

LORD WIND

A Memoir of My Second Coming Out
by Richard Balthazar

CHAPTER 5: BLOWN AWAY

—in which I return to the home of my heart



The Storm, by Pierre-Auguste Cot

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5.1 HURRICANE

—in which I enjoy a ménage with Ken and Donnie

The desolate refugee who fell into Ken's arms was no more conscious than he'd been those last months in Milwaukee. It being evening, Ken immediately took my exhausted, insensate body to a bed and held me with few words. Our many kisses felt unreal, as though reliving memories. I felt still lost somewhere between the drive and the shock of the move, so all we did was sleep together on his familiar flowery sheets.

When we awoke in the hot dark sometime after midnight, I was famished, and dear Ken fed us some cold roast chicken and rice. Then, after our months apart, we finally said a heartfelt hello. Our first greeting was so warm that we said hello once more to cool off.

Breakfast was Ken's favorite pancakes and bacon, and I sat eating across the table from him, basking in his love and feeling a sudden peace, as though coming home. Of course, it being New Orleans, I had, but this was more the joy of coming home to my lover at last. We'd been so long apart with so many things—and people—happening to each of us, yet we were again looking into each other's eyes with that tender longing.

All those months apart and even the glory of Kenny seeming like a dream, now I'd awakened to the new reality of being with beloved, beautiful Ken with his blondish curls. He gave me a determined look from across the table and said, "You're getting a haircut this evening." I didn't object, and Ken grinned sweetly, saying, "But I still think you're cute."

#

Since I'd been to New Orleans last, Mother and Bill, recently back from Nigeria, had moved to a little house coincidentally not all that far from Ken's place in Gretna. In the late morning, he drove me over there to see them, even in my scruffy, un-shorn state, and do my filial duty. Mother was very happy to see me, hugs and all, and Bill stepped in with his Texas howdy, all smiles, and a hearty hug that reeked of tobacco. Mother lamented my being unemployed and remarked gently on my deplorable state. That Ken would cut my hair seemed to comfort her.



Ken and Mother in Gretna, September, 1971

Leaving Ken and Bill in the living room, Mother invited me into the kitchen supposedly to "help" her make coffee. Setting out the cups and saucers, she off-handedly asked if I thought I'd ever get married again. It being a good time for honesty, I answered, "No, Mother, I'm gay." All she said was a quiet, "Oh." So I added that Ken and I were lovers, and whatever she may have felt about it, we never spoke of the matter again—ever.

When we went back into the living room, Bill commented about how awful Nigeria was and then took pictures of our reunion, including this one of Mother and my newly revealed lover. Afterwards, he fetched out some gifts for me: an ebony African head and an ornately carved ebony walking stick. To get it into his suitcase, Bill had

sawed it into two pieces and then tried (not very successfully) to join them together with a screw. I hid my dismay behind gratitude and wondered what on earth I'd ever do with an African head.

Then Mother brought out her present. Bill had also brought back some Nigerian fabric with bold green, gold, and red patterns, and she'd made him and me matching shirts. While at the time I couldn't imagine ever wearing it, I actually did once a couple decades ago to an ethnic fair. I still have that shocking shirt carefully packed away, an ultimate souvenir. The head and walking-stick disappeared sometime back in the 70s, but I believe Bill also gave me the simple ebony letter-opener that sits still in a holder on my desk.

While we drank coffee, Mother had news about the family, including that my sister Judy was going to have a baby in December, that my aunts were well, and that my uncle George and his family had moved to California for his mysterious job in the rocket industry. Bill was exuberant about new prospects for another international job somewhere, but without promises of positions for me and Ken. We didn't mention Buenos Aires, the revolution hardly his fault.

Fortunately, they didn't dwell on my distinct lack of job prospects, even when Ken expressed his concern. Just something else I didn't want to think about. Having awoken to this wonderful new world with Ken, I wasn't going to worry about the past—or the future. Lord Wind had nicely brought me to where I needed to go, and true to form, I'd wait patiently for Him to send me somewhere else. Fortunately, I had a bit of a bankroll from my teaching salary, enough to buy food and stuff for a while. So things weren't desperate yet.

#

Back at Ken's place, I fully intended to drag him into bed again, which I'm sure he wouldn't have resisted much, but it was not to be. When we walked in, there sprawled on his sofa was a splendid, nubile young man, shirtless, with light hair and eyes and bright smile. He jumped up in greeting, and Ken proudly introduced him as "Donnie—he's staying here for a while." I shook Donnie's hand, wondering what else he was doing here for a while.

He smiled at me, now seductively, and said, "So you're the famous lover from Milwaukee!" Charmed by his directness, I confirmed Donnie's conclusion and made myself look away so as not to stare shamelessly at his shapely tanned chest. He said, "So I stayed away last night to give you guys some space."

While I thanked Donnie for his generosity, Ken laughed, "He was out whoring around, weren't you, darlin'?"

"I was not," Donnie declared with a kiss on Ken's cheek. "I slept at Sam's." Then he turned and gathered me into a tight hug, whispering in my ear, "Ken's the whore..."

"Hey, I heard that!" Ken grunted. "I'm just a bigamist." With that, he held the two of us in his long arms, which I took as ample evidence that Donnie was now a third in our previously binary relationship. I was hugely surprised, to say the least, but not dismayed, to find the new young man kissing my ear and fitting his body up against mine—all the while in Ken's arms. For a mini-moment I foolishly wondered why Ken hadn't mentioned...

Rather than get into it right there on the sofa, we eventually controlled ourselves and stepped apart, Donnie announcing, "I made us some lunch." He led us into the kitchen and presented three stupendous oyster po-boy sandwiches, and while we ate, Donnie regaled us with details of his quiet Monday evening in the bar and who was hitting on whom.

I didn't know any of the characters, of course, but his tale was quite entertaining. Ken noted some of the characters with whom he'd shared carnal knowledge and their capabilities. One of them was a certain Jim, for whom Donnie expressed a galloping desire, and Ken warned

that Jim's got a lot more than he could handle. After all the oysters, I definitely felt ready, even eager, to handle these two guys at the same time, but Ken pushed back from the table with, "Keep out of trouble, baby. Rich and I are going back to bed."

"Have fun," Donnie giggled and comforted me confidentially with, "Too bad Ken doesn't like three-ways. Says he can't concentrate."

Moments later I enjoyed the special benefits of Ken's focused concentration.

#

Too soon reluctantly out of the bed, I sat me down in the kitchen where Ken once again sheared my shag, a little shorter even than that time before. I was surprised to see a normal-looking person in the mirror. No more long-haired hippie. Ken finished the barbering job off with a kiss, and I took a quick, much-needed bath in his huge claw-footed tub.

Afterwards, we took Donnie with us down to the French Quarter, where we ate a civilized supper to classical music at the Napoleon House and then wandered the streets for me to get a sense of being back home. Of course, the city felt so terribly different without my old sailor bars, but I didn't let on about my regrets. Ken already knew them, and there was no point in moaning to Donnie, who was way too young to have known such dens of iniquity.

When we got there, Pete's was still relatively uncrowded on the Tuesday evening. It proved quite fun dancing with Donnie, whose sensuous style drew eyes. Ken stood by with his beer admiring, I hoped, the both of us and later on pointed out to me some of his earlier tricks, all rather hunky. Donnie and I were sorry the richly endowed Jim was absent. While we danced, I kept wondering how we might convince Ken to divide his concentration. Personally, for the first time I felt no qualms about trying to divide mine, and evidently neither did Donnie.

Later in the evening, like on a pilgrimage, we ambled the few blocks up Bourbon Street to venerable Lafitte's in Exile to check on the crowd there, and then walked back down the street to pay our respects at the tomb of the former Dixie's Bar of Music. Donnie remarked that a couple years back, he'd snuck into the bar with a fake ID, and the guy he went home with had been too uptight to come, no matter what clever tricks he tried.

We caught the ferry across the dark Mississippi and leaned together on the rail to watch its roiling wake and smell that fragrance of wharves. At Ken's, Donnie camped out on the sofa while Ken and I did clever tricks in his bedroom. Later, I was vaguely aware of Ken getting up, likely to placate Donnie on the sofa, and awoke later with him snuggled up spoon-fashion.

#

Over another of Ken's filling pancake and bacon breakfasts, he told us hopefully about some appointments shortly for teaching with the Orleans Parish Schools and needing to be gone all morning. Donnie gave me a sly wink, which I'm sure Ken noticed without comment. Instead, he suggested I check the job listings in the newspaper, which he handed to me, and maybe look through the phone book for businesses to contact.

So suddenly confronted with rude reality, I sat there in shocked silence. Ken had already looked into possibilities for me teaching Russian, which naturally were absolutely nil, and I didn't feel at all ready to look into other frightening options. Nor could I imagine any kind of job I wanted to do. What? Follow up on my first job and become a waiter? I just couldn't... Or on my second and become a cashier? That felt more okay, but most stores and such places were so unattractive. Definitely I wasn't going back to being a security cop again.

Waving the newspaper at Ken, I told him I would but wanted to see him get a job first. Donnie, who apparently also had no job, laughed, “Maybe I can find one too, but they don’t advertise for jobs in my kind of work.” Ken volunteered that our cute friend was a masseur—with very talented hands, and my fascination with his shapely shoulders became a deeper appreciation of Donnie’s whole lovely body. When Ken went off to dress, we sat there at the table in our underpants and shared many looks of questions, answers, and concordance.

Giving us goodbye kisses, Ken left us with the command not to do anything he wouldn’t do, which allowed great leeway. Underpants soon forgotten, our wrestling kiss dropped us onto the checkered linoleum between table and refrigerator. Artful wiggling soon turned us around for classic 69, heads nestled between thighs for synchronized thrusts and sucks. Eventually, lightning surged round and round the closed circuit of our upside-down bodies, our muffled groans sounding a discordant harmony. We finally un-plugged with slurps, and lay back on the hard linoleum, ravished.

“Holy Jesus!” Donnie exclaimed at last, “I never done that before!” Nor had I. He exulted, “Like we were each other and sucking ourselves!”

“Yeah,” I sighed, “like ouroboros!” To Donnie’s reasonable question, I explained the mythical serpent devouring its own tail, and he understood perfectly. Only while writing this did I discover that besides as a simple circle, the ouroboros can be shown in the twisted symbol for infinity, which seems apropos for that communion of our young bodies—and beings. Now I reflect that never since have I communed with anyone so simultaneously, so infinitely.

#

Donnie set about making the lunch he’d promised Ken, chicken gumbo. I helped in the long and complicated process with chopping celery, stirring roux and such, and remarked that no wonder Ken liked him if he was a good cook. “I’m Cajun,” Donnie said, as though that explained all his talents. I was pleased that he was making Ken happy, however he did it. When the gumbo was finally ready, we got into some clothes, shorts and t-shirts, for Ken’s return.

He showed up looking really dejected that his interviews had led nowhere but brushed that aside with his real bad news: A hurricane named Edith was going to hit New Orleans that very night! Ken laid out what we had to do to batten down the hatches, so to speak. While he’d get the storm shutters (which it was really lucky to have on the house), closed and fastened, I should go over to Piggly-Wiggly for groceries just in case we got marooned by the storm. They said it was moving slow and would bring a lot of rain in the late evening, soon after midnight.

Donnie convinced Ken to calm down, sit down, and eat his fabulous gumbo. When I worried about all the wind and rain to come, and Ken said we’d take shelter at the hurricane party that night at Pete’s. This New Orleans tradition of storm parties I already knew well from having danced through several long ago in La Casa. Then we emptied the gumbo pot.

With his thorough list of emergency supplies, I took Ken’s car first past Mother’s place to make sure they were preparing for Edith, and then as Ken directed to the grocery store. It is was a horrible madhouse of people crowding the aisles and counters, all trying to snag stuff they simply had to have during a hurricane. With my list, I was no different. Already the shelves were emptying, and I couldn’t find several items, including eggs. Getting up to a cashier with my cart meant a line and 45 minutes of daydreaming about communing with Donnie again.

Once more back at Ken’s, frazzled by anxious crowds and tedious traffic, I found they’d latched the shutters on only half the windows on the house. I suspected that while I was gone they’d been busy otherwise, and Ken’s “cat that ate the canary” grin confirmed my suspicion.

Donnie gave me a fake-innocent smirk. A surge of desire for his splendid body up there on the ladder, shirtless in short shorts, almost knocked me over.

To cool off, I took the groceries inside and put them away, all while my body burning with the urge to merge, if you will. It wasn't a matter of love-longing but a more existential horniness, a desire to become one with another, to commune. Back outside, I stood around watching my hot guys at their even hotter work, deliciously tormented by desire for both of them, and a big cloud bank moved in from the south, harbinger of the coming storm.

Within a half-hour they'd latched the rest of the storm shutters, and then Donnie grabbed my hand, advising Ken ingenuously that we were going to take a bath. Waving us away, Ken said he was going to cook up a shrimp boil for our supper.

#

In Ken's huge bathtub, Donnie and I wet ourselves down with the hand-held sprayer and between kisses and gropes, soaped each other up. Hornier than ever before, I felt like one giant, turgid penis desperately seeking a warm, dark place to burrow into. Then Donnie knelt in the tub, rested his head on its end, and stuck up his lathered butt invitingly.

Once inside him, I didn't dare move—or let Donnie even wiggle—for fear of instant orgasm. Finally calm enough to move, I watched my cock, bigger and longer than I'd ever seen it, slip in and out of his soapy white bottom in hypnotic slow motion, an ecstatic vision of the primeval phallus plunging into the archetypal orifice, a surreal icon of ultimate sex. I wished the whole world could witness our pornographic glory. Hey, everybody, get a load of this!

I screwed Donnie in many attacks and retreats—until I finally lost all control, my bliss exploding like fireworks into his very being. For the first time ever on coming, I heard myself howling, an animal cry, and then from the doorway came applause—from Ken, our audience. “Hot stuff!” he exclaimed. “Now it's my turn...”

They rinsed me off with the sprayer, and while I towed dry, Ken stripped, soaped up, and knelt at the end of the tub in the famous receptive pose. Fascinated, I sat on the other end watching Donnie bugger my lover's bottom, entranced by the sublime symmetry of his buttocks and balls centered by the vertical shaft diving into Ken's hole.

Donnie drew out their spectacular fuck for what seemed like several impressive minutes, while I, scarcely breathing, just sat there, eyes riveted, with my own cock resurgent, but I dared not touch it. Once again, I felt conjoined with Donnie as our dick skewered Ken—and for the first time, truly conjoined with Ken, our body opening its gate wide for the invited guest.

When Donnie simply couldn't refrain any longer, what I could see of our cock began to pulse slowly and its root throb back between scrotum and anus—where but a few moments before... Under that transfixing scene, almost hidden beneath his ravisher, Ken stroked his rocks off, and I ejaculated at the same time, involuntarily, but more than willingly. In my corner of our triangular climax, my erection only pumped out a smidgeon of semen. I guess maybe our mystic communion wasn't technically a three-way, but it sure as fuck felt like one to me, one fucking fabulous triple fuck.

Rinsing our dear despoiled fellow off with the sprayer, Donnie chided him, “Hey, you're supposed to be out there boiling shrimps!” (In the Cajun dialect that's the plural.) In fact, before snooping in on Donnie and me in the bath, Ken had put a big pot of water on the stove, and out in the kitchen we found it boiling happily. Donnie took over the cooking at that point, added another bag of Zatarain's seasoning, and then tossed in about four pounds of shrimps.

By the time we'd finished supper, the evening sky was darkening with dense clouds, but otherwise the air was hot and still. Ken told us the TV weather said that since Edith was moving fairly slowly across the Gulf, it would be some hours yet till the winds would kick up. At our leisure, we cleaned up the messy kitchen and then took a satiated nap on Ken's bed, chastely tangled up in so many arms and legs. My two guys dozed off, but I was exhilarated and just lay there in the hot gathering darkness giving thanks for this incredible new joy.

#

Edith's winds were indeed picking up when we left the house all sealed up in its shutters and set off in Ken's car for the hurricane party at Pete's. The place was jammed with refugees from Edith. We got beers and my Coke and dived into the crowd.

Almost immediately we found tall Lee holding court along the back wall. I'd known him since 1962, and in the past year, he and Ken had also found a good friendship. Lee was titillated to meet Donnie, but the scrumptious kid soon wandered off into the crush, leaving us older guys to camp it up. An old hand at hurricane parties, Lee raised his glass of gin and tonic and toasted Edith's winds that would blow away all our troubles—a spirited toast but not terribly realistic hope. (Now I know that Edith was an epiphany—Lord Wind Himself! After hiding His mighty face from me for so long, here He was showing up now in full-blown person—in drag!)

For me the hurricane party soon turned into old home week. First off, I ran into Butch again, my plump Cajun former boyfriend. He'd found a generous older guy who'd sadly moved away, back to Lafayette. Feeling odd about touting my multiple amours, I reported the idyllic autumn affair with Kenny and marveled aloud that Ken, whom he'd met before, and I were still together. I pointed out the voluptuous Donnie dancing nearby and pompously called him our "apprentice androphile." Butch thought he danced like a skilled worker.

I'd spied another old friend across the crowd and bussed Butch bye. It was Henri, once upon a time Pope of the Holy Charlie Brown Church, who'd canonized me St. Norman, patron of sailors on shore leave. (See my first memoir.) Henri was easily noticed with his big dark eyes sparkling behind specs with round black frames. He was still with Paul, my former paramour of summer 64, who stood close beside him, long-haired like a decadent French poet. Both were gainfully employed in building Mardi Gras floats and blissfully living in the Quarter.

They were thrilled to hear about my second coming out. Henri exulted that St. Norman was risen from the dead! When I'd married Barbara, he counted me an infidel doomed to eternal torment in the straight world. Skipping over those heretical five years, I told them the faerie tale of my ballet dancer and of course proudly pointed out my current two guys. Paul accused me of making up for lost time. Henri proclaimed that after my five years of penance in the desert, he absolved me of the sin of heresy. (I still appreciate his beautifully papal view of reality.)

#

Undulating through the dense crowd, I made my way over to Ken and Lee with some guys by the jukebox and subtly insinuated myself at my own guy's left side. All subtlety disappeared when he wrapped his arm around my neck and delivered a deep kiss tasting of gin. They insisted I had to have at least one gin and tonic in honor of Edith. Lee cautioned that one must never go sober into a storm, and claimed that being drunk keeps the lightning away.

After several dances, Donnie rejoined us, gliding in to smooch Ken and me in that order. Noticing Lee gazing wistfully, he bestowed a kiss on him too, with a wiggle. He was all excited having just seen the legendary Jim come in the door and wondering what to do. I remarked that

he knew what to do, and Ken repeated his dire warning that Jim was hung like a horse—Donnie would never manage... Our talented apprentice brightly exclaimed that in that case he'd just have to handle it. I recommended using two hands.

He set off on a circumspect stroll through the swirling, swilling crowd, stalking the equine Jim, and Ken sighed, "He's insatiable!" Lee opined that an insatiable boy's a poet's dream. I agreed then, but in times since I've had cause to disbelieve that aphorism. Ignoring nagging thoughts of Donnie two-handling the horse and perhaps loosened up by the gin, I cordially met the several guys in conversation with Ken and Lee and chattered, as I'm wont to do, about myself. Then I set off to dance, at first by myself and then with various guys who felt like moving, including once with Donnie, fairly lasciviously.

Thus the hurricane party rolled on, even though weather reports from the front door were that it was still just a strong breeze outside. By well past midnight, Edith was seriously overdue. Patience required more drinks, including another for me, and more socializing. Occasionally I'd see someone in the crowd who looked familiar from long ago, but mostly I spied on Donnie's moves Jim-ward. Soon I observed Jim wending him-ward and knew the jig was up.

Disturbing news soon came from the bartenders that Edith had stalled out over the Gulf and now wouldn't make landfall till the early morning hours, like five or six. That put a serious damper on potential refugee enthusiasm, but we recovered quickly and partied on. Personally, however, I was getting tired and didn't relish the thought of carousing till five or six—and after that through however many hours of Edith's belated fury.

Some while later, Donnie came back with Jim in tow, a muscular guy with a little mustache and a pleased, expectant grin. Giving me and Ken, in that order, a tender kiss, Donnie announced that he was going to go home with Jim tonight. I saw and shared Ken's faint frown of disapproval, but relinquishing hopes of ravishing our apprentice again tonight, I wished them lots of fun. Jim promised to bring Donnie home tomorrow—after the storm. (Having been to Ken's before, he remembered the way.) I used the occasion to suggest to Ken that we also abandon ship and take our chances of surviving Edith in bed.

While we drove over the bridge to the West Bank, Lord Wind in His hurricane drag blew a lot more wildly, much stronger winds and then rain buffeting the car. Ken drove quietly and carefully, and once we got across remarked, "You know, Rich, I think I love him more than I ever loved you." Certain that by love he meant sexual desire, I could've said the same but didn't, feeling that our bond was far more fulfilling and enduring, a larger love.

###

5.2 AFTERMATH

—in which Ken leaves me behind

Waking near noon, Ken and I found all quiet on the outdoor front. Edith had struck only a glancing blow, side-swiping New Orleans, and was now dousing Baton Rouge with torrents. Outside, we found trees blown down, sheets of water flooding the streets, and in the backyard a sliver of two-by-four driven right through the trunk of a chinaberry tree like a huge stake.

While Ken made our lunch, I called Mother. They were safe and sound with the flood halfway up their front steps, the house an island in nearly two feet of water. Then I wondered aloud to Ken how Donnie had managed two-handling Jim. He didn't want to think about Jim's giant schlong, which he recalled as at least ten inches and quite thick.

As we were finishing lunch, Ken asked if I'd found any jobs in the want ads. I simply said no. He frowned, handed me the paper again, and told me to look again. Meanwhile he'd go out and open the storm shutters. With no excuse now, I scanned the columns in disgust and despair: ads for retail sales, receptionists, office workers, and things so unappealing that I felt like heaving my lunch. Besides, the pay being offered for anything was miserable. Then I turned as Ken had also suggested to the yellow pages in the phone book, and I might as well have been perusing a list of plumbing parts.

My duty done, I went outside and while Ken finished with the shutters, picked up branches and junk in the yard, including pieces of somebody's doghouse smashed into the fence corner. He took my silence for the failure it was and wondered when Jim might bring Donnie back to us. I agreed that our apprentice's presence was much to be desired, and Ken added pointedly, "In the bathtub."

Returning to our previous topic, Ken gently ordered me to look in tomorrow's paper and choose three jobs to go for. He'd discuss and advise... When I promised, Ken remarked, "And remember, every day is a tomorrow." That gave me great pause, but I figured it was the least I could do for the guy I loved. And it just might actually, wonder of wonders, find me a job.

#

In my old truck we splashed across standing water and over the bridge again to the Quarter. I dropped Ken off at Victor's to order, parked over on Dauphine, and walked back to the restaurant. To follow up on our Italian dinner, we walked over to the art cinema theater on Royal to see an Italian movie by a new genius director that distracted us for a good while. Walking over to Bourbon Street to Pete's, our worries returned. Optimistically, I ventured that we'd get home to find our guy waiting for a bath. When we walked into the bar, however, there was Donnie dancing his tender tush off with Jim.

He bounded over to us with kisses. Jim greeted Ken casually as an old trick. I found him pleasantly attractive, but the thought of what was swinging between his legs gave me the shivers. We four toasted merrily to surviving Edith. Donnie slurped from his beer and casually informed us that he'd be staying with Jim again tonight, who promised again to bring him back tomorrow. I recalled Ken's earlier existential remark about tomorrows.

We proceeded to chat and dance while slyly keeping tabs on Donnie's carouse. Soon Ken wandered off, leaving me and my Coke to contemplate my complex love life. Then a song I hadn't heard before started up on the juke box, and the first lines in a guy's urgent voice stopped me in my mental tracks: *Wake up, Maggie, I think I got something to say to you! / It's late*

September and I really should be back at school... The juke box said it was Rod Stewart and “Maggie Mae.” It was that late September line that threw me for a loop.

Here it was late September indeed, and for the first time in my life (23 years at least!), I wasn’t back at school. A wave of terrible grief washed over me, and I wondered what in hell I was doing back here in a French Quarter gay bar now seven years after leaving town. After all those years of school, marriage, kids, Ken and Kenny, and now right back where I started from. Somehow full circle. I chugged my Coke and danced off to join Bonnie and Jim.

Later Ken told me that George, the cute curly-headed guy at his side, wanted to come home with us. With George smiling at me so invitingly, I could only say sure. On the way home, I revealed my lack of interest in a three-way and suggested I’d sleep on the couch.

#

Still troubled by it being late September—and even more so by Bonnie still away with Jim—I turned on the fan and flopped naked on the sofa in the hot dark, unbothered by Ken screwing around in the bedroom with George. Our relationship had always been very open. At some point I was awakened by Ken gallantly sucking on my cock. When I’d come, he kissed me and went back to bed with George.

At breakfast, Ken told me that George worked for a big company that was always hiring people, and maybe he could help me. First thing, George asked to see my resume, and I was mortified to say I didn’t have one. “Of course you do,” he laughed and told me what to put on it. Eating the usual pancakes, I scribbled out my brief and unimpressive work experience:

1956-60: Waiter, Penney’s Café, Lockesburg, Ark.

wait tables, cashier, short-order cook, peeling potatoes, washing dishes

1960-64: Cashier, Tulane University Snack Bar and Cafeteria, New Orleans, La.

1964-65: Waiter at a sorority house, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash.

1965 summer: Keno writer, Sahara Tahoe Casino, Stateline, Nev.

sell tickets to gambling game and pay off winners

1967 summer: Janitor in a water softening plant, Ann Arbor, Mich.

1968-70: Security Cop, Ann Arbor, Mich. and Milwaukee, Wisc.

guard range of locations from industrial plants to museums and public events

1969-71: Instructor, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisc.

teach Russian & Serbo-Croatian languages and Russian & Soviet Literature

George looked it over and advised me to drop the potatoes, dishes, and janitor job, but add things I also had to do in the other jobs, my education history, special talents, personal details, and contacts information. I actually had had 15 years of work experience! George wondered what on earth Serbo-Croatian was, and I explained Yugoslavia. He figured our best chances were desk clerk in a hotel, bank cashier. His first suggestion was rather attractive, giving me lovely visions of working the reception desk at the grand Hotel Montleone on Royal Street. George cheered, “Go for it!”

In his pragmatic way, Ken called Gerry at his office and arranged for me to use his typewriter to type it up. At the shotgun house, he took me back into the third room and installed me at the IBM Selectric (best invention ever for a task now obsolete), ordering me to do ten clean copies. George added, “No carbons. Gotta be originals!”

Ken would take George home, hang out there to give me time, and then come back for me. I asked him to bring me back some lunch. George offered, “I could come back...” Flirting

back, I said I'd prefer an oyster po'boy, and he replied with good grace. "So would I, darlin'." Then I turned to the magic Machine, the Select Trick with its correcting tape. After completing three clean copies of the resume, I wrote a poem:

EDITH

*The Hurricane has passed,
Tangling us like broken limbs.
You've been splintered
From him by me.
You've been twisted
Like steel around me.
And I've been driven
Like a spike through you both.
What axe will chop us free?*

9/18/71

Then I returned to typing for another hour with just two messed-up pages and seven more clean ones. Afterwards I went up into the front room to lie on the bed famous bed for Ken to show up. He brought me an oyster po'boy, sans George, and I ate it on the way back to Gretna. Ken told me all about the three big aquariums the guy had for tropical fish and their fantastic colors. Donnie hadn't returned, so Ken took the opportunity to show me how to dress right to look for a job, white shirt and tie and such. Fortunately I had decent dress slacks and shoes.

Ken also dressed up for a meeting soon at LSUNO, a prospect he hadn't mentioned before. When I hoped he'd get to teach at that school, he grunted, "Maybe..." His lack of optimism troubled me, but then he'd been looking all summer. When he took off to the lakefront campus, my instructions were to go to the Hotel Montleone. I figured I could do that.

#

Before I could do that, though, Donnie got home. Jim and I said hi and bye at the door. I asked Donnie if he'd had used both hands. He said, "Once... The rest of the time up between my legs." Then he carefully removed my slacks and his own cut-off shorts. I bent him over the window sill looking out into the sunny yard, and fucked him so diligently that he groaned in rhythm. Outside, some silly birds chirped in the bushes watching our antics. When the show was over, Donnie helped me dress again to hit the streets. He totally shared my excitement about the Montleone possibility and thought maybe he should look for something like that too.

With my rocks so splendidly off and full of hopeful bravado, I ferried my old truck across the river to a parking spot down below the imposing Roman temple of the Customs Building. Walking the Quarter Streets in shirt, tie, nice pants and shoes was sure new for me, and I felt very good-looking, like a model in a magazine, as I marched into the Montleone.

An attractive girl at the registration desk called the manager out to see me in the fancy lobby. The much older, square-faced man introduced himself with a handshake. I told him I wanted to be a desk clerk and handed him my hard-typed resume, which he scanned quickly. Then he said, "We don't have any openings at the moment." He clapped me on the shoulder and assured me he'd keep my information at hand for future openings.

Making my way back to the truck in the mid-afternoon heat, I undid my tie. After the ferry-ride, I found Ken and Donnie napping *in flagrante*, but left them in peace, sat naked on the sofa in front of the fan, and wrote another poem.

FERRY TO GRETNA

*I lean on the rail of the ferry
Watching my shadow rise and fall
On the rolling brown water.
I'm stopped in mid-stride,
 About to close my arms
 Around you.
A great steel ship
Leaves a sprawling wake.
Soon we must force the plot—
Our West Bank passion play
Must stagger into one more act.
By this rush of river wind,
I'll not have the last
 Time I held you
 Be the last.
And you'll know
You'll not have gone to him,
 But been sent.*

9/18/71

#

Sitting in the cool of the fan, I relished the fact that my darlings were lying there naked on the flowered sheets, and whenever I wanted... But at the moment I didn't feel up to jumping on their naked bodies. Our orgiastic triad had been exhausting, bloating my brain with thrills of fornication. Comparing this sensual madness with that romantic insanity of first being with Ken—and the idyllic months with Kenny—I saw those earlier affairs so full of love and caring, with the sex a tender expression of our emotional connections.

In this triangular affair, I felt instead an overwhelming passion, an intense lust focused on the sex act and its gratification. My whole concept of sex seemed to have changed, maybe back when I deflowered Roy. Indeed, in my faerie boyhood in the French Quarter I'd led many astray solely for the purpose of sex, but as a man of nearly 30, I now seemed to have come to value more the emotional than the physical connection with a guy.

Sure, I still felt caring love for Ken and a tender new affection for Donnie, but what I primarily felt for those two naked males in the bedroom was plain and simple lust. It shocked my baptized-Catholic, but apostate soul that I'd committed that deadly sin, lusting so furiously. I went into the bedroom to insert myself into my guys' chaste embrace and join their nap.

Waking up just in time to start supper, Donnie pulled on his shorts and set about doing so, leaving Ken and me snuggled up. He nuzzled into my throat and groaned, "Jesus! He's wearing me out!" Reminding him of Lee's dubious aphorism, I cradled his curly head on my chest and felt again our old love. And then we whispered to each other about how our afternoons had gone. Ken's report on the conversation with the person at LSUNO was fairly vague. He

remarked with little enthusiasm that whatever was still a possibility. On Monday maybe... And George gave him a lead to a sales opening in the huge Holmes department store on Canal. He had an appointment for tomorrow morning there.

My story of going to the Montleone was quickly told, and I didn't take much comfort in my resume being kept at hand. For tomorrow I'd target another hotel and a bank. Signaling his approval, Ken squeezed me and said, "Rich, darlin', I'm so happy you're finally trying to get your life together." He was quite right, of course. It was high time I took charge of my life. As my first official act, I got up to use the toilet.

#

We watched Donnie cook up a mess of collard greens with bacon and rice with a thick, spicy gravy, his grandmother's recipe. Throughout supper, I felt a glow of contentment in my love for these two guys, actually finding a balance between the love and the lust. Afterwards Donnie flopped in front of Ken's TV in the corner, and as always, I avoided even looking at the boob tube. Ken lounged in the easy chair with today's Times-Picayune, while I sat on the sofa futilely scanning the want ads. Quite content in our peaceful ménage and still very tired, I was all the same easily convinced to go out to Pete's again. After all, it was a Friday night.

The crowd in the bar was the usual, and I felt alive and awake in my dancing. I took secret extra pleasure in the absence of our horsey friend Jim. At a respectably wee hour Saturday morning, we headed home to get some sleep before tomorrow's next round of job-hunting. Believe it or not, we did get some sleep, after only an hour or so of lascivious behavior.

Donnie said he'd always wanted to be in a "sandwich," and while he and I did the magic number, Ken made free with his exposed rump. Again with his dick pumping down my throat, I could only watch as, just past the end of my nose, Ken's perfect penis plunged Donnie's beatific ass. Far too soon, I came like gangbusters—setting me free to concentrate on the transcendental spectacle of my guys' orgasms, Ken's first and then Donnie's. Then we slept in a pile.

#

After breakfast Ken ironed our shirts, and we dressed up again. Seeing us off at the door with deep kisses, Donnie dropped his bomb: "I gotta tell y'all—I'm moving in with Jim." We stared at him in horror. "He's picking me up about noon." We each grabbed him by an arm and begged him not to. Donnie kissed us again, assuring us that we'd be okay, then ushered us out the door with: "It was a lot of fun. So bye now, darlin's. Good luck finding jobs."

Ken and I stood a moment on the porch muttering profanities and then drove off to pursue our elusive jobs. In that less than optimal frame of mind, I visited a big bank on Baronne, filled out an application to be a teller, and left knowing only that they'd get in touch with me by the end of the week. At another bank on Tulane Avenue I had the same experience.

After a lunch of several tiny hamburgers at White Castle, I wandered by two hotels in the Quarter where they perfunctorily took my precious resume, though they had no openings. Then I staggered over to Jackson Square and sat in the shade moping. On the ferry back to Gretna, I found myself crying real tears over the last time I'd held Donnie being indeed the last.

At Ken's I climbed into the infamous bathtub full of cool water feeling like an axe had lopped off a limb and hoping I wouldn't bleed to death. When Ken got home, he joined me, sitting at the other end. He tangled our legs, and we tickled each other's crotches with toes. He dutifully reported a good interview at the Holmes store, but there were lots of applicants for the job, and they'd only decide on a hire later next week.

After lunch, he'd checked in with the Maison Blanche store just down Canal Street and had a lengthy interview with a fat manager who wanted to get into his pants. The guy said they

had no openings and told him to check again next week. I assured Ken he had to be the best applicant at Holmes—he'd just have to wait till later next week. With a strained smile, Ken tickled my balls again and said, "I can't wait a few more days, Rich."

That was when he announced his decision to go to grad school at LSU in Library Science, and classes were starting this coming week—in Baton Rouge. Feeling totally side-swiped, I asked why he'd never said anything about that to me, and Ken told me going back to school had always been his secret option, his ace in the hole. Regretting that I didn't have one, I splashed him and groused, "Not Baton Rouge! But, Ken, why'd you keep it secret from me?"

He leaned forward, took my hands in his, and answered gently, "Because I was afraid you wouldn't want to move there. I really did hope to get a job here so we could live together, Rich, but today I had to decide for myself. I sure hope you'll come with me, darlin'."

#

Lord Wind has an irritating way of suddenly blowing up out of nowhere. This second intimate bathtub exchange, I believe, was in fact the epiphany Edith was supposed to be, slightly delayed, no longer in drag, and blowing hard towards Baton Rouge.

Ken's hopeful invitation to come with him required a quick answer. My mindless, unreasoning gut quickly decided, for some ungodly reason, for the first time in my life, to resist Lord Wind, to defy Him and steer my life where I wanted—or didn't want—it to go. Like Ken, I too had to decide for myself. No more just going with the flow or whither the wind blew! I quickly replied, "I really do want to live with you, Ken, I do—but not in Baton Rouge."

"That's what I was afraid of," Ken sighed. "But what will you do, Rich-babe?"

To that long question, my profoundly short answer was, "We'll see." I spoke with some enthusiasm about plans to keep looking, typing resumes, filling out applications... And I'd go over and stay at Mother's till I found a place. She and Bill had a nice sofa.

Beyond that, I wasn't going to think about his long question right now—since it was time to haul ourselves out of the now tepid tub and start supper for just two. All evening Ken and I related the same as ever with each other, open and affectionate. We laid plans to pack and load his stuff onto my truck tomorrow and then move him to Baton Rouge on Monday morning.

#

Came time to go out, and at Pete's we greeted Donnie and the interloper graciously. Our evening rolled on with the usual chats and dances, but earlier than socially acceptable, we left for Gretna. On our ferry ride we leaned together at the rail, staring into the dark water and weeping over our love affair, but not our love, now coming to an end. In bed we held and loved each other without coming, lying on the beach like storm-wrecked flotsam.

After a full morning's work packing, over lunch Ken finally told me about his coming out at that little college in Wisconsin (now UW-Whitewater). His painful first loves echoed my own, though Ken's were generally more successful sexually than mine. I was humbled to learn that I was his first real, lasting affair and repeated what I'd said on the ferry: So our love affair, this closest thing to marriage gays can hope for, will soon be over, but only the official, the affair part of it. The love part of us would go on. Quoting that Cohen song again, I told him, "You know my love goes with you as your love stays with me." Ken's eyes were soft with sorrow.

We went back to packing and then over to Mother and Bill's. She'd cooked up a special bon voyage supper for Ken: fried catfish with french-fries, fried okra, boiled corn on the cob, and ketchup. Ken thanked them profusely for their friendship and good wishes.

Mother rather bravely said she was so sorry he and I were breaking up. Ken again took hold of my hand—right there in front of them—and said, “Oh, no, we’re not... We’ll always be brothers.” While I bawled into my napkin, Bill commented, “Well, that’s how it is alright!”

I arranged to show up tomorrow with my stuff and camp out on their sofa. Still needing to load Ken’s stuff on the truck, we took off, and they both hugged us goodbye. And by dark we got the truck loaded with his furniture, boxes, and stuff securely strapped down.

#

In our last night of love on Ken’s flowery sheets, our coupling was the pure communion of brothers, untainted by lust or hurry. Monday’s morning forced us to get it together for the dramatic finale of our passion play. Getting to Baton Rouge took nearly two hours what with my lumbering flatbed and Ken up ahead keeping his Dart’s speed down.

On the shady campus, Ken had me back the truck up near the side door of a dorm, and we luggered everything upstairs to his new room. He closed the door, and saying since he couldn’t do it outside, he’d have to do it here, he gave me a more than brotherly kiss. Outside, in public view by my open driver’s door, we hugged briefly, and Ken said, “Come visit me, Rich-babe.”

Driving away seemed to be, and probably was, in slow motion as the truck rolled away from my beloved brother, the painful distance extending yard by yard... And I heard again that perfect Leonard Cohen line: “It’s just the way it changes, like the shoreline and the sea.”

It was a blessing not to have any inkling that I wasn’t to see Ken again for three years. We’d keep in loose touch, and he with Lee, but that belongs to our many future years as brothers instead of lovers.

###

5.3 MAROONED

—in which I play at Robinson Crusoe on a desert island

Rolling along in the old truck from Baton Rouge through the swampy woods to New Orleans, I drove in a trance. Back in Gretna at Mother's house, she fed me a BLT for lunch, over which I probably said no more than ten meaningless words. Afterwards, she and Bill cheered me on as I got dressed up to go out job-hunting again, this time to two banks in the University District. The results were the usual courteous dismissals and loss of only one typed resume. Then I wandered around on the Tulane campus watching the students on their happy ways to and from classes. Late September indeed.

Over a nice dinner with Mother and Bill at a local seafood joint, I tried to chat optimistically about plans to find work. Oddly, I felt nothing in particular about now being unattached romantically. I didn't even think about going out in the evening and bore with the TV programs the folks watched, mostly just staring at the wall behind the set. They mercifully went to bed fairly early, leaving me the sofa. In the interminable dark, my head rang with those beautiful lines from that Cohen song—interspersed with Stewart's lament about late September. I felt like a ship-wrecked sailor marooned on a desert island!

#

But Tuesday was a new day, and I actually felt almost upbeat about hitting the pavement once again. After calling Gerry to arrange using his Select Trick to type some more resumes in the afternoon, I dressed again and drove downtown to try some of the big hotels. At the first, I was met by a surly woman who simply snarled that I wasn't their "type," which maybe meant that my hair was still too long. So I didn't have to waste a resume, but the nasty experience convinced me seek refuge in Audubon Park.

On my stroll along the bayou I mused on those distant years when Desai and I would sit on the bank teasing ravenous ducks, when Tony and I made midnight love on the 18th green... After lunch in a little diner on St. Charles Avenue, I went over to Gerry's and labored over another dozen resumes. When I got back to Mother's, she urged me to take one to the big grocery store nearby, which I reluctantly did. It turned out to be another waste of paper.

Mother made us a dinner of her less-than-remarkable meatloaf with mashed potatoes and gravy. She and Bill talked cheerily about my bright prospects, apparently thinking that being an over-educated young man with no particular skills or talents ought to be highly desirable. I pretended to agree and with phony confidence predicted that tomorrow I'd surely strike gold. Later, unable to face another evening of not looking at the TV set, I took off for the Quarter in hopes of dancing my blues away. After all, it was a Tuesday night...

Finding it easier to park my old flatbed truck in the warehouse area below Decatur, I walked past dear old La Marina on the corner of Toulouse, where the beloved, boarded-up green door used to swing open for me so noisily and joyfully. (Nowadays the place is a very upscale eatery called Café Maspero on a tourist-trampled Decatur Street unrecognizable to yours truly. The Wild Side has become a populous promenade.) I zigzagged over to Pete's on Bourbon for some serious dance action to celebrate the strange new freedom of being unattached.

"Maggie Mae" was playing, and before I even got to the bar, that musical cadenza (or riff, or whatever) caught me up and awakened the dervish within. I had to work off some of my bittersweet enthusiasm or else implode. When the riff ended, I found myself dancing with a succulent young man with sparkly dark eyes and black curls—like awakening to another dream.

We danced out the song with many if not quite lewd, at least suggestive, moves and smiles, and then he hugged me, my first but happily not last time to hug a perfect stranger before saying word one. Not even hi.

His first word to me was "Scott" and mine to him "Rich." Over the evening, verbal communication progressed rapidly between more dances, and soon, since he had to work in the morning, I walked Scott home to his place on Toulouse for more intimate communication. His apartment faced the street with fancy iron grills on the windows, almost reminding me of a cage. That suggestion of a zoo didn't inhibit my beastly behavior with Scott. He was like a lovely piece of cake, both to be eaten and to be had in many delicious ways. We wound up with only a brief while to sleep before Scott had to be up for his job at some office.

Stunned and satiated, I ambled down Toulouse in the early bright morning too addled even to notice the boarded-up green door and back to my truck. Mother and Bill were up at their coffee. Without remark on my prodigal appearance at this hour of the morning, they offered me breakfast. Grateful, I added by way of explanation that I'd met a guy... Mother again said, "Oh," and Bill cheered, "Hey, howdy! You work fast!" Enjoying my stepfather's admiration, I joked, "Too bad it's not a job." Even Mother laughed.

#

The next days and nights were a blur, respectively, of beating my head against the employment wall and jumping in the sack with Scott. The fruitless visits to more banks and hotels were light-hearted and nonchalant, balanced by feasts of fornication at night on Toulouse Street. Each morning my folks greeted me with a hearty breakfast and encouragement as I set out to pound the pavement. The only pain was so futilely dispensing the precious resumes.

On Thursday evening scrumptious Scott and I had dinner at a Chinese place on Dauphine and actually talked about personal stuff. Besides remarking on his childhood in a small town in Illinois, he told me his job was "office work" with a real estate business. Boringly simple, filing stuff, writing form letters, and keeping track of numbers, it certainly sounded like something I could do with my hands tied behind my back. Scott suggested I should also look into motels because they'd need desk clerks too. A whole new wall for head-pounding!

Leaving my new paramour's place on Friday morning, I was horrified that the old truck wasn't parked farther up Toulouse where I'd left it. Scott called the police for me to discover that they'd towed it to the impounding lot under the elevated freeway by Ursulines. I was thrilled that it hadn't been stolen, unlikely as that might seem. They made me pay twenty dollars: As a commercial vehicle, it had to have my business name and phone number on the sides. So I painted a black camel on both doors with "Balthazar's Caravan" around it and Mother's phone number beneath. Bill thought it was hilarious.

When I met him at Pete's that evening, Scott was elated by having made it to a weekend, but I was a bit disgruntled by two more futile job attempts. He made me drink a gin and tonic to take the edge off, and several exuberant dances restored my equanimity. Later, Donnie showed up all by his lonesome—Jim apparently busy at some family affair—and greeted me with his memorable deep kiss. Meeting cute Scott, Donnie whistled appreciatively and gave him one too.

That sealed our triple alliance. With those brief negotiations, we left Pete's public premises to execute it in the privacy of Toulouse Street. Suffice it to say, Donnie supplied the makings for a new kind of sandwich I've heard called a daisy-chain. Clamped between those two insatiable boys, I felt my brain turn into liverwurst.

In the leisurely Saturday morning, we walked over to the Old Coffee Pot for a late breakfast of real food. While Donnie and Scott dug hungrily into huge omelets, I made do with a croissant. Then Donnie had to go back to Jim's, and Scott and I rode the Caravan out to Pontchartrain Beach, where we swam, napped in the sunshine, and cruised the cute guys. A perfect Saturday afternoon divertissement, untroubled by lack of job or loss of former lover. Being marooned on New Orleans' tropic isle didn't seem all that bad. It was almost Bali Hai.

#

It was already late on Sunday morning, nearly noon, after our third bout of spirited copulation when Scott and I collapsed amongst his pillows, both screwed senseless. He nibbled on my ear and in a cautious whisper asked if I loved him—even a little bit.

Knowing better than to hesitate, I answered, "Of course I do, snuggle-bunny!" Also wise enough not to ask Scott the same loaded question, I asked, "Why do you even wonder?"

"Because all you ever seem to think about is sex," he muttered. "You're insatiable!"

Struck by his choice of words and amused by his powers of projection, I blithely asked, "What else is there, darlin'?"

Now that I hear myself asking that, I deplore my youthful cynicism, but that's apparently what my history of temporary love affairs had brought me to. When Scott proposed becoming lovers and living together, I did pause to consider the ramifications and then stupidly suggested, "Let's just stay boyfriends and see what happens." He sat up, frowning, while I babbled on about how gay guys can't hope for straight things like marriage or happily ever after. How all we can hope to do is roll in the hay while the sun shines.

Scott got up and stood looking out the barred window, his splendid buttocks as ripe and round as apples. Then he said quietly, "I think you should go now." I got up out of bed saying okay, and I'd be back this evening. He turned to look at me with tears in his eyes and said, "No. Go now." And turned back to the window.

Dumbfounded, I got up and quickly dressed, hoping all the while Scott would stop me, but he didn't. At the door I said goodbye, but he said nothing, and as I walked past the window, he turned away again. I stood there on the Toulouse sidewalk for a moment, astonished by getting the boot—for the first time in my life—and surprised that I hadn't even protested getting thrown out. Then I walked numbly up the street to my waiting Caravan.

My first thought was to go to Gerry's, figuring he'd surely offer me some tea and sympathy, if not gin, and maybe even some lunch. Gerry was surprised and pleased to see me and indeed provided gin and a big hunk of muffaleta sandwich. It was left over from a just-finished lunch with Ken, who'd left not ten minutes before.

Gerry explained that my brother-lover had driven down yesterday afternoon to see his old boyfriend Richard from New York and nodded meaningfully at the big bed in the front room. (I knew all about this one from last year's letters.) Ken was taking that Richard to the airport and then would head on back to Baton Rouge. My timing couldn't have been any worse.

Ken left me a note: "Hi, Rich Babe, called your mom's place yesterday afternoon and this morning, but no answer. Sorry we couldn't connect. Bet you were out whoring around. Hope it was fun. Come on up to BR sometime. Love, Ken." I could hear his dear voice in each word, and his bet was uncannily correct. I saw my five-day affair with Scott had just been hanky-pank, and I didn't love him even a little bit, which softened the boot significantly.

#

Riding the famous ferry back to Gretna, I watched the afternoon sun glitter off its rippling wake and considered the concept of hanky-pank. Clearly the past five days had indeed been spent “whoring around” with Scott. It certainly had been fun, but I’d just been wallowing in lust again, no lesson learned from those deliciously depraved three-ways with Donnie and Ken. The daisy chain with Donnie and Scott was mind-blowing—liverwurst and all that—and in their surreal moments had made wild fantasies palpably real. The satisfaction was also palpable.

As a matter of fact, it seemed to me that satisfying lust achieves a sort of corporeal nirvana. I lamented that the ecstasy of orgasm was as ephemeral as it gets, like the fleeting glints of sun on the ferry’s ripples. In my nondenominational gay morality, I didn’t consider lust a sin—just a biological imperative. Orgasm was our species’ survival mechanism, the goal of life and incentive to procreate. I mean, lust was the cause of my former marriage and fatherhood!

But the terrific power of unadulterated lust, the sexual drive, troubled me. In post-coital torpor, I’d felt drained of mental energy. No wonder my futile job-hunting had been so low-pressure—I’d been lobotomized by the overdose of sex, a walking, pulsing gonad. On the other hand, most folks needed a good orgy once in a while, if only to keep the organs in working order.

While I hadn’t loved Scott even a little bit, I still was really sorry he’d gotten so hurt. I’d cared for him and sure wished I could have kissed him good luck. Watching the flurry of sparkles on the ferry’s wake, I realized that what I really missed in my current unattached state was simply being with a person and doing whatever we wanted together, sex an added benefit. The way I’d felt that with Ken, and of course Kenny. While waiting for that happy time, I figured I ought to try and restrain my lust. It was exhausting.

#

No one was at home at Mother’s, but no matter. The key was under the camellia bush by the porch. After my contemplations on the ferry, I felt focused and energized, ready like Robinson Crusoe to put together a life on this desert island. I snatched up the Sunday paper from Mother’s table, quickly read the funnies, and then checked Help Wanted. With a much lower bar than before, I marked several office opportunities to check into during the coming week.

Retiring then to the sofa in the silent afternoon, I lay there thinking what now? What was I going to do now? Now I was alone, really by myself for the first time in six years, ever since that first year in Seattle. Thinking again of Robinson Crusoe’s example, I recalled that he’d quickly built himself a house of sorts. That also being my first concern, I took up the want ads again and looked at apartments for rent.

There were lots of expensive places listed around the Quarter, and I quickly got a bit discouraged, but as soon as I looked in other areas the prospects improved. In fact, I found a studio apartment just a short way up Canal Street listed for a mere \$50 a month, and I leapt up to call the number. A woman answered, happy to hear that I was interested in the place, and we arranged for me to meet her there, 4219 Canal, first thing in the morning. The hope was electrifying, and out in the backyard I danced a few jigs of joy.

That exertion was enough to warrant a nap, and I was awakened a good while later by Mother and Bill getting home. Missing my coming back for breakfast the past two mornings, Mother had been worried, and at the news of my affair ending, she said her usual oh. Bill opined, “Easy come, easy go!” They’d been away all day visiting plantations up the river. Mother didn’t feel much like cooking, so we went out to the seafood place again.

#

Monday morning I got up from Mother's sofa feeling like a million dollars, my batteries fully charged with the chance of the cheap apartment on Canal, and possibly by the crawfish etouffee for yesterday's dinner. With the trance of lust lifted now, I gave no thought to sex. Again like the marooned Mr. Crusoe, I focused on survival and was quite willing to wait for a man Friday to surprise me someday, hopefully in the not too distant future.

Mother also got up early to make me a hearty breakfast. Over our coffee, Bill slipped me \$50 to help nab the apartment, the first financial assistance I'd ever gotten from my family. Mother kissed me good luck and really hoped the studio would be a nice place. So did I.

The old lady who met me on Canal Street was glad to get the cash for a damage deposit. She even urged me to move in today and would give me the last few days of September for free. I was embarrassed accepting her offer, such largesse from a perfect stranger. Suddenly, it seemed the world actually wanted to help me, another unique experience in my life.

Some 30 blocks up Canal Street from the French Quarter, 4219 was the front half of a white shotgun house with a porch roof decorated with fancy barge-boards. Inside, the "studio" was the first two shotgun rooms closed off from the rear unit of two by the bathrooms in between. There was a small bed in the back room, a combined kitchen and bedroom, and a sofa and chair were in the front room with big bright windows onto the porch and to one side.

What sold me on the place before even walking in the door was the front yard: A grand circular rose garden in late bloom and in its center a hugely tall, surely 60-foot, Royal palm tree. My heart was stolen away, my new home already perfect... I took a walk along the street, loving the ancient live oaks and profusion of tropical plants like elephant ears, even birds-of-paradise. Drunk on the familiar, beloved fragrance of New Orleans, that humid perfume of flowers and sweet rot, I did a sailor dance—light-footed along the broken and buckled sidewalk—to celebrate coming back after seven years away to the home of my heart.

#

Moving into that pretty old house on a palm-crowned desert island was even more exhilarating than moving into the place on Bellevue in Milwaukee. In a used furniture store (which would nowadays be an Antique Shoppe), I picked up a couple more things for the front room and a simple chifferobe with mirrored closet on one side and drawers on the other. Sitting just inside the second room, it set off the sleeping area from the kitchen. My pictures looked quite fine on the living room walls, and the floral tapestry hung over the bed made a great contrast with the cabinets, counters, sink, and window across the room. My new nest.

In the first couple weeks, on a walk along Conti Street, I came upon the wreckage of a giant, viciously pruned rubber tree. Several big-leaved branches made a green spray of jungle between the side windows in my living room. Then I discovered that the very thick wall between my rooms, maybe four feet wide, was a closed-in central fire-hearth. The chimney could be seen from the side of the house, and it proved still operable. From the nearby gas outlet on the floor, I ran a pipe up into the hearth to make a fireplace. A little bit of lumber made mantles around the new holes in the walls. That's how I made 4219 truly mine.

All the weeks of October I persisted in the job hunt, ever more discouraged. The most momentous occasion of the month was my dear Kenny's birthday one Saturday when we got to speak to each other through Mother's phone in Gretna. He sympathized with my continuing unemployment, and I congratulated him on landing the gig as the tailor in "Fiddler on the Roof." Our goodbyes were stuttering phrases of love and missing each other.

Interviewing for advertised jobs was demoralizing when they'd sit there asking questions and look totally disinterested in my answers. I continued dropping into places about maybe cashiering, like the Morrison's Cafeteria just down Canal (where I sometimes dined), and even for desk jobs at motels, but they'd all look at me like I was some Martian or disgusting bug. Most told me, supposedly as a good reason for rejecting me, that I was "too over-qualified" for their little job. At least very few wanted a copy of my resume.

Some of the rejections, I think, maybe most were probably caused by a general prejudice against hippies, and maybe even against gays. I don't think I looked or acted particularly gay—unless in my educated, articulate language—but there was my still-too-long hair... Though relatively hip, I was still a naïve young man to think that beyond wearing decent clothes, my appearance didn't really matter. I figured it wasn't like I was looking for a date.

#

Speaking of dates, I gave that matter very little thought. The five-day festival of the flesh with hunky Scott had apparently exhausted my supply of lust, and the few times I went out to Pete's were solely for purpose of dance. Once I saw Scott there, but he pointedly ignored me. Another evening I ran into Donnie, who definitely didn't and locked lips with me like old times. With no drive to trick, I danced with a light heart and went home happily alone.

Early on, tired of having to park it on back blocks, I gave the Caravan back to Bill and then only rarely rode the bus downtown. It was just as much fun to dance at home to my records. The problem with giving up my wheels was that I couldn't go visit Ken up in Baton Rouge. The fare on the Greyhound didn't fit into my unemployed budget. There was the same problem about wanting to go to Gainesville for Aimée's birthday in early November.

However, my new life on the desert island wasn't totally solitary. Old friend Lee often dropped by to visit and update me on plans for another new musical, which within a few weeks fell through for lack of financial backing. He loaned me his old bike, and sometimes I rode it down Carrollton to visit him on Oak Street. One evening Lee took me in his little MG to a theater out by City Park to see a movie called "Something for Everyone," and I fell in love.

Starring Michael York and Angela Lansbury, the film is a black comedy based on the fairy tale of the young hero wooing the beautiful Princess in a castle. From the first scenes of Conrad in tremendously short leather shorts, I was smitten, and his seduction of the handsome Prince of the castle really got my romantic juices flowing again. Over the next couple weeks I went back several times on Lee's bike. Even at the time I recognized this intoxicating passion as much the same as back in high school when I adored the unattainable Annette Funicello, but that didn't matter. I could feel the fires of real (reel) desire purifying my spirit of any residue of lust and invigorating my being.

October of 71 was thus another happy new beginning for me, this time totally on my own with bright possibilities everywhere, though not immediately evident. By the end of the month I was totally ready for one of them to materialize. Of course, I was resigned that there'd never be another Kenny, but eventually... Most desirable, of course, would be to find a decent job. Soon.

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5.4 TEMPEST

—in which I find two jobs, rehearse a play, and get raped

Here begins a passing strange part of my second coming out, up till now so amorously active in the delicious aftermath of the divorce. Lord Wind had blown away to Baton Rouge, absquatulating with rowdy Hurricane Edith and abandoning me to my own elite company and imaginary resources, suddenly a single gay bachelor of the former-hippie ilk.



The Storm, by Pierre-Auguste Cot

By the way, “absquatulate” is reportedly an honest-to-john real word from 19th-century English that means “to run off with someone in a hurry, to abscond.” See “The Little Book of Lost Words” by Joe Gillard, which illustrates the word with a painting held in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Incredibly evocative of Lord Wind, I used it as an appropriate title image for this chapter and will repeat it here because it will prove even more so by the end of it. I admit to brightening it up a lot to see the hot fellow’s face and the maiden’s gauzy contours. Some say it’s Daphnis and Chloe.

In terms of imaginary personal resources the gay bachelor was admittedly a brilliant esoteric scholar, a promising but useless poet, and for a male, if I do say so myself, inordinately beautiful. However, he was both unemployed and un-endowed (fiscally, not physically). In my deepening poverty, just like over the past ten years since leaving home, I was determined never to rely on my family for anything—I could take care of myself. My dear Ken had taught me well how to take charge of my own life—and I proceeded to do so.

Maybe Lord Wind didn’t come blowing back at me because He was irked at my refusing to come with Him, Edith, and beloved Ken to Baton Rouge? Maybe He got insulted by my striking off on my own and renting an apartment He didn’t approve of? Well, that’s just too damn bad! He sure hadn’t blown me any mansions to live in recently—and marooned sailors had to make shift somehow. Frankly, I figured I’d done quite well taking charge—so far.

However, lying so many years in the dry dock of matrimony, the metaphorical ship of my life, the Faerie Prince, had rotted mostly away. Who had I now become? A sailor without a ship—so what kind of stupid sailor did that make me? My lovely life metaphor had finally run its course, and now I’d have to learn to live life non-metaphorically. Without Lord Wind!

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Mr. Gillard’s little book also has some other neat words for my readers who waste their time reading this amphigory (again 19th-century English meaning “a piece of writing that appears to have meaning but is really just foolish nonsense”). Remember when Scott told me like in that old Ray Charles song to “Hit the road, Jack,” I’d remarked on his buttocks as ripe and round as apples? The perfect word for his splendid derrière would be the 18th-century English adjective callipygian, meaning “possessing beautiful and shapely buttocks.” Now there’s a useful word.

Frankly, ever since hitting the road in the weeks spent settling into my new apartment, I'd given no thought to any derrières—other than Michael York's, of course, which was truly callipygian in those leather shorts. Though armed and ready for a new guy to appear, I wasn't exactly on the lookout for one. All the orgiastic activity since arriving in New Orleans had apparently pumped my well dry. Seeing so vividly and enjoying so greedily every secret part of a man's body, and several times moreover, had left me feeling oddly indifferent to even the memory of those stupendous fucks, much less to needing another. As mentioned earlier, I was preoccupied with the urgent need to find a decent job. Soon.

My efforts in that direction took me up and down Canal Street to pound on doors in the business district and Quarter, on the bus in rainy weather and on foot in dry to save bus fare. The thirty-some blocks were good exercise, stumbling along the broken sidewalks and snooping at all the yards and houses along the way. There were many business buildings along Canal, but none looked like employment possibilities for a brilliant scholar, etc. with no skills or talents.

Friend Lee once said maybe I should learn a trade, but he had no suggestions. I couldn't imagine being a plumber or car mechanic—or fixing vacuum cleaners or sewing machines. So, while walking downtown on Monday morning, November first, I looked again at a familiar big building sporting a sign for Meadows Draughon Business College. In a way learning to do business, whatever that meant, surely had to be some kind of trade.

Encouraged by the familiar notion of a college, I went inside and inquired with a heavy-set woman at the reception desk about opportunities. She told me to see the Dean, Mr. Hebert, and rang him up. He came hurrying out of a nearby office, a squat, balding fellow, and greeted me with a handshake. Neither he nor the receptionist seemed to notice my long hair.

In his office, Mr. Hebert kindly listened to me describe my lengthy and esoteric academic career and ask what business course might best help me find a job. He proceeded to describe the classes the Business College offered. It was discouraging because I was already proficient at typing, filing, letter writing, bookkeeping, etc. and the basic academics were water under my bridge long before. I dismissed his mention of shorthand, since I didn't want to be a secretary.

Unbothered by my lack of enthusiasm, Mr. Hebert then pointed out the college's special curriculum in drafting and told me that highly specialized talent was very employable in all kinds of industries. Knowing no better, I took his word for that, meanwhile having no idea that within a decade that handmade trade would be demolished by computers. (It was also quite ironic that within five years I would learn shorthand and use that to make my living for some decades.)



Wisconsin Winter Scene

As a matter of fact, though unsure what exactly drafting involved, I was intrigued by the notion. In high school I'd enjoyed drawing (including some hormonal sketches of naked Greek statues), like a winter landscape that even won a state contest and got printed in the local newspaper. And of course you might well recall that intimate image earlier of Ken and me in bed which was drawn in a fit of love just the year before. Thus I was won over by savvy Mr. Hebert's supposedly free counseling service.

The next hurdle before jumping into a profitable new career as a draftsman was the cost. I honestly stated that payment for classes was simply out of my question. Mr. Hebert parried with a surprise, asking if I could teach one of their math classes in exchange for taking my own class in drafting. Math being an fascinating intellectual game for me ever since forever, I swore I could, everything from basic to algebra, geometry, trigonometry— He stopped me, saying basic math and a little algebra was all they'd need. We had us a deal—starting the next day!

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There was mild rejoicing that evening when Mother and Bill picked me up to go out for seafood. Her first response to my news was that I wouldn't be making any money. I rejoined that I wouldn't be spending any either. Just my time—three hours in the mornings with the afternoons free to look for a job. Bill seemed to approve the drafting thing as a good trade and figured it should pay fairly well. Mother ultimately approved as well, but admonished me to keep on job-hunting in the afternoons. I assured her I'd most certainly be doing that because, after all, I had to keep sending Barbara money for child-support.

Teaching my first math class at Meadows Draughon was disconcerting: I was to pick up the reins dropped by the former math teacher, who had suddenly abandoned ship just the Friday before, October 29. Mr. Hebert had shown no obvious concern or regret about the personnel change and given me the deserter's textbook and lesson plan, stunning in its simplicity. He'd also told me my classes would be like personal tutorial instruction for each student.

That's what it was on Tuesday morning alright. Each of the nine young students (just out of high school), was mathematically almost illiterate. Learning that half of them planned on doing accounting gave me great pause. I went over their homework assigned by my predecessor and realized what a very basic sort of personal tutoring it would be—teaching truly elemental math each weekday morning at nine.. Multiply this, divide that...

Each weekday morning immediately after my math class, my drafting class met at ten. In the classroom that Tuesday morning, I counted six others perched on tall chairs at large slanting drawing-boards. They all just stared at me like deer in the headlights. The instructor, a plump, plum-nosed fellow with hair almost as long as mine, parked me at a drawing-board and explained how to use the board's sliding ruler, the kinds of pencils I had to use, etc. All quite simple. I felt exalted sitting up on the stool at the professional drawing-board and learning to draw things properly.

At Mother's for dinner Saturday night, the folks were pleased that the Business College arrangement was fun, but she still worried about me finding a job—rather like that ancient nagging song, "Get a Job!" Well, damn it! I was trying. Now with access to a typewriter at the college, I was tossing resumes around like confetti. Bill's step-parental Texas perspective was that things would work out when they worked out. There was some truth in that...

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Having the non-paying teaching job gave me a sense of purpose again, a renewed sense of identity and of being back at school, albeit early November. Each morning I greeted my math class cheerily and soon got to know the individual students more or less, a mixed young bunch of black and white guys and girls. That first day I quickly adjusted my professorial attitude and tried to see them not as dimwits but simply as unwittingly uneducated.

I enjoyed giving them each personal attention and watching their struggles to understand. A couple of the girls were pretty good with their numbers, and a couple of the guys were equally

bad, one of them a black kid named Tyrone. First leaning close to explain how to add a list of figures, I looked into his big black doe-eyes with long curling lashes—his full, sculpted lips smiling—and it took some moments for me to find words. When the class was over, Tyrone stood up to leave and literally took my breath away with him. The red shirt barely contained his broad chest, and the blue jeans stretched taut over and around his supremely callipygian behind—shapes that put Michael York's leather-bound buttocks to shame.

I went to my class every morning excited to see Tyrone and smell his animal fragrance, vaguely like a horse—what I believe nowadays they call pheromones. My first infatuation with a black boy had been back in 1963 at Tulane, when I fell in futile love with one of the first blacks to enroll at the school. That passion went absolutely nowhere, but ever since then I'd been fascinated by black beauties. And frustrated by never getting to ride one.

Tyrone seriously disturbed my new detachment from sexual matters, and it took me a couple days to come to terms with my hormones. Having already fallen in love with a student before (Bogdan in my Russian classes), I well knew that romantic madness. It was nothing like Tyrone's physical attraction. I recognized that my reaction was sheer lust, while what I really wanted was romance, like that with Kenny. Tyrone's pulchritude was easy to live with once I accepted sexual attraction being essentially aesthetic appreciation. He was a lovely black orchid, exquisite to smell and admire, but no need to eat it. Enough to exult in its existence.

#

By the next Thursday, 11th day of 11th month, I was feeling quite content with my Tyrone-infused math class and then my Tyrone-energized drawing of odd shapes and sizes. But the plodding afternoon hours of delivering resumes hither and thither really wore on me. The supposedly human encounters with manager or whomever were quickly and mostly politely over, and I'd check that one off my list as forgotten. My optimism declined noticeably after each afternoon's tiring forays, of which I actually did keep a list. Thank the universe, that sad document has long since been lost.

So Thursday when I got back to my palm-crowned home feeling a little down and tired, I was pleased to find Mother and Bill sitting in my junk-store wicker chairs on the porch. They'd come to take me out to dinner at a barbecue place over on Broad Street. Their casual company was quite welcome since I was only seeing friend Lee a couple times a week, maybe. Bill was really looking forward to a big rack of barbecued ribs.

It amazes me now looking back nearly fifty years that I cannot remember a single shred, not even a crumb, of how I ate during those fall months. Can't even summon up an image of my old kitchen there on Canal Street, across from my two-walled bedroom, you may recall. And economically I certainly couldn't afford to eat out often. Also I can't recall ever going grocery shopping, having any favorite foods, or for that matter, any of the titles or subjects of the myriad public library books I devoured in quiet evenings alone on my tropical isle.

So the folks' invite promised to be a notable feed. Let me tell you, that dinner at the barbecue joint on Broad turned out to be more than a feast. Mother told me a friend of hers knew this guy in a bank who needed a smart person to work on some new something called "credit cards." She'd already made me an appointment to see so-and-so tomorrow at 2:30.

Just like that, my life suddenly took off like a big wave, a powerful current, sweeping me along, carrying me away. It was that old flow all over again, the one I used to simply go with before—before Lord Wind blew into town—and then out again. What choice did I have but to ride the wave and try to keep my head above water? So after another intoxicating dose of

Tyrone's pheromones and a fit of drawing diminishing rectangles, I went to see so and so and was told to show up at eight-thirty tomorrow morning, Saturday.

First thing, I stopped by Meadows Draughon to let Mr. Hebert know I wouldn't be back for either my math class or my drawing lesson. Looking not at all perturbed by losing his second math teacher in as many weeks, he congratulated me on finding a job. I really regretted not getting to see Tyrone again, and was sorry my number-challenged students now would face yet another teacher change—if Mr. Hebert could even find anybody. Outside I found a phone booth and called Mother to please her with the great news.

#

The job was for a bank division called Master Charge, one of the bigger credit card companies of the time (later to morph into MasterCard). Remember that this was in 1971 when there were no computerized business systems. Along with six other workers, I sat at a long desk at a bank of blinking phone lines wearing earphones and a curved mike by my mouth, an animate Account Authorizer, if you can imagine such a primitive thing. We took calls from merchants and either approved or declined a customer's purchase. But that's not all.

With the customer's name—not their account number yet—we had to go to the filing cabinets behind us, find the customer's alphabetical file, now verify the account number, and then determine if the account limit would cover the proposed purchase. If it did, we entered the amount, date, and new total on the account sheet—in pen!—and approved it, giving the merchant an approval code. Hey, it was a decently paying job and rather fun what with all the numbers, detail orientation, and that delicious taste of power in declining a purchase.

Less pleasant were the constantly ringing phones and long hours between breaks. And there wasn't much to get excited about among the four male and two female authorizers, all white. The guys mostly looked angry, none of them in the least attractive, and girls were much the same, though the heavy one actually smiled at me when I first arrived. But there was one thing about the job that everybody enjoyed: laughing at the incredible names on many of the accounts, outrageous names with hilarious spellings. I wish I could remember any of them, but they were right up there with that hysterical name in Monty Python's movie "The Life of Brian" for the wife of Bigus Dicus: Incontinentia Buttox. I kid you not.

This was the first time I'd ever worked a standard eight-hour day, and getting home around 5:30, I'd be fairly tired. But it was a good tiredness sweetened by the fact that soon I'd get a nice paycheck. In my new schedule I went to bed earlier than before and woke up earlier in the mornings, feeling almost like a normal person, proud of finally being employed.

The next Tuesday evening, after my fourth day on the job, Lee showed up with a pot of his great gumbo. He told me about getting a role in that famous Shakespeare play, "The Tempest," being done by Actors Classical Theatre. He was the fairy Ariel, rather a stretch for such a tall guy. Now a composer, at LSU Lee had also been a ballet dancer, so he could easily prance around like a fairy. (Actually, Lee always acted fairy-like.) He invited me to try out for a role. His director friend, Suzanne somebody, would surely want to cast me as somebody.

#

The performance was to be on the first weekend in December, and rehearsals would all be in the evenings. And that's how I suddenly became a Shakespearean actor. Suffering a severe shortage of actors, Suzanne cast me as a composite minor nobleman, combining several characters into a strange buffoon who held oddly schizophrenic conversations with himself. It



A Composite Minor Nobleman

was quite comic, and I had a hard time not laughing at myself. I even sewed up my own costume and showed it off in this flattering photo Bill took at Mother's house.

For the next couple weeks, between my engrossing and entertaining day-job and evenings of artistic and humorous rehearsals, I hadn't a moment to think about being romantically unattached. My new life as a single bachelor was wonderfully full. I even had a new social life.

After rehearsals, I often went out with other cast members for drinks. It cut into my sleep time for

the job, but I coped. Almost as a matter of course, we were all gay men, though no one inspired my aesthetic appreciation, much less struck a spark to my romantic kindling. Many a night we camped and gaily made merry in a dark little lounge on Chartres called The UpStairs.

That's right—you've probably heard of that tragic place where a homophobic fire-bombing would happen in 1973, a year after I'd have left New Orleans. To this day, I count my social nights there as a horrifically close call and wonder if some Tempest companion—besides Lee, I can't remember their names—was among the 32 brothers who perished there. Like the biblical Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they were all God's children thrown into the fiery furnace, but no magnanimous deity came to their rescue.

#

On a much lighter note and more to the point of my suddenly busy and fun-filled bachelor life, very soon Thanksgiving rolled around, and I had to work on the holiday in case any credit card customers might go out shopping. The phones rarely rang, and the manager sent all but me and the thin girl named Shirley home early. We spent our slack time browsing the file drawers and guffawing over ridiculous names, and soon we too got off for the holiday.



With Mother on Thanksgiving, 1971

The folks picked me up for Thanksgiving dinner. There was all the old traditional stuff—I couldn't remember Mother ever making a turkey before for turkey day. We'd always been too busy in the café. Sure, she'd baked pumpkin pies, my very least favorite. Dinner was as good as a turkey got, and I really enjoyed Mother's stuffing, gravy and mince pie, baked on request as my very most favorite.

In our thanksgiving statements, I gave thanks for the credit card job and for the great role in the play—and naturally for Mother and Bill feeding me such good food. Surprisingly so, as I'd never thought of Mother as that good of a cook. While serving me stuffing, she gave me their big news. Bill got a job in Spain. They'd leave on Monday for Madrid.

Bill said the job was for like six months, and they'd also be going to Beirut in Lebanon. As if that wasn't enough of a surprise, Mother added the kicker—while they were abroad, they'd leave her almost new Camaro, a fancy blue hot rod, with me. For that amazing gift, I was extraordinarily thankful with every bite of her tremendous mince pie.

#

On Friday, lots of people were out shopping that day after the holiday. Saturday's credit card business was also pretty brisk. On our lunch break, Shirley and I chatted for the first time. To keep things clear, I told her right away I was gay. Not having a *Tempest* rehearsal that evening, I mentioned I'd be going out dancing at Pete's. Shirley asked to come along, and I could hardly refuse. We'd meet at the bar at nine, and she'd drive me home afterwards.

In the crowd at Pete's, Shirley didn't seem to mind being one of the only girls. Though she was a vaguely awkward dancer, I kept her busy for a good while. Though Shirley was off on Sundays, we left fairly early because I wasn't. In her car, Shirley said she wanted to show me her apartment, but I said I didn't really want to see it, not tonight.

She drove there anyway, quite proud of having decorated it all by herself. At the old apartment complex, we'd just started up the long walk, when it started raining. So, like in that French painting, we quite literally absquatulated into the building. Her apartment was really something with dramatic posters and fishnet draped across a corner. Once inside, she pushed up against me growling that I was such a hot man, while I insisted I wasn't at all hot.

I tried gently to get her off of me, but she clung, begging to suck my dick. A blow job, even from a girl, was hard to refuse. Pants down, I lay back on her bed, eyes closed, imagining my Roy Boy sucking me. When I got hard, Shirley scrambled astraddle and stuffed me up inside her. Almost there, in a moment I came with a weird feeling I now know is *akrasia* (from the Ancient Greek, meaning "knowing you shouldn't be doing something but doing it anyway").

As soon as I could speak, I asked Shirley to take me home, but she suddenly got really mad at me and refused. So I exited forthwith, walked many blocks in the rain to a bus on St. Claude, and got home late, soaked and furious.

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