G., or one of the freaks?

"What would my eyes show without copying anyone's else's? Then, of course, the answer came to me. They would be dead."

Cade did not find the happiness he expected with Corey. For a couple of days, they were friendly, to the point of his sleeping with her in his apartment, where he had brought her to try on Sarah's clothes. However, Cade was lonely for Sarah, and as a result of this he tried to behave toward Corey as he wished he had behaved toward Sarah while she was with him. This behavior had no attraction for Corey. Soon she would not answer his knock on the door, when her parents were away, and soon after, he stopped trying to see her.

The absence of his wife, followed closely by the other revelations made to him, exerted a profound effect upon Cade's thoughts. As a creation of Guttman, he necessarily contained many of the old man's values and desires, one of the strongest acting upon him being the desire to possess beauty. Inbred into each of the

assassins, so they would share that ideal which the Government hoped would unite the nation, was the yearning to win beauty to oneself, even to have it to destroy, so as to be able to be at peace with oneself. All of the men whom Cade came into contact with possessed beauty in the form of themselves, their wives and other relationships with attractive people. Not only the fact that Sarah left him, but also the rejection handed to him by Corey, made Cade feel there was no reward for the path he was on.

For a long time he had no luck in finding Sarah. They wouldn't let him change to another assignment, although he complained bitterly (knowledge of his being dead was the end of the enchanted period in Cade's career, when he had loved and obeyed his superiors without a question) and Cade, powerless to alter his vision of self-interest, stayed on the case hoping to wrap it up.

There is a question whether he or anyone in the Bureau would have succeeded in tracking Sarah through the hostile sea of the people who were protecting her, but Cade was finally assisted by that inevitable

character of all relations with the Government - the Informer.

Cade had been assigned to a private room with a desk, a chair, and a telephone, and walls of fiber glass, mostly for the purpose of receiving such an individual. He thought about his wife constantly, He still loved her. He planned to take her back with him, after they were free of the child.

With what thoughts did he continue to write in his diary, now that the mechanical nature of his writing had been exposed to him? He did continue. He subjected himself to self-examination. He loved to read his own words, for, the truth was, he hoped to trick his being dead through his writing. He hoped there was a word, or some combination, whose creation by him would, in some way, spring him to life. The many who have written words do not have to be told the yearnings that were within him, or how ridiculous they were...

A knock on the plastic door. A pale woman stepped into Cade's office. She was hesitant and slipped from the door to a place near Cade. She held her vision on his eyes directly. He looked up from his diary. The sad face. The defeated shoulders. Cade had the sensation

that he had seen her somewhere before, but he could not recall where.

"Mr. Cade," she said, in a low voice, "you don't know me, but I have seen you. It was a few months ago. In Venice, if you remember that time." Cade did not. This child-faced woman told him she was Katherine Casey, mother of Raphael, the cyclopean whom Cade had destroyed (as he now recalled) on the day of his meeting Sarah. Katherine Casey had never recovered from the bitter period when her son was a healer. Now that he had been dead for almost a year, the initial shock of his murder had worn off long ago, and the stunting influence of that shock in her youth, revealed itself in the stuporousness and virtuousness of her expression. She wore white cotton gloves. Her bedraggled hair, falling in oily blonde strings, her forlornly furious look, her nervous habit of pursing her lips like the ring of thread used to raise and lower the window shades of an old room, indicated to Cade that the woman was an outcast from her group. She obviously spent much time talking to herself. She was isolated because of pride, he thought he could detect.

"You see," she said, "you killed my son, Raphael..."

Cade started to rise in his chair, saying "Now listen," but she put up her white glove and stopped him by saying, "Please, Mr. Cade, I do not hold you to blame. I do not blame anyone. No," and this was true. She had watched Cade going down the hill away from the church and the seed of desire was planted in her. What a brave man, she thought at that time, and still did think. What a brave man. While many would consider it the act of a coward to murder a young child with a shot gun, and even then, not approaching the child directly, but shooting him from ambush, Katherine saw more deeply, to the heart of the action, and saw that here was a man who had defied the miraculous, and defied it even more, even more bravely, by daring to attack it by the most underhand means. To her, Cade had inherited the powers of her son. Thus, having changed greatly since that time before the birth of Raphael, when she was alone in the attic, she walked behind the desk of Cade and touched the thick shelf of his brow. She lowered herself with her eyes closed onto his lap.

Afterwards, she told him of the apartment where

she had visited Sarah and the child. He strapped his shoulder holster under his left arm, plugged a pistol into it, upside down, threw on his jacket, and went out.

Now Cade had come to this: thinking of what to do. He was dead in a time without imagination. There were no stories, no access to the thinking of others, which had any bearing on his problem. The play Hamlet was broadcast a few days after his conversation with Guttman. Cade found a lot to think about in Hamlet. The ghost was his favorite character. He understood the chains worn by the ghost. He latched onto the most famous line, and turned it around. "Not to be or not not to be."

He had no examples on which to base his actions. He changed every few hours, sometimes considering his state the lowest, sometimes the highest, then no different from that of others; sometimes feeling called upon to do some violent thing, then called upon to do nothing; then to be in grief, or forgetfulness. Soon he was as much at home with himself as anyone. He soon thought everyone disappeared when he wasn't looking at

them, that they judged him by laws he knew not of. But all these things, while they may have allowed the days to pass with less and less pain for Cade, gave him no help in the decision of what to do...

Where were the laws for him set down, how must a man live so separated from himself in every way, from his past, from the further past, when he had been born as an infant, to a woman, like others, when he had possessed a name he didn't know; and from the causes of his actions, murders. What could he accept on any authority to be that toward which he must tend, or away from which he must flee?

Finally, he saw many things others of his time and place did not see. He became critical of what he saw around him, and there was a lot of self-saying going on within Cade, and unconscious, silent talking. This in part came from his yearning for Sarah, and in part by the influence of Sarah. Her goodness could not help but be productive of goodness, especially in one who was, as was Cade, a copycat.

He began to change so radically, filled with the inspiration breathed into him by his time with Sarah, that finally he took the side of the freaks. He found

himself wishing the freaks well, and all those who let them live.

He realized that the only way to live decently was to be weak, to suffer, to be the butt of violence.

If only Sarah were here to see how I've changed...

He curled up on the bed. He found a long hair of hers lying caught in the tendrils of the woollen blankets. This he pulled out of the wool and laid on the white pillow beside his face, smelling it, touching it, wetting it with his tears...

And so, when Katherine told him where Sarah was, he did not go there, but instead went to see Guttman.

He found Guttman in the cone of light from the green lamp, bent over some papers on his desk, with his thin forearms curled around the pages, which seemed to be something Guttman himself was writing, and didn't want Cade to see. Cade had not known exactly what he would say to the Doctor, but he sat down immediately, before he was even invited to enter the dark room. Then he leaned forward in his chair and put his fingers on the edge of the desk.

"I have been told where Sarah can be found, but I won't go," he said. "I will not be made to kill her, or her child, though it may not be mine. I am changed."

This was truly a new Cade facing Guttman, if not quite looking at him, for Cade had not come that far this soon that he could look into the eyes of Guttman and at the same time rebel. "You're a ridiculous character, Cade, I must say. And this is one of the strangest moments I will ever have, to have heard the ventriloquist's dummy cry out from the depths of its trunk, so to speak, although it is not my purpose to insult you." Guttman spoke with the anger of a man who has been interrupted while doing something he had planned for a long time, and just found an hour in which to do. "How do you come by these new ideas? And then, having such ideas, why bring them to me? I am your only benefactor, the one who has fought the entire Government for your continued permission to walk on the earth instead of lying beneath it, why hurl your retorts at me?"

Cade didn't know what to say. Wasn't it obvious why he had come to Guttman once he had resolved that

he would not track down Sarah? Where else should he have gone?

Guttmann turned the pages on his desk over, stood and went to the file cabinet behind his desk. He opened a drawer and looked into it. Cade's eyes followed him. For a long time, Guttmann stood staring into the long drawer, with his deep eyes, and then said: "Would you rather be dead? Beneath the ground? I'm sure you would. So would I. There's nothing of you that wasn't first of me."

"I don't want to be dead," said Cade.

"I was always certain that would be your first wish," said Guttmann.

"It was," said Cade.

"I diluted your opium. I thought you would want death, if you were in pain."

"It also made me want to be in your good graces... But then you returned the strength a few days ago. Why did you do that? Did you think I was convinced to do as I have always done?" Cade spoke in the full knowledge that the very ability to speak was by the grace of Guttmann. "I have come to believe that there is

something else to me, another aspect to me, than what you put into me. Is that possible?"

Guttmann closed the file drawer, went to the window, and looked out. "Another aspect" I don't know," he said after a long time.

Then he said, "Yes. Sure. The influence of the girl. Who can say what will be the strongest influence. I filled your wall-trough not because I thought your rebelliousness was over, but because I couldn't bear your suffering. The others said, "Cade's influence on you has gotten to be as great as your influence on him." and they may be right. Long ago I could have been promoted out of here, but I knew they would kill you if I let myself be moved. Now, if, as you say, you have drawn some kind of existence, outside the one given to you by me - that would constitute a very definite step in an evolution. An evolution when we expected only a mechanistic repetition. In other words, somehow, the spark of life has been ignited in you. My guess would be, however, that that has not happened, although it seems to you it has. That is, you're showing a very complex set of variations on your primary material, but my guess is, if we studied this set of variations, we

would discover its entire source would be your mimicry of someone else, in this case Sarah, and is in itself one part of your primary material. In any case, I can't change your assignment. I have no power to do it. Others are interested in what you can do. They want to see specifically how you handle this assignment before you now. That's the way they are. As to what you will do you believe it is up to you. I only say: Cade, a situation exists on 109th Street. Go there, make the child of yourself and it, be death."

Cade sat looking at Guttman a while, then stood. He said, "I am going there now. But I don't know what I will do when I get there."

"Good luck, Cade," said Guttman.

When Cade was gone, Guttman turned over the pages on which he had been writing. He had not wanted Cade to see them, for they were a new thing to Guttman, but not to Cade. In fact, Guttman had allowed himself (in this once instance, he would admit) to be influenced by the example of Cade, and to begin a written account of his life. Hadn't Cade continued to write, even after knowing he was dead? And hadn't it also been true that Guttman, when Cade was asleep, reading by the light of

a small flashlight, one large-printed word at a time, had been continually surprised not only by the fact that Cade was able to write a line or two, or even three, before the constraints of the inner juices made him sleep, but the content, the words themselves, where did they come from? What was the source of Cade's stringing together? And then over a certain number of days it pressed itself upon Guttman, that he too must write a record of his thoughts, and somehow string together words, toward no end that he could think of, now, but to do it, and in this, to follow Cade, in one thing at least, and so, picking up his pen and pointing it once at each word teeming down the most recent page, he pushed it into the paper at the first white space and continued:

"...Then, the squanderer of chances became the grabber of chances - I put my genius in harness to a State job - I had trusted it long enough to arrive at some notion or invention assured of delivering to me my fortune in the pure form, a fortune made without having had to compromise with the world, its evil, its good; I realized I would have to play politics, and since then, I have had to eat all my meals with other people,

always talking about our plans, our schemes, scheming against one another, joking. My life has been entirely changed since then. When I am lucky enough to be able to sit alone, in my own room, eating toast, drinking tea, happily contemplating the sorrows of the world, I wonder what in the name of God I could have been thinking of to want anything beyond a minimal existence. And women liked me, hideous as I was, that's the thing, I was a beast, but they were fascinated... Allurement, how else can I explain my mad desire to have money. Desire to vindicate my family, to attract the attention of the world to the worthiness of my family - my father, mother, brothers and sisters. Not me, but where I came from. But my family has never benefitted. Not really. Neither have I, unless you consider to pace marble floors to benefit, or to have power over the lives of others. What a terrible thing that is! - My mother, my sweet little mother! When I first left home and took myself to school I gave her beautiful round face a kiss and said, 'Mother, I'll be back soon, and we'll be rich.' but I waited too long.

"At first I was too arrogant. I thought I had no need of others. I was aloof. I tried to exalt myself

through my private exertions alone. I thought and dreamed, in hopes that one or the other would lead to something, but had no great, or profitable, theories... It was expected I would be the most famous of all the brilliant brains at school, but the others played politics. One after the other I saw them make their careers. I was the one not to be helped, because after all they had seen me for so long as the one to beat. Not that I really was arrogant, only that I was driven into solitude in order to work. I thought there would be time enough to make my amends after I had done something of value. My real arrogance was in thinking I could do it at all, let alone soon. You start something with the idea it should be finished before dawn so you stay awake all night, you drink coffee, and it takes eight years before you publish a short article in the Journal of Orgonomic Chemistry. I remember the years I spent in Paris. Year after year, new grants would be given to me, just in time to have left me penniless for one or two terrified months, just enough money in each grant to prolong the agony of my exile..."

He was thinking along these lines when the telephone rang. He picked up the receiver, still reading over his own words, and listened to the talk, then said, "I am fairly certain he will." It was Gerhard. A shift in favor had suddenly put Gerhard in a new position in relation to Dr. Guttmann, one from which he could demand answers to his questions. "No. Never before. But I think there are certain limits," said Guttmann, somewhat offended, because of what Gerhard was saying about Cade. Finally, he was able to hang up.

CHAPTER 15.

On the way through the corridors of the Agency, Cade decided he would not go to Sarah's hiding place, but would drive home and wait to see what the Agency did to him.

However, when Cade was in his car he lost track of his own thoughts, and was washed through with the tide of thoughts formerly hypnotized into him. He forgot his resolution of just a moment ago, that he would not go to the place where Sarah was. He drove directly there. But, when he pulled to a stop and stood up in the street, the fresh air entered his head, and caused a change to come over him once again. He stopped, almost falling forward, saying, "Well, I do want to see her, and I have to go there for that" He went forward again.

After a moment or two he reached under his jacket and pulled the snap of his holster, allowing the pistol to fall into his hand, and holding his arm across his middle to hide the gun against his left side. He stopped his forward progress once again. "Why did I take out my gun? I'm just here to see Sarah. Well... In case anyone else is here to do Sarah harm..." and

yet, he was the only one. He turned. He walked back toward the car. He stopped and turned again. He walked toward Sarah's hiding place. He looked at the windows for some sign of life. He saw a thin girl pass in front of the window. He pulled the gun from under his jacket. He lifted it up. Then he shook his head, seeing almost at once it was a young girl. He put the gun back, turned again, shaking his head in an attitude of self-criticism, and got back into his car. He touched the control that lowered his window, in order to keep the fresh air flowing into his head, because he dreaded losing it. He threw his gun into the street, looked at the building once again, and drove off.

Now he went through the city, until he was beyond the trash piles at the outskirts, and out among the orchards that surrounded the city to the East.

He drove further East, past where the orchards came to an end. He was then in the desert. It was late afternoon. Cade could not remember ever having seen the objects that were around him there, but he knew they were cactii, sagebrush and flowers. He passed a family of Indians sleeping by the side of the highway. He passed no other cars as he went. After nightfall, he

veered his car off the road. He drove in the sand, until the car ran out of gas. Then he walked away from it, but soon turned and came back to it. He lay down on his back, and saw billions of stars, many more than he could see from the window of his room, all drifting left-to-right. The sky was white with starlight. He put his hands on the ground. The morphine diminished in effect. He had not been in his wall heater for many hours. He felt the reawakening of his nerves of pain, like areas of fire breaking out beneath the skin of his face, his stomach, his neck, eyes, lips, shoulders... His teeth began to chatter. He tossed back and forth on the ground.

A pack of wolves heard the sounds of his motion and walked toward him in a straight line a hundred yards. They fanned out and circled around him. They closed in an irregular line, taking one step back when he would throw his arm or body around suddenly, to escape the breezes that scraped against the surface of his skin, until at last one of the prairie wolves found the courage to attack this unusual creature who had ignored them, and seemed not to have heard their barking and howling, and sank its teeth into Cade's

left arm. The others then, with louder noises than the courageous one, began tearing into Cade's flesh. They bit him on the right hand, almost removing it, the right side of his rib cage, also below his left eye, and tore away his right ear. One of the wolves held Cade's arm in his teeth as he bounced himself against the nearby car. Cade experienced these indentations as a welcome relief to the pain of the air passing across the surface of his skin. He opened one of his eyes narrowly. Through his eyelashes he saw the straining shoulder of one of the animals. He closed his eye. Suddenly the growls of the wolves ceased, and they removed their teeth from Cade. They began to sneeze and snort. Cade opened his eye and saw one of the wolves rubbing its nose and jaw. Then, like the others, it stood with its mouth open, looking at Cade. He wondered what they had tasted in his blood to make them stop devouring him, but the pain of his insides removed his thoughts from them.

The wolves left. He wrapped his hand in a plastic bag when he noticed the flowing of his blood. The places where he had been bitten felt cold, and the energy that coursed through his body was able to escape

the inside through the wounds, so he didn't mind them. He pressed a towel to the side of his face, to stop the blood there. He stood up and paced around his car, until he fell down, stretched himself out, and was able to sleep. After a few hours the white light of a search beam crossed the desert. Guttman saw him from the air raft, in which he was riding with Gerhardt and Osawa, and they came down to get Cade. They took him back to the Agency, where Guttman patched him up with new skin. Cade was drugged, and he slept for 18 hours. When he woke up, he had no memory of having gone to the desert, or of the wolves, or any of the troubles of the past few days, nor of his rebellious feelings. Guttman walked out with him to the sunny parking lot, where his car was waiting, and before he closed the door of the car he said, "This is your last mission, Cade; you won't see me again. I'm afraid your time has not yet come. It was not yet the time for you. Take care."

Cade drove down to an area near the docks, and got out of his car standing on a wooden dock. The boards were dry and rotting. The sun cut into his eyes. He saw down one block the building where he knew Sarah was, and went toward it, to do his mission. He saw a crowd

around the front steps of the building so he walked between two small houses, to the alley running between the backs of the rows of houses. The backs were wood although the fronts were made of stone.

As he approached the building he saw a black man at the window, almost bald, with smooth muscles and a hard chest, with the face, to Cade's seeing, of a dog, with a long dog's jaw. Cade, whose desire for his wife increased with his closing steps, his head already full of lust, imagined the man as the lover of his wife. That is why she left me, he said to himself. He was overcome with jealousy. His coat billowed as he crouched and ran. He drew his pistol. Its barrel extended out over his fist. The other man was looking into the wide cavity of a t-shirt that was stretched between his arms, bending his right arm at the elbow and pushing his head upward toward the neck of the shirt, as Cade squeezed off his first shot. It passed through the clean glass into the man's shifting chest. The man took the bullet, staggered, and fell beneath the window sill, out of Cade's vision.

Cade broke down the wooden door to the right of the window. His usual caution was gone because for the

first time in all his missions, he did not desire the outcome to be any particular one, and his motions were made as though he were herding himself through corridors.

Twisting and turning in the linoleum entranceway, in which he could sense, but from what direction he did not know, the smell of an infant's flesh, he saw that a certain number of rooms lay to either side of him, in a series to each side. To the left, in the direction of the room where the man he had shot lay dead, at the end of two or three rooms, was a flood of green light unexplainable to him; to the right, two or three rooms succeeded one another, and the end of them was dim. In that direction, also, the doorways of the rooms began to fill with the faces of people. Cade, not knowing which direction to go in order to find Sarah, and wary of passing too many others, who, once having been passed, might fill up the spaces behind him, went instead toward the dead man. That room, a bedroom, was empty except for the man's form; the next room was smaller. Cade ran through it, noticing only as he was already in the next room, that that room had contained several people, standing in front of one another

against the wall to his right. There were many small children with their backs pressed into the chests of older women. Finally, Cade stood in the room flooded with light, where his imagination had placed Sarah and the infant, but this was the room that she had always avoided. The room was so warm and light, so protective, so full of the past, that it attracted the sentimental side of Cade, that had grown with every murder, then with the alliance with, then the loss of his wife, with jealousy and the renunciation of sex that had gone with it, that Cade felt he was floating, without desire, as he so much desired to be, and wasted precious seconds drifting through the sunfilled area, gazing at the pillows, where he felt she must often recline, probably at peace with the black man, at the religious prints on the walls, whose messages were submerged beneath rippling sunlight, and only after a long while did the panicked sounds of the family and guests return in his hearing to their true volume, giving him the eerie sensation of having been asleep. With difficulty he tore his eyes from these surroundings and stepped into the doorway that led to the other rooms. He was ready to be killed, but there was no one in the house who

could accomplish it. Cade instead slaughtered two young boys and a man who appeared to be a minister, who was cut down as he ran between the boys' bodies swinging over his head a hatchet.

As he went from room to room he saw that the density of the crowd increased with each one, but the opposition he would have expected to rush from such a packed material did not. Sarah must be in the final room, he thought. In the third, toward that dim final wall, where the three were dead, Cade found that his headlong run toward the completion of this event, which he had initiated without enough thought to its carrying out, was impeded by the comic backs of the crowd, who were squeezing in fear through a narrow doorway.

This resistance, that had no spirit of resistance, offered Cade no choice but to wait until the mass was through the door. During this period, he looked behind him and took two steps into the previous room to see whether or not the children and aged ones he had spared were taking any action against him. They were only crying among themselves. It was as though by the fact of Cade's having entered their house, they had become immigrants in a country where they didn't know the

language, which made him, in his own eyes, that much more the representative of his Government, and Cade once again was thankful, despite those facts about his own existence that disturbed him, that he was, at least, as one of the indivisible attributes assigned to him, a member of the Middle Class, and that he would never be found huddled among others babbling in a room.

He wondered, as he scanned the mournful crowd, what had become of these peoples' sense of individuality. It was as though none of them was the hero or heroine of his or her own life-story. Cade thought of vegetables growing in rows, and it was only because of the necessity to turn again and follow that other crowd through the door on the other side of the room from where he watched this crowd, that he did not - if only to separate himself more clearly from the vegetable state, kill the children and old people. He wondered, as he resumed his action, whether it was the fact that he was dead, or some innate uniqueness relating to his destiny, that made him so clearly different from the mass of humanity, whose situation, pitiable as it was, seemed to be preferred by them to death.

In the fifth room, counting from the greenhouse where Cade had been momentarily bewildered not to find his wife, and only one room removed from the one where she was, Cade encountered strong opposition from the crowd, which by this time was so dense that the people in its center were calling out for air. The crowd was packed in the two final rooms. Those who faced Cade were in that group that had been the slowest to run away from him.

None of them was armed. These were people brought together by a religious impulse, no matter what else you may think of them. Their faith in the freaks, in the face of unrelenting propaganda and that common sense whose source was Federal, could only have been accompanied by the renunciation of arms.

They were, after all, sects formed around leaders of another species than they themselves were in. They were people whose desire to assume the responsibility for their own acts was minimal, even less than that of a man who follows a dictator, who at least is another man.

Cade had always been amused by certain qualities of the poor, and now, to see them all unarmed, his

first impulse again was to laugh at them. Even as he had done a few moments ago, when the children were pressed against their grandmothers. (Cade turned and satisfied himself again that these people were not moving to attack him.) But now, seeing that there were so many of them, and that he was facing them alone, the opposite attraction to all the attractions he had been subject to in his history attracted him -- that of the crowd.

He felt that even if he were to kill them all, they were somehow more safe than he was, because they would still enjoy, in death, the approval of one another, while he would not be approved of, except by Dr. Guttman and the rest of his superiors.

And Guttman himself, Cade remembered, was not the sort of person whose friendship could be relied upon through any situation; not that Guttman had ever actually done anything which Cade could now remember as having been contrary to Cade's best interests, but he could remember many moments in Guttman's presence when he had suffered from the uncertainty of Guttman's goodwill, and many moments when Guttman's mobile and ironic face had even seemed malicious to Cade. Could

this have been true? he now found himself wondering. It was clear to Cade that merely by wondering, he was illustrating the unsatisfactory nature of his relationship with Guttman. What kind of friend is it whose face recaptured in a moment of personal trial cannot ignite even a pale flame of self-assurance such as can only be derived from the memory of a friend's sincere emotion? Not a very good one. Whereas the people who faced him, all pushing closer to one another, derived the strength of blamelessness, just from one another.

Again, for the second time since he had entered the apartment, with its row of small rooms, Cade was lost in the meditative mood. He looked at the faces of three people: first, a short woman with a round face and apple cheeks, whose eyes were wide and imploring. He found that he desired to speak with her. Her face seemed to wash toward him on waves of the air, and he wondered if this was an effect of his imagination, or if, as it appeared, she was such a kind woman that her concern, even for a man like himself, her sympathy, was capable of flying through the air. Then, when some

motion drew his attention from that woman, it was arrested as it crossed the inner surface of the sphere of vision, by the face of a man. The man was sweating, and large drops like lenses ran from his brow. Cade was attracted by the calmness of his eyes, in the midst of such chaos as he, Cade, had introduced into the scene, and in the midst of the glancing lights that shone from the man's face. How had the man achieved that state of calm? He had a fat nose. Cade tried to imagine his life, but he had to interrupt himself, when the dreadful purpose of his being here was recalled to him by the sound of a man's voice that apparently came from the speaker of a radio or television:

"In the continuing battle against the alien children," he said, making Cade think of his mission, and making him remove his eyes from the face of the man, who, if he was calm before, was even more calm now that the gaze of the killer had shifted from him.

As Cade lifted his eyes to see beyond the crowd, hopefully to see his wife, in the last room, he saw instead the face of a man who, although he was black, reminded Cade of himself. The man's eyes were on the level of Cade's, and they gave as much into the room,

seemed to hide the same thoughts as did Cade's eyes, and were looking at Cade with Cade's own attitude. The man was obviously poor. Nevertheless, the relationships among the articles of his clothing - the gradations of darkness from his shirt to his outer clothes, to his shoes - that Cade was able to see clearly, although it meant connecting the small areas of the man that were visible in the entangled crowd - were so similar, to Cade, with his own taste, that he wondered if he were of any relation with the man. Lots of white people have black relatives, whom they may not know anything of, he thought. The man did not appear stupid to Cade. Cade asked himself if the man was an agent of the Government, for what else could explain his appearance of harmony, the self-assured glare that poured from him like the waters of a fountain. Was it possible that the man was also dead? He searched the man's face for a clue, noticing for the first time that the man was not looking at him, but was looking beyond him. Cade had felt there might be an affinity between himself and the man, but now he looked past him, and searched again for Sarah.

He called over the heads of the crowd, "Sarah, I am here, I am here." He continued to point the gun at the people, although it was apparent that they were nonviolent.

"Sarah, come to me, please," he called. He noticed how strangely the people regarded him. Many of them were not looking at him. Their eyes, like the eyes of the one who resembled himself physically, seemed to be directed toward a point beyond him, at the level of his jacket shoulder, or slightly lower than it, and past it. Cade wondered, what could it be that draws so many of their gazes away from me, when I threaten their very existence?

It was possible that the crowd was conspiring. Sarah did not appear, and he did not hear her voice. The smell of the infant reached his nose, destroying even further his impaired concentration. He sniffed at that odor, but it was so thick it seemed to come from everywhere at once.

And finally, weary, unhappy, Cade by his contact with this association of the poor, was lost to himself. By the relation of himself and they, he felt he should speak to them, and in fact, he felt that, in the event

of anyone's having power over some group, as he did, he should be able to teach those people something, although Cade had nothing to say to them at all. What, he wondered, is my right to be here, and to kill, if I have nothing to impart to people, and if I have not learned any more than they have? And thinking, he lost the firm knowledge of tactics, which had been, along with his good looks and availability, one of the qualities of his original life that marked him for the resurrection of his tissue. He was drawn to turn around, to see what all of them were looking at. In other words, he gave up to them, and followed their teaching, for he stood that low in his own estimation.

Turning at the waist, and looking away from his gun, he searched down the corridor of five doorways, to the final room, still giving off its green light, that stretched beyond the room itself and lay less and less in the rest of the house.

There, on the long bed where he first had thought he would find her, but where she had not been, he was sure that now he saw Sarah. All became silent as he looked at her, seeing within the visible portion of the

room, her legs, crossed at the ankles, all surrounded by the bright colors of magazines.

She could not be in that room, he said, but she was.

When the gun had first been fired, and the window broken, Sarah, who had been in the dim final room, which she made darker by hanging a black towel over its windows, watching a small television screen with a group of the visitors around her, sitting on her bed and on the floor, knew at once it was her husband.

The child was in a wooden crib beneath the bars of the window. Sarah looked in the eyes of one or two of the women, as they listened to the sounds of Cade breaking in the door, running through the house, and killing the other three men. Her hand was inside the book, and she was touching the trigger of the gun. She threw off the covers, leapt out of bed, and ran to her child. The calm of the people lapsed, and they began the chaos that was not to stop until they stood facing Cade.

Several of the women wanted to form a protective blockade around Sarah and the child, and, especially after they saw Cade run through the apartment in the

wrong direction, they thought they could sneak them out behind his back. Sarah, however, did not want to go... Sarah looked out the door... She saw Cade doing this and that... at one point saw Cade's back and the backs of his shoes as he leaned toward the old and young captives against the wall in the fourth room from her... Now parted the shoulders of the waiting women, tiptoed through the kitchen and other rooms, behind Cade's back, as he turned almost bumping his shoulder into her breast, toward the room where she once was...she carried the infant in a blue blanket...she reached the sundrenched room, surrounded by the green rippling material, and lay down on the couch like a white feather...still holding her hand inside the book...she turned on her side and held the baby next to her...she was wearing an antique nightgown of tan colored lace... Unknown to the crowd gathered at the other end of the house, Sarah was prepared to give her child to Cade and watch him slaughter it, in order to save her own life and to return to Cade. She had not enjoyed her life at this home, and hated more and more every day being in a state of opposition to her husband, whom she had often yearned for and had so much

forgiven as to be ashamed of herself for ever running away from him. She accepted no reason for her having given birth to such a child as hers was, whose cyclopean forehead was not pleasing to her, as it was to the daily droves of religious ones.

As far as she has been able to tell, it is she who has betrayed Cade, not willfully, but through a flaw of her character, and he who has suffered.

The sound of the television, which did not penetrate the helmet of Cade's senses, as he ran, through what to him was a silent place, when everything inhaled itself away from him, still to Sarah spread its waves. The news, the news, always the news, she thought in the warm area where she and the child together were breathing.

She felt, through the news, the nature of her purpose in society. It was for this reason, unknown to the others, who watched the news with her, that she was so drawn to it: she saw that she must be destroyed, and she saw that it elevated the era in which she lived, and united the society, to have her, and those who were like her, and her child, to repudiate, track down, and fear. Of course, she did not represent her feelings to

herself as feelings of guilt. She told herself that she was proud to be in her position, and that it was the ignorance of the population, from which she alone was destined to save them, that had isolated her, and had separated her from intelligent and comfortable society and abandoned her to the company of the fanatical, eager poor...

She held and kissed the child, rubbing her hand all around his central eye, touching his forehead, the bridge of his nose, and the side-mounds of the eye, as she often did, perhaps as a way of drawing the child's own attention to his feature during this impressionable period of his life. It is doubtful that she was aware as she caressed him that she was anxious for him to be removed from her sight, but still, the impatience she felt, for Cade to appear, was largely caused by her desire to see the last of her son.

"Asia!" said the deep voice in the distance. "Today in the town of Ngo Dinh, it happened...little Le Duc Williams, one of the first wave of the world's freaks, has been elected mayor of his town. Here, two of his aides, are pouring the skeleton-lacking mayor into his chair. The aides have said that Le Duc

promotes an honest and a forthright regime... Whoops! Looks like a bit of the Mayor has dripped out of his chair... Well..."

Cade appeared at the door. Sarah raised her shoulder to cover her face. Cade had often cut down the humble, but for him to kill someone he loved would have taken for that one to be defiant, and to face him. His former love for her flooded his senses. The green light served to meliorate the squalid surroundings, which in themselves might have thwarted the eroticism he felt for her in this warmth and heavy groaning of the sun. He raised his gun more in the sense of continuing his action so that it would dissipate closer to its completion than in the sense of making a threat.

"Sarah," he said. She did not turn. Cade was aware of nothing but her form. Her whiteness. There was an aura of soft light surrounding her as she lay there, which, along with her beauty, seemed to Cade to mean to say something to him.

She has been cornered, she has fought, finally she is down. He stood over her with the gun, while she loosened herself to die, and put her palm over the side of her face. Her cheek, her eye, her nose, surrounded

by their lights, were taken from Cade's vision. More and more painful to him. His heart bursting. He felt himself drawn downward, to his knees, to face her graceful and breathing back. He touched the lace over the delineated ribs, rising and falling. All of her body seemed to hold him in contempt. He did not hear the drifting of the soft-stepping crowd, who soon were piled face upon face in the doorway behind him, watching the two people in the powerful light, that was so strong it hid half of each form it poured over. "Sarah, come on, let's go home," said Cade.

The gentleness of his voice caused her to release a sob of relief. Cade put his hand forward, over her rising hip to the familiar sheer drop of her waist and belly, that almost made him lose himself in a swoon. His nose pressed against her back and slip upward as Cade moved closer to Sarah's face, and his left eye rose from behind her thin, folded arm, to look in her face, by straining sideways in its socket, and then he saw the child who was in the hollow of her humble circle, realizing immediately that this was the one. His eye and the eye of the child met. Cade's heart was hardened by the sight of his traditional victim. The

very presence of the child recalled to him all the training of his new life, and, more than that, reminded him of his position in society. It made him more than he was, in his own eyes; he was in that frame of mind necessary for a man to perform an action in the absence of advice, which was so dangerous it required the memory of a face from the past, offering encouragement.

Sarah could sense immediately the change that had come over her husband. She stopped her crying, because she was no longer relieved, and instinctively she grabbed the child's face in her small hand, covering the eye and cutting down the tower that the eye threw forth to Cade.

"I have come to claim this child," said Cade in a cold voice. He removed his left hand from Sarah's body and reached for the freak.

"No!" screamed Sarah, who had had the plan of turning the child over to Cade, but the will is an inadvertently responsive mechanism, as those most often defeated, most often disregarded, have learned over the years. Flooded again with the juice of her former will, to oppose her husband, and the conventions by which he lived, with a personal truth that she

presented to herself as superior to his, Sarah pushed herself up on one thin arm, twisting herself on the couch, lifting her legs to place her bare feet firmly on the couch, and thereby throwing upward the sensitive liquid of her nightgown and showing her legs to Cade, whose calves, ankles, arches, knees, thighs, were so poised, so defiant, that in her poverty and youth she emerged before Cade and the crowd, fully in the aristocratic mode. At the same time, the left strap of her gown slipped from her shoulder, and there was a naked area including her long neck, and the tops of her breasts. Her eyes were generalized and unfocused. Her mouth was distressed. Her flesh was the ruler of the room and time.

Cade, staring at all that was alive, all that once had been his, said to her, almost in a pleading way, "I have to take the freak," but she did not relent.

"You'll kill him," she said. At this, the crowd became audible to Cade; its sound rose behind him. They seemed to be saying, No, No. He did not want to turn, but he did. They were in the doorway. None of them had entered the room.

He looked at Sarah and the child, behind her on the yellow, tropical couch. His face was red and enraged.

His arm rose. He grabbed a handful of her hair and pulled her head backwards, turning her face upward. In his other hand, he held the gun. Always watching her, attempting to show her that she had hurt him, that he was suffering, he pointed the gun at the child. Sarah shrugged beneath his hand, and the other strap of her thin gown fell. The loose material slid down until she was naked above the waist. Her form was beautiful, her shoulders were trembling. Cade could not remove his eyes from her.

At the last moment her face assumed an ecstatic appearance, and looking down, from her eyes to the whiteness of her breasts, he saw that the area of her flesh between her throat's indentation and the gentle rise of her breasts, seemed to be fluid and inexact.

CHAPTER 16.

Earlier, Guttman had been visited in his office by Gerhardt and Osawa. He knew something was wrong by the fact that they entered his office and stood together in the dark (Guttman used only the desk lamp, and kept his shades down) and between them had quite a lengthy conversation, saying nothing to him at all, though it was his office, and he could remember the day, not so long ago, when if they had found themselves in the same room as Guttman, let alone in his own office, they would have paid no attention to one another, devoting themselves entirely to him, would have studied his face to detect his mood, his words to detect his opinions, and so on, but now, he might as well not have been there. Gerhardt had his hand around Osawa's shoulders, and seemed to lift one point of Osawa's collar up and lay it down, brushing it repeatedly, as he talked to Osawa.

"Yes?" said Guttman, as he put the papers of his new journal together, and put them in the one drawer of his desk that he could lock. "Yes? Doctors? What may I do for you?"

"Dr. Guttman," they started to say, almost at the same time, until Osawa put her hand over her mouth and closed her eyes, allowing Gerhardt to go on alone.

"Please excuse the two of us," said Gerhardt. "Without any application on our part, the order has come from Washington compelling us to take charge of the operation of this department. Mr. Auberville instructed us specifically to take personal charge of Cade's last mission. You are the creator of Cade, and now it comes down to us that you are not to be allowed to perform that miracle again. Today all of that which you have done will be ended." Gerhardt shook his head, took a deep breath and continued:

"Your function, in the new arrangement of things, will be to write your full record of the second existence of that man we know as Cade, from the first thought of him in your mind, on those late-night strolls of yours around Cambridge, Mass., of which Dr. Osawa and I have had the pleasure of hearing during these past years, through your preliminary experiments on other bodies, to the success with Cade, including everything about his training, everything about his job, his breakdown - no one except qualified scientists

will ever read it - and finally not leaving out his final death, which is coming soon. In the future, the story of your achievement is sure to have the same value as the story of any unique endeavor of men, and it must be preserved, or so it is felt from Auberville up. Auberville said, 'Let's not have Cade, or any like him, but let's not lose his story.' Come with us now, and whatever you see, remember, so you can write it down, making sure it will be part of the legacy of John Cade."

Guttmann swallowed his pride, and did not argue with Gerhardt and Osawa. They were only doing their jobs. He knew Cade's time had been fulfilled, and as the creator of Cade, he did not want to miss Cade's death. He thought, He might need me there. I might be able to make him comfortable. He didn't know how.

Guttmann went out to Gerhardt's car with them, and he sat in the back seat. Gerhardt reminded him once or twice during the ride, that he was only being allowed to come along, so he could write the complete record of Cade's end. Again, he mentioned it when they opened the doors of their car, at the docks.

They acted as though they were afraid of Guttman. When he had been their superior, they had tried to act like his equal, or rather, to act like him, but now that they had been elevated over him, they behaved as though he were a captive lion they were escorting in a flimsy cage. The doors of all the cars opened and closed, and the agents were standing up, looking over the roofs of their cars at one another. They all were wearing suits. Their right hands disappeared below the left flaps of their jackets, as they got their guns ready.

In the distance of one block, Guttman could see the unmistakable expressions of people who had seen the agents. After a moment they started running around, not knowing whether to run away or into the apartment where Sarah was. Guttman saw the panic spread, until all the people in the street were thrown into motion, and behind each window of the building, he could see bodies in confused motion.

Gerhardt and Osawa had been put in charge of Guttman, but not clearly in charge of the other agents whom Guttman had always supervised before this. Guttman assumed they must have been handed all the

reins, and also that the agents must have been told of his own shameful demotion. Therefore, when he got out of his car, he looked around, and walked over to the river, to look at the brown water glide by. The air was filled with drops of water that came up and laid on his face and hands. Unknown to him, the agents, after looking at one another in confusion, began to come up behind Guttman, as respectful as ever, and they looked over the edge of the dock, as he was doing, and watched the water, to see what he saw.

Gerhardt was pointing out to Osawa the terrified pulsations of the crowd, saying "We won't find very much resistance here," when he saw that the men were not advancing on the building.

Gerhardt and Osawa went to Guttman and one of them said. "Please ask the agents to attack, Doctor. We haven't had the time yet to transfer their loyalty to us."

"I see," said Guttman. He touched one or two of the men on the shoulder and turned them around.

"Do they know what to do?" he asked Gerhardt.
"Will they shoot Cade?"

"Yes. All that was taught to them."

The agents went forward, some to the front of the house, some to the alley. The three doctors walked slowly behind them. Osawa and Gerhardt wanted to be sure Guttman was seeing everything he should be seeing, so he would be able to write as complete a record of this action as possible. "What color would you say the sky is?" asked Osawa.

"It looks grey-blue to me - rapidly moving clouds, west-to-east direction..."

"A good number of old people," said Gerhardt. "...a mixture of the races seems to be there..." and so on.

Guttman answered, "I see," to whatever they said, or "I'll remember that..."

While Cade was looking at Sarah, his gun pointed at the child, Mrs. Stone, Sarah's hostess, came through the other people who were standing at the doorway, and walking quickly, her feet barely skimming across the floor, she came up behind Cade, passed around his left side, and took the infant from the arms of its mother. She did this not just to protect the child from Cade,

but in fear of the commotion from the street. The advancing men had jolted Mrs. Stone to act. All Cade saw was her back, covered with a black shawl on which were sewn rhinestones in a scene representing the moon and the Eastern Star. The stones were like the stars Cade had seen in the desert, and the black shawl was like the sky as he had then seen it. Cade didn't see where the round back rolled off to after it separated itself from Sarah's naked flesh, and he didn't notice the fact that the small face of the child, with its single eye, was gone. No uncertain moving shape was enough to make him take his eyes from the face of his wife.

Mrs. Stone took the child back through the crowds of the line of rooms. In the middle room she disappeared beneath the wooden floor. She went down a flight of stairs in total darkness. The smell of wet chalk filled her nostrils. She walked and walked, never daring to light a torch, through worn-away rivulets of chalk, until she came to the passageway she was looking for. It led to a sort of egg-shaped room. She lowered the child into the egg, then climbed into it herself. She found the items she knew would be there, and

covered the entrance through which she had come with three boards that fit together without leaving any spaces. Only then did she light the torch lying on the floor, pick up the child again, and continue on through the tunnels, which for the most part were sufficiently high for her to walk through upright. She kissed the cyclops child when he started to cry.

Cade held the gun, but now it was on the floor, propping him up as he leaned forward in an awkward position not noticing his body as he had put his face forward to kiss his wife and she, now had her hand on his shoulder, with one finger touching his neck above his closed collar, and was just about to allow herself to look at Cade with the look she would give to a returning one she loved, but which she had not allowed herself to give to Cade, because of doubts about him, which now were gone, when through the wavy green glass came his colleagues. Cracking the glass they stepped into the room. Seeing Sarah, they shot her, as Cade had done to many others.

She was dead. Her face was fallen to the floor, in the yellow sunlight, at peace despite the boots of the police, or the terror of the crowd.

As ripping through and ripping through, hot bullets tore his flesh... His stomach, his shoulders, his chest, his neck...and drove his face down to the cool flesh of her back, but he was dead and could not die, though he looked at his exploding body, and reflected, "Now my soul will fly away." yet it did not, although soon he was shattered and empty on the floor; he could not fly away with the soul of his wife. Many bullets went through Cade's flesh, and the flesh of Sarah. Cade saw the white form, the thin arms of Sarah, ripped apart. Blood flew from his wife. Then, over him stood one of the men. It was Agent White, whom Cade had often wished he could speak to, when they sat next to one another in Guttman's class. Agent White looked as tough as ever. He had a heavy rifle in his arms. For a moment he looked Cade in the eyes, just as Cade used to look into the eyes of his victims, when he would think about the thoughts they might have had or been capable of. The eyes, he thought. What a clue to what? Then White pulled the trigger of the rifle, and Cade felt

the tearing through of the bullets in a line. From the eyes of White, which were not as he had ever seen them before, he thought Guttman had probably showed a hologram of himself, Cade, revolving seven times, so the other agents would be able to shoot him when they came upon him today. He couldn't move, but still, his consciousness did not dim for a long time. It was well aware of his being torn apart, of his further and further fragmentation, until, overcome by shock, and the loss of blood to his brain, and catching sight of old Guttman coming up beside Agent White, putting his hand on White's arm, so that White stopped his firing, Cade was accepted into darkness and silence.

The crowd at the doorway to the corridor were gone, pushing through the rooms to leave the apartment. They ran into the street where those who had been waiting to enter now joined them in fleeing. Many were shot by the Agents, who thought at first that some of the crowd might attack them. When the people ran away, the squad of killers did not follow them. They closed in around Cade and his wife.

They saw that these two were dead enough, but where was the child she was supposed to have had? Either it had never existed, or someone had taken it away, or it had not been here today.

Guttman bent down to examine the body of Cade, and said to Gerhardt and Osawa, "He has stopped functioning. However, I will not say it is unthinkable that I could yet again once more revive him. What do you think...? Look how the heart continues to pump the blood, even now, how it spurts out... Can the old man do it again? Doctors?" and momentarily the two former assistants regained some of that old awe, to see their master's hand behind the torn ear of Cade, and forgot how their teacher had fallen in his career, and both their sets of eyes were like metal things that had been lying there dull and dark, but that someone had come along to polish, and that now reflected the warm light of Guttman's genius and Guttman's hope, in them. Could they so soon have forgotten the goals they had shared, working under Guttman for so many years - both of them having come to him directly from graduate school - or the feeling they used to have, that only his work was important to mankind, only his discoveries

were the vital ones? There was a time, after all, when Gerhardt and Osawa had used to take their entire identities from their roles as assistants to the strange, isolated, talked-of Guttman. It is clear that once having felt so strongly, neither one of them could ever take seriously his and her new positions in the hierarchy of things, above Guttman.

The bodies of Cade and Sarah were carefully wrapped in the woollen blankets that happened to be found in the plastic-roofed room. Before the body of Sarah was taken out of the room, by Agent White, who turned his head to the side, to avoid any looking at or breathing in of, that pale dead substance he held in his arms, Guttman told White to stop and stand still. Here was the girl he had seen so often, but who had never seen him, even once. He looked in at her face, among the folds of the blanket, with the neutral small line of her mouth seeming very alive and the two dashes of her closed eyes, with their soft lashes, seeming on the verge of reopening. "I was the one who watched her, on the screens of my office." thought Guttman. "I was the one who saw how innocent and honest she was - hard-working for Cade, how beautiful! she was, going

back and forth before the screens. I remember when she first came to Cade's apartment, I used to wonder if I had not been led to all my experimentation, through all those years of failure, and through my success with Cade, and through the misery-making program against the freaks - only for the purpose of arriving at that time, when I was able to view such beauty as hers. Grace, at last! And now what? I didn't do anything for her. There was not even that tiny remaining vestige of my former power, that could save her." He touched, with one fingertip, the porcelain-like swelling of her cheek. He kissed her brow above her left eye. He thought of asking Gerhardt and Osawa if they would allow him to have her body taken to his lab, in the headquarters of the Agency, so that he could try - and probably succeed, he felt, considering the fact that all those distractions of the freak program had been taken away from him - to recreate her, using the original form of Sarah, in combination with the motors, and the sources of energy and memory, known to Guttman. Would they allow it? He could see pretty easily they would do almost anything for him, even now. Even those who had taken the large step of removing Guttman from his

position, did not presume to know enough about things in that Section to replace him with anyone but his own assistants or to do anything with him but keep him in the same place, only taking away his power. Therefore, he knew if he wanted to, he would be able to save Sarah, but he found he did not want to do that, but instead revelled in the fact that she was dead, and finally dead, and that in order to save her from such sadness as he now saw was all he had brought to Cade, in order to save her from that difficult kind of learning which characterized the learning of things as it had been done by Cade, the only one in the world he had to save her from was himself, for no one else was able to bring new life to her, and so he found he was able to do a lot, and prevent a lot from being done, by doing nothing.

The body of Sarah was carried to the Agency headquarters, where it lay in a lit room while some telephoning and checking of records was done by one of the clerks, a young man just starting out. He was not told where the girl had come from, or how she had died. After about three hours the body was carried to a small

blue truck, and driven on the highway, back to the school from which Sarah had escaped. The young clerk sat bunched up by the side of the shrouded body for the short ride. He was required to witness the burial and sign his name to three pieces of paper. Two men representing the school met the blue truck in the school's graveyard, each carrying a large, old-fashioned ledger-book, obviously the records of the school. This was separated from the school building and dormitories by an area of woods. No one except the driver of the truck, the clerk and the two men from the orphanage saw the burial. The grave was marked with her name on a stone square that lay flat, facing the sky. Then, sitting between the rows of graves, the two men and the clerk made all the necessary changes in the ledgers the men had brought with them, to show what the clerk had been ordered to arrange to be shown - that is - that Sarah had never run away at all, that she had, instead, been hospitalized on the day of her escape, and had remained hospitalized until this, the day of her death. They stood up, brushing the dirt from their pants, and the clerk turned and left them without

farewells. He was muttering to himself as he climbed up over the rise and came into view of the truck.

What a horrible day, he thought... Those old vultures and their big books. What's it about, though? he wondered. Who's the girl?

He got into the seat beside the driver's and they drove back to the Agency, saying nothing about it. All the way back, the clerk thought of asking for a transfer.

As for Cade, he knew not whether he breathed, drank, dreamt, or remembered, nor whether he was still together in a solid body, nor whether he was afloat in some solution, nor whether there was light or dark in the room where it seemed to him he was kept; nor did he understand the state he was in, or if it had ever been experienced by anyone else, or even if there were someone else there with him, wherever, or any of those things, whether of sense or abstraction, that characterized his life in the world resulting out of the negative fire which still remained to him, and which he took to be his existence: fire, because it evidently glowed on in some element - negative because

it had no one and nothing with whom or which to interact.

He never saw Guttman's daily efforts to bring him back to consciousness, although Guttman believed the "spirit" of Cade watched him work, nor did he see anything. He was in a void, waiting.

His form lay beside the windowed wall of a long room, in the arc of the light's entrance, and soon through external pulsations the actions of the body's heart and lungs were duplicated. So he lay there as he would have if he were asleep, slightly breathing in and out.

Gerhardt and Osawa left Guttman alone with Cade, and they devoted their time to the ongoing attack against the freaks. Due to the many failures of that attack, Gerhardt and Osawa were to come on difficult times. Their superiors demanded to know how it was that when Guttman had been in charge, the monsters had seemed to be under control. Their numbers had grown,

but not the way they grew now that Gerhardt and Osawa shared the command of the Agents.

However, they never tried to shift the blame for their troubles onto Guttman, although they could have. Therefore, Guttman escaped much of the censure that came to all who participated in the Government's war against the monsters. He only attended to Cade, monitoring Cade's vital signs month after month, year after year, as Cade lay on his bed in his constant state of sleep.

More and more mutants came into the world. The Government, and its subsidiaries and allied governments in the other nations of the world, were helpless in the face of the teratological baby boom, and the persistence of many people, especially but not entirely among the poor, to give aid and comfort to the freaks. The poor watched the freaks more and more desperately, seeking their "messiah" among them.

Even when, ten years after the death of Sarah, food started to become more plentiful, and the chronic malnourishment of all mankind began to be alleviated, (meat returned to the family table, and even milk was

seen in the cities, where you used to be able to find only vege-recon 2) so that the poor might have been expected to be less susceptible to the visions and hopes that had motivated them for so long, still their devotion to the freaks continued, and their search for a messiah, to make their lives more bearable.

Rebelliousness increased, and the hiding of the freaks. Fewer informants were willing to give the children up to the Government. In secret elections, young monsters became the mayors and sheriffs of towns in America. The murder of the freaks also grew more intense, but they could not murder fast enough to keep up with the growing numbers and influence of the freaks. As Gerhardt and Osawa said, in their weekly lecture to the Cabinet, "We need the help of the poor, or at least of the Middle Class, to root out and destroy the freaks. We cannot succeed without the help of the citizenry."

Cade and Sarah's son, the cyclopean Aqbal, spent the twelve years following his escape from the scene of his parents' deaths on Mrs. Stone's farm. She and a group of friends protected and raised him. They told

him the news of the other freaks around the nation and world. He knew the expectations held by the group of friends who raised him, and the other local people. He was told of the danger to him. At around age 12 he started to heal, as did so many of the mutants. But was he the one? Was he the messiah long awaited? Mrs. Stone and her friends talked about it when he wasn't around. When they decided he was ready to give his first public healing, word was discretely circulated among the surrounding farms, and in the town. When Mrs. Stone went into the town, people would stop her and ask her, "Is this the one?" and they would say, "We can always use another healer, but do you think this Aqbal is the one we've been waiting for - who can save us from the Government, and the Middle Class?"

* * * *

Guttmann sat by the bed of Cade in the green filtered halflight of the dust-choked air of the most unused wing of a former VA hospital that had officially closed several years ago. In the other wings, various secret experiments were going forth, some concerning

the freaks. But Cade and Guttman had been thought too unimportant to occupy space in any of those wings. After all, Cade hadn't moved in a decade, and Guttman was running a close second. He hardly ever went home, just sat in the chair, or fiddled with the dials on the ancient machinery that kept Cade's breath moving in and out. He drank a little of the sugar juice that fed Cade, and that was his only food. He had applied every year for the funding he needed to bring Cade fully back into the world of the living, but his applications were no longer acknowledged.

Thus, imagine his surprise when Gerhardt and Osawa appeared in the doorway of Cade's room one morning, a little older, a little greyer. He asked them who they were, to upset them.

After a short period of re-acquainting themselves with one another, over the still form of Cade, the three had the following conversation:

Mrs. Osawa said to Dr. Guttman:

"We have come to the conclusion there is no way to oppose the longing of the poor for this mythical creature they call their 'messiah.' Until they find him (we are now certain) there will be no peace between

the poor and the Government. Society will continue to suffer, as it has; science and culture will fail to flower -- we will enter the next century more primitive and wretched than we entered this one..."

"Unless," said Gerhardt.

"Yes," said Mrs. Osawa. "It has been decided that the only way to get these fools to stop looking here and there and everywhere for a messiah, is to give them one."

"One of the freaks?" asked Guttman.

"No -- the freaks don't have what it takes. Studies show it's hard for people to unite behind any one of the freaks. You find the locals in an area will grow to love their freak, but none of the freaks ever has a wide enough appeal to serve as the messiah they are looking for, and we need them to have. After all, they don't look right. Let's face facts."

"If not one of the mutants, then who?" asked Guttman.

"John Cade!" said Gerhardt, smacking the chest of Cade hard enough to produce a sound as of wood snapping. "Think about it -- he's handsome, athletic -

- the very reasons you chose him in the first place -- and we have lots of photos and films of his ministry."

"His what?"

"His life. Tracking down the freaks. Saving the innocent poor from exploitation by the terrible mutants and the demonic forces that were behind them."

"Who?" asked Guttman, but he was beginning to get an idea of what was going on.

"We remembered your notes, your record of Cade from the time he came back to life, to the present time. We are going to publish them." Guttman couldn't help but swell with pride. "They show clearly who the real messiah is and was all along. The one who rose from the dead in order to save us from the falsity of the monsters."

Guttman shook his head. "And you are serious about this?"

"He went from town to town, protecting the gullible poor from the ravenous freaks. Until finally, at the birth of his son, Aqbal, the freakfollowers trapped him, and killed poor Cade. It's all right there, in your lab notes."

"I never wrote anything like that! You've falsified the scientific record."

"Call it what you will. Still and all, if you want the Government to give you the funding for which you have asked, to revive Cade, or even to allow him to continue to lie here getting Government air and sugar water, I am here to tell you that you will appear on TV, with your lab notes. It's all been worked out. You will claim that you decided to publish them after having a vision of Cade."

"How do you mean?"

"A vision. He came to you. He told you he was the messiah. He told you to reveal the story of his life. It's all here, this is the manuscript."

"Let me read it," said Guttman.

Gerhardt left the book on Cade's chest. The two doctors left the room. Guttman felt he had always known it must come to this -- the utter betrayal of the science for which he had lived his life. What choice did he have? This was the last hope for Cade, who was the closest Guttman would ever come to having a son. He took the book from Cade's chest and started to read.

* * * *

Aqbal had been doing healings for almost two years. Just about every Sunday.

Now, it was Sunday again, and he and Mrs. Stone sat on the porch of the farmhouse, waiting for the expected crowd to come up the road. Aqbal's hair was combed and wet. He wore a new white shirt and blue pants.

Soon, up the road came cars, trucks, buses, people on foot, running beside the vehicles, people hanging onto the outsides of the vehicles, waving their arms.

"They're early," said Mrs. Stone. She didn't understand.

By the time they could see the expressions on the faces of the approaching people, and hear the sounds of their voices -- so unlike the expected sounds -- it was too late. The vehicle at the head of the column crashed through the wire gate of the farm, and the crowd streamed through, up the road to the house. If Mrs. Stone had understood in time, she might have been able to lead Aqbal into the woods, and the two of them might have been saved. But a moment after the cars and

trucks had entered onto the property, men and women of the crowd were already ranging across the front yard, overthrowing the long tables that had been set with food for them.

A young woman appeared at the side door of the house, smiling and singing some local song, carrying a tray of rolls from the kitchen to the tables. A woman and a man approached her and the woman, shouting something Mrs. Stone couldn't make out, raised her hand and struck the young woman with the rolls. Then the man, and some others, set upon the young woman, beating her with their fists. She screamed in horror and surprise. "Murderer!" someone shouted at the young woman. "You killed John Cade!" They beat and kicked her until she was dead.

They went through the house and outbuildings, murdering everyone they found, whom they knew as the protectors of Aqbal.

Mrs. Stone stood in front of Aqbal and shouted, "What has happened to you people? We are innocent here."

But the people in the crowd called out: "He's one of them --"

"The freaks --"

"They killed our Messiah. They killed Cade!"

In the last moments of her life, Mrs. Stone was able to piece together in her thoughts a few bits of information she had read or been told in the prior months. This new thing about Cade, and the book that had been written about him.

She was to understand no more. They pulled her from the porch, several stabbing her as she lay in the dust.

They took the cyclops child, who was crying and casting his eye among the faces of the crowd, seeing some he had formerly healed, seeking even one face of mercy, but not finding one. They carried him to a tree. They tied a rope around his neck and threw the other end of the rope over a branch of the tree. One man could have raised the child, but several men and women joined in pulling the rope, raising Aqbal until his neck was broken.

Later, after eating the food which they had knocked to the ground, they doused the child's body with gasoline and set it on fire. They watched the boy

burn and sang and prayed, each one praying for whatever
each one most desired, to their Saviour, John Cade.

THE END.