

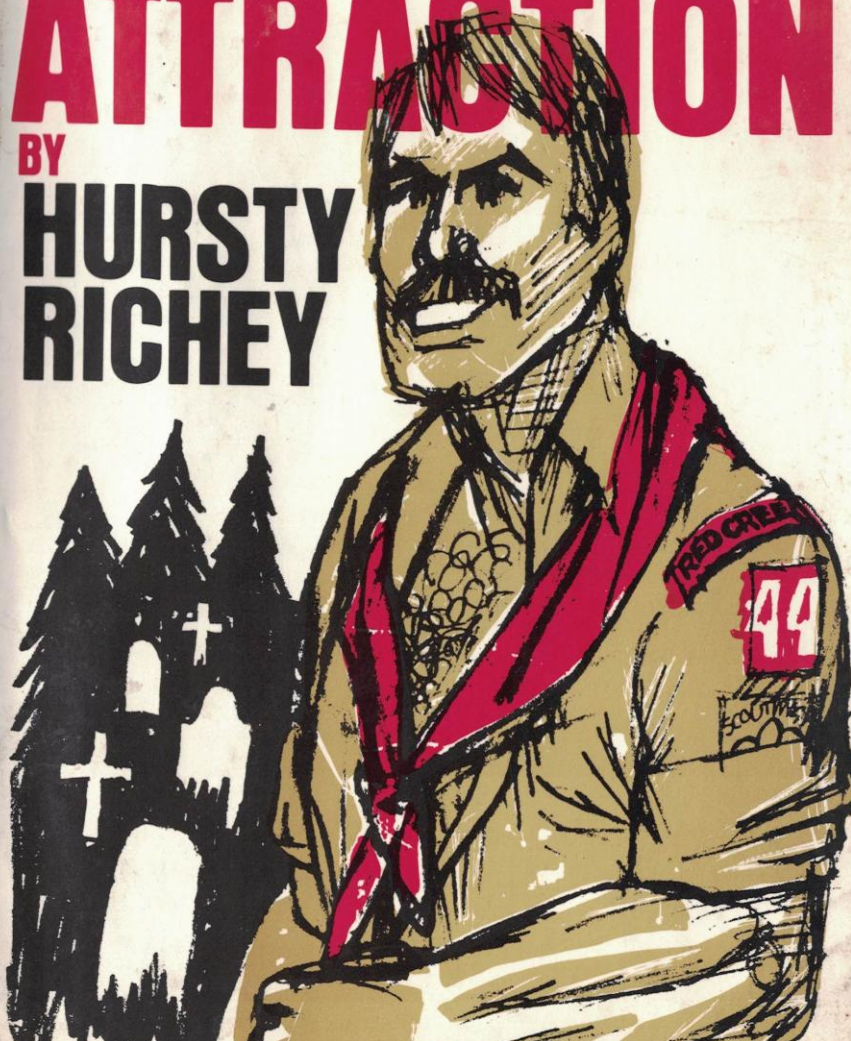
**NEAR FATAL ATTRACTION**

**HURSTY RICHEY**



# NEAR FATAL ATTRACTION

**BY  
HURSTY  
RICHEY**



# NEAR-FATAL ATTRACTION

*A Novel by*  
Hursty Richey

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**JHI^Bshley books inc •**

Port Washington. N. Y. 11050

Published simultaneously in Canada by George J. McLeod,  
Limited, 73 Bathurst Street, Toronto, Ontario M5V 2P8

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Library of Congress Number: 76-26783  
ISBN: 0-87949-076-4

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Address information to Ashley Books, Inc., Box 768, Port  
Washington, New York 11050

Published by Ashley Books, Inc.  
Manufactured in the United States of America

First Edition

987654321

*For Dorothy Turner*



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NEAR-FATAL » ATTRACTION





## CHAPTER ONE

### LETTER TO TOM PEDDIGREW

JANUARY

507 Braddock Ave.  
Red Creek, W. Va.  
January 23, 1974

Dear Tom,

If this letter reaches you, I imagine you will be surprised at hearing from me after seventeen years. It really does not seem that long. I still picture you the way you looked on that camping trip you and I took in the fall of 1949 to Harmon's Rock. Of course, I saw you some for the next few years, but that camping trip was really the last time we did something together. You were fourteen then, but still a slender little fellow with a mop of blond hair. And those heavy-lidded blue eyes! It does not seem possible that you are now thirty-nine years old!

I am sending this letter to the New York address of the oil company you went to work for when you graduated

from Carlton. Perhaps, if you no longer work for them, they will know what company you went with and forward it to you. One reason I am writing — other than that I would really enjoy hearing from you - is that I have just completed a three-part article for “Mountain Scene Magazine,” a Sunday supplement which the *Red Creek Times* began publishing three years ago. The article, which I will mail separately, is about the uncanny series of tragedies that befell the members of our old Boy Scout Troop 44.

First, I would appreciate it if you would comment on the accuracy of the information as you remember it and feel free to send along any corrections or additional facts I have forgotten. Also, the editor is anxious that the principal, living participants described in the article should read it before it is published and state any objections they might have. In writing the article — I am on the staff of the *Red Creek Times* — I have dealt with the lives of the individuals involved in a kind of personal way. The editor feels that I have indulged in a lot of conjecture. He wants verification.

In reading the article you will be brought up to date on what has happened to me and what I know about the other members of Troop 44. No doubt, there is probably very little that you don't know, but I would really be interested in learning what has happened to *you* in the years since you graduated from college and left Red Creek. I would especially be interested in knowing how you feel the tragedies have affected your life. I am thinking about writing a short follow-up article about the survivors of the tragedies — where they are, what they are doing — and any comments they might have on those incidents of long ago. That would be you, Chalky Bertram, Mr. Bertram, Jack Magro, Mr. Magro, and your brother Arnold.

I hope you do not think I am only interested in hear

ing from you because of the article. Over the years I have often thought about trying to contact you. I have the fondest memories of our childhood friendship and the good times during our boy scout days in Troop 44 — before the accidents. As you well know, after four boys were killed and two seriously injured in separate incidents in little more than a year's time, something of a tragic myth has been created here in Red Creek. Since you left Red Creek in the mid-fifties, speculation about how they all happened has, if anything, increased.

I am really looking forward to hearing from you and would enjoy even more seeing you and having a chance to talk over old times. I will wait to send the article when I am sure I have your correct address. If you get this letter, let me know your correct address and I will send it. Write soon.

Your scout buddy,

Roger Stockwell

*Until Tragedy Claimed Four Youths in the Late Forties, the Red Creek. Boy Scouts ' . . .*

ILL-FATED TROOP 44 WAS KNOWN  
AS 'THE SUNSHINE BOYS'

by Roger Stockwell

PART I

Sometime in the late fifties, Red Creek made a sudden leap into the future. The town permanently changed from the sleepy little college town of my childhood, isolated in eastern West Virginia's brooding mine-scarred and misty Appalachian foothills, to a cosmopolitan array of suburban housing developments, shopping centers, a nationally recognized medical center, a large two-campus university complex, and a proliferation of federal agencies that crank people from all over the country through our midst.

In the small-town Red Creek after World War II, Boy Scout Troop 44, sponsored by the Braddock Hill Baptist Church, was formed with ten boys, of which 1 was one. Troop 44 radiated such clean-scrubbed youthfully innocent and do-a-good-deed-daily charm that we were known collectively as 'the sunshine boys.'

That was before a series of tragedies and near tragedies decimated the troop. Preceding the anguish of those events, the fathers of two of the scouts had died in shooting accidents the previous fall and winter. The lives of those who belonged to Troop 44 were irrevocably touched by what seemed then a malevolent curse. Only five of us survive — one hospitalized for the past fourteen years.

There is no longer any Troop 44; in June, 1949, the troop disbanded. After the multiple tragedies no Red

Creek lads were willing to step forward to replenish its depleted ranks. Several years later when another troop was organized, some discerning boy scout official no doubt saw reason not to tempt fate, and risk reviving the “curse” of Troop 44. A new troop number was assigned.

Twenty-five years have passed, but it seems like only yesterday, since we bright-eyed, eager scouts stood erect at roll call adorned in our starched red-and-gold neckerchiefs and freshly-pressed khaki uniforms. We always met on Tuesday evenings promptly at 7:00 p.m. in the basement activity room of the Braddock Hill Church.

In those days, before housing developments and shopping centers, Braddock Hill Church was surrounded by a two-hundred acre evergreen forest with an unpaved road — which is Braddock Avenue today — leading up from the town. The land was donated, and the church built, by the elderly Braddock sisters in 1911 on the site where fire had gutted the old Braddock family mansion.

### **Roll Call of Troop 44**

In the summer of 1948 — to be the last carefree time for Troop 44 - our scoutmaster was William Bertram, a tall, blond, rugged outdoorsman in his early thirties. After World War II, in which he had been an infantry captain at the Normandy invasion, he attended graduate school at West Virginia University at Morgantown. He came to Red Creek to teach mining engineering at what was then Carlton College — now Carlton University.

Mr. Bertram, who was divorced and had custody of his ten-year-old son, William, Jr., or Chalky as he was called, was the ideal scoutmaster. He was originally from southern Mississippi and spoke with a distinct southern drawl. He was a kind, considerate, and patient man who loved the outdoors.

Other than his teaching, Mr. Bertram had three absorbing interests. First in importance was his son Chalky, to whom he had to be both father and mother. The remainder of his time was spent acting as scoutmaster of Troop 44 and serving as a captain in the then Red Creek Volunteer Fire Department. He gave about equal, devoted attention to both these pastimes.

There were two patrols in Troop 44, and the five members of the Panther Patrol answered roll call first. They were the original members of the troop when it was organized in January of 1948, and thirteen-year-old Tom Peddigrew was the Panther Patrol leader. He was a slender and delicate-featured youngster with blond hair, pale skin, and heavy-lidded blue eyes. He was the image of a Christmas card choir boy.

However, his appearance was deceptive, and no one would have identified him as the avid outdoorsman and hunter that he was. Tom was, in actuality, a hardy, athletic lad with an indefinable quality that made other boys look to him for leadership and approval. From his father's side he was part Indian, which may have accounted for his alertness and agility in the outdoors where he liked to spend much of his time. But he looked just like his mother: blond and fair and delicate.

His toughness may have been the result of having weathered much tragedy for his young years. His father, a state trooper, had been killed in a gun battle while trying to make an arrest in December, 1947. His mother was a very nervous and highly emotional woman who often required lengthy hospital stays. His half-brother, Arnold, had been badly injured in a hunting accident in which Tom had accidentally fired the shot.

In a very competitive way Tom and I, as the other patrol leader, were very close friends, even as we strived

with all our might and cunning to have our patrols outwit and outshine each other's in those boy scout years of 1948 and 1949. But our friendship seemed to dissolve after the series of tragedies that struck down our buddies over the next year. Perhaps we subconsciously believed that our continued association, in itself, was inviting peril.

Tom is one of the five survivors of Troop 44. The last I heard of his whereabouts — after he graduated as a petroleum engineer from Carlton College in 1957 — he was working for an American oil company somewhere in South America.

My other closest friend in Troop 44 was the third to die in the tragic events of 1948-49. He was twelve-year-old Jamie Driscol, a slender, dark-haired, and quiet lad whose most noticeable feature were his very bright green eyes. He was Tom's first cousin, and just as Tom's angelic appearance belied his strength and determination, Jamie's somewhat tough, unruly appearance belied his nature which was, in fact, gentle, even-tempered, unassuming and always kind. For a brief time before his death, Jamie and I became inseparable friends, but he remained close to Tom.

Jamie's parents had been killed in an automobile accident when he was two years old and he was raised by his grandfather, Judge Driscol, who passed away in 1969. Judge Driscol assumed a protective kind of role toward Tom after his father had died and during his mother's illnesses. And Jamie, who seemed better able than anyone else to understand and talk to the often-brooding Tom, especially after he lost his father, was always alert to Tom's well-being.

Tom's and Jamie's mothers had been sisters, and Jamie's father had been Judge Driscol's only son. Even though Tom and Judge Driscol were not blood-related, after Jamie's death, Judge Driscol raised Tom, whose

mother, by then, had to be permanently hospitalized.

Jamie, an exceptionally affectionate youngster, was, perhaps, most devoted to his black cocker spaniel, Plato, who went everywhere that he went — even to scout meetings and on camping trips. He perished just after his thirteenth birthday in June, 1949, mourned by us all and deeply so by his devoted grandfather.

Another member of Tom Peddigrew's Panther Patrol was his fourteen-year-old half-brother, Arnold Peddigrew. Arnold, who was the tallest and strongest boy in the troop, and Tom had the same father. Arnold had his father's Indian-like traits of dark hair and eyes and high cheekbones. Their father had divorced his first wife, Arnold's mother, and married Tom's mother about the time Arnold was born.

Arnold was the first member of Troop 44 to experience tragedy. But he is one of the five members of the troop still alive today. In a hunting accident in February of 1948, Tom accidentally shot him in the throat with a rifle. After almost bleeding to death, he was rescued; but he was never able to talk again because of damage done to his vocal cords.

My mother and I did not move to Red Creek until January, 1948, and I did not know Arnold before the accident. Because I was never able to talk to him, my impressions of him were visual. Arnold always hovered close to his half-brother, Tom, and they seemed to share an unspoken communication. He was a well-built, handsome youngster, but, unfortunately, one's attention was always drawn to the deep, ugly red scar on the left side of his neck.

I have been told that Arnold was a withdrawn and disturbed youngster before the hunting accident, and he definitely was afterwards. He moved about with a kind of



vacant look and seemed never to care about communicating with anyone. In fact, I rarely remember him showing any emotion at all. Arnold has been confined to the Morton State Psychiatric Hospital the past fourteen years.

Another member of the Panther Patrol was thirteen-year-old Chad Hartley. His father, who had been a coal miner, died in a hunting accident in the fall of 1947 while hunting with Tom Peddigrew's father. Chad's family lived outside Red Creek in the mining camp of Bertha Hill. Chad, a strong, stocky boy with black, curly hair, had met Tom Peddigrew while they were deer hunting with their fathers in the fall of 1947. Chad had joined Troop 44 after he had been arrested for vandalism, and Judge Driscoll had asked Mr. Bertram to take him into the troop and try to prevent him from getting into more trouble.

Chad always played the role of 'bully' in our troop, forever teasing and taunting the rest of us. Perhaps he was just showing his insecurity, away from his familiar surroundings. However, he seemed to be totally devoted to Tom Peddigrew even if he was not very comfortable around the rest of us. I never felt that I knew him very well.

If Chad was a little stand-offish from the rest of us, it was probably because in those days there was a fierce rivalry between the boys who lived in Red Creek and those who lived in the outlying coal mining towns. Chad was to survive the tragedies of Troop 44, but he was killed in the crash of a troop transport in the China Sea on the way to Korea in 1954.

The fifth member of the Panther Patrol was twelve-year-old Luke Washburn, the minister's son. Luke was a little, wiry fellow with wavy red hair, and was what you might call a 'loner.' He rebelled against being the minister's boy, constantly living up to a reputation as the "worst-behaved" boy in town.

Most of the time, however, he was good natured and agreeable. We generally accepted his quick temper and intemperate remarks in good spirits. We seemed to realize that being the minister's only boy with four sisters gave him a lot to rebel against. Luke was the first of Troop 44 to die.

I was the leader of the Beaver Patrol which was formed in April, 1948, about three months after the troop was organized. It also had five members, all sons of college faculty at Carlton. My mother had moved to Red Creek from a small town in western Kentucky, where my grandmother lived, to be on the English Department faculty at Carlton. My father, who had been a major in the Army Intelligence Corps during World War II, had died of leukemia soon after the end of the war.

I was thirteen and had a younger, adopted brother, Jason, whom we called Specs because he wore glasses. He was twelve and a few months younger than me when we joined the troop.

People could tell right away that Specs and I were not real brothers. I feel certain Specs was of Latin ancestry because he had olive skin, black hair, and brown eyes. He was short and stocky, and I was tall and blond like both my parents.

Our temperaments were entirely different, too. Specs was a total realist. He always needed to know the 'why' of everything, and, being practical, he took no pleasure in horseplay or jokes. I, on the other hand, was a born romantic, living more in a dream world than in the real world. My behavior was a constant frustration to his realistic outlook. Specs was the last of our troop to perish in June, 1949.

Two of the Beaver Patrol members I have to describe together because I had trouble telling them apart. They

were the twelve-year-old Magro twins, Wally and Jack. They were the only sons of the piano professor at Carlton College, Bernard Magro, who was later to become a well-known concert pianist.

In raising their identical twin sons, Professor Magro, who was to serve as our assistant scoutmaster for a brief time, and his wife tried to instill in them separate identities. They gave them un-rhyming names, dressed them differently, and even, for a time, tried sending them to separate schools.

But it was all to no avail. The shy, introverted Magro twins resisted every attempt to separate them. They seemed to be totally enthralled with each other's company. To get to know one, you had to be an equal friend to the other. When they trudged about they clung to each other. When they were drawn into conversation they sneaked sideward glances at each other for reassurance. And when they slept they grasped each other as though they feared being separated even then.

The twins were delicate little fellows with big brown eyes and long, wavy chestnut hair, who looked as if they could be blown away by a strong puff of wind. Wally Magro was the second victim of tragedy. After Wally's death in April, 1949, the Magros moved to upstate New York where Mr. Magro took another teaching position. I have never heard any more about the surviving twin, Jack.

And lastly in the Beaver Patrol was ten-year-old William Bertram, Jr., better known as Chalky because of his almost white hair. Chalky was the sturdy, hazel-eyed son of our scoutmaster, Mr. Bertram. Chalky was too young to be a scout, but we let him tag along since Mr. Bertram had nobody to leave him with at home.

Chalky was a spoiled, temperamental youngster because his father gave him just about everything he wanted.

The rest of us in the troop also tended to give him the attention he demanded. He was a strong-willed, resilient little fellow who could be really stubborn in getting his way. Chalky survived the tragedies that befell the troop and returned to live with his mother's people in northern West Virginia. He left Red Creek in the summer of 1949 just before his father went overseas to work and I have never heard any more about him.

That is the roll call of Troop 44 in the summer of 1948, before the tragic events of that fall and winter and the next spring.

### **Summer of 1948 — Last of the Good Times**

This fall I was asked by Mr. Joel Simpson, Editor of the *Red Creek Times*, to write a three-part article about the tragedies of Troop 44 for the Sunday magazine section, "Mountain Scene." Troop 44's misfortunes twenty-five years ago have been mulled over and retold by Red Creek residents so much that the events have an almost legendary aura about them today. Mr. Simpson asked me to report the facts as I remember them.

Some of my memories about the accidental deaths of my childhood friends are today like a series of vague, half-remembered nightmares. I can recall very vividly the youngsters themselves, and the good times we had, but the disturbing events I have somehow managed to push to the far recesses of my mind.

The final deaths, those of my best friend, Jamie, and my adopted brother, Specs, perhaps jolted my mind into a numbing insensitivity. So, because of a hazy memory about some aspects of those months, I have researched the incidents as much as possible. The newspaper accounts of the day are brief, factual — and unhelpful. The people who were close to those events are either dead or have

disappeared.

I recently went to the scout supply room in the basement of the Braddock Hill Church to see if any records remained of Troop 44 that might be helpful. On the top shelf of an old wall locker I discovered two, dusty, Troop 44 attendance and record books, one for 1948 and one for 1949 that was, because the troop disbanded, only half completed.

In each book our prompt attendance was charted with a row of X's. Only seven of the ten names had rows of X's that continued until June, 1949. Those were Specs, Chalky, Tom, Chad, Jamie, Arnold and myself - and then only blank spaces after Jamie and Specs died.

Also in that locker were our two patrol flags still attached to their poles. One had the outline of a stalking black panther on red cloth, and the other had a brown beaver on green cloth. Attached to the poles below the flags were faded blue, gold, and white ribbons we had won at scout jamborees and campfires during our three-week stay at Camp Man-a-toba during the summer of 1948.

The record books and patrol flags were all that remained of those glorious yet tragic childhood years, except for one other article in the locker that still mystifies me. In a thin, cardboard container there was a large reel of recording tape that is wider than the kind used today. It is identified as having been made by the Witteveen Voice Recording Company, New York, N.Y.

Printed in ink on the tape label, is a reference to a Boy Scout Troop 44 meeting, June 17, 1949. When I discovered it my heart pounded with excitement at the prospect of being able to hear the voices of those long-dead or disappeared comrades. But I soon discovered that none of today's tape recorders will play back that tape.

In the fall of 1947 the ladies' auxiliary at the Braddock

Hill Church purchased a World War II surplus tape recorder so the church services could be recorded. These tapes were taken to the Trobe Hill Nursing Home so the old people could listen to the church service on Sunday afternoons. However, I do not recall a scout meeting being recorded; and I am sure I would remember because that bulky tape recorder — the first we had ever seen — was installed under the pulpit in the sanctuary and held great fascination for us youngsters.

The one person who could solve the mystery of that tape recording was old Snooks Larson, who had been custodian at Braddock Hill Church for over forty years, until he died three years ago. He was the one person who knew how to operate the complex recorder and the one who had handled the tapes. If there is a reader who has any information about that recorder, I would appreciate hearing about it.

Since the tape recorder had been permanently installed in the sanctuary, and our scout meetings were held in the basement activity room, I can only conclude that the tape was of the Boy Scout Recognition Sunday that June of 1949. If that is the case, none of our voices would be on it. But I continue to hope that tape will provide a tangible link with those long-dead or disappeared, fondly remembered buddies out of the past.

The faded award ribbons on the patrol flags made me recall the three weeks Troop 44 spent in July, 1948, at Camp Man-a-toba. The boy scout camp was then in Walton County on the road between Walton Mills and Canaan. Those were the most memorable three weeks of my childhood. And, in a way, they signalled the end of childhood for all of us in the troop. With the tragedies that began soon after that, a pall has hung over the lives of those of us who survived — at least over mine.

The old camp was a virtual kaleidoscope for childhood memory — mountain streams and forest glades, logging trails and virgin timberlands, and even coal mine tipples and slag piles, strip mine high walls, and mist-shrouded mountain tops.

Troop 44 chose the campsite furthest back in the woods from the main camp buildings. Mr. Bertram was teaching in summer school and was only able to stay with us on week-ends. Tom and I, as patrol leaders, were able to dominate our little civilization — it was like a boyhood dream of living with your buddies on an uninhabited tropical island.

Because we kept our campsite the neatest, passed the most scout requirements, and presented the best skits at the nightly campfires, the young counselors at the camp left us pretty much unsupervised. They, no doubt, felt there was no need to tamper with perfection. Our days were spent swimming and boating on the Algonquin River, and there were daily hikes into the surrounding wilderness. Our close comradeship, which existed more intensely during those three weeks than any other time, stands out in my memory with the warmest glow of nostalgia.

Another thing that stands out in my mind from that camping experience is that Tom Peddigrew may have had the power to hypnotise me. I remember that under his hypnotic spell I would become totally obedient to his command. He would put me in a ‘trance’ where I would do such things as place my hand in the flames of the campfire. It was a very eerie experience. I have trouble today deciding whether I was really hypnotised or just pretending.

Tom made his first attempt to hypnotise me late one evening early in the second week of camp. The ten of us were sitting around the fire at our campsite trying to think of a new skit for the next evening’s campfire. The previous

week we had gone through all the usual boy scout skits we could recall.

Tom off-handedly announced that he had seen a stage magician at the old Roxy Theatre do a hypnotist act, and he thought he could do it. There were a lot of dares for him to try so Tom said I would be his first subject. He walked confidently over and stood facing me where I was sitting on a picnic table near the fire. Looking intently into my eyes, he slid his scout belt from his trousers and dangled the shiny gold buckle a few inches from my eyes.

As he swung the buckle slowly back and forth, he told me I would obey all his commands until he snapped his fingers. At first I thought I was just pretending, and then I had the uneasy feeling that if he had asked me to jump off a cliff, I might have obeyed. After a few minutes he snapped his fingers and I imagined the intangible yoke of control lifted from me.

Believing that I was just pretending, the other boys in the troop were skeptical. They demanded a more convincing performance before they would agree that Tom's hypnosis act would be our campfire skit. Swinging the belt buckle before my eyes as before, he hypnotised me and had me put my hand into the campfire. I do not remember having a stinging sensation in my left palm until he snapped his fingers. Most of the skeptics were convinced and the hypnosis act became the campfire skit for the week.

As we practiced the act, other boys in the troop pretended at times to be under Tom's hypnotic spell. But I believe only two of us, the other one was Chad Hartley, were the only ones affected by Tom's hypnosis. However, I was the one who was used in the campfire act.

One of the stunts involved lifting the hypnotised person and the rest of the troop said Chad was too heavy. Tom would command me to make my body totally rigid,



and the rest of the troop would place my head and feet on the ends of picnic tables spaced apart the length of my body. Then he would have Chalky stand on me as I lay horizontally suspended.

Specs, always the skeptic, claimed the hypnosis act was a big fake, but he must not have been too sure. He and the Magro twins refused to even let Tom try to hypnotise them. Strong-willed Chalky and hyperactive Luke Washburn would pretend they were hypnotised for a while. They liked the attention that got them, but they would always give themselves away by breaking out in laughter before too long.

Tom's hypnotic suggestions had no effect whatsoever on passive Jamie's behavior. And Arnold looked like he was in a trance all the time and responded to all Tom's commands anyway so there was no way to tell if Tom could hypnotise him. That left Chad and me whom it appeared Tom could put in a trance at will.

However, our hypnosis act was short-lived. By Friday evening, when the big campfire of the week was held with parents and visitors in attendance, the act had progressed to some really unusual feats. Tom directed the Magro twins to stand on my rigid body supported only at my head and heels. He also had me keep my hand in the flame for a good ten seconds with no really bad effects.

For comedy relief that Friday evening, Tom informed the audience that I was so prudish and modest that I even took a shower with my swimming trunks on. Then he commanded me to strip off all my clothes. I took everything off down to my undershorts, even with all those parents present, and Tom stopped me just as I was about to take them off. I will never know whether I would have continued if he had not stopped me.

None of our parents were at the campfire the second

week. Most of them had come at the end of the first week. That is why Tom could be so bold in his hypnotist's act. I expect my mother would have been horrified. Even Specs, who could usually be counted on to report my worst transgressions, did not tell her about my brief partnership in Tom's act. When she reads this article she will learn about it for the first time.

Without us being aware\*of it, Mr. Bertram showed up at the campfire while we were doing the act that Friday evening. Afterwards, it was one of the few times I had seen him angry. He very firmly informed us we were never to play around with hypnotism again. He said it could be quite dangerous.

The third week of camp was to be the week of 'the game.' It all started when we began considering new skits we could use for the nightly campfire. Our nearly completed Indian outfits gave us an idea. In the camp craft shop the first two weeks we had, with Tom's encouragement, made Indian outfits. We had constructed feather headdresses, wooden-bead bracelets for our necks, wrists, and ankles, and moccasins, beaded belts and loin cloths. We decided that the third week we would perform Indian war dances at the campfire.

We then spent a part of each day preparing war dances patterned after those we had seen in western movies, with a lot of stomping, grunting, groaning, and chanting. Chad had made an Indian drum and a gourd rattle that he used for background rhythm. This gave the proceedings an authentic flare.

We cut sticks and sharpened them into spears with colorful feathers tied along them, and we flailed them about menacingly as we danced. We also colored our faces and bodies with streaks of water paint that we got from the craft shop. In the glow of the campfire our dances

must have been impressive because we continued to win mostly first-place ribbons.

By the third week we were beginning to get bored by the scheduled daily camp activities, and we participated less and less. We looked for new excitement and one evening, that third week when we had gone down to the Algonquin River to wash off the 'war' paint after the campfire, Tom got the idea for playing 'the game.' It was to become an exciting part of all our camping trips and outdoor excursions after that.

In the beginning we divided by patrols. The Panther Patrol became the hunters and the Beaver Patrol the prey. My patrol would hide in a clearly designated area of the camp, and the Panther Patrol would search for us. When the hunters spotted a prey they had to capture him, and one of the hunters would take the captive to the campsite and prevent him from being released by the other prey. The game would be over when the hunters captured all the prey. Usually it just went on all night, because never were all the prey caught.

The most exciting part of 'the game' was when the hunters would spot a prey, charge after him with spears raised, and scream 'Kill! Kill! Kill!,' just as they did in the climactic moments of the war dance. Once they caught the prey they would struggle with him until they brought him to the ground.

After a couple of evenings of playing 'the game' we began to sleep most of the day just to rest for the next game. However, we continued to keep our campsite clean and go to meals to keep the camp staff from getting suspicious.

Tom much preferred being a hunter to being the prey. Hunting was his most avid interest. Most of the rest of us preferred hiding to searching so a slightly different variation of 'the game' evolved. Tom, along with his friend,

Chad, and the ever-present Arnold, became the permanent hunters. And my patrol, along with Luke and Jamie from Tom's patrol became the permanent prey.

On our earlier hikes we had found a small wilderness island on the Algonquin River about a mile below the camp. We soon realized it would be an ideal setting for playing 'the game.' The island was a dense wilderness of rhododendron thickets and rock outcroppings. It was about three-hundreds yards long and one-hundred yards wide at its broadest spot. The island was ideal because it provided easily definable boundaries where the prey could hide. No one was allowed to leave the island while 'the game' was being played.

'The game' probably had more appeal to Tom and me than it did to the rest of the troop. But since we were the patrol leaders they had to pretty much give in to our whims.

Because of Tom's agility and stealthiness in the wilderness, he was a tremendous hunter both in 'the game' and in hunting animals for sport. I developed a passion for 'the game' as well because I revelled in my reputation as the only prey that had never gotten caught. Tom, Chad, and Arnold could stalk the island the whole night, but I always eluded them.

They always caught Specs first because he thought 'the game' was silly and was much happier as a prisoner than prowling through the woods. The Magro twins would usually get sleepy after about an hour and purposely make some noise so they could sleep the night away clinging to each other as prisoners.

Chalky refused to play 'the game' because he was scared of the dark, and he would not leave the area of the campfire. Jamie, I suspect, could have eluded them for as long as he wanted, but he would always grow disinterested during the hunt and allow himself to be caught. Except for

me, Luke could give them the best chase, and he, too, would often go the full night without being captured.

Too soon our third week of camping was over and we had to return - reluctantly, you can be sure — to Red Creek and the civilization of our parents. Our scoutmaster, Mr. Bertram, was especially impressed with our Indian war dance when he visited us at the campfire on the final Friday evening. He let us continue to practice our war dance at Tuesday evening scout meetings, and on later camping trips, so we could perform it at the fall scout jamboree.

We did not tell Mr. Bertram about ‘the game.’ We felt, perhaps instinctively, that he would object in much the same way that he objected to the hypnotist act. We continued to play ‘the game’ every chance we got.

Mr. Bertram always carried a walkie-talkie radio with him on camping trips so he could be reached if there was a fire, and he often had to leave us in order to answer a call of the volunteer fire department. If he was near town he could hear the fire department siren. At those times we were able to switch quickly from rehearsing the war dance, or whatever else we might be doing, to playing ‘the game.’ We usually already had our ‘war’ paint on for rehearsing the dance.

It was playing ‘the game’ that led to the first tragic accident in our troop — the one that killed little Luke Washburn.

### **Early Warnings — Arnold’s Accident and Luke’s Death**

Tom Peddigrew never mentioned Arnold’s tragic hunting accident in all the time I knew him; I guess it was too painful for him to talk about. But Jamie Driscoll told me about it. Arnold had been injured on the troop’s first camping trip to the Algonquin State Forest in February,

1948, two weeks after the troop was organized.

On that camping trip, besides Tom and Arnold, were Jamie, Chad, Luke, Chalky, and Mr. Bertram. Tom, Chad, and Arnold had been allowed to bring their hunting rifles because they were known to be expert hunters and marksmen. They had been trained by their fathers who had been expert hunters. In fact, Mr. Peddigrew had been reputed to be the best tracker, marksman, and hunter in the whole state.

The troop went camping on a Friday evening after school and overnight there had been a deep snow in the mountains. On Saturday morning Tom, Arnold, and Chad asked Mr. Bertram's permission to go grouse hunting in the remote Big Sandy Canyon section of the forest.

Mr. Bertram drove them there in his four-wheel-drive station wagon and instructed them to meet him at that spot along the trail later in the day. Mr. Bertram had then taken the other boys along with Jamie's dog, Plato, to the trout pond and let them clear the ice to go skating. At noon they had returned to the cabin for lunch.

Jamie said that they had no sooner arrived at the cabin and started building up the fire when they heard a thump at the door. When they went to see what it was, they found Tom, totally exhausted and almost collapsed, leaning on the doorsill. Mr. Bertram helped him inside and laid him down by the fire. After a few moments, Tom was able to talk.

Jamie said Tom appeared to be in a state of shock. He spoke in a flat voice that showed no emotion and stared straight ahead with a blank expression. He told them Arnold had been shot in the neck in an accident, and he was afraid Arnold may have already bled to death.

Mr. Bertram immediately told Tom and Jamie to get into the station wagon and they would go and bring

Arnold out. Luke and Chalky were instructed to walk down the road to the ranger's cabin, tell him about the accident and arrange to have an ambulance waiting at the cabin when they got back. Jamie said Tom told him how the accident happened as they drove back down the mountain trail.

After Mr. Bertram had let them out earlier that day, the three of them had begun walking parallel - about fifty yards apart — down through the bottomland of the canyon. Tom said they had not gone more than a quarter of a mile when four grouse sprang up out of the brush, and he had fired three rounds. He said he had not worried about firing because the grouse were directly in front of him and Chad and Arnold were off to his right and left. He said the shots missed and he continued to move forward.

When he reached the spot where the grouse had been flushed, out of the corner of his eye over to the left he saw Arnold lying face down in the snow. At first he said he thought Arnold was lying down to fire at something.

But then he had spotted blood trickling out on the snow near Arnold's head. He ran to him, found he was unconscious and saw the gaping hole gushing blood from Arnold's neck. It was then he realized that one of the bullets must have ricocheted off a rock and struck Arnold.

Chad had heard the shot and in a few moments he came over. They discovered that Arnold was still alive but bleeding badly. They dragged him up under a rock ledge and made him warm with their jackets, but they did not know any way to stop the bleeding.

Tom told Chad to stay with Arnold and he left to get help. He knew the nearest help would be the cabin which was over three miles away by road. He decided to try and save time by climbing the steep face of the mountain ridge which would cut the distance by more than half. But the

deep snow had made the climb slow and treacherous, and he was sure he had not saved much time.

When they reached the place on the trail where Mr. Bertram had let them out that morning, Tom led them quickly on foot to Arnold and Chad. They found Chad, bloody and shivering from the cold, cradling Arnold's head and still bleeding neck in his lap. Mr. Bertram checked Arnold's pulse and said he was still alive but just barely.

Mr. Bertram had brought along a blanket which he constructed quickly into a stretcher, using two thin saplings he cut. They were able to get Arnold, still unconscious, quickly back to the station wagon. When they reached the cabin the ambulance was waiting and it took Arnold to the Walton County Hospital at nearby Canaan. Mr. Bertram and the boys followed the ambulance in the station wagon.

They waited at the hospital the rest of the day and evening, but the doctors were not able to tell them whether Arnold was going to pull through. Jamie said he had to wait outside most of the time because they would not let his dog, Plato, into the waiting room. Mr. Bertram and all the boys donated blood to replace the many pints that Arnold needed.

The next day, after they had returned to Red Creek, they got the news that Arnold was out of danger but that he had suffered throat injury that would make him permanently mute. Jamie said his first reaction to that news was that Arnold rarely said anything anyway and that it would not be a great loss to Arnold.

Jamie said that Tom must have felt very badly about the accident. Except when he was telling Jamie what happened when they were going to get Arnold in the station wagon, Tom refused to talk about the accident again. Arnold must not have blamed Tom in any way



because, when he got out of the hospital, Jamie said, he and Tom were more inseparable than ever.

The Magro twins, Specs and I joined Troop 44 in the middle of April, 1948, about two months after Arnold's accident. Professor Magro and Mr. Bertram had come to Carlton to teach in September and my mother had come in January, and they had all met at a faculty party. Mr. Bertram had invited my mother and Mr. Magro to have us join his newly-formed scout troop, which we did.

Soon after we moved to Red Creek, Specs and I had met the Magro twins and Chalky at the college swimming pool in the student union, where faculty children were allowed to swim on Saturday mornings. The five of us decided that when we joined the troop we would start our own patrol with me as patrol leader.

Even though I had my own patrol, Tom Peddigrew was the real leader of the troop. I think he had more influence over most of us than Mr. Bertram. Chad and Arnold seemed totally loyal to him and unquestioning of his authority.

In different kinds of ways, Jamie and I were strongly attached to Tom. Jamie was, oddly enough, attracted in a kind of protective way; I was somewhat awed by Tom's confidence and cool detachment, but I constantly tried to outshine him. Specs, the realist, and Luke, somewhat of a loner, did not regard any of us with awe. The Magro twins worshipped each other and whatever authority there was around to direct them they followed.

Only Chalky looked to me in hero worship. He and Tom did not seem to get along at all. Sometimes I suspected they were both competing for Mr. Bertram's attention and were jealous of each other. Perhaps it was because his father had died recently that Tom looked to Mr. Bertram as a father image.

As attentive as Mr. Bertram was to his son, Chalky, he

sometimes seemed to be more devoted to Tom Peddigrew. They both had an avid interest in hunting and the outdoors. For Mr. Bertram, it appeared that Tom could do no wrong, and he often seemed to encourage Tom to assume a leadership role over the rest of us.

When we returned from our three-week camping session at Camp Man-a-toba in late July, 1948, we continued to go on week-end camping trips the rest of the summer. In fact, each week we talked Mr. Bertram into taking us back to that island on the Algonquin River. Tom and I particularly wanted to go back there because it provided such an ideal setting for playing 'the game.' And since Tom usually got his way with Mr. Bertram, the troop did go there each week-end.

We continued to practice our Indian war dance at Tuesday evening scout meetings and on those camping trips. There was to be a scout jamboree in September and we were determined to win the first-place ribbon with our performance. We also kept playing 'the game' without Mr. Bertram knowing about it. 'The game' had become a ritual for the troop and almost an obsession for Tom and me. Tom was determined that I should be captured, and I was equally determined that I should continue to elude the hunters.

We played 'the game' when Mr. Bertram was called away from camping by the fire department which was often, because Red Creek then had the only fire department in the entire county. We even played 'the game' in the Braddock Hill Church during Tuesday evening scout meetings if Mr. Bertram was called away. The old church provided a myriad of nooks and crannies and dark recesses where we could hide.

In late summer Mr. Bertram had to spend many hours on camping trips grading papers for his college classes, and

we became daring and started playing ‘the game’ while he was around but occupied in his tent. On camping trips and at troop meetings, we were always in our Indian garb and war paint, practicing our dances, and that was all it took to motivate us to play ‘the game.’

It was when Mr. Bertram was called away by the fire department on a Saturday evening during one of those weekend camping trips in late August that Luke Washburn died in an accident. Everyone had been captured except Luke, Jamie, and me as we played ‘the game’ until after midnight. I was able to elude the hunters because I had a hiding place high in the fork of an old sycamore, which was the island’s tallest tree and stood on the thickly-forested upper end.

From my perch I could see the lit campfire area where Arnold was guarding the bound and mostly sleeping prisoners. Chalky, who refused to be a prisoner, was wandering about with Jamie’s dog, Plato, and shining his flashlight aimlessly in all directions.

There was a full moon that evening, and I could see the red-green-and-white-streaked hunters silhouetted when they crept out of the rhododendron thickets onto the river bank or climbed along the high rock outcroppings, and I could hear their muffled voices as they stalked through the thickets down the middle of the island.

Immediately I knew they had spotted Luke on the high rock ledge along the river to my left. I had just caught a glimpse of him, the streaks of paint glowing on his body in the moonlight. Then I heard the hunters, Tom and Chad, charge in pursuit screaming, ‘Kill! Kill! Kill!’ I could not see any of the chase, but a silence followed the struggle when I knew he had been caught and wrestled to the ground. Suddenly I heard the renewed cry of the hunters in pursuit and then a frantic scream pierced the night that

I knew was Luke. Then there was another silence.

I felt instinctively that something terrible had happened. I scampered quickly down the tree and clawed my way frantically through the rhododendron thickets until I reached the high rock ledge where I had heard the scream. Much to my surprise I found Jamie peering from the ledge to the river below.

I looked down and there below me in the moonlit river were Tom and Chad, wading in shallow water, carrying Luke's limp body toward a little sandy alcove along the river's edge.

"What happened? What's wrong with Luke?" I called to Tom anxiously.

"He fell from the ledge and hit his head on a rock back there. He's unconscious," Tom answered. "I'm afraid he's hurt bad," Tom added.

Even from that distance in the darkness I could see that Luke's paint-streaked body was unnaturally contorted, and a feeling of terror engulfed me because I somehow knew he was dead.

"I'll go call for help on the walkie-talkie," I yelled back to Tom.

I wanted to get away because I was afraid to stay there and find out the truth about Luke's injury. I ran quickly along the bank to the bottom of the island where the camp was. The rest of the troop had heard the scream and were waiting anxiously but had not ventured forth to investigate.

I tried to mask my terror as I explained to them that Luke had fallen and was injured and that I was going to call for help on the walkie-talkie. All of them left immediately to go to the scene of the accident.

I was quickly able to get Mr. Bertram on the walkie-talkie. He was at the Red Creek Fire Hall over twenty miles away, and I told him, trying not to sound too panic-

stricken, that Luke had fallen and was injured, and he should send the ambulance right away. He said the fire crew was still there and they would be on their way immediately with the emergency car.

He asked me how seriously Luke was injured, and I just told him that Luke was unconscious, that he had fallen off a ledge into the river and I had not gotten a close look at him. I could not bring myself to tell him that I thought Luke was dead. Mr. Bertram instructed me to keep Luke warm and see that he was not moved any more than necessary and that he would be there soon.

I took an army blanket from the campsite and walked slowly back up the river bank to the sandy alcove, dreading to arrive. When I came in sight of the spot, I knew for certain my fears were correct. All the boys, still in their Indian outfits and war paint, were standing in a solemn semi-circle around Luke's body.

When I reached them I handed Tom the blanket without a word and he got down and wrapped it around Luke's lifeless, paint-streaked body. I told them that Mr. Bertram and the emergency car were on the way.

Tom broke the solemnity and took charge, telling us to go back to the campsite and get washed and dressed, that there was nothing else we could do for Luke. Everyone obeyed mechanically, without speaking.

Before we left Tom told me he would stay with Luke and asked me to bring his and Luke's clothes after I got dressed. We all walked back to the camp silently, washed in the river and dressed.

I found Tom's and Luke's clothes and, after telling the others to watch the road across the river for the emergency car, walked back to the sandy alcove. When I got there Tom had taken off his Indian outfit and was at the edge of the river, naked, washing the paint streaks from his body.

Luke's body was now lying uncovered on the blanket and I noticed Tom had finished getting the rest of the paint streaks off Luke's now naked body. Reluctantly, I pushed a wet lock of Luke's red hair back from his staring, lifeless eyes.

Tom quickly dressed himself and then knelt down beside Luke and began to dress him. I told Tom that Mr. Bertram had said that we should not move Luke any more than necessary. But Tom responded that it did not matter now and he proceeded to put the rest of Luke's clothes on him.

I could not bring myself to help Tom dress Luke, and just watched. I was surprised to observe that Luke did not seem to have any marks or gashes on his body, but his head wobbled in a very unnatural way on his shoulders when Tom put his shirt on him. When Tom had finished, he covered Luke's body again with the blanket and then covered his face.

Everything else about Luke's death is a kind of blur in my mind. It seemed at that moment, when Tom covered Luke's face, and there was nothing else to occupy me but to wait for the ambulance, my mind sank into a numb stupor that lasted for days. I remember vaguely the ambulance coming and taking Luke away, Mr. Bertram driving us back to town, and the days that followed. We learned the next day that Luke's neck had been broken and he had died instantly.

All the troop was at the funeral dressed in scout uniforms. We were fussed over and consoled by our parents, Luke's parents, and the town's people as though we had suffered the tragedy instead of Luke. In truth, we enjoyed feeling sorry for ourselves and having others pity us. Perhaps we must have felt a little guilty, too, because none of us had ever really been close to Luke who had always

remained something of a loner.

I also remember feeling guilty about something else. I can not recall when it happened or whose idea it was but, some time before the ambulance and Mr. Bertram arrived, we all agreed to tell the story that Luke was out looking for firewood when he fell. We agreed that we would not tell anyone we were playing 'the game' when the accident happened.

I am not sure why we did that but I remember never being able to look Reverend and Mrs. Washburn in the eye after Luke died, because of that lie, and I was relieved when Reverend Washburn was transferred to another church in the northern part of the state that November so I would no longer have to face him.

After Luke's death we did not attend the fall scout jamboree in September to perform our Indian war dance. For the time being we had lost our enthusiasm for war dances and 'the game.'





## CHAPTER TWO

### **ILL-FATED TROOP 44 WAS KNOWN AS THE SUNSHINE BOYS'**

by Roger Stockwell

#### PART II

#### **The Curse Continues — Chalky Falls and Wally Drowns**

The boys in Troop 44 had a habit of always complaining about Chalky. But they complained to him and each other and never to Mr. Bertram. They teased him for being too much of a baby to play 'the game.' They grumbled about Chalky being spoiled and always demanding his way.

And they never stopped teasing him because sometimes he urinated in his sleeping bag on camping trips. There were some other bed wetters among us, but straightforward Chalky never tried to hide his accidents. Chalky just ignored the taunts and went on being his stubborn, demanding, exuberant self.

Sometimes I would half-heartedly join in the teasing and taunting, but I had gradually come to be very attached to Chalky. I can still see him standing up to their badgering with his strong little jaw jutted forward, a steely look in his bright hazel eyes, and his arms folded defiantly across

his broad little chest. I admired his stubbornness, and I suspect my attraction to him was made even stronger because he looked to me as his idol and protector.

There is no doubt in my mind that my ego was boosted mightily by Chalky's affection and trust. The other boys looked to Tom for leadership. Even Specs who claimed not to like Tom's bossy ways usually looked to him.

But Chalky looked to me, and I had resolved in my mind not to betray his loyalty. I came to fully realize how attached I really was to Chalky when I thought he had been badly hurt — possibly killed - at a Carlton College basketball game.

In the late forties, Carlton College was a basketball power among the small colleges in the East. For the Red Creek lads of my day, there were few events more anticipated during the winter months than the home basketball games played in the old Conway Field House on Dillner Street.

We dressed warmly and left home early on those cold winter evenings. Sneaking in the Field House was a time-consuming chore with a lot of hit-and-miss efforts. At least once, a youngster was to experience an unceremonious dumping on the sidewalk before the waiting throng when the often-used tactic of rushing the gate failed.

Another effort was always called for. Fortunately, there were enough sympathetic — or lazy — gatekeepers to make success, with a little bit of persistence, a matter of eventual certainty.

During the first winter I lived in Red Creek, my buddies and I were too shy and unaggressive lads to rush the gate. But we had another sure-fire method that always worked. We would stand sad-eyed and forlorn, shivering in the cold like hound dogs waiting to be petted, at a certain entrance where a kindly old gentleman guarded the gate.

He could not stand it for long. When nobody was looking, he would give us the high sign and in we would scoot.

We abandoned that method, however, during the basketball season of 1948<sup>^</sup>-9, when Mr. Bertram persuaded the college to let Troop 44 serve as ushers, dressed in our uniforms. The ushering was a special treat for our troop because we had not been camping since Luke's death.

It was during the third, game of the season, in the middle of December, 1948, that Chalky had his accident.

That evening, after we had finished finding seats for spectators in the bleachers and the game had started, we went to our reserved seats on the top row of the bleachers. We were then about thirty feet above the playing floor.

The Carlton basketball team that year was rated as one of the best in the league and they were undefeated. The games during those years were thrilling experiences; people were crammed screeching and screaming in the bleachers, pressing forward right down to the playing floor. Just to be a part of that surging, throbbing mob was soul-stirring for Red Creek youngsters. Win or lose, we usually experienced all the emotions from heart-stopping outrage to spine-tingling exhilaration.

It was during a deafening roar of cheering in the second half, when everyone had risen to his feet, that I suddenly turned and saw that Chalky, who had been sitting beside me, was missing. The moment before he had been standing on his seat to see over the people who had stood up in front of him.

Immediately, I was terror-stricken. With the people packed in front of us I knew the only way he could have disappeared was to fall over the back of the bleachers.

Almost paralyzed with fear and my heart practically pounding out of my chest, I forced myself to peer down behind the bleachers, but it was so dark I could not see

anything below.

“Chalky’s missing! He must have fallen down there!” I gasped to Jamie, who was sitting on the other side of me, as I pointed down into the darkness below. I then lowered myself over the back of the bleachers and started inching my way down the steel lattice supports.

Hearing someone above me I looked to see Tom, who had been sitting on the other side of Chalky, coming over the back of the bleachers. The other troop members peered over the back of the bleachers, waiting for Tom to start down so they could follow.

As I neared the bottom I could feel a cold sweat begin to cover my body, thinking to myself, ‘It’ll be just like Luke! He’ll be dead just like Luke!’ I pictured Chalky’s blond hair and pink, lifeless face battered and lying in a pool of blood on that gritty, black dirt track below. The cheers of the crowd above and the brightly lit arena of the basketball game seemed a million miles away.

My eyes had begun to adjust from the bright lights to the darkness below the bleachers when I forced myself to take another look at the spot below where I knew Chalky should have landed.

A cautious flicker of hope crossed my mind when I realized I was peering down into the sawdust-filled area of the indoor pole vaulting pit. But I could see no sign of Chalky, until suddenly, up out of the sawdust where he had covered himself, popped smiling, bright-eyed Chalky.

“Hey!” he yelled cheerfully, “Let go and fall the rest of the way. It won’t hurt you. I fell all the way from the top,” he bragged proudly.

On hearing Chalky’s voice, I felt the paralyzing fear leave me as quickly as it had seized me moments before. Chalky had become very special to me. I vowed then never to tease him again, and to protect him from the taunts

of the other boys.

I dropped down into the sawdust and I impulsively grabbed and hugged him. When I realized the other boys were coming down beside us, I pushed Chalky away at arm's length and shook him in a mock gesture of anger, trying to hide my momentary show of affection.

"You little devil," I shouted, "You saw me climbing down. Why didn't you tell me you were all right?"

Chalky did not answer. He pulled away and started throwing sawdust at the other boys. Soon we were all rolling and wrestling in the sawdust. Then we got the idea for climbing back up on the steel supports and jumping down in the sawdust again. Only Specs, always the serious one, seemed to be agitated at the rest of us for forgetting the near tragedy too quickly.

"What caused you to fall?" I heard Specs ask Chalky as he waited in line to climb the steel bleacher support to make another jump.

"Some dummy pushed me. I was just leaning over the rail looking down here," Chalky answered, showing no particular interest now in the incident, which unnerved me even though I had indulged in the horseplay that followed. I would never forget the fear that had seized me during those horrible moments when I thought Chalky might be dead. I was just overcome with joy that I had found him still alive.

Later, when I was able to talk to Chalky, we decided that when Chalky stood up on the seat and turned and peered over the back of the bleachers, someone must have brushed against him during the wild cheering that broke out at that moment. He had lost his footing and fallen over the back rail of the bleachers, and we had not been able to hear him scream through the roar of the crowd.

Afraid we might not be permitted to usher any more

for basketball games, we all decided we should not tell Chalky's Dad or anyone else about the incident. After that it became an obsession with me to protect Chalky.

We had stopped playing 'the game' after Luke's death feeling, in a way, that it had been partly responsible. Also, I am sure; that is why we did not tell anyone the exact circumstances of Luke's death.

During the fall we had continued to put on our Indian outfits and war paint and practice the dance at Tuesday evening scout meetings. Before long, when Mr. Bertram was called away to a fire during scout meetings, we began to play 'the game' again, turning off the lights in the church. That thwarted the hunters just as the fork of the sycamore tree had on the island.

By Christmas, 1948, the horrible impact of Luke's death had started to subside. We had told the story of Luke being injured when he went to hunt firewood so often that we began to believe the story ourselves. We ceased to hold ourselves and 'the game' responsible for his death, and began to camp again.

During the fall Mr. Bertram had occasionally taken Tom, and sometimes Chad and Arnold, on hunting and fishing trips with him. But the rest of us in Troop 44 did not consider these as troop activities. Because Tom's father had been killed, Mr. Bertram assumed a kind of father relationship to Tom. Chalky often stayed at my home when his father was away, and I had begun to regard him as a little brother.

Thinking back, I guess Chalky resented his father showing so much attention to somebody else. But the rest of us were not jealous because we knew that Tom had been very close to his father and must have missed him a great deal.

Actually, six of us in the troop — me, Specs, Tom,

Arnold, Jamie, and Chad — did not have fathers, so that when Mr. Bertram was looking for a father who might serve as an assistant scoutmaster and go on camping trips with us, the Magro twins were the only ones who had a father to offer.

Professor Magro, who did agree to go with us, did not seem very suited to outdoor excursions. He was a thin, nervous little man whose mind always seemed a million miles away. He even appeared thinner and more delicate than his twin boys. On camping trips he could usually be found apart from the rest of us, reading a book somewhere. But I admired him for going along, mainly because I suspected it was a real chore for him. He seemed so alien to the outdoors.

With the coming of spring and the end of basketball season, we returned to thoughts of camping. At a troop meeting in early March, 1949, Tom and I began talking to our patrols about going on another camping trip. We proposed that we go camping on the island again during Easter.

The rest of the troop showed no enthusiasm for going back to where Luke had died; for once, Tom's and my wishes were vetoed. Mr. Bertram said that it might still be too cold at Easter to camp outdoors. He suggested we could stay in the staff cabins at Camp Man-a-toba and from there we could hike to the island when we wanted to. The rest of the troop agreed to that proposal.

The weather had turned warm just before Easter, and on Good Friday Mr. Bertram and Mr. Magro drove all nine of us to Camp Man-a-toba in the early afternoon. In a way it seemed almost like old times and there was no mention of Luke's death or our previous camping trip there.

With their father along, even the normally shy Magro twins seemed to gain some confidence and enjoy them

selves more. Tom and I had not been keen on the idea of Mr. Magro going along to help supervise us, liking it better when we could count on Mr. Bertram being called away and we could take over and run things. But we soon discovered that Mr. Magro posed no threat to our authority or plans. He always seemed to be preoccupied and never noticed what we were up to.

In some ways, Wally Magro's drowning was to be the saddest and most tragic of the four deaths that Troop 44 experienced. Seeing the anguished suffering of the living can be more devastating than mourning for someone who is dead and out of their agony. I refer, of course, to the effects of Wally's death on his inseparable twin brother, Jack.

I will never forget little Jack's heroic and, for him, superhuman effort to save his brother, nor the anguished, mournful sobs that welled up from the deepest reaches of his fragile body and soul when he knew Wally was lost.

I can only compare the experience to a Christmas morning during World War II when I was nine and we lived at my grandmother's home in western Kentucky. A much requested and anticipated air rifle was under the tree for me on Christmas morning. I rushed out onto the rural land that ran along an apple orchard behind my grandmother's house to try it out before I opened the rest of my presents.

Sitting on a bare limb, high in an apple tree about thirty yards away, was a bright red cardinal. Impulsively I took aim and fired, not really expecting to hit the cardinal, but just to frighten it. It fell to the ground, dead.

Immediately I was mortified at my selfish action which took the life of that beautiful bird, but what happened next made me sick to my stomach with remorse. The female cardinal appeared from nearby and began swooping back and forth over her dead mate, screeching and cawing in the bleakest, most mournful cry I ever heard until I heard Jack mourning for his dead brother, Wally. I vowed I would never again kill a defenseless animal.



We stayed in the staff cabin at Camp Man-a-toba that weekend. On Friday evening we practiced our Indian dance around the old campfire where we had first performed it during the organized camping sessions the summer before. There was to be a spring scout jamboree in June at Camp Man-a-toba and we wanted to have our dance well rehearsed to try and win the first place ribbon.

The campfire brought back the happy memories of the camping experience the previous summer. Afterwards, when Mr. Bertram and Mr. Magro drove into Walton Mills to get some kerosene for our lamps, we all went down to the river to wash the war paint off.

Tom and I tried to talk the others into going to the island and playing 'the game' while Mr. Bertram and Mr. Magro were away. We were sure they would stop and drink beer while in town and be away at least two or three hours. But the others showed no enthusiasm. They said it was too cold to play out that night. I suppose they were really reluctant to go back to the scene of Luke's death.

After washing the paint streaks off we took a short hike to our old campsite of the summer before and then returned to the cabin. Tom, Chad, and I razzed the others about being too cowardly to go back to the island to play 'the game.'

They finally promised to go back to the island the next evening and play 'the game' if the weather stayed warm. As it turned out, Mr. Bertram and Mr. Magro came back in little over an hour and it was fortunate that we had not gone to the island that evening.

During the night a slow, steady rain began to fall. Tom and I had permission to sleep in a picnic shelter near the cabin on Friday evening, but the shelter began to leak and we moved back into the cabin before the night was over.

We stayed in the cabin most of Saturday, as the rain

continued. By evening we were all getting somewhat restless. Tom and I kept watching the sky, hoping it would clear before evening, so we could go to the island and play ‘the game.’

Mr. Bertram had to return to Red Creek Saturday evening for a training session with the fire department. Mr. Magro, we knew, would not interfere with us because he had kept his head buried in a book all day and would, no doubt, be glad to see us leave for awhile.

But the rain did not let up, and before he left, Mr. Bertram opened the mess hall so we could practice our war dance during the evening and get rid of some of our pent- up energy. Mr. Magro stayed there with us for a short time but then returned to the cabin.

We soon grew bored with practicing the dance. Before long, we were romping and tumbling on the camp mattresses that were stored in the mess hall.

Tom talked us into playing ‘the game’ then, so we turned off the lights and the hunters, Tom, Chad, and Arnold, began to search for the rest of us in the near total darkness. Eventually, they captured all the prey but Jack Magro and me. Once during the evening I tried to free the prisoners, but the guard, Arnold, heard me and pounced. After a brief struggle, I was able to get away. Even in the dark mess hall I was able to remain uncaptured.

Finally they captured Jack. In the struggle he turned his ankle badly and we had to turn the lights on and stop ‘the game.’ It was still raining, so we dressed and went back to the cabin and to bed without bothering to wash off the war paint. Mr. Bertram had still not returned, or he would have made us get cleaned up before we went to bed.

Easter Sunday morning dawned bright and clear. Since Mr. Bertram had gotten in very late the night before, he did not wake up when the rest of us got up

and fixed breakfast.

While playing in the mess hall the night before we had discovered the camp's two yellow, inflated life rafts stored on the rafters. Tom and I asked Mr. Magro if we could float down the river on the rafts to the island, and Mr. Bertram could come down in his station wagon after he got up and haul the rafts back.

Mr. Magro seemed uncertain at first, but we explained that we had been allowed to use the rafts in the river when we were there in summer camp. He reluctantly gave us permission and made us all promise to wear life preservers when we were in the rafts.

Excitedly we hauled the rafts, paddles, and life preservers from the mess hall down to the river. Tom's Panther Patrol got in one raft and my Beaver Patrol got in the other one.

The Algonquin River, which was normally little more than a large creek where it flowed through Camp Manitoba, had risen several feet above its usual level, so I warned everybody that we should stay close to shore and take the rafts out of the river when we reached the island. The river made a steep, cascading descent just beyond the island that would now be particularly treacherous.

Where it flowed past the scout camp, the river was wide and flat. The current was not very swift there, even with the river high above its normal level. But when we got below the camp the river began to narrow, dropping gradually to the next flat pool where the island was located.

As the current became swifter, and the waves made by the water flowing over the submerged rocks began to toss us about, we were a little frightened. We quickly caught on how to steer the raft through the rocks and changing currents; soon everybody became exhilarated and excited

by the rapid-shooting experience.

After we had learned to control our rafts in the faster rapids, we began to maneuver closer, splashing each other with our paddles. Before long we were all soaked with the icy cold water.

We reached the island quickly and I steered our raft over to the larger channel on the left side of the river, passing the ledge and sandy alcove that was the scene of Luke's death. A kind of hush fell over the boys in both rafts, but nobody mentioned the incident.

I was able to steer our raft over to a flat rock just above our old campsite, but Tom's raft got caught in a rush of current in the last moment before coming ashore, which threw them out toward the middle of the stream.

For a moment I was frightened that they might be whipped past the island into the rampaging roar of rapids I could hear below the island, but with strong paddling they were able to bring their raft ashore and beach it on a sand bar extending from the lower end of the island.

When I saw that they had safely pulled their raft out of the current and were walking up to the campsite, I pulled our raft up on the sandy bank and turned it over to dump the water out. I told the others to take some drift wood up to the old campsite so we could build a fire to dry our clothes and warm ourselves.

After the fire was going we stripped off our wet clothes and shoes and laid them by the fire to dry. We made a strange sight with our naked bodies and faces, still streaked with the smudged war paint we had not washed off the night before.

Before, when we had painted ourselves to practice the dance or play 'the game,' it had usually been in the dark fire-lit shadows of evening. The war paint then had taken on an eerie glow, making us look like savages.

In the daylight, our bodies pale from a winter of little sunlight, the streaks of paint looked out of place. The boys, their soft, pink smooth bodies and faces behind the paint, looked like they were masquerading. Only Tom, with his slender, taut, muscular body looked like he really belonged in the wilderness and sunlight.

Tom suggested that we play 'the game' in daylight for a change. I expected most of the boys to object, but they were surprisingly enthusiastic. Even Chalky, who would rarely play 'the game' at night, was quick to agree. Jack Magro said he would keep the fire going because he was still only able to limp about.

Tom, Chad, and Arnold began to make spears from branches, and Tom told us they would give us until they finished making them to hide. The spears were not really needed in the game, but they had become a part of the ritual.

I had wanted to object to playing 'the game' in the daylight. Since I had never been caught, I did not want to risk my proudly acquired record of stealthiness with the much more difficult challenge of avoiding capture in daylight. But I knew if I objected, the others would say that I was afraid of this new challenge. I secretly resented the others agreeing to the daylight 'game' so readily when they did not have any reputation to protect. I immediately decided I would not return to my safe perch in the large sycamore tree on the upper end of the island. With the foliage still off the trees I could be easily spotted there in daylight. I disappeared into the rhododendron thickets with all the other prey, except for the injured Jack who stayed by the fire.

As soon as I was out of sight, I circled quickly back to the river bank where we had beached the raft. While Tom, Chad, and Arnold were by the fire, concentrating on shap

ing the points on their spears, I inched my way across the sand to where I had overturned the raft.

Just before I reached the raft, which was in sight of the camp fire, I saw that Jack had spotted me. But he just smiled knowingly and the hunters continued to sharpen their spears in intense concentration. I quietly slid myself underneath the raft and cleared a little slit in the sand so I could see out in the direction of the campfire and the hunters.

I felt really proud of myself for thinking to hide practically right under their noses, the last place I figured they would think to look. When the hunters had finished sharpening their spears, they held a whispered conference and disappeared in two directions. Arnold headed toward the rock outcroppings at the top of the island, and Tom and Chad stalked off toward the rhododendron thickets on the lower end.

Before very long I could hear the familiar cries of the chase in the thickets where Tom and Chad had headed. And then there was quiet. I figured they had caught their first prey and one of them would be back soon to the campfire with him as prisoner. I moved some more sand, making a slit so I could see down the bank to the lower end of the island, in the direction from which the cries had come.

Wally Magro suddenly broke from the woods to the little sand bar where the other raft lay. He began dragging the raft out into the current, when I realized he had probably escaped from the hunters and was still being pursued by them. I was terrified because I knew from the roar that the rapids below the island, where there was a steep drop in the river, must be really churning whitewater.

I jumped out from under the raft and ran a short distance down the bank.

“No! Wally! No! Don’t get in the raft!” I screamed. But I could tell my pleas were lost in the water’s roar.

Jack, who was still by the campfire, heard my scream and hobbled quickly down to the river beside me. By this time Wally was in the raft out in the current and was paddling strenuously toward the other bank. But the current carried him quickly down toward the cascading rapids.

At that moment Tom and Chad emerged running from the woods out to the sand bar. Tom immediately waded in the water, trying to reach Wally. When he could go no further without being swept downstream, he held out his spear toward the raft for Wally to grab. For a moment I breathed a sigh of relief thinking Wally had been rescued.

Then I realized an even worse catastrophe was in the making. The point of the spear punctured the side of the raft collapsing it almost in an instant. The sinking raft floated away quickly downstream.

Immediately I dragged the other raft out into the current. When I leaped into the raft and pushed off I felt it jerk and turned to see Jack tumble into the raft behind me.

“No! Don’t get in!” I yelled at Jack, “I might get caught in the rapids.” But it was too late. We had already drifted out toward the middle of the channel toward the lower end of the island. Telling Jack to put on a life preserver and buckle it, I slid one around my shoulders and began to paddle downstream with all my might.

Wally had already drifted into the faster current and was headed toward the rapids. He was still hanging on to the one partly-inflated compartment of the collapsing raft as he approached the chute. As Jack and I dropped below the end of the island, I got a better view of the chute of rushing whitewater ahead.

I watched helplessly as Wally and the nearly deflated raft disappeared out of sight over the brink of the chute

down into the roaring, churning whitewater. Out of the corner of my eye I saw something that raised my spirits slightly. Mr. Bertram and Mr. Magro, in the station wagon, were on the trail that bordered the right side of the river.

I could see they were fully aware of the crisis. They drove to across from us on the trail and yelled and gestured to Jack and me in the raft, but we could not hear them. By this time we were entering the fast water above the chute that shot down to the left into the river. There was no turning back now even if we had wanted to.

The foamy whitewater leaping into the air and tossing us about, and the deafening roar, made my heart pound like a dynamo. Jack was showing no outward fear and was intently scanning the chute for Wally.

Just before we shot over the brink of the chute I caught one more glimpse of the nearly collapsed yellow raft bobbing about two hundred yards ahead. I could not see Wally. I glanced back at Jack and pointed down the chute toward the raft. He nodded to acknowledge that he saw it also.

As we swirled down the top of the chute, I just held on, making no effort to steer the raft. Once I had adjusted to the sensation of shooting between the large boulders that jutted into our path, I began cautiously to push the raft off rocks and to paddle, guiding us into the widest channels.

About half way down the three-hundred-yard chute, the channel veered sharply to the right and centrifugal force threw the raft up and onto a large, rounded boulder. I leaped out and began tugging at the rope around the outside of the raft, trying to drag it back into the current.

After several hard tugs the raft started to drag loose from the boulder. I turned toward Jack just in time to see him leap over the side of the raft into the raging torrent.



“No! No! Wait!” I yelled. But he was already swirling helplessly out into the foaming channel.

One more hard tug and I was able to swing the raft back into the current. I had to leap in to keep the raft from getting away from me as it shot loose from the boulder. Down ahead I could see Jack’s orange life preserver bobbing him up and down in the current and over the drops.

Using my paddle I strained to stay in the same channel behind Jack, following his orange preserver down the remainder of the chute. As we neared the bottom, the current began to ease. Jack was now floating only about twenty feet ahead of me, but he did not seem to be aware that I was behind him. Off to my left was the now totally deflated yellow raft, washed up on a boulder where it had been carried by the current. There was no sign of Wally.

The trail that bordered the river across from the island had cut away from the steep banks of the river where the chute descended and the station wagon with Mr. Bertram and Mr. Magro was no longer in sight. I paddled hard to catch up with Jack who was still drifting with the current. Finally able to paddle up behind him, I reached out and grabbed his life preserver and dragged his small, almost naked body into the raft. Jack was blue and trembling from his long exposure to the icy water.

“That was a stupid thing to do,” I scolded him.

He did not respond. His eyes immediately began to scan the boulders and rhododendron thickets on each bank.

“We’ve got to find Wally,” he finally announced with fierce determination. This fierceness was a side of Jack Magro that I never knew existed. I had never thought he could be anything but the meek, mild-mannered little boy I had known him to be in the past.

“I saw the raft back there,” I said as I pointed back up

river toward the chute. "It was deflated. He must be down here somewhere," I added.

We drifted on with the current for a few moments, neither of us saying a word; both of us were intensely searching the shallow areas of the river on both sides where the current ran among the boulders.

I could feel that horrible, desperate feeling that overwhelmed me when I knew that Luke was dead and the time I thought Chalky might be. I began to realize that there was not much chance that we would find Wally alive.

Up ahead on the right I spotted Mr. Bertram's station wagon where the trail swung back to the edge of the river. Beyond that the river swerved off to the right. From the roar I could tell it made another steep descent.

Soon Mr. Bertram appeared on a boulder along the river's edge and I paddled hard to bring the raft ashore just above him. Further down the river Mr. Magro was making his way clumsily along the boulder-strewn bank, scanning the river down toward the next rapids.

"It's Wally who's missing," I announced to Mr. Bertram, knowing that he could not tell the Magro twins apart. "I saw his raft, deflated, back there. But I didn't see any sign of him," I added dejectedly.

"Search along the bank back upstream," Mr. Bertram commanded. "I'll take the raft and his father and I will search further down stream," he said, helping Jack and me out of the raft. Mr. Bertram got in and pushed the raft off, paddling toward the roaring chute below.

Numbly, Jack and I, dripping and near naked in only our underpants, watched Mr. Bertram disappear around the bend and Mr. Magro disappear along the rocky bank.

Without speaking, Jack and I began to make our way over the boulders along the shore back toward the roaring chute we had just ridden. Hiking was very slow and tor

turous over the rocks with no shoes, and we stopped often to check the rapids and the rocks on the other bank.

For a few moments I wondered why the other boys had not come to help us search, and then I remembered they would still be trapped on the island with no raft to get to the other bank. When the river was at a normal level, there was a very shallow place where we were able to cross over to the island on foot, but the water would be too swift and deep now.

Perhaps ten minutes had passed before we got to the lower end of the chute where the rapids were the steepest. At that point the footing was even more difficult along the bank because the edges of the river were steeply rising rock formations and the high water covered the entire river bed. The swirling rapids flowed against an almost vertical wall of rock.

Jack, apparently forgetting his injured ankle, began to inch his way along the steep inclines and I started to follow. Just as I leaped from one boulder to another to approach the steep wall where Jack had crossed ahead of me, I happened to look down between the rocks and I spotted Wally.

His small, limp, almost naked body was lying in a little inlet between the two boulders. Unable to call Jack to see that sight, I leaped down between the rocks and dragged Wally's lifeless body over to a flat rock along the bank.

I could tell from touching Wally that he was dead. But I bent down and methodically began to breathe large gulps of air between his blue, lifeless lips. By this time Jack had returned to the rock beside the one where I had Wally laid out. I did not look up at him, but just kept my face down in Wally's and continued to mechanically breathe air into his lungs. I had wanted to deceive Jack a little longer into believing there was a chance to save Wally, but I could

tell he knew the truth, because he began sobbing in the most anguished, mournful way I have ever heard.

With every breath I longed with all my heart to breathe life back into Wally's cold, motionless body. I think I would have done anything to make Jack stop his terrible grieving.

But I knew that was not to be.

I did not think there was any chance of saving Wally, but I did not stop trying to revive him; I could not let Jack know I had given up hope.

It must have been over half an hour before Mr. Bertram and Mr. Magro came. I did not even hear them approach, I was so intent in the hopeless task of reviving Wally. They must have realized that Wally was dead right away. I heard Jack's sobs moving away from the rock next to me where he had stayed the entire time, and looked up to see Mr. Magro holding him tightly and leading him away.

Mr. Bertram must have used his walkie-talkie to call for the ambulance from the Red Creek Fire Department even before they began the search because, in a few minutes, two Red Creek firemen showed up with a stretcher.

Mr. Bertram gently put a blanket around my shoulders and led me away before the men handled Wally. Once I looked back and saw they had covered Wally's body and face with a blanket, just as Tom had done with Luke. I regretted I had sneaked the look.

When we got back to the trail the ambulance was there behind Mr. Bertram's station wagon, where I sat while he went to help the firemen with the stretcher. I did not see Mr. Magro and Jack, but I could hear Jack's mournful cries coming from the ambulance. I never did see Jack again.

Everything became hazy to me after they took Wally away, as it had at Luke's death. I absolutely refused to go to the funeral because I was afraid to hear Jack still grieving and I did not believe I could stand that. Everyone

must have understood my feelings because no one insisted that I go.

After the funeral my mother told me that Mr. Magro planned to go to another teaching job at the end of May. Mrs. Magro and Jack, who was said to be ill with grief, stayed at her family's home in Virginia where Wally had been buried.

Mr. Magro finished teaching that semester at Carlton and moved to a new position at a college in upstate New York. About two weeks after the funeral, Mr. Magro wrote, thanking me for my efforts to save his son. I still have that note.

After the ambulance left with Mr. Magro and Jack, and Wally's body, Mr. Bertram took me back to the camp cabin. He left me there while he took the raft to rescue the other boys from the island. There was no mention of Wally's death, or any of the events of that day, on our trip back to Red Creek.

For a long time, what kept going through my mind was how similar Jack's mournful cry was to the cardinal's whose mate I had killed with the air rifle. Even today, a Christmas or Easter can not go by without my recalling the plaintive wail of grief of those two who had suffered the violent loss of their loved ones on those holidays.



## CHAPTER THREE

**ILL-FATED TROOP 44 WAS KNOWN  
AS THE SUNSHINE BOYS'**

by Roger Stockwell

## PART III

**Death on Braddock Hill —  
Jamie and Specs are Final Victims**

In looking back over those childhood years, I now realize that relationships among the boys were as important as events in telling the story of Troop 44. It was after Wally's death in April, 1949, that Jamie Driscoll and I became inseparable friends. Wally's death had sent me into a tailspin of remorse. And there was something about Jamie's calm, reassuring presence that drew me to him in my melancholy state.

My depression stemmed from the fact that I considered myself partly responsible for Wally's accident. He had died playing 'the game' and I had been the one, along with Tom, who gloried most in our hiding and stalking ritual.

Outwardly Jamie and I had little in common. He was passive, quiet, and uncompetitive; I was energetic, talkative, and always trying to be the best at everything.

During my first few months in the troop I constantly sought Tom's recognition and approval. At first, I vaguely resented Jamie because he seemed to have a special relationship with Tom without making any visible effort. I did not resent Arnold and Chad because their relationship to Tom appeared to be one of eager servants to a benevolent master. I had too much pride to assume that role.

Jamie was the most confident boy in the troop. He just did not feel the need to be constantly proving himself the way Tom and I did, and I am sure Tom and I both saw in little Jamie a calm stability when we needed reassurance. Jamie seemed to be the only person who could communicate with Tom when he was in one of his sulky, dejected moods — from some real or imagined grievance — which was often, and he could be counted on to talk me out of some of my more fanciful, but impractical, notions.

I had gradually come to realize that Tom's outward show of strength and resolve, which so impressed me at first, was a thin veneer. He was, like me, not far below the surface, as vulnerable and unsure of himself as his heavy-lidded blue eyes and soft features suggested. But as I became more attached to Jamie, my attraction to Tom did not diminish. Tom had some strange, magnetic quality that drew people to him.

There was a time before Jamie's death that I think Tom became somewhat resentful of Jamie's close friendship with me. Just before his death, Jamie and I palled around with each other almost to the exclusion of everyone else, and Tom seemed to draw away from both of us and just be friends with Chad and Arnold. Tom's worst fault was that he expected his friends to be loyal and devoted only to him.

My close friendship with Jamie was to be short lived. He died, along with Specs, in the final, tragic occurrence



that brought an end to Troop 44 one stormy Friday evening in June, 1949.

As an aftermath to that tragic evening, both Chalky and I ended up in the Red Creek Hospital. Chalky had a mild concussion and a stab wound in his right thigh. I was put under heavy sedation for shock.

We had continued to practice the Indian war dance all spring for the scout jamboree, where we would compete with scout troops from six counties. After pleading with our parents to allow us to go camping so we could compete in the jamboree, they finally gave in, allowing us to go because, I suppose, they felt that surely no further tragedy could befall Troop 44.

Specs and I trudged up the unpaved road to Braddock Hill Church carrying our packs a little before nine o'clock one Friday evening. Mr. Bertram had to go to a training session at the fire department in the early evening, and had told us he would not be able to get away before nine o'clock at the earliest. He said we should put on our Indian outfits and war paint when we got to the church, and practice the dance until he was able to get there to take us to Camp Man-a-toba, where we were scheduled to perform the next evening.

The gathering dark clouds brought a sudden downpour with flashes of lightning and rumbles of thunder. Specs and I had almost reached the church, and we were able to run and get inside before getting too wet. When we got into the front entrance hall to the sanctuary, I turned on the lights. Almost immediately there was a lightning Hash and explosion of thunder, and the lights went out putting the church back into total darkness.

We lit our kerosene lanterns and went down to the front of the sanctuary to wait for Mr. Bertram and the rest of the troop. We were meeting in the sanctuary instead of

the basement activity room because there was more room to practice the dance there.

When Specs and I reached the sanctuary we heard the distant whine of the fire department siren. I went to the front door of the church where I could see out over the town. The lights were out all over the north end. I figured the lightning must have struck the transformer station on Market Street. Mr. Bertram would probably be even later in getting to the church because he would be with the fire truck.

When I went back into the sanctuary Specs had already dressed in his Indian outfit and was putting on the war paint. Knowing Mr. Bertram would be late, I went over to the pulpit and started fooling around with the levers and switches on the tape recorder that had been installed under the pulpit. It had a microphone on the pulpit, and three more along the front of the choir pews to record the singing of the church choir.

When I pressed down on one lever a little red light came on and a glass-covered dial began flicking back and forth when Specs and I talked. At first, I could not figure out how the red light could come on with the electricity off. Then I remembered that the machine was powered by two large car batteries placed beneath it.

When Specs saw the red light, he threatened to tell Snooks Larson, the custodian, if I did not leave the recorder alone. I grumbled to Specs that I was not afraid of Snooks Larson. But I put the cover back on the recorder and began getting undressed to put on my Indian outfit.

The wind seemed to be roaring louder outside. Through the stained glass window behind the sanctuary we could see the lightning flashing across the sky every few seconds, followed by a constant rumble of thunder. Specs had finished putting on his war paint, so he took a flashlight

and went down to the scout room in the basement to pack the camping gear.

A few minutes later Jamie came into the sanctuary with his dog, Plato. I was so intently watching the flashes of lightning through the stained glass window, that he was able to sneak up and tackle me with a war whoop. We playfully wrestled until I pinned him down. Then Jamie got undressed, put on his Indian outfit, and began putting on his war paint. By that time I had finished with my war paint so I helped him streak his on.

I think both of us were a little scared in the eerie lantern-lighted darkness of the large sanctuary, with the storm raging louder and louder outside. Jamie, in particular, was afraid of lightning and thunder and cringed every time a bright streak flashed through the stained glass window and was followed by a roar of thunder.

We soon heard voices in the front hall and decided to hide in the darkness and scare the new arrivals. We blew out the lantern and hid in the choir pews across from the pulpit. In a few moments, Tom, Chad, and Arnold came down the aisle with their lanterns lit and deposited their gear. They began undressing and getting into their outfits.

As they talked, Jamie and I listened from our hiding place only a few feet away. They began talking about playing 'the game' on the camping trip. Tom told them he knew where I had been hiding on the island and they could capture me for sure if we played 'the game' on this camping trip. Tom told them he had found my hiding place on a camping trip the past summer, the one before Luke's accident. He said he had hidden on the upper end of the island one night where he was sure I was hiding and had waited till dawn, when he had seen me come down out of that tall sycamore tree. I poked Jamie to let him know I was glad we had hidden and found out that Tom knew

my hiding place.

Jamie and I also heard that Chad had brought along his carbine this time and had hidden it in his bedroll. Apparently Chad had asked Tom to bring some blank cartridges, and Tom then gave them to him. Chad said that he was going to use his rifle and the blanks to scare Jamie, because he had said he might drop out of their Panther Patrol and join my Beaver Patrol.

When Chad saw Plato sitting beside Jamie's gear he said it would be a good joke to scare Jamie by making him think he was going to shoot his dog. Chad said that he bet that would be the one thing that would upset the always calm Jamie. Jamie poked me to let me know he would be ready for that joke.

Chad sometimes liked to scare us with practical jokes or by making us believe we were in grave danger. The morning of Wally's death, when we were rafting down to the island in the high water, it had been Chad who had pushed his raft out to the middle of the channel and almost caused it to be swept downstream past the island and into the turbulent whitewater chute.

Another time, when we had been at the summer boy scout camp, Chad had talked the Magro twins and Chalky into letting us take them on a 'snipe' hunt. A 'snipe' hunt is a practical joke often played on new scouts when they are left deep in the woods holding a bag while the rest of the troop go to hunt the non-existent snipe. The rest of the troop simply returns to the campsite, leaving the uninitiated ones in the woods holding the bag.

Instead of just leaving Chalky and the twins to eventually discover they had been duped, Chad sneaked up within a few feet behind them and let out several ferocious howls like a wildcat. Chalky and the Magro twins had bolted and run the whole mile back to the camp.

By this time Jamie and I were tired of hiding. Since we did not want them to know we had heard their plans we crawled through the open door at the end of the pews that led to the bell tower. The wind was still howling so loud we did not have to worry about being heard. Once outside the door we reentered the sanctuary as though we were coming down from the bell tower.

Tom, Chad, and Arnold had finished putting on their war paint when we came back into the sanctuary. Tom told us he had talked to Mr. Bertram down at the fire hall, who had said he would be along as soon as he could get away, and also that the storm warnings would be over later that evening and we would be able to go to Camp Man-a-toba.

While we were waiting for Mr. Bertram, Tom said he had a new idea for a game. He told Chad and Arnold to climb to the bell tower and see if they could capture a sleeping bat. Often, when we had climbed into the bell tower we had seen sleeping bats hanging upside down from the rafters. Chad and Arnold rushed off to the bell tower.

Jamie said he did not want to play any game with a bat because he heard they carried rabies, and if you got bit by one you had to get shots. He left to join Specs in the basement to help pack the gear.

There was an awkward silence between Tom and me, now left in the sanctuary alone. Since Jamie and I had become close friends, a kind of rift had developed in Tom's and my friendship. But, after a moment, Tom smiled that winning grin of his that would melt the sternest of hearts.

That was a quality that was hard to explain about Tom. He could be disdainful, selfish, and even cruel with his friends at times. We would swear we were never going to forgive him; and then he would smile in that meek, mis-

chievous way and we would be putty in his hands again.

Tom and I began making plans for the weekend ahead as though there had not been any hostility between us. I always hated myself afterwards for forgiving him so easily — when I had firmly resolved not to — but I just could not help myself. Tom said we would find a way to go to the island on Saturday night after the campfire and play ‘the game.’ Remembering that he knew my hiding place on the island, I started plotting how to continue to elude the hunters.

Tom suddenly announced that he wanted to see if he could still hypnotise me. He went over and got his scout belt from his pants and began swinging the gold buckle before my eyes. Just as I had been uncertain before at summer camp, I was still not sure whether I was really hypnotised or not. I obeyed all his commands, but I did not test myself to see if I was able not to obey him.

After a few minutes, when Chad and Arnold had not returned, Tom and I decided to go to the bell tower to see what was keeping them. We climbed the ladder that led from a little alcove that was next to the sanctuary. When we got to the platform in the top of the bell tower, just below the three huge cast-iron bells, we found Chad and Arnold looking out through the small arched openings that surrounded the bells, watching the high wind tilt the evergreens in the forest below.

I looked out toward the town and could make out the fire department truck with its rotating light down at the Market Street transformer station in the darkened north end of town. The lightning was still flashing every few seconds, the thunder rumbled continually, and the wind whistled through the openings in the bell tower, spraying us with misty rain.

Finally, Tom told Chad to climb into the rafters that

supported the bells where he had spotted a bat. It made me uneasy to see Chad discover the place above the rafters because that was where I hid when we played ‘the game’ in the church.

Chad was afraid to touch the bat so he captured it inside his scout cap that he brought along for that purpose. He and Arnold then went down the ladder and back to the sanctuary with the bat. Just as Tom and I were about to follow, Tom thought he spotted another bat above the rafters. He climbed up to check and discovered it was only a dead leaf. While Tom was in the rafters, Jamie and Chalky climbed up the ladder to see what was going on.

When I saw Chalky, I knew that Mr. Bertram had arrived. Chalky had already dressed in his Indian outfit and put on the war paint. When we were all in the sanctuary, Chad said we could play ‘the game’ with the bat before Mr. Bertram came back. Jamie said that Mr. Bertram had gone down to the scout room in the basement to help Specs get the gear packed.

Tom took out of his pack a roll of luminous tape that glowed a greenish-yellow in the dark. While Chad held the screeching bat immobile in his cap, Tom cut a small strip of the tape and stuck it to the underside of the bat. Then he told us to get our spears ready and to turn out all the lamps. When Chad hurled the bat in the air we were to try to bring it down with our spears as it flapped about in the dark sanctuary.

Tom gave the order and Chad hurled the bat into the air. We could follow the bat’s arcing, flapping flight above us by the tape that glowed on its belly.. Tom, Chad, Arnold, and even Chalky, who had objected at first when the lamps were being turned out, began to rush about in the sanctuary following the flight of the bat and yelling encouragement to each other. They jabbed their sharp

sticks into the air when the bat sank low enough in its flight.

Jamie, who rarely took much interest in Tom's games, did not even pick up his spear. I made only half-hearted attempts when the bat flapped down near me; I had not been able to kill an animal since killing that beautiful cardinal. But I did not want to let the other boys know I could not kill the bat.

Chalky was the one who finally impaled the bat on the end of his spear. He was so pleased with himself that when we got the lanterns lit again, he went around displaying his grisly trophy on the point of his spear. Jamie helped Chalky wrap the dead bat in an old newspaper and told Chalky he would help him bury it when we got to Camp Man-a-toba.

Mr. Bertram and Specs came into the sanctuary carrying the camping gear. Moments later a bright streak of lightning lit up the stained glass window, and was followed by a deafening crack of thunder. In a few moments we heard the whine of the fire siren, and Mr. Bertram immediately put on his rain coat to leave.

He told us we should stay in the church regardless of how bad the storm got because it was the sturdiest building in town. He left the walkie-talkie in case we needed to get in touch with him, and as he left he told us to go ahead and practice the war dance; he would return as soon as possible.

Our chants and body movements seemed to take on the savage and frenzied rhythms of the storm, as the wind began to whistle louder and louder through the bell tower and the lightning flashes illuminated our paint-streaked bodies. The rumble of the thunder blended in with the rhythmic beat of the gourd and drum. As the dance reached its frenzied climax, the lantern suddenly went out. In the darkness, I immediately felt the point of a spear graze the



inside of my left thigh. Once the lantern was re-lit, we discovered that Arnold had accidentally let loose his spear.

Specs wanted us to keep practicing the dance but there was little enthusiasm for that. Everyone seemed to be becoming anxious and distracted by the raging storm, and Tom suggested we play ‘the game’ to pass the time until Mr. Bertram returned. Chalky and I wanted to play, but Jamie and Specs said that they did not want to.

We decided we would play anyway, with just Chalky and me as prey. We blew out all the lanterns but one, and Chalky and I disappeared in different directions to hide. Chalky went toward the basement, and I went through the sanctuary and, circling back, climbed up into the bell tower to my secret place above the rafters.

With the storm raging about me outside the bell tower I heard very little and can only report here what I was told later about the hideous accidents that ended Troop 44.

When the hunters began their search, Tom and Arnold had gone to the basement and Chad had searched near the sanctuary. When Chad was unsuccessful he returned to the sanctuary where Jamie and Specs had waited. Chad had decided to scare Jamie and Specs by telling them that if they did not play ‘the game’ he would shoot Jamie’s dog, which was still sitting next to Jamie’s gear.

Chad had removed his carbine from his bedroll and put what he believed to be one of the blanks that Tom had given him into the chamber. Jamie knew, of course, that Chad planned to use a blank bullet so he did not move. Specs protested that Chad had brought his rifle along against Mr. Bertram’s orders. But he did not expect Chad to carry out his threat so he did not go either.

Chad took careful aim at Plato and began to squeeze the trigger slowly. Jamie remained calm, but Specs protested, saying Chad’s cruel joke was dangerous. Specs did

not really expect Chad to pull the trigger, as Chad told him and Jamie that he would give them one last chance to hide before he pulled the trigger. But neither of them made any move to obey.

Chad again took careful aim at Plato and began to slowly squeeze the trigger. At the last moment Jamie instinctively leaned over to pick up Plato and shield him. At that moment Chad pulled the trigger.

In the furnace room in the basement of the church, Tom and Arnold had cornered Chalky on a stone ledge behind the coal bin. When the hunters had moved in to capture him, he had lunged forward to try and escape. In the struggle, Chalky had fallen onto Arnold's spear, its sharp point slicing deeply into his right thigh.

Chalky stumbled forward and fell head first off the ledge, being knocked unconscious when his head struck a masonry drain pipe. Tom and Arnold lifted Chalky to carry him back to the lighted area in the sanctuary.

It was at the moment they lifted Chalky that Tom said he heard the rifle shot above in the sanctuary. He later said the shot did not scare him because he thought it was only one of the blank cartridges he had given Chad. When he and Arnold finally got the unconscious Chalky up the steps and into the sanctuary, he realized there had been a worse tragedy there.

Chad was still standing with the rifle in his hands, and Specs was sitting with Jamie's bleeding and lifeless head in his lap, screaming hysterically at Chad, not seeming to realize that the shooting had been an accident. Tom said that when Specs saw him and Arnold carrying unconscious Chalky with the broken spear still in his bleeding thigh, he suddenly ran sobbing to the Church office to phone for help.

Tom looked at Jamie's head wound and realized there

was nothing they could do for him. He had gotten a tourniquet out of the first aid kit and, after Arnold helped him get the broken spear out of Chalky's thigh, tightened it above the wound to stop the bleeding.

Chad still stood staring straight ahead and holding the rifle. When Specs came back from the church office he had calmed down only a little. He said the telephone lines must be down because the phone did not work.

The bleeding had stopped in Chalky's thigh, but a big bump was starting to rise in the center of his forehead, and he was still unconscious. Specs remembered the walkie-talkie and asked Tom to try and reach Mr. Bertram, but Tom had no success in reaching anyone.

Tom said Specs suddenly got the idea of ringing the church bells to get Mr. Bertram's or anyone's attention in the town. Specs bolted from the sanctuary and began to climb the ladder to the bell tower. Tom said that Specs must have gotten only about half way up the ladder when he slipped and fell. They had heard a scream, followed by a loud thud when Specs hit the concrete floor in the alcove where the ladder went up to the bell tower.

Tom said he knew right away Specs was dead, when he went and saw him. Specs' head must have struck first because his skull was mashed and busted open. Overwhelmed, Tom had returned to the sanctuary and occupied himself with tending the unconscious Chalky.

Both Chad and Arnold seemed to be in shock Tom said, and although he had thought of walking to town to get help he was not sure he should leave Chalky with Chad and Arnold. Knowing that the tourniquet would have to be loosened often, he decided it might be safer just to wait until Mr. Bertram returned. Nothing could be done for Jamie and Specs.

In the bell tower I had heard the rifle shot and, a few

minutes later, Specs' scream in the bell tower below. It was several minutes after the rifle shot and the scream that I decided to come out of my hiding place, believing the shot had been Chad playing a joke on Jamie and that the scream was only Chalky being captured in 'the game.'

Nonetheless, I was bothered by the silence and decided to venture out of the loft. I cautiously lowered myself down the bell tower ladder, halfway expecting one of the hunters to come in pursuit of me.

I nearly tripped over Specs, lying in the dark on that cement floor. In a flash of lightning I saw it was Specs with his head bashed and bloody.

I can barely remember stumbling uncomprehendingly into the sanctuary and then seeing Jamie lying lifeless near the altar with his grieving cocker spaniel nuzzled up close to him. Except for the anguish, much of what I now remember is blurred.

Tom appeared out of the darkness while I was sitting beside Jamie, sobbing, and tried to explain what had happened. Moments later Chad appeared. He had a glazed expression in his eyes, as though the reality of the moment was too much.

After Tom finished going over the tragic events, the next thing I remember was the arrival of Mr. Bertram and two other firemen. At some point Tom had reached him on the walkie-talkie and frantically told him to come with the emergency car.

Chalky regained consciousness and had hobbled over to where I was sitting next to Jamie's body and put his arm around my shoulder trying to comfort me. He refused to get on the stretcher Mr. Bertram had brought and would not leave until I was ready to go with him. I left Jamie reluctantly and walked up the aisle with Chalky by my side. About half way up the aisle I felt Chalky bump

against me as he fell unconscious to the floor.

The two firemen hastily got him onto the stretcher and I followed them outside. It was still raining a little but the wind had died down and the lightning was flashing only on the horizon. After they got Chalky in the emergency car, I got in the back with him.

Chad and Arnold had gone ahead of us out of the church, and one of the firemen put them in Mr. Bertram's station wagon and drove away. The other firemen drove Chalky and me to the Red Creek Hospital. Tom had stayed at the church with Mr. Bertram.

I had not stopped sobbing since I had discovered Specs, and when Chalky regained consciousness again in the ambulance he tried to comfort me.

When we got to the hospital emergency room, they must have taken Chalky to the operating room because he disappeared immediately.

I was placed on a cot in the emergency room, still sobbing uncontrollably. They gave me a shot that must have been a sedative because I went to sleep immediately. When I woke up it was daylight and I was in a hospital ward. There were three other youngsters in the ward but none of them was Chalky.

My mother was with me but she did not mention anything about the tragic events of the night before. She was tense and shaken but managed to keep a calm outward appearance for my benefit. I was in a daze, more asleep than awake, and was not able to face reality. I did not ask any questions.

Mr. Bertram did visit me briefly that day and I asked about Chalky. He said Chalky had relapsed into a state of shock from the loss of blood and had been in serious condition, but was out of danger now. Chalky was not allowed any visitors.

Mr. Bertram was the first to bring up the subject of Jamie's and Specs' death to me. He explained about the tragic events that took place in the sanctuary while I was hidden in the bell tower, saying Tom and Chad had told him how it all happened. After Mr. Bertram left I never saw him again.

The next day my mother told me that my Uncle Dillon, her brother, had driven up from Kentucky and was going to take me back to Kentucky to visit my grandmother where we had lived before we moved to Red Creek. I made no protest. She did not mention anything about Specs and Jamie and their funerals and I did not ask. She said it would be good for me to get away from Red Creek for the summer.

Before I left the hospital on the third day, a state policeman came by the ward to talk to me. I was only able to tell him what Tom and Mr. Bertram had told me about the deaths, but I did add that Jamie and I had overheard Chad's plan to scare Jamie using a blank cartridge in his rifle.

The policeman surprised me when he asked some questions about 'the game.' Oddly enough I was still secretive about the details of how 'the game' was played, and told him we had on the Indian outfits and war paint and the hunters carried the spears only because we had just finished practicing the war dance. I did not tell him the war paint and spears were a standard fixture of 'the game.'

Finally, the officer asked some questions about Luke's and Wally's deaths and about Arnold's accident. I realized suddenly that the officer had at least a suspicion that someone in the troop might be responsible for the accidents. I told him all that I remembered about Luke's and Wally's deaths and what Jamie had told me about Arnold's accident.

Soon after the state policeman had talked to me, my mother told me to get dressed as I was being released from the hospital. When I got outside I discovered my clothes were packed and my Uncle Dillon and I were to leave directly for my grandmother's home in Kentucky. My mother, who was teaching in summer school, told me I was to stay at my grandmother's until it was time for school to start in the fall.

In Kentucky, as I played with friends I had known a year and a half earlier, I began to put the tragedies out of my mind. My relatives never discussed them in my presence; perhaps, the doctor had advised them not to.

I believe now it was a mistake. I would have been emotionally much better off if I had been encouraged to talk about my fears, and sense of guilt, and deal with them. By allowing those events to remain unpurged from my mind, I think I became more guilt-ridden and haunted by those tragedies as the years passed.

Even today, more than twenty-five years since it all happened, I sometimes awake in the middle of the night, in a cold sweat, dreaming a nightmarish montage of those accidents: Luke's piercing scream when he fell from the rock ledge, Jack's mournful sob when he knew Wally was lost, that horrible vision of Specs' smashed skull and Jamie lying lifeless with the bullet hole in his temple.

After a couple of weeks at my grandmother's I began to gradually come out of my melancholia and forget about Red Creek and Troop 44. In late August I was put on the train at Cincinnati, Ohio, for the return trip to Red Creek. On the seven-hour journey my mind began to return to life at Red Creek.

My mother met the train at Belleville and during the ride back to Red Creek she began immediately to bring me up to date. She must have realized that I

had to face reality.

The funerals had been held at the same time for Jamie and Specs, two days after the accident at the Braddock Hill Church, and they had been buried in the Braddock Hill Cemetery where Luke had been buried. The medical reports had shown that neither Jamie nor Specs had suffered before death. Specs' skull had been fractured and he had died instantly. The bullet that had entered Jamie's head had been a hollow-tipped kind that had exploded in his brain on impact and had killed him instantly.

Chalky had recovered, and when he was discharged from the hospital he had gone back to live with his mother's people in Morgantown, West Virginia. Mr. Bertram had taken a job with the U.S. government in Iran, and had left in July.

Tom's mother had been hospitalized and Tom was thus staying again with Judge Driscoll, Jamie's grandfather. Judge Driscoll had sent Chad to the boys' reform school at Perrytown because he had been involved in a vandalism incident at the school house in his community. No one had seen much of Arnold that summer, and he did not seem to pal around with Tom any more.

Driving back to Red Creek my mother warned me that the ill-fortunes of Troop 44 had become a subject of much speculation in Red Creek. She said news stories about the uncanny sequence of tragedies had flourished after Specs' and Jamie's deaths and had been carried on the wire services nationwide. She said much of the interest had died down over the summer but that I would undoubtedly be plagued with questions about the accidents for awhile. I should be patient and people would soon forget.

My mother was trying to prepare me for becoming something of an object of curiosity in Red Creek. I soon found out that all kinds of wild stories had evolved about



the incident. Because we had still had on the war paint when we were found at the church, and because Chalky had been injured with a spear, the more fanciful claimed we had turned into savages.

One story had it that we had been playing some kind of deadly game in which the object of the game was to kill or injure each other. Most of the stories focused on the outsider, Chad, or the strange, mute Arnold as the real villains. But there were those who speculated that Tom and I had been the angelic-looking but heartless real culprits.

Over the years the accidents have more or less been attributed somehow to Chad. I think that was mainly because Chad was to get in trouble with the law later that summer and be sent away to the correction school at Perrytown. People in Red Creek were also quick to believe that an outsider — Chad was from Bertha Hill — was more likely to be guilty than one of their own.

Though I never did particularly like Chad, I always felt that story was unfair. I am convinced that Chad was not any more responsible than the rest of us who played ‘the game’ except in Jamie’s death, which I also consider an accident. Nothing much has been done over the years to dispel that notion about Chad until the writing of this article.

Some in Red Creek also sought to blame the muted, disturbed Arnold for all the tragedies, even though he was the first victim. I never believed that any of us were consciously guilty of any of the tragic events. But a strong case could certainly be made that Tom and me, inadvertently and unintentionally, precipitated the events that led to much of the tragedy. We had reveled in playing ‘the game’ and that had led to at least two of the deaths.

I always thought it was strange that people have tended to place the blame on Chad or Arnold, feeling that

if one wanted to take the facts and twist them to pin the blame on any one of us, it would have been easiest to try and blame Tom. But I guess it is human nature to try and make villains out of the people who are outwardly, perhaps, the least appealing.

For a time after I came back to Red Creek, Tom and I became as close friends as Jamie and I had been. Perhaps it was the unwanted attention that focused on us — the last visible members of Troop 44 — that welded us together temporarily. Arnold's mother, whom I had never met nor seen, had moved a few miles outside of town in early summer and very little had been seen of Arnold since then.

Tom and I, as if by some unwritten agreement, never talked about the events of Troop 44; neither the good times nor the bad. Tom never mentioned that Chad had been sent away to reform school. And I had heard from someone else that Arnold's behavior had become erratic and unstable after the final tragic incident in the church, but Tom never mentioned it. Perhaps it was our way of ignoring the talk and speculation we knew was swirling around us.

Some Red Creek people did question me about the accidents, particularly about the night Jamie and Specs died. But mainly, I suspect, most preferred to make up their own version of what happened and did not really want to hear the truth. I think a lot of people believed that Judge Driscoll sent Chad to reform school because he was responsible for Jamie's death and just used the vandalism as an excuse. The judge had been cruelly hurt by Jamie's death.

I guess I also believed that Chad was being punished for Jamie's death, and I felt guilty about that. Once, when I went by Judge Driscoll's large colonial home over on Protzman Lane to see if Tom was in, I found the Judge in

the parlor alone. Hesitantly, getting my courage up, I blurted out that I was sure that Chad had not intended to hurt Jamie.

When Judge Driscoll did not respond, I went on to explain about Jamie and me being hidden and hearing Chad say he was going to scare Jamie by shooting a blank at his dog. When I had finished, I could see that tears had welled up in the stern old man's eyes. Any talk about Jamie's death was still very painful to him, and I was immediately sorry I had mentioned it.

The Judge did not respond to my explanation about Chad. In a few moments, when he recovered his composure, he reached over and petted Jamie's dog, Plato, that was lying on the floor beside his chair. The Judge told me he wanted me to have Jamie's dog, if I wanted him, because he thought Jamie would want that. I nodded that I would take the dog and I could feel tears beginning to well up in my own eyes.

### Conclusion

Tom and I went camping once more. In early October, about a month after school started, we camped at Harmon's Rock State Park one weekend. Thinking back, my mother and Judge Driscoll deserve credit for wisely giving us permission. I am sure their first impulse must have been to refuse. But they judged correctly that it would be wrong to try and shield us from normal activities because of their fears.

That trip turned out to be one of the most enjoyable camping trips I ever had. Tom and I were closer and seemed to share more happy moments that weekend than at any time since we had become friends. It was, however, to be the end of our friendship.

We rode a county bus to the park entrance on Friday

afternoon, and obtained permission from the ranger to camp in one of the picnic shelters in the overlook area. The park was closed for the winter, and Tom and I were excited about being the only people in that huge forest. The weather was still warm and the leaves had just begun to turn glorious autumn colors.

We rolled out our sleeping bags on a picnic table in the shelter and Friday evening we got into them soon after dark. But we could not sleep, and talked about half the night. One thing we discussed was what would happen if an escaped convict or a maniac was hiding in the park. The park had been named for an escapee named Harmon who had hidden in that wilderness around the turn of the century.

Sometime during the night, after we were asleep, an animal must have caused a dead limb to fall nearby because we both awoke with a start. A shifting fog had settled around the shelter and we right away visualized a knife-wielding convict lurking in the fog ready to leap out and slash us to bits.

We were both so frightened that we put one sleeping bag inside the other so we could sleep together, spending the rest of the night clinging to each other to calm our fears; much the same as the Magro twins had grasped each other when they slept.

Saturday morning dawned clear and bright with a cloudless blue sky. In the early afternoon we hiked the long trail down the face of the mountain to the Algonquin River, far downstream from where it flowed past Camp Man-a-toba. We found a beautiful, calm pool below steep rapids, and spent the next few hours swimming, diving and riding the swift rapids bodily down to the pool, then sunning ourselves on a rock.

We were so happy and content there that we hesi

tated to leave even when the sun began to sink behind the high ridge to the west. I think, without being aware of the reason, that we were happy we were far from the prying eyes and questions that had plagued us all fall. Reluctantly, we dressed when twilight began to close in on the deep river valley.

Darkness fell while we were climbing the last hundred feet of the trail below the overlook, and I lost my footing and slipped, almost tumbling down over the steep ledge. At the last moment Tom had grabbed my hand and pulled me back to where I could get my footing. When I was safe we exchanged a desperate hand-clasp that spoke of all the past tragedies we had survived.

Sunday morning Judge Driscoll drove to take us back to Red Creek. After that gloriously happy weekend Tom and I seemed to drift apart. My greatest desire then was to get on the eighth grade basketball team, and that Monday I found out I had made it. After making the team, I met a lot of new friends and started to pal around with them. Tom began palling around with an older boy who liked to hunt and fish and they became inseparable.

Somehow, Tom and I sensed on that last camping trip that our close friendship was soon to end. It was as though we lingered momentarily in the twilight of our childhood years, hesitating to enter the next phase of young adulthood, where new interests would send us separate ways. On that camping trip we seemed to cherish each moment and dreaded to see the hours pass as the weekend ebbed away.

I sometimes think that because we had suffered so much anguish together, we drew apart fearing our continued association would only bring more sadness. Perhaps we just grew up, finding different interests and friends and naturally went our separate ways, after a year and a half of

close friendship.

It was not long before we barely acknowledged each other with more than a nod. By our high school and college years we could pass each other without any sign that we had once shared so much in friendship and in tragedy. Our eyes would meet and the unspoken message was that our friendship had been burdened with too much tragedy — too much heartache — for it to endure.

The burden must have been too great for all the survivors of Troop 44 because I never heard from any of them again . . . nothing about Chalky, who went to live with his mother's people; and nothing about Jack Magro, who moved with his parents to upstate New York.

In the fall of 1968, Bernard Magro, who had become a well-known concert pianist, played a concert at Carlton University. I had looked forward to asking him about Jack, but on the evening of the concert my eldest boy was taken to the hospital with an acute attack of appendicitis. There was no other chance to talk to Mr. Magro.

Chad was released from reform school after two years and returned briefly to live with his mother in Bertha Hill. I did not run into him, nor try to find him, and a few months later I read in the newspaper that he had joined the army. His picture was in the newspaper in 1954, with a story about his death in the crash of a troop transport in the China Sea on the way to Korea.

Arnold had continued to live with his mother until 1960, when she died. After that he had been placed in the Morton State Psychiatric Hospital because there was no one to take care of him. I have always meant to visit him there but I have never gotten around to it.

Tom's mother was also put in the same hospital and, as far as I know, she is still there. Tom went to live with Judge Driscoll in the summer of 1949 when she was sent to

the hospital. Although she was out, briefly, a couple of times in the early fifties, and stayed at Judge Driscol's home, each time she had been returned to the hospital and, following her last return in 1942, I have never heard any more about her.

Tom graduated from Carlton in 1956, a year ahead of me, because he went through college in three years as an honor student. He majored in petroleum engineering and went to work in New York for a large oil company. I remember reading in the Carlton Alumni News, in the early sixties, that he had been sent to South America — Venezuela, I believe — for the same oil company. I have not heard anything more about him.

In the late fifties, after graduating from Carlton College with a degree in journalism, I was in the army for two years. Afterward, I worked for a newspaper in Columbus, Ohio, returning in 1961 to Red Creek to be the sports editor for the *Red Creek Times*. In 1967 I became the city editor.

My mother still lives in the home where I grew up in Red Creek. She retired from the Carlton English Department two years ago. Jamie's dog, Plato, lived for eight years after Judge Driscol gave him to me and became a beloved family pet. He died while I was in the army.

My wife, Ann, whom I married while working in Columbus, is the sixth-grade teacher at the Market Street Elementary School. We have three sons, Roger Jr., twelve, and the twins, Jason and Jamie, nine, named after my best friend from childhood and my adopted brother who died that same evening at the Braddock Hill Church. I might mention that our twin boys are not identical and are certainly not devoted to each other the way Wally and Jack were. In fact, much of the time they seem barely able to tolerate each other.

My eldest boy, Roger Jr., belongs to the boy scout troop at the Braddock Hill Church which is now Troop 123. Last summer when the scoutmaster, Mr. Brandywine, was called out of town on a weekend when they planned to go camping, my boy tried to talk me into taking his place. I refused.

I am not superstitious — and I never believed that Troop 44 was the victim of anything except uncanny bad luck — but I saw no reason to take even the slightest chance of reviving what many believe was a horrible curse that plagued Troop 44 twenty-five years ago.



CHAPTER FOUR

**CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOM PEDDIGREW**

FEBRUARY

507 Braddock Ave.  
Red Creek, W. Va.  
February 6, 1974

Dear Tom,

Don't be surprised if this letter goes on for pages and pages. I rarely write letters, except an occasional business letter, and when I do I usually get carried away and don't know when to stop. For some reason I have thought about writing you for a long time, but, since I had no idea about your address, I was never motivated to write until recently. I had even thought about writing the Alumni Association of the Harvard Business School - there must be one — and getting your address. I remembered reading in the *Red Creek Times*, that my mother sent me while I was away in the army, that the company you worked for had sent you there to graduate school.

Well, today I ran into Barry Heller downtown and,

since it was an unusually warm winter day here in Red Creek, we stood and talked for about an hour. Of course, we got to talking about old times and what happened to all the boys we grew up with here in Red Creek and naturally your name came up. Barry is the Alumni Secretary for Carlton University and he mentioned that he had your address in his files at the office, and he thought you were still in a South American country working for the same oil company you went to work for when you graduated from Carlton.

Actually, I had remembered the name of the oil company and had recently sent a brief letter to you addressed in care of the New York office, hoping they would forward the letter to you. But the letter was returned with no forwarding address. I have decided to write you another letter and take the chance you are at the address Barry has. I will call Barry and get the address as soon as I finish the letter.

I guess it may seem odd that I should write after so many years, but, for some reason, I just felt like getting in touch. Of course, there is always the possibility that you may say, 'who the hell is Roger Stockwell!' It's been a long time since we were scout buddies back in 1948 and 1949. Truthfully, I guess I'm really writing you because there was a time in my life — and there's certainly not a more impressionable time in anyone's life than when he is thirteen or fourteen — when you were the closest friend I ever had. I hope that doesn't sound too corny.

I remember so clearly the time you and I went camping at Harmon's Rock in the fall of 1949 one weekend. Do you remember planning the trip during morning homeroom periods in the Junior High? We caught a county bus at the courthouse Friday afternoon after school. We got out at the park entrance, and the gate was closed on the

road that led into the park. After we saw the ranger and got permission to camp there, we hiked the three miles to the overlook area.

You had a back pack and a canteen that buckled on to one of those khaki combat belts. I, as usual, took too much stuff — in a duffel bag — and we had to stop about every two hundred yards for me to rest. Once, while we were resting, we saw a herd of thirteen deer in a glade off to the right of the road, and I commented that I didn't see how anybody could kill anything as beautiful as a deer. We got there just as it was getting dark and camped in one of the picnic shelters far down to the right of the overlook area. I can still show you the place today.

We cooked at the fireplace in the shelter and we slept — or tried to — on one of the wooden picnic tables that was in the shelter. The first night — it was pretty cool and foggy that late in the year - we lay in our sleeping bags and talked about half the night. The park was closed and there was no one for miles, and we talked about what would happen if some escaped convict or maniac was hidden in there. I don't know what we thought would happen. I guess we thought he would molest us or something. That kind of talk certainly didn't do anything for our ability to sleep. Nor did the hard picnic table.

I remember during the night, after we finally got to sleep, that an animal must have broken a limb nearby or something. Anyway, we both woke up in an instant. We were so scared that we sat up half in and half out of our sleeping bags shivering in the cold in our BVD's. We were ready to bolt, expecting any moment a grisly, knifewielding convict to emerge from the fog. After a bit we calmed down a little and put one sleeping bag inside the other so we could sleep together — to keep warm, we said.

But our real purpose was to give each other some con-

fidence to endure the long night, our imaginations running amok about lurking convicts. Then I remember being scared to go to sleep because I feared a relapse of my former bedwetting habit — it hadn't happened in years — and I would be humiliated beyond belief. Fortunately, that didn't happen.

The next morning it was still foggy, and we walked all the way back to the ranger's cabin on the main road because I only had permission to stay one night. My mother would not give me permission to stay two nights before I left, and I wanted to call her on the ranger's phone to tell her we were going to stay two nights. When we got to the ranger's cabin, he was gone so we had to walk all the way back to Harmon's Rock without making the phone call.

When we got to the first parking lot back at the overlook, we ran into the ranger. We told him we were camping in one of the picnic shelters, and he told us he had seen our gear. I told the ranger that if my mother called wondering what happened to me, I wanted him to tell her we were going to stay another night. After the ranger left we commented on the fact that he certainly knew his job to be able to find our camping place in that big park. At the time we both thought we wanted to be forest rangers when we grew up.

We went back to the picnic shelter and ate some sandwiches and some tomato soup for lunch, and then we decided to walk down the steep trail to the Algonquin River. The sun had burned off the fog, and the sky was a cloudless deep blue. We went down by Haystack Rock and commented on how difficult it would be to climb the steep incline to the top. Some day, we figured, that rock would roll from its precarious hold on the side of the mountain, taking a lot of trees with it as it bounded down the mountainside to the middle of the river.

When we finally got to the little log lean-to that is at the end of the trail by the river, we rested and took off our shoes and waded along the edge. Around the bend upstream we came to a beautiful, calm pool below a steep section of rapids. We took off our clothes and spent the rest of the afternoon swimming and diving in the pool, floating down the rapids into the calm water, and sunning on a rock. Time passed quickly and suddenly we realized the sun was low in the sky. We had to hurry to make it back up the mountain before dark.

Trudging back up the trail was a lot more difficult than going down. Once, as dusk began to fall over the valley, we got off the trail and were afraid we were lost. We ended up having to follow a trail up the steep face near the overlook. Once I slipped and almost fell but you were able to grab me and pull me back up so I could get a firm foothold on the ledge. When we reached the top of the ledge, we came out very near the picnic shelter where we were camping.

We ate some peanut butter and crackers and, for some reason, we got chilled by the night air. We wrapped ourselves in our sleeping bags and sat on the log bench by the fireplace. The fire was out and there was only just some warm ashes. We sat there and laughed and talked. I can still remember the conversation as though it was yesterday. We talked about whether we thought another ice age would cover the earth in the next few thousand years and what would happen if it did.

In a little while we gathered some wood and rebuilt the fire and cooked our supper over the fireplace. But we didn't go anywhere else as it was already totally dark by then. We went to bed early again that evening because we were very tired from the long trek down to the river. I was worried about the fact that I had not spoken to my mother about staying a second night. But you reassured

me she would call Judge Driscol or the ranger and one of them would give her the message.

I never was confident she would get the message, but I never once considered not staying the second night. That really took nerve on my part because I knew my mother would be furious — and she was — that I had stayed two nights. But I guess I had looked forward to the camping trip so much that I was willing to face the consequences.

A little while after it got dark I had to urinate and I walked about fifty yards from the picnic shelter to do that. I was awfully shy about things like that. When I came back you were sitting up in your sleeping bag, and you asked me where I had been. I told you I had gone to ‘water my horses.’ I don’t remember using four letter words and I don’t think you did either. Lord only knows where I picked up that corny phrase. You must have known what I meant because you didn’t ask me anything more.

The next morning we got up early, packed our gear, and started back up the road to the highway. By then I was really worried about having stayed out a second night. Going back I didn’t have to rest so often. Either I had gotten in better condition or my duffel bag was lighter without the food in it. Before we left, we had a can of corn we didn’t eat, and we buried it in the sand by a little spring that was near the shelter. Years later I searched for that can of corn, but I never found it.

We called Judge Driscol on the ranger’s phone and he came up to the park entrance and took us back to town. Thus ended our final camping trip. Perhaps, you don’t even remember it or only remember it in the vaguest kind of way. I don’t guess you’d like to hear about all our other camping trips, hiking excursions, attending Carlton basketball and football games, scout meetings, meetings to work on merit badges, etc. Of course, it would be as

long as *War and Peace*, but I think I could put most of it down. In fact, I could have written fifty pages about that one camping trip.

You may be wondering why I would go into such detail describing a single event. Well, once when we were in college, we ran into each other at a beer party at the Phi Delt Fraternity house, and began talking. You said something about photographic memories, and I said that I - in a way — had that ability. You then asked if I could remember everything that was on a page in a book, and I said I could not do that. What I meant was that I had a kind of photographic memory for scenes of my childhood that had made an impression on me.

What I'm getting at is that I can still see you on that trip as plain as day in my mind's eye — the things you said, how you said them, and what we did. Maybe a lot of people have a vivid memory for things like that. I don't know. Incidentally, that was the last time I saw you — the time at the beer party in the spring of your senior year at Carlton when we were talking about photographic memories.

But, you know, I have a kind of funny wish. If you think it's stupid, don't tell me. But I wish, sometime, when you are near Red Creek, or anywhere in this part of the country and you have a weekend free, you would give me a call and we would go on another camping trip to Harmon's Rock. I don't care if we are both in our sixties although I would rather it would happen before then. I guess we could hobble up that long road with a couple of canes. For some reason — I'm not sure why — I would just like to relive that experience all over again. Harmon's Rock hasn't changed at all, and maybe we haven't changed that much either.

Anyway, I would really enjoy that. But, seriously, consider it. Of course, you may be saying, 'What is wrong

with this crackpot that he would like to go on a camping trip with someone he hasn't seen in seventeen years?' I am not really sure why such a thing should occur to me, but I just know I would enjoy doing that.

Recently, as I said, Barry and I were talking about what happened to all the guys who were in old Scout Troop 44. I have not heard any more about Jack Magro — remember he was one of the twins — since he moved to New York State with his parents. And I have not heard anything from Chalky Bertram since he went back to West Virginia to live with his mother's people. Of course, you were still around when Chad Hartley died in a plane crash on the way to Korea in 1954. And I'm sure you know that your half-brother, Arnold, had to be put in the Morton State Hospital in 1960 when his mother died.

I have never heard anything about our scoutmaster, Mr. Bertram, since he went to work for the government in Iran back in the summer of 1949. A few years ago Mr. Magro, the twins' father, came to Carlton to play a piano concert and I was looking forward to hearing about Jack from him. But there was a medical emergency in my family and I missed seeing him. I am the only one in Red Creek left of that bunch who belonged to Troop 44. Incidentally, Judge Driscoll died five years ago, but I'm sure you know about that.

Last winter the minister at the Braddock Hill Church tried to get me to occasionally assist with the scout troop when the scoutmaster has to be away. But I declined, remembering what Mr. Bertram had to put up with when he took us camping. I've heard my boy say that scouts now are likely to sneak beer and cigarettes along on their camping trips. We never did that, of course, but I guess we had our faults, too.

I have been thinking of trying to find some way to



run down Mr. Bertram's address and get him to send me a copy of those pictures he used to take of us on camping trips and at scout jamborees. Maybe he still works for the government and I could locate him that way. If I ever get around to locating his address and writing him and he sends me those pictures — you would have been in most of them — I'll certainly see that you get copies. That is, if you want them.

You know, it was a kind of funny thing about our friendship. I can remember just about everything about it. Maybe it was more memorable and important to me than it was to you. I can remember vividly when I first got to know you. It was when I first enrolled at Red Creek Junior High School in January, 1948. On my first day at school, I was sitting on the bench outside the principal's office anxiously waiting for him to take me to my home-room. When you came in to get a tardy slip you must have seen I was nervous because you sat down and talked to me a few moments. After that I was not so nervous any more. I don't even remember what you said to me but right away I liked you. I remember how happy I was when I discovered that I had been put in your home-room. For some reason, I developed a strong attachment to you that morning outside the principal's office. I don't mean for it to sound weird or anything, because it wasn't. You were just especially friendly, and I guess I hadn't made any friends in Red Creek at that time.

I didn't see you again after that for about two weeks. I think you were out of school with the flu or something. Anyway, the first day you were back, I recall going over and sitting across from you in the cafeteria. I remember how important it was to me that you should remember who I was, which you did. Then I spent a lot of my time trying to hang around where you were —

without being too obvious about it — so I could try to get to know you better.

I guess this all sounds a little crazy now, but perhaps not. Youngsters that age have very intense loyalties and friendships. Anyway, to make a long story short, we did become close friends — probably more from my initiative than yours — and I can remember very vividly just about everything that happened during the period of time we were friends. In fact, I'm sure I would be safe in saying that during that time I just about worshiped the ground you walked on.

As you can see I am still a bit awed by the intensity of my attachment to you in that friendship. I have had many close friends since then and many before that, but I have to honestly say that no friendship ever meant as much to me during the time it existed as that one. My father had just died a little over a year before and I had just moved to a strange new place. I'm sure that to you I was just one of many acquaintances you had over the years of our youth.

In all this rambling I want to get to the main point. You were — and I still regard you — as one of the kindest, most considerate, and likeable people I have had occasion to know over the years. I know this sounds like some sappy testimonial, but I can't think of any other way to say it.

One of the reasons I go into all this — and I know it sounds kind of crazy — is that I am not really able to recall why we suddenly stopped being friends. It is just inconceivable to me that I could remember everything else during the time I knew you and not be able to remember that.

I can see some psychiatrist reading this letter and saying, 'Aha! Stockwell, you've got a guilty conscience! A perfect example of a mental block! You don't remember, Stockwell, because you don't want to remember! One of

the best friends you ever had — the friend that you sought out, and he responded by being a friend — the friend that accepted you, Stockwell when you were so lacking in confidence and practically overwhelmed with insecurity. Stockwell, you lost your best friend because of something you did! Now, think hard! You'll be able to remember!'

How's that for being over-dramatic? Probably not the case at all. Maybe it was something so trivial that neither of us remember. Or maybe it was — getting psychological again — that I was the rejected friend. It was all your fault. You found another best friend and cast me by the wayside. And the insecure, painfully sensitive me of fourteen years old was not able to face the fact that I had been rejected.

Of course, you probably don't even remember that anything ever happened. If I didn't think you were bright enough to realize that I am using this letter as a kind of therapy to try and sort out a nagging psychological mystery out of my past, I wouldn't send it. Of course, you could be saying by this time that this guy, Stockwell, needs to be committed. I hope that's not what you're thinking.

I can remember years later when I ran into you by accident at the beer party that at first I had an uneasy feeling. I hadn't talked to you since we were youngsters, and we were in our early twenties then. I had, of course, seen you off and on during our high school and college years after we stopped palling around together, but, for some reason, we never even spoke. At first, I remember feeling very ill at ease when we were thrown together at that beer party. But after you made some small talk that feeling quickly disappeared. And I suddenly realized that there still remained — well concealed, you can be sure — a vague feeling of that overwhelming attachment I had toward you in childhood.

As I keep saying, I know it sounds crazy! Anyway, the fact that we stopped being friends is something that has remained in my mind as an unresolved mystery. Suddenly it has occurred to me, as I write this letter, why something so far out of the past vaguely bothers me. (I told you this letter was a kind of therapy for a slightly guilty conscience.) I still think the breakup of our friendship was all my fault.

The reason that it is important to me is that I have never had another close friendship that did not continue. Of course, many of them I never see, but we are still friends. That's why I am bothered when I think about it. I have to admit to a slightly guilty conscience about it all even if I am unable to remember of what I am guilty.

By this time you probably feel like a psychiatrist sitting next to a couch. That brings me to my next revelation. Occasionally over the past fourteen years I have had spells of anxiety and depression. That happens to all of us neurotics at one time or another. And, like many people, I have tried a little psychotherapy from time to time. That, of course, is when you pay a fortune to mull over your childhood in great detail. I don't think the experience has done much for me. I just kind of cheer up on my own, or maybe I just realize that everybody else is sometimes as depressed as I am.

In talking about my childhood with the therapist, I remember being mystified by my inability to explain why we stopped being friends. I guess the truth of the matter is that the friendship I felt most intensely was, somehow, short-circuited. It did not run its full course — for me at least. Am I making any sense? I doubt it.

If all this psychological rambling does not interest you, just ignore it. My real intention in writing was just to wish you well, find out how you've been doing, and let you

know I have the fondest memories of our friendship from childhood. And — here I'm getting psychological again — if I ever did anything or said anything that caused a rift in our friendship, I want to apologize and ask to be forgiven. But, truly I do not remember.

Anyway, our childhood years were really great years. At least they were in retrospect. No camping trip, Carlton basketball game, or hike in the woods ever seems to take on the great pleasure that was derived from those childhood experiences. But I guess that's true of just about everyone's childhood. I guess that is why I would like to go on another camping trip to Harmon's Rock with you — an attempt to recapture, even partially, some of the pleasures of those bygone years.

And — getting psychological again — I guess I believe I would be able to immediately erase any unpleasant association there might have been between us. But I'm still not sure there was any. So, be a sport, and give me a chance to redeem myself one of these days. I continue to have the vague feeling that I need to.

Over the years I have mainly worked for the *Red Creek Times* — first as the sports editor and now as the city editor. And I have done a lot of writing and PR work for a lot of organizations. I know you won't believe that after reading this disjointed letter. I have also done a lot of writing on my own — magazine articles about outdoor subjects and sports for Sunday supplements and the like — nothing very important. In fact, I have just completed an article about Boy Scout Troop 44 of which I will send you a copy in a separate envelope. I would like to have your opinion of it.

What I get the most fun out of now is to run canoe trips on the whitewater rapids of the Algonquin River on weekends and holidays during the summer months. In

other words, I guide adventurous tourists on a ten-mile canoe journey on the wilderness whitewater. I continue to get a lot of pleasure out of it, even though I have long since ceased to be enthralled by the rapids. I make pretty good money at it, too, because I own the equipment and also serve as a guide.

On those whitewater trips, we go through the Harmon's Rock Park section of the river, and I usually stop at that little lean-to you and I hiked down to on our last trip together. As I paddle into that spot where the lean-to is — which is near the end of the trip — I close my eyes and can visualize two adolescent, slender, tow-headed fellows wading naked along the river's edge many years ago.

If you are ever in the area and want to go on a canoe trip, let me know and I'll take you. Bring your family along — if you have a family — and they will enjoy it too. Sometimes I think the women and children who go are better at it than the men. I have nothing but contempt for the men who go just to prove their courage. They are always saying things like, 'when are the really big ones coming up?' I always manage to let them take the really big ones by themselves. I'm sure there's something psychological about my doing that, but I'm not sure what.

I'd better close this letter. If I'm going to send it to South America, it's going to cost a small fortune with this heavy paper. And I've still got to call up the alumni office and get your address. If I had any sense, I'd just send the first and last pages of this letter. Maybe that way you would answer. With all that stuff in the middle, you'll probably think some nut is on the loose. Or maybe you'll enjoy it. I've kind of enjoyed writing it.

Best regards,

Roger Stockwell

19 Rio Pinar Plaza  
Caracas, Venezuela  
February 17, 1974

Hi Roger Baby!

It was a real surprise hearing from you. The reason your first letter was not forwarded, I imagine, is because I have been on loan from Americo to the Venezuelan government for the past two years. My name must have been temporarily dropped from the company directory. As you probably know, American oil company holdings have been pretty much nationalized in foreign countries, but they had to retain many of the technicians to keep pumping the oil. They'll probably boot us out, too, as soon as they learn our jobs.

It's been so long since I've been back to Red Creek or anywhere in the eastern United States, I'd almost forgotten they even exist. About twice a year I fly up to Los Angeles to place orders for supplies and equipment, but that is usually just for two or three days. Every two years we get six weeks off when we can return to the States. On my last vacation two years ago I went to Japan, Hong Kong, and some of the Pacific Islands. Two years before that I spent six weeks in Italy, Yugoslavia, and Greece. In June I am eligible for six more weeks and I have been thinking of going to the States and then, perhaps, on to France and the Scandinavian countries. Maybe we could get together then and go on that camping trip to Harmon's Rock.

However, I have to go to Los Angeles and then on to

Washington, D. C., for two days in early April. If I can work the D. C. trip in with a weekend, maybe we could get together then. Yes, I knew about Judge Driscoll passing away. My Aunt Margo, my mother's sister who lives over at Canaan, tried to contact me when it happened. But I was away from Caracas and did not get the message for several days or I would have tried to get back to attend the funeral. I also knew about Arnold having to be put in the Morton State Psychiatric Hospital. That is where my mother has been for over twenty years. I certainly should go by and see them when I'm in the States. I write one of the doctors from time to time to find out how they are doing. But there never seems to be any change. And, of course, I knew about Chad being killed in that troop transport crash as that happened before I left Red Creek.

I'm dictating this to my secretary so I won't make it too personal, but I will briefly try to answer some of your questions. I have to leave today for an oil field in the interior for a couple of weeks, and I only got your letter this morning. But I wanted to let you know I received it before I left. When I get back I'll sit down and read your letter again and try to write a much fuller reply. That was quite a volume you wrote, but I guess you're used to sitting behind a typewriter and expressing yourself. Let me first say that, in reading your letter of reminiscences about our childhood, I sometimes wondered whether it was the same Tom Peddigrew and Roger Stockwell that I remember.

Without going into any detail at this time, I will make an observation about something that you surely must have come to realize as a youngster. Underneath that cherub exterior of mine, of wide-eyed innocence and angelic demeanor, beat the heart of a homy little sex fiend. And still does, for that matter. I add this last admission for the



benefit of my new secretary taking this dictation who, I hope, might be interested in a little extracurricular activity when I return from the interior in two weeks, sex starved and searching for a revival of my depleted spirits.

Here is the answer to one of your questions without going into any great detail at this time. Yes, you were responsible for our friendship coming to an abrupt end. Or, perhaps, I should say you chose to terminate our friendship. I guess it happened because of something I did, or something I tried to do. You don't have to feel any remorse or guilt on that score. But, yes, you are the one who chose to bring our friendship to a hasty end. Maybe I'm the one who should have talked to your analyst. It appears I could have filled him in on a lot of information that you seem to have conveniently misplaced. Are you really sure that you do not remember any more than you described in the letter? Maybe there is something in this psychological hocus-pocus about people being able to put out of their minds the things they can not or do not want to face. Or is it that you are conveniently forgetting a few things just to save us both the embarrassment of having to talk about it now? Give it a little thought and answer that question.

Don't get me wrong! I, in no way, hold it against you that you ended our friendship. In fact, it was probably best for both of us that you did. As youngsters there was some kind of near-fatal attraction that existed between us that we were not anywhere near mature enough to know how to handle. It could have had - perhaps, did have — dire consequences. I'll try to comment more on that later. Yes, I do remember the camping trip to Harmon's Rock in the fall of 1949 very well. After reading your letter I have concluded I remember it a whole lot better than you do. You apparently do not have the photographic memory

we talked about at that beer party except, perhaps, for the things that you choose to remember. What I am saying, of course, is that there were some things that happened on that camping trip that you obviously do not want to recall or, perhaps, do not want to discuss.

I am curious about the article that you have written about Troop 44. I would enjoy reading it. Any article about Troop 44 that would be of any interest today would have to be about the deaths of Luke, Wally, Specs, and Jamie. You seemed to avoid mentioning anything about that in your letter. Surely you don't have guilt feelings about any of their deaths? Yes, Roger, I do think you have a few hang-ups from your childhood. But maybe we all do.

Must close now and be on my way. Drop me a line in the meantime and convince me you are not pulling my leg about what you do and don't remember. I'm sure in writing an article about Troop 44 that you had to describe the people and events so it would make good nostalgic, inspirational copy for your readers. Boy, if they could only know the whole story! Perhaps, your letter to me is just a carry-over of how you finally conceptualized the people and events for your article.

If it will make you feel any better, you are totally forgiven for any injustice you subconsciously believe you may have committed against me. But, believe me, there was none. No one could blame you for the 'rift' — boy, that's an understatement — that developed in our friendship. If you really feel our friendship was short-circuited — did not run its full course, as you said — there certainly will not be any difficulty in repairing the wires from this end of the line. A little pun there! Roger, I have always thought you were one of the greatest guys I ever knew, and I still do.

Let me hear from you again soon, and I promise you a more informative letter in a couple of weeks.

Your buddy,

Tom Peddigrew

TLP/ma

507 Braddock Ave.  
Red Creek, W.Va.  
February 28, 1974

Dear Tom,

I was really overwhelmed by hearing from you. For some reason — I'm not sure why — I didn't really expect you to answer my letter. That was very considerate of you to let me know you got the letter right away. Hope you are making some headway with that secretary when you get back to Caracas. For some reason I was so excited and nervous when I got your letter, that my hands were shaking when I tried to open the envelope. I have carried the letter with me ever since and read it over and over. Maybe you are right about some attraction existing between us. I

know it sounds a little weird for me to say, but, for me, at least, I think it still exists. In fact, I'm sure of it.

I presume you have gotten the article about Troop 44 that I mentioned in my first letter. The editor wants me to send it to all the living participants. That would be you, Jack Magro, Chalky, Mr. Bertram, and Mr. Magro. Of course, Arnold is still alive but I don't suppose there would be much use in sending it to him. Let me know if there are any corrections you have or any objections before it is published. As you indicated, in writing the article I had to gloss over some facts for the sake of propriety. But, essentially, I think I have been more frank than most would have been in telling the story.

I hope you do not find my description of you or your family to be unflattering in any way. I guess none of us appear in the article as saints except, perhaps, the four dead boys. But it is a lot easier to make a saint out of someone who died than someone who survived. I guess I make it appear that Chad and Arnold were your everpresent henchmen, and I know that is not altogether true. I can recall being with you much more often when they were not around than when they were. But I guess I just didn't like Chad, and never understood Arnold, so that might have influenced my slightly unflattering portrait of them. And, perhaps, the truth may be that I was a little jealous of their close relationship to you.

Another implication of the article that may be somewhat erroneous is that Jamie and I became close friends and you were unhappy because I claimed that you wanted all your friends to be loyal just to you. But what is not said is that one of the reasons I became close to Jamie — and I did think the world of him — was to make you jealous. Such are the petty intrigues and intense feelings motivated by the insecure relationships of early adoles

cence. But one thing is obvious. If I thought the world of Jamie and used him to try and make you jealous, I must have had an even greater attraction to you. In the article I did not go into all that because I'm sure the readers would not understand anyway. And I am sure it would have made us sound like a bunch of little perverts. I think adults tend to put out of their minds the strange motivations and peculiar behavior of their early adolescent years.

I make no pretenses about it. As is obvious in this correspondence with you, in contacting you I am motivated by more than a mere nostalgic whim. I am beginning to believe that writing the article has rekindled my awareness of some emotions and feelings I have tried to keep buried. That is why, in my first letter, I only mentioned the article briefly. I did not want you to think I was only interested in making contact with you to get a reaction from you about the article. There is no question in my mind that I am using this correspondence as a kind of therapy to try and sort out some hard-to-face psychological drives and desires that have remained with me from childhood.

And you can be sure — if you continue to answer my letters — that my correspondence will begin to get deeper and deeper into the past and our relationship as well as others that have continued to plague my subconscious — as well as my conscious — thoughts over the years. To be more truthful than I was in the first letter, I was still going to a therapist until about three months ago. He told me to take a few months off from therapy and try to contact my old acquaintances from childhood and see if that would rekindle my memory because we had come to a kind of blank wall in therapy. Obviously, he feels I am guilt-ridden about something in my youth that I refuse to bring out in the open. And I get the impression he feels

there was something in the deaths and the relationships in Troop 44 that is troubling me and I'm still not facing.

In fact, that is why I wrote the article. It was more my idea than the editor's, which I implied. I was hoping that by reconstructing that troublesome time from the past, more insight into what is bothering me would be forthcoming. But, of course, a magazine article is hardly the perfect vehicle for one to bare his psyche. I guess I am subtly warning you that if you do not have the patience and understanding to assist me in this effort to purge the devils from my past, you should just avoid answering any more of my letters. But my bet is that after my first ambiguous letter, I have you hooked with curiosity, if nothing else. Yes, I do remember a little more than I implied in my first letter, and certainly more than I reveal in the article. But us neurotics are strange animals. We have to purge our souls slowly over a long period of time. We can face only so much of our degenerate selves at any given time.

There I go being melodramatic again! I do not really remember much more than is in the article. In fact, your reference in your letter to 'things that happened' on that camping trip to Harmon's Rock in the fall of 1949 mystifies me. So we horsed around a little on that camping trip. That does not seem very important. Haven't all young boys horsed around that way on camping trips since time immemorial? I'll bet even Cain and Abel horsed around that way in the Garden of Eden. I guess the 'Garden of Eden' reference is an unfortunate one since there is much connotation of sin and evil connected with that garden. Somehow, those references 'to the other things that happened' make you sound like some Victorian prude, and I'm sure you are not that.

And that other reference of yours, 'boy, if they only

knew the whole story,’ in regard to the article about Troop 44, is also something of a mystery to me. As you will see when you read the article, I went into great detail about ‘the game’ and how that pastime was indirectly responsible for some of the deaths. In many ways I think the article goes a long way in indirectly establishing the guilt of all of us, in ways that were not generally known before. Of course, no story about those accidents would be half as interesting and lurid as some of the tales that evolved among the gossips here in Red Creek. I refer to those tales about how we all turned into little savages. I guess those stories got started because when each of the accidents took place our bodies had been streaked with that war paint after practicing the dance.

I will admit that there may have been some aspects of ‘the game’ that I did not mention. But, like I said, boys are always going to horse around that way on camping trips, and I really do not see how that had anything to do with the accidents. Anyway, I hardly think that would be a subject that would be suitable for an article in a Sunday supplement!

I was overjoyed to hear that you may soon be coming to this part of the U. S. If we are not able to get together while you are in Washington, be certain to plan to come to Red Creek when you are on your six-week vacation this summer. Incidentally, they have almost completed the interstate highway system and it would be very easy to meet you somewhere between Red Creek and Washington if you have a weekend free. If not, I’ll get the camping gear ready for our camping trip to Harmon’s Rock this summer.

Incidentally, I still do not recall that I was responsible for terminating our friendship. I do recall starting to pal around with the guys on my eighth-grade basketball team

after our camping trip to Harmon's Rock, but I think that was mainly just to make you jealous — like I did with Jamie. As I recall, you found another best friend and totally ignored me. Perhaps, we were both just waiting for the other to make the first move, and we waited for twenty-five years. But you have to give me credit for doing that. I wrote the first letter. Keep in touch.

Your neurotic buddy,

Roger Stockwell



## CHAPTER FIVE

**CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOM PEDDIGREW**

## MARCH

19 Rio Pinar Plaza  
 Caracas, Venezuela  
 March 10, 1974

Greetings again Roger baby,

I received your second voluminous letter before I had time to thoroughly digest the first one. And the next day your article came and, of course, I read that also. I had a rotten two weeks at the oil field camp. It's over a hundred miles into the interior, over roads that make some of West Virginia's country roads look like super highways by comparison, particularly in the rainy season. And the day after I got there I came down with a recurrence of a liver ailment and had to spend most of the first week in the infirmary flat on my back. And, would you believe it, the air conditioning was out of order and it is the hottest season. But, of course, it's always hot down here.

I have this liver ailment that almost did me in three years ago. I turn yellow and pallid when it flares up and

look like something the buzzards could feast on. Since I came down with that, I'm not supposed to drink any more. The doctor who treated me said any more prolonged drinking on my part and I would be saying 'hello' to St. Peter or, perhaps, Lucifer. I guess I did have something of a drinking problem. When I had to spend days on end out in the sticks at the oil fields, I used to think there was nothing else to do in the evening but drink. But I've had to give that up.

I hope the reference in my last letter about trying to proposition my secretary didn't make me sound like a total rascal. But when you are in a foreign country with no family and you can't drink, there's not much else left to do but chase broads. Roger, these half-Spanish, half-Indian girls here are something else. Some of them are really supple, curvaceous beauties and the swim suits they wear show you all. You ought to plan to take a couple of weeks off and come down here. A big, tall, blond, handsome fellow like you would really have a ball down here. But, of course, I noticed in your article that you are a family man. (Maybe you could talk your wife into letting you have a vacation alone.)

I was married when I was at the Harvard Business School back in 1961. I married a girl from Boston and we have one son, Allen, who would be twelve years old now. I have not seen my wife in six years or my son in two years. My wife flew our boy down here to Caracas two years ago when he was on summer vacation and he stayed two weeks. But it was kind of a trying experience for both of us. Other than go to the beach, I couldn't figure out how to entertain a ten-year-old in Caracas. Now, if he had been twenty years old, that would have been a different story. Anyway, I think my boy and I still felt like strangers to each other when I put him on the plane

back to the States.

My wife and I never really had any battles that would have ruined our marriage — we only really lived together a few months — but she simply did not want to come to South America after I was assigned here. Her people have money and her Dad's friend offered me a job in Boston, but I wanted to come to South America and so we separated. I guess we should have talked about those things before we married because I pretty well knew I was going to be sent to South America. But, come to think of it, she had Allen about four months after we were married so actually we got hitched to keep our kid from being a little bastard. Anyway, we're still married but in her last letter she talked about wanting to get a divorce and marry some professor who teaches Greek at Boston College. I really don't care one way or the other.

Enough about me. I enjoyed reading the article about Troop 44. No, I don't think your description of me was unflattering. If anything, I would say it was too flattering. Of course, you did make me out the villain of the piece now and then. I came through as a pretty, cunning, conniving, self-centered charmer who got my way about everything and was never blamed for anything. Now that I think about it, maybe that is a pretty accurate description of Tom Peddigrew, the angelic little boy scout. Anyway, it was interesting to view myself through someone else's eyes.

Perhaps, I should not have been so critical in my first letter of your nostalgic, romantic way of looking at things in the past. I can see now, from reading your article, that you just have a very idealistic outlook. And there is certainly nothing wrong with that. Maybe it's best to see everything with rose-tinted vision. Frankly, I have just not thought about our buddies in the scout troop for years. I guess I have also forgotten about my mother and Arnold

confined to that hospital for months at a time. And I know that is unfeeling on my part. Roger, would you do me a favor? When you get a chance, if you are passing near there would you drive over to the hospital and let me know how they are getting along? I would really appreciate that.

You know what I remember best about Troop 44? I remember that little Chalky, Bertram hated my guts. But I guess that was because I started monopolizing his Dad's attention, and Chalky was used to his Dad catering to his every whim. Mr. Bertram did take me a lot of places and spend a lot of time with me. But, I must admit, I've never really thought much about what happened to him. I guess I'm one of those people who lives for today and lets my yesterdays fade from mind. Reading your article made me realize how much I have forgotten about my childhood. I do remember being close to you and Jamie, but not much else.

In your second letter, you seemed to be making a little headway in your self-proclaimed therapeutic effort to rid your psyche of a few devils, by exposing them to the light of day. I say that because I notice in your second letter you do admit that there was a little 'horsing around,' as you described it, that took place on camping trips. That may be the understatement of the year. Of course, I only grew up with one bunch of boys and only belonged to one scout troop so I really have no basis for comparison. But I would hazard a guess that if there had been a boy scout award to the troop that committed the most covert and overt sex acts on each other, Troop 44 would have easily run away with the first-place ribbon.

It is a shame that at those jamborees, where we won awards, that we were not allowed to demonstrate our best talents. Those were in the area of sadism, perversion,

sodomy, pederasty, group masturbation; or maybe it would be clearer just to say that we were specialists at anal and oral intercourse. How is that for high-flown terminology? I could have said cock sucking, screwing your buddy up the ass, jerking off, with a little rape and cruel assault thrown in for good measure. But, I suppose, those are the simple, everyday pleasures of just about all little boy scouts the world over. Or, perhaps, not. I'm not really sure.

Admittedly, I remember that you and your brother, Specs, did not really join in those sexual pastimes. But Specs was the only member of the troop from whom we tried to hide our sexual activities. We knew he would tell on us. But, with you, it was different. I remember you as being very curious but reluctant; somewhat like an anxious virgin aroused with desire but afraid of the consequences. I think that made you the most sought-after conquest of all. It was the attraction of conquering the unconquerable, I suppose. I guess it was Chad who introduced those coalcamp, male sexual pleasures to us. But we were willing — even eager — participants, and quick to add our own variations and refinements.

The reason I say all this is that your article makes us sound like a bunch of real 'straight arrows.' And that was hardly the truth. If I were writing the article, I would probably have substituted 'The Children of Darkness' for 'The Sunshine Boys' in the title. That would probably have been a more apt description of us.

You also failed to mention some very important aspects of 'the game.' Admittedly, it would not have made very suitable reading in a Sunday paper, but if I was describing 'the game' it would have been something like this: 'The game' we boys scouts played was really just an excuse to commit various acts of sexual gratification on each

other. In the beginning there were three hunters and seven prey and when a hunter caught a prey there would be a struggle. Ah, yes, the struggle! That was the part of 'the game' that mattered. When the hunter would ride the prey to the ground in the wilderness darkness, he would maneuver himself into a position for anal intercourse with the hapless victim, struggling and copulating until sexual gratification was achieved.

And did the hapless struggling victims really mind? Apparently not! They never complained or refused to play 'the game.' In fact, it was not unusual for the so-called 'hapless' victim to roll out from under the sexually- gratified and exhausted hunter and position himself to get his own gratification by screwing his pursuer and assailant. And it was all done without anyone making any reference to the act. Getting screwed up the ass was just referred to as 'getting caught.' Such is the ability of children to rationalize their more pleasurable behavior.

We all came to realize it was no fun to capture and screw Jamie. With passive little Jamie there was no struggle; therefore no conquest, no excitement. If you wanted to screw him up the ass, that was fine with him. If you wanted him to suck your cock, that didn't bother him either. There was just no 'excitement of the conquest' in capturing Jamie.

Now, little Luke Washburn, the preacher's boy, was a hard prey to catch. But the pursuit was really worth it. The hunters could count on a really exciting struggle with him. There would be a lot of moaning, twisting, groping, and squeezing, all the ingredients that made the capture worthwhile. When you finished with Luke, he was likely to give you a better screwing than you gave him and then he might roll back over and let you screw him again for good measure. Yes, Luke was one of the really exciting

prey to capture. But you couldn't make Luke suck your cock no matter what threat you might make.

And then there were the Magro twins, Wally and Jack. The hunters did not dare struggle too roughly with them for fear of breaking a bone in their fragile bodies. The seduction of the Magro twins, once they were captured, was an easy affair with little struggle. But they would writhe in pleasure, and their moans of ecstasy and delight when they were being screwed made them much more attractive prey than the passive Jamie. Like Luke, the Magro twins could not be made to suck the cocks of the hunters, no matter how dire the threats. But we never gave up trying to make them do that. It became a sort of challenge.

Then there was Chalky Bertram. The little devil was too scared to play 'the game,' but that didn't stop him from getting into the act. Once, before we went to search for the prey, Chalky, who always stayed near the campfire, confronted us hunters — Chad, Arnold, and me — with a threat. Little Chalky informed us that if we didn't suck his cock he was going to tell on us and what we were doing when we played 'the game.' Yes, little Chalky had been very observant. We all three had to suck his cock. We knew Chalky always carried out his threats. But, after that, we screwed little Chalky anytime we felt like it by saying we would tell his Dad what he made us do if he told on us. But Chalky was not about to tell. He enjoyed every minute of it. It became a ritual. We'd fuck Chalky while we were waiting for the prey to hide just to get us in the proper frame of mind to play 'the game.'

And then there was Roger Stockwell, the elusive virgin who never got caught and, consequently, never got screwed. The hunters had a real passion to catch him because, in capturing him, they visualized the ultimate

experience in that struggle — screwing the tall, vain, handsome, arrogant Roger. If he had ever been caught, he would, no doubt, have endured the experience of having all three hunters screw him passionately, one right after the other. And he would have loved every moment of it! Roger was considered the almost unattainable prize — the screwing that had to be fantasized, and therefore made more desirable — in the imaginations of the hunters. And there was the chance that Roger, too, would have discovered being caught was the ultimate experience. I really believe that he craved to be caught and screwed. But I guess we'll never know.

How did 'the game' get started? First, we hunters enjoyed the simple pleasures of mutual masturbation. In other words, Chad, Arnold, and I laid around on camping trips in our sleeping bags and jerked each other off in the night. And then the three of us began to crave new thrills. So we began, still under the cover of our sleeping bags, to screw each other up the ass and to suck each other's cocks. Soon that grew less exciting and we craved new carnal pleasures and partners. So, I invented 'the game' in which it would be a part of the ritual to screw the rest of our buddies and try to make them suck our cocks.

I must have subconsciously known what I was doing; Luke and the Magro twins would never have indulged in those sex acts so willingly just by invitation. But when it was made a part of a game — a ritual — they were able to do something very pleasurable without admitting to themselves, or anyone else that they had done it. They had just been caught in 'the game.' Getting screwed up the ass in the struggle of capture became as commonplace and ritualistic as being touched in a game of tag in earlier years. And why did they never tell? Because they loved every moment of it. That's the reason.

I don't think we hunters ever really expected Specs to



play ‘the game.’ He was too rational — too civilized — to allow himself to enjoy what could be termed very instinctive and primeval pleasures. The hunters just captured him and made him a prisoner. I don’t think Specs ever suspected what ‘the game’ was all about. Everybody knew to hide the real point of ‘the game’ from him. His rational outlook made it possible for him not to suspect what kind of barbarous pleasures were taking place almost in his very presence. In any case, we knew he would tell on us. We learned to be discreet around Specs. But you, Roger, I think you really knew. And I think you still know. And I think, in your romantic and idealistic illusions, you were, in those childhood days, building yourself up for your capture and seduction to be a huge ‘mind-blowing’ climax! But it was the climax that never came off.

That’s enough about ‘the game.’ I am sure your newspaper would probably not be interested in printing my version of the boy scout years of Troop 44. By the way, I am going to be in Washington, D. C. on April 11 and 12, which is a Thursday and Friday, and I do not have to catch a flight out of Dulles until ten o’clock Sunday evening, April 14. I’ll be at the Sheraton Inn out at Dulles Airport. How about coming up on Friday evening or Saturday and spending the weekend? I would really enjoy the company. I don’t know anyone in D. C. The meals and the room will be on me as I’ll be traveling on an expense account. I’ll be expecting you if I don’t hear from you before I leave. Give me a call at the motel before you start out. If I’m not in when you call, leave a message when you plan to arrive and I’ll be sure and be there.

Your buddy,

Tom Peddigrew

507 Braddock Ave.  
Red Creek, W. Va.  
March 18, 1974

Dear Tom,

Thank you for the quick reply. I was not quite so nervous when I received this letter. But I was excited just the same. Are you ready for the next round of therapy? You certainly broke the ice — or I should say the language barrier — in your last letter. I refer to your description of what I had discreetly called ‘horsing around.’ I guess I vaguely realized that something more exciting than a chase and capture was going on when ‘the game’ was played. But, since no one ever talked about it, I could not be sure. I was aware from distant observation and sounds in the night that there was something terribly exciting, terribly forbidden, about being captured in ‘the game.’ And you’re probably right. I did, in a way, crave to be caught and find out what brought those screams of anguish and ecstasy from the hunters and the prey.

In a way, more than you could be aware, you take the same approach in writing to me that my analyst does in talking with me. Once, I spent almost a whole hour with him talking around what happened on that camping trip you and I had. Finally, my analyst, who rarely says anything, looked me straight in the eyes and, in an exasperated tone, said, “What you’re really trying to say is that you wish Tom Peddigrew had screwed you until you dropped from exhaustion that weekend! Isn’t that right?”

I meekly admitted, “Yes, I suppose that may be true.”

Still exasperated, he had said, “You know, Roger, I think it’s really a shame that on that camping trip you two

didn't spend the whole weekend jerking each other off, screwing each other up the ass, sucking each other's cocks, and doing anything else that came to mind; because I believe that both of you, no doubt, so desperately wanted to. I think your sex life and a lot of other aspects of your adjustment are being haunted by a climax that was never reached."

Although I did not admit it to him at the time, I immediately knew he was right. I am sure that my early, strict Baptist upbringing in my grandparents' home — where all things pleasurable were considered sinful — is the real culprit in my guilt-ridden conscience. But all my fears and inhibitions seem to center on the events — or lack of events — of that weekend. I have been fantasizing what did not happen ever since. In my memory of sensations, the semen that was not released that weekend dwarfs all other climaxed sexual experiences. Perhaps I should have said that everything sexual since then has been an anti-climax for the climax that never occurred. Lord help me for saying it, and Lord help me if she knew, but I even close my eyes when I have intercourse with my wife and imagine that I'm back on that picnic table in that sleeping bag with you at Harmon's Rock. The climax that comes is never nearly as ecstatic as I imagine *that* climax would have been if it had happened.

I certainly can not blame the lack of completion of the sex act on you. You did everything one could reasonably expect in trying to seduce me. You were as persistent as a beaver building a dam, but I would just not cooperate. When we got in that sleeping bag together that night after we thought we heard someone — or was that a made-up excuse — you began by gently stroking my genitals through my underpants. What a glorious sensation that was for a fourteen-year-old who had been too straight-laced

and prudish to even masturbate. Then you reached gently and slowly into my underpants and grasped my penis and began to stroke it softly with your thumb and forefinger. The feeling was like an electric bolt of pleasure shooting through my whole body. It took my breath away. In fact, the pleasure was so great I had to roll over and pretend I was about to wake up so you would remove your hand. The sensation of pleasure was greater than I could bear for more than a few brief moments. Or was it the fear of being a sinner that made me roll over — always that ingrained instinct that told me that anything too pleasurable had to be equally sinful?

But you were not to be so easily discouraged. No matter which direction I would roll or twist or turn, your hand would return gently, easily down into my underpants, stroking first my penis and scrotum, then my hips and thighs, and then a finger would be pressed gently between my buttocks, working its way against my anus. As I twisted and turned and breathed irregularly, I was in an absolute glorious state of ecstatic pleasure. Once, you briefly had one hand stroking my genitals and your other hand on my buttocks, with a finger digging gently into my anus. The pleasurable sensation became again unbearable, and I had to twist about, freeing your hands, to get relief. How I could experience such an overwhelming sensation of pleasure without having a climax is beyond my comprehension. My penis was so stiff it felt like it would explode. I guess I can only wish now that it had exploded, and I would have been freed from that ecstatic fantasy.

You were ever so persistent and I was ever so elusive, always twisting and turning away from that incredible sensation of pleasure. Finally, you slid my underpants down around my knees, making it more difficult for me to have my genitals and buttocks evade the searching grasp

of your groping hands. We spent what must have been at least an hour in a ritual of near seduction. When I would roll on my stomach you would begin to work your stiff little penis gently between my thighs toward my anus. But in that moment just before your penis slid in, the pleasure would become unbearable and I would roll over on my back. And then you would begin to massage my genitals and work your head slowly down into the sleeping bag to try and get my penis in your mouth. But when I would feel your moist lips moving across my stomach and thighs toward my penis, I would turn over again just before your lips got to my penis. The anticipation of the pleasure was just too great. Or was it the anticipation of the sin and the guilt feeling that would follow? And then the ritual would begin again, with you trying to work your penis into my anus.

Finally, you tired of the cat and mouse game and masturbated yourself and went off to sleep. You can not imagine how dreadfully sad I was when it was all over. The absence of those bolts of pleasure was also well-nigh unbearable. I hated myself for not letting you complete the act — to end it — to relieve me of that state of suspended sexual animation. After you went to sleep I even began to rub your genitals lightly through your underpants — a daring act for puritan me — to try and get you to revive the seduction ritual. But your passion was spent. I was not even able to get your penis more than part way erected.

What I really craved with all my heart was to be raped — to be taken forcefully in a struggle of pain and ecstasy like I suspected happened in ‘the game.’ That way I would not have had to admit that the terrible transgressions were my idea. It would have all been done against my will. I’m sure you’re right, that that was the rationale of the prey —

the ‘good boys’ who would never have consented to such a thing on their own — when they were captured in ‘the game.’ They had been forced to endure those pleasurable, sinful acts against their will, and there was nothing to be gained by telling anyone. However, I don’t imagine that could apply to the pleasure-seeking Chalky and the passive Jamie.

Of course, it would have been absurd to expect you to really rape me. I was actually taller and stronger than you. But you might have found, if you had tried, that there would have been only a token struggle — like the struggle of all the prey. Yes, there would have been only a small show of resistance for the sake of conscience.

The next morning we didn’t mention the groping and evasion of the night before. Certainly, I do not remember showing any hostility for your attempt. I guess in the sunlight those things were never mentioned or acknowledged just as ‘the game’ was rarely mentioned during the day, and then in only the most evasive terms. I do remember there was still pain in my groin from the great sexual tension.

That afternoon, when we climbed down the trail to the river, the seduction ritual began all over again. As we splashed naked in the rapids, you got me excited and erected by brushing your hand repeatedly against my genitals and grasping at my thighs and buttocks as we attempted to push each other about in the current. As we tumbled in the rapids, you tried time and again to insert your stiff penis into my anus. And each time I would almost let it happen; then I would twist away in the swirling, surging current. You would maneuver your body in the water so your lips would brush against my genitals, and just as you were on the verge of sucking them in, I would slide away.

If once — just once — you had made that extra little

effort! If you had suddenly, forcefully, at the last moment jammed your stiff penis into my anus or clamped your lips down on my erected penis, the seduction would have been over. I would have been paralyzed into a submission of pleasure. But the way you pursued me, the tentative, slow, easy approach, brought on an intense pang of pleasure too great for me to bear and I instinctively pulled away. Why was it that you were not willing to be the total aggressor — to allow me to be ravaged? Why did I have to be a willing participant? Why did we come so close and no closer?

Finally, when we were lying on the rock in the afternoon sun, after being totally exhausted from playing in the rapids, I had at last willed myself to let you do whatever you chose to do. I would, somehow, bear up under the pleasure and pain. I would convince myself that I was just too exhausted to resist any more. My groin was about to burst with the built-up sexual tension that was surging to find release. Even my brain ached from the anticipation of the desired ecstasy. But you only played your hand lightly over my genitals and thighs, building up the pressure even greater in my erected penis. Once, you brushed your lips lightly over my stomach and thighs, and I closed my eyes and arched my pelvis rigidly upward, anxiously awaiting your lips to receive and engulf my penis and scrotum. I willed myself that I would allow it to happen this time — that I would not pull away. I would withstand the electric bolt of pleasure.

But it never happened. You must have been too exhausted, as well, for any final effort. In a few moments I felt your groin cupped against my thigh. There were a few pressing, jerking motions of your thighs with your stiff penis and soft scrotum pressing and rubbing, squeezed hard against me. And then I felt the warm ejaculation of a large quantity of your semen squirt over my thigh.

A few more moments later you rose slowly, exhausted, and began putting on your clothes. That left me with my newly resolved will to withstand the final ecstasies of seduction unrequited, unfulfilled. A kind of bleakness spread over my spirits when I realized I had resisted another chance for that sought-after, ultimate sensation. How I craved an ejaculation that was different from those that come in sleep after fantasies and dreams. I craved an ejaculation that would come after making real contact with the human flesh of the one most desired — the one most sought after! But I was not in complete despair because there was one more night to spend camping — even by disobeying my mother's edict that I could only camp one night — and I would not let this, perhaps last, chance pass me by.

But again there was to be failure. That night after we got into our sleeping bags, I waited. I anticipated the moment your hand would reach out and begin that purposeful - but made to seem accidental — brushing against my genitals through my underpants. But, for some reason, it did not happen. I willed myself to do something, something that was very difficult for a boy who had been too constricted and guilt-ridden to masturbate by the time he was fourteen years old. I rolled over and very gently, as though it was accidental, laid my hand very lightly on the crotch of your underpants.

An excitement raced through my body. Feeling your soft, pliable penis and scrotum, cupped in my hand through your underpants, restored immediately that unrelieved pressure of unspent semen in my now erected penis. Gently and almost imperceptibly at first, I began slowly to apply pressure, then to grasp and rub the small mound of soft flesh. When I felt your penis start to stiffen and erect, another almost unbearable pang of excitement



shot through me. The pressure of the semen in my groin grew stronger, and my brain began to ache in anticipation.

In my excitement I got more daring. I slid my hand up onto your stomach and, trembling with anticipation, gently edged my fingers below the elastic band of your underpants and slid them slowly downward, across the warm, smooth flesh of your belly. Then, for a glorious, exalted few moments, before I hardly realized it, I was grasping and kneading your stiff penis and soft, warm scrotum. The tips of my trembling fingers pressed on and isolated those two, little solid ovals beneath the stiff underside of your penis, now pressing up against my wrist. Then the tips of my fingers moved to caress the enlarged, smooth rock-hard circular tip of your penis that had strained forth from its uncircumcised tight roll of flesh. And then my forefinger gently stroked the taut sliver of flesh connecting the tiny lip opening on the tip with the rolled back circular band of flesh, stretching a V-shaped crease beneath the taut, smooth half-oval. And then as my forefinger moved back to the tip, I felt a barely perceptible drop of warm, moist semen! My heart was about to beat out of my chest. My breath came in short gasps. I trembled all over with excitement.

And then, you rolled away, causing my hand to slip from your genitals and from inside your underpants. Suddenly, I felt crestfallen, defeated, and humiliated. For once I had dared make the first move, and I had been rejected. I vowed I would hate you for that forever. I would get even. I would never let you touch me again. Somehow, I would make you regret my humiliation. I turned my back to you and willed myself never to crave contact with your body again. In a few minutes I heard you begin the rhythmic stroking of your penis to relieve the pressure of the semen I had stimulated. Anger rose up

in me that you were able to satisfy your craving without me. I hated you for that. And your hand has never touched me since that night.

Later that night, after I willed myself to sleep, there was that inevitable explosion in my groin. And the semen that had built up over two days and nights of stimulation shot forth in such great quantities that it felt like I had peed in my underpants. But the brief sensation of pleasure, that had preceded in my dreams, was not even close to those electric bolts of pleasure that shot through me when the touch of your flesh was the stimulus, even without ejaculation.

The next day I said very little to you as we packed to go home from what I had determined would be our last camping trip. I would never expose myself again to that unrequited soaring toward pleasure, only to be hurled horribly and bleakly back to earth before the ultimate sensation was achieved. In the months to come I was to overcome my aversion and fear of masturbation. But no climax was to come anywhere near giving me that ecstatic sensation of pleasure that those near climaxes gave me on that camping trip. A year or so later came the adolescent groping and eventual climax when seducing a girl, and that was to provide much pleasure. But, unfortunately, that too was to fall far short of those unbearable, pleasurable bolts of ecstasy I craved to achieve on that camping trip.

There, I have said it. Are you satisfied? You have achieved beyond all limits what my analyst has never come close to achieving. He has never been able to get me to admit that there was anything more than a very platonic, boyhood attraction between us. Of course, if you had related the experience, it would have been a little more explicit and earthy. You would have said 'cock' when I said 'penis,' you would have said 'balls' when I said

‘scrotum,’ you would have said ‘ass hole’ when I said ‘anus,’ you would have said ‘hard on’ when I said ‘erected,’ you would have said ‘jerk off or ‘fist fucking’ when I said ‘masturbate.’ In that way you’re just like my analyst. Every time I say ‘intercourse’ in a session, he says, “You mean ‘fuck,’ don’t you?” I guess he thinks I’m a little too much of a puritan for my own well-being. I suppose you implied the same thing when you said I was idealistic. But you have to admit this letter is not exactly an idealist, puritanical document. So I must be making progress.

I’ll even go so far as to admit that while I was writing about our experiences on that camping trip, I felt that familiar pressure in my groin, and even a slight tinge of that electric bolt of pleasure shot through me as I recalled the events of that weekend. But now that I have gotten past the erotic passages, the pressure has subsided.

Sorry to hear about your ailment. You should have a good clinic check you over back here in the U. S. They’ve made a lot of progress in treating and controlling liver disease in the last couple of years. I’m really happy to hear that you’re going to be in D. C. next month. I will come up to see you on Sunday, April 14. We have to put out the Sunday paper on Saturday afternoon and evening so I will not be able to get away until Sunday. To be truthful, I suppose I could trade shifts with someone and get away for the weekend, but I don’t think that would be a wise thing for me to do at this time. I know that statement needs a little explaining. So here goes.

What I’m about to say may sound very presumptuous — or even incredible — to you. But I have started being honest with you and I may as well keep it up. I don’t want to get together with you for a weekend at a hotel or motel and take the chance that a sleazy, perverted affair might evolve between us. Maybe that’s the furthest thing from

your mind, but it's not the furthest thing from mine. No, if our sex act is to be completed — and it may never be — it is going to happen in the great outdoors, in the wilderness, in the presence of towering trees, rock outcroppings, pure mountain air, long shafts of golden sunlight penetrating through the branches of the trees on a high mountain ridge, preferably on that picnic table, in that shelter in the Algonquin State Park, or on that rock below those cascading rapids of the Algonquin River. Or it could happen on that island in the river about a mile below Camp Man-a- toba — the camp is no longer there — where we played 'the game' and I was never captured.

Somehow, the completion of anything between us that was started years ago must be climaxed in those places where it began. That way it will just be a continuation of the natural experimentation and curiosity-induced probing of two early adolescents. It will just be two innocent boys giving in to an overwhelming and mysterious urge of the moment — not two middle-aged men seeking a perverted sensation. In those places in the wilderness it could have a certain meaning — a certain beauty — a certain inevitability. If it was to happen in a motel room with ornate fake prints on the wall, veneer covered furniture, rose-print wallpaper, thick gaudy carpets, Gideon Bible in the drawer, pulled drapes, it would be nothing but a cheap, perverted act we both would regret and feel guilty about afterwards. But in the pure mountain air in sunlight or twilight of the wilderness, it would be nature's own. There would be no regrets.

It's hard to believe I am even contemplating such a thing. And maybe you are not. I guess there is the chance we might get together and not like each other at all. Maybe there will be no attraction left. But there is always the chance that the attraction will be as great as ever.

I guess in these liberated times a little perverted hanky-panky is not something one should get so uptight about. But that is not the point. This is different. Somehow, I feel I am going to have one more chance to complete that sex act that was started twenty-five years ago, a sex act I had so many tantalizing chances to complete, to soar into ecstasy; but I kept avoiding it at the last moment, putting it off a little longer — the ultimate sensation.

I simply put it off too long. I slid away that one last time when I should have let you have me. But if I can complete it now, I will be liberated forever from that terrible, beautiful attraction to the ultimate, ecstatic sensation that I did not achieve but forever lives in my tortured memory for what it might have been. It will not be important to me that the sensation at that moment of climax will not be as electric as I anticipate it. It surely can not be. The important thing is that I just complete it, and even, perhaps, discover that the sensation is no more pleasurable than any other climax. But the setting must be right, and, unfortunately, for you, the sex partner must be right. I say all of this so you can call off seeing me if you choose. At least, I have made my dishonorable intentions known.

I can say that because I feel you are not going to be able to resist going through with it. You are going to be drawn into this like the proverbial moth into the flame. I just sense that the act will liberate me, and that it's going to happen. My sexual relations over the years have been sporadic, obligatory role-playing mainly because I tend to compare my mundane relations with my wife to the phantom of the ecstatic moment I never quite achieved on that camping trip. But my wife is a long-suffering, patient, wonderful soul who never complains. Since she has never, apparently, had an ecstatic sexual experience, she probably believes that our routine, unexciting love-making is what

sex is all about.

I guess I have gotten to the point where I don't even pretend there is much satisfaction in our carnal relationship. And I think that does bother her. But we do love each other in our way and we have three fine children and I guess that should be enough. Some people say that sexual pleasures are overrated in marriage, and that certainly applies to us.

I'm sure it is very unfair that I am attempting to make you assume the role of sex object so I can try and purge a devil from my past. But, if I am to make the attempt, I have no choice. At least, if you get involved, you will be going into it with your eyes open. Let's hope, if it happens, that it liberates me and does not harm you. I don't know why I should say that — about harming you — but I guess I have some foreboding, and guilt feeling, about the whole matter as far as your well-being is concerned.

I will meet you in Washington on Sunday, April 14. We will have plenty of time after that to decide if we really want to see each other again; or if there is any need to see each other again. There is just the chance I may find out that all these passions and drives are just a figment of my imagination. My fantasies may be much more exciting and stimulating than reality could provide.

Your buddy,

Roger Stockwell

P.S. I will get down to the Morton State Hospital to check on your mother and Arnold the first chance I get. However, I doubt if I will be able to visit there before I meet you in D.C.

CHAPTER SIX  
CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOM PEDDIGREW

APRIL

19 Rio Pinar Plaza  
Caracas, Venezuela  
April 2, 1974

Dear Roger buddy,

You notice my salutation is getting more affectionate. I'm saying 'Dear Roger' now — that should tell you something. I'm getting packed tonight to leave for L.A. tomorrow. And I will meet you in D.C. on Sunday, April 14. Be sure you call me at the Sheraton Inn at Dulles Airport on Thursday or Friday evening to let me know when you will be arriving on Sunday and where at the airport I should meet you. The Pan-Am counter would be as good as any place to meet. If there is a mix-up you can always page me at the airport. If I am not in when you call the Sheraton Inn, leave a message at the desk.

It's just as well we did not plan to get together for the whole weekend. I have to fly up and be in Boston on

Saturday to meet with my wife and her lawyer to sign some papers so she can start divorce proceedings. She has decided to hook up with that Boston College professor after all. However, I would have enjoyed trying to lure you into a cheap motel room for that sleazy seduction you feared. But, of course, we still have our camping trip to Harmon's Rock ahead of us in the spring for me to achieve that goal.

I will arrive back at Dulles from Boston a little after eight o'clock Sunday morning, and I am not scheduled to fly out of Dulles until ten o'clock Sunday evening. Incidentally, I have no intention of calling off our meeting after learning your avowed intentions. Your letter only whetted my appetite, curiosity, and desire. In a way, Roger, we are motivated by a similar aim and purpose. You want to have a climax with me to achieve something; I want to have a climax with you to prove something.

I have always been very egotistical about my sex appeal — about my ability to accomplish every seduction I set out to achieve. Here in Caracas the past ten years I have had 187 affairs. I notch them off with my pocket knife in the headboard of my bed. Believe it or not, it is Jamie's old, prized pocket knife I have. Judge Driscoll gave it to me years ago. I can't recall any broad that I really determined I was going to screw that I did not make it with. And I've never paid a dime for a piece of tail. Maybe a little booze or a few gifts were proffered but never a dime. I have already shacked up with and discarded that little secretary I was propositioning when I dictated my first letter to you.

When I was a young boy back in Red Creek, and going through that early adolescent aberration when boys are attracted to other boys, there was never a boy I set out to screw that I didn't make it with eventually — except one,



Roger. And that one was you. What a blow to my pride over the years. The one conquest that pretty, seductive, appealing little Tom Peddigrew didn't achieve is still running loose, unconquered, unscrewed. You just don't know how much that has been a thorn in my pride over the years. The conquest I tried hardest to make - the one I most desired — just slipped from my grasp.

All the other conquests had been so easy for that blond, magnetic, irresistible little sex fiend. He could usually achieve a seduction by inadvertently brushing his hand against the crotch of another boy's britches or sliding his fingers lightly across another boy's thigh. I did not really need 'the game' to screw Jamie, Chalky, Luke, or the Magro twins. In fact, I screwed every one of them in their sleeping bags on camping trips before we even started to play 'the game.' Except for Jamie, they probably never would have admitted they had been screwed. They just pretended they were asleep.

There were some things about the struggle during capture in 'the game' that made it more exciting — the bruising body contact of the struggle to the ground; the rough, jabbing insertion of my stiff little penis into a struggling, resisting body; the gradual submission as the yelps of pain and struggle turned to moans of delight as the victim writhed in ecstasy — and all that was often followed by the excitement of trying to get the subdued captive to screw me up the ass, which was always a greater and not always successful endeavor.

You may be thinking that I was never able to seduce Specs. That's true. But I never really wanted to. Admittedly, it would have been a formidable challenge. But I am sure I could have pulled it off if I had really set out to do it.

Don't think I was not aware of my seductive appeal as

a young boy. I used it to every advantage. I never had any trouble getting my way with women. They just fawned and slobbered over me without my making any effort. I guess my long blond hair and my heavy-lidded blue eyes — as you described them — just brought out their maternal instincts. But it was mainly men whose attention I wanted. And, believe it or not, I never ran into a man when I was growing up in Red Creek that I was not able to literally or figuratively seduce into letting me have my way. That included teachers, coaches, scoutmasters, merit badge counselors, doctors, policemen, relatives, friends of the family, everybody! If I needed to get my way with them, I could drop my head and peer out at them with my blue eyes with that hang-dog sympathetic expression, and I would usually get what I wanted. And you would be surprised at the number — and the identity — of the men where the seduction was more literal than figurative.

Sometimes, after I charmed them into giving me what I wanted, whether I wanted them to or not I would have them fawning all over me. That was the price I paid. At first, it might merely be an affectionate, ‘innocent’ pat on the head. That would soon progress to a gentle pat on the rear end. Next, it would probably be a pat on the ass with a little squeeze — a little fondling — with the fingers assisting. If I let them get away with that, it would next be a hand laid inadvertently on the crotch of my pants with a little pressure applied. Then came the squeezing of my cock and balls through my pants followed in one quick step by them running their hands down inside my pants, playing with my balls, or running their hand down in the seat of my pants and trying to goose me up the ass with a finger. I guess there was just something about me they couldn’t resist.

I’ll give you an example. Do you remember Mr. John

son, that swimming coach at Carlton College, whom Mr. Bertram got to teach Troop 44 swimming and life-saving in the spring of 1948? You would never want to meet a nicer guy. In fact, I dated his daughter, Suzanne, when I was in high school. Every time I would get in the water with him to be shown how to do some swimming stroke or how to grasp the drowning victim in life-saving, he would get his hand inside my swimming trunks and play with my cock and balls. Or he would insert his fingers up my rectum when he supported me in the water. I was too young to wear a jock strap then, and we wore those loose-fitting shorts to swim in with nothing underneath, so he had no trouble getting his hands inside my swimming trunks. I'll bet you all wondered why I always was chosen to demonstrate the strokes and techniques. It was because he was having a field day grabbing my cock and balls. Once, I shot a big wad of semen out into the water and everybody saw it, and I was really embarrassed. But he should have been embarrassed. Now you know why my swimming trunks always stuck out in front like a pup tent every time I came out of the water.

But that kind of horsing around was no substitute for the seduction I desired the most. And that was you, Roger. You were the tall, blond, arrogant, paragon of virtue whom I most desired to screw. You represented to me the ultimate seduction — the biggest trophy of all for my ego. And why were you so unattainable? Wasn't I the desirous, beautiful little seductive creature that everybody else could not keep their hands from? And wasn't the eager Roger working his tail off seeking my approval — trying to be my best buddy — trying to be alone with me? And then why would he not let me slip it in ever so gently on that weekend camping trip? Don't think my ego didn't suffer over the years from that rejection. And don't think

I didn't want to get even with you at times.

Once, in high school, I even connived to go out with your steady girl friend, Ellie Bergdorf. I didn't really like her, but I knew she had a crush on me. Didn't everybody? So I persisted in asking her out just to try and get her to cheat on you. One evening in December, 1952, I picked her up when she was walking home from a basketball game. I was driving Judge Driscoll's Packard. You had the flu and had missed playing in that game so she was alone. I talked her into riding with me out to Algonquin Lake. After we parked it wasn't long, after a little horsing around, before I was screwing the hell out of her. It never took long. Girls just could never say 'no' when I gave them that pleading, hound dog look.

I think that was one of the better screws I had in high school, and that's saying something! Mainly, it was such a satisfying screw because there were three motivations that made me seek that conquest. Number one, I had heard that she really knew how to fuck, that she put a lot into it. And that was true. I guess, Roger baby, you weren't going with her for no reason. Number two, I felt like I was getting even with you for not letting me slide it into you on that camping trip three years earlier. You had not allowed me my one, big, all-important conquest. And number three, there was something erotically thrilling about sticking my cock in a place where I knew yours had been so often.

Back when we were boys scouts together, and I was unrequitedly longing to capture and seduce you in 'the game,' after you and Jamie had become such close friends, I used to practice the same 'proxy' method of satisfying my longing to seduce you. After a night of 'the game' when I was thwarted in capturing you, I would go back to the campsite and give compliant Jamie a good screwing

up the ass. I could console myself with the erotic notion I was penetrating a place where I figured, because of your close relationship with Jamie, that your penis must have been so often.

Anyway, it must have seemed like a good screw to Ellie Bergdorf, or, at least, better than you because she called me several times after that and asked if I would meet her again. It kind of made me feel good that I had her wanting to cheat on you. I did screw her a couple of more times, and then I stopped, afraid my girl friend, Jeannie Howell, would find out. I didn't want to lose her because she absolutely was the best screw in town, and with her I didn't need any secondary drives to motivate me.

And you ask me if I'm going to pass up the chance to seduce you, Roger? Do you think I would pass up the chance to erase that long-remembered, long-despised blot on my otherwise perfect seduction record? Not in a million years! My reasoning is like yours, Roger. Just as you see this as your last chance to purge that deeply felt longing for the ultimate climax, I see it as a chance to right that one, overwhelming, keenly suffered rejection of the powers of my seductive charm. I'm sure one does not often get the chance to repair his ego from the wounds of such long-past rejections, and I, for one, do not intend to let it pass me by.

Fortunately, my past heavy drinking, general fast living, and broad chasing has not affected my appearance. I still have that same mop of blond hair, the same heavy-lidded 'bedroom' eyes, the same slender, soft, and sensuous body that made me irresistible as a boy. And, as you can well see from reading this letter, I still have the same irresistible charm and wit. Therefore, I guess there is not much chance of your rejecting me again on that score as I'm still the same Tom Peddigrew you knew as a young-

ster right down to the same little uncircumcised cock and little puffed out wrinkled scrotum. But they say it's not what you've got that counts, but how you use it. And I still know how to use it! And I can promise you I won't be so reluctant about slipping it in the last possible moment. I'll slip it in this time the first possible moment. I'll not give you the chance to change your mind.

Of course, you did reject me once before, and I guess I should be prepared that you might well do it again. I'm sure you are your same tall, slender, arrogant, handsome, puritanical, and confused self so there's no chance of me being disillusioned. Yes, I guess you are right, Roger. The chances of us having an affair would appear to be far better than average. Perhaps, as you say, it shouldn't happen in a cheap motel room. The great outdoors might make it a lot more glorious. And the anticipation can only make it better. We can use the meeting next week just to look each other over and size each other up and begin the anticipation for the final and fatal meeting. Who knows? Maybe a twenty-five year seduction — that's a long time to keep a hard on — will be much more exciting than a twenty-five minute one. That's about the average time I usually spend at it, I would say.

Roger, your latest description of our camping trip to Harmon's Rock was just exactly as I remember it. You have to admit, your latest description is a lot different from the one in your first letter and the description in the article. Maybe it would be unwise to examine all the events you describe in the article with the same intensity we have examined that camping trip. I suspect we might regret it. Anyway, I — or anyone else, I suspect — never tried harder for a seduction than I did that weekend.

How many times that weekend had I my aching penis — and you think your brain ached — almost stuck into

your rectum. I would be just ready to shoot that massive wad of semen in you, and revel in the glories of my most magnificent conquest, only at the last moment to have that elusive crevice slide away, leaving my cocked and semen-loaded penis unspent. And how many times my lips were open wide, ready to suck in that most sought-after penis and scrotum, only at the last moment to see them pulled out of my reach. The mouth, full of saliva generated by anxious taste buds, was left only to drool without those anticipated morsels of flesh to savor. As you can see, my frustrations were equal to yours that weekend.

And why did I fist fuck my passion away? Because I was too totally exhausted to make any more effort. I could stand the pressure in my semen-filled cock no longer. During the first night's camping, and the next afternoon's swimming in the Algonquin rapids, I just could not go on any longer. I had to seek the relief of immediate ejaculation so my exhausted, weary body could begin to recover from the grueling pursuit. I still believe, if I had really made that one last attempt, when we were lying on the rock by the river, that you would have pulled away again. But I didn't have the strength left to make that final effort.

During the second night, I was so exhausted from the afternoon in the rapids and the long climb back up the mountain that I must have been as dead as a rock when you played around with my cock. I'm not really sure I could have conjured up much passion, even if I had known you were encouraging me. I do remember waking up and discovering I had a hard on. And, as I remember, it took my last ounce of energy just to jerk off. But, believe me, if I had even suspected that you had been playing with my cock, I would have made the effort, feeble though it may have been, to screw you all over again. Like I keep saying,

you represented — and still represent — that so far unattainable conquest.

The answer to one of your questions is very difficult for me because I am not used to expressing myself in the terms, or discussing the emotions, required. I have just slugged down a big shot of vodka to bring a warm glow of sentimentality over my soul — what little there is — and that may cause me to say some surprising and, perhaps contradictory things. You wanted to know why I didn't force myself on you. Why didn't I, at that last possible moment, forcefully insert my penis up your ass, or lunge forth that last moment and clamp my lips down on your cock. After all, I had in 'the game' forcefully and brutally ridden the other boys down to the ground and inserted my penis in their writhing, supposedly resisting bodies. Why was I not able to do the same to you who were, in fact, being far less resisting than the prey usually pretended to be in 'the game?'

The answer is that as much as I craved to seduce you, I craved your acceptance even more. Only if you had given in willingly would I have felt acceptance. That may sound a little crazy. My big hang-up as a child — and perhaps as an adult, too — is that I was always feeling craved, idealized, desired, admired by other youngsters and adults. But I never felt just liked. Or, maybe, I should say just loved. Sometimes I'm not sure I know what love is. But if it is the feeling I think it is, I have only loved three people in my life. They were my mother, Jamie Driscoll, and you. I stopped loving my mother very early in life. I was eventually to stop loving Jamie as much as I once did because he became more attentive to you than he was to me, and I never was able to forgive him for that. But I was really never to stop loving you as long as you were around and in my sight, the reason being that I knew you had not



stopped caring about me. I could see it in your quick, inadvertant glances toward me when we passed each other during all those years when we did not speak. But it was understandable to me that it was a feeling, an emotion, that you did not want to recognize — perhaps, could not face.

That is why I could not force myself on you on that camping trip. I am not sure I could have brought myself to forcefully seduce you if we had ever caught you playing ‘the game.’ But, perhaps, the ritual, the darkness, the struggle would have made it possible. For example, I could never bring myself to forcefully seduce Jamie. But Jamie was such a loving little bastard, one did not have to force him. As you know, I used to stay with Jamie a lot at his grandfather’s. I became very attached to him. I can recall when we went to bed at night and I was feeling horny, which was just about every night, I would proposition Jamie.

I would whisper, “Hey, Jamie! How about letting me give it to you up your rear end?”

And he would say, “Sure!” — just like he was agreeing to a game of marbles or something. And he would roll over and let me screw him.

Or I might whisper, “Hey, Jamie! How about jerking me off?” And he would rub my penis between his fingers as nonchalantly as he Fingered and fondled the ivory handle on his prize pocket knife.

Or I might whisper, “Hey, Jamie! How about sucking my cock a little while?” And he would suck it as disinterestedly as if he were indulging in his unconscious habit of chewing on his pencil’s eraser at school.

Jamie was something of a saint, now that I think about him. He just wanted to give love and be loved and he did not really care how he or anyone else showed it. If it made

me happy for him to suck my cock, then he'd suck my cock. And why did I lose some of my love for him? Like I said, he turned his most ardent affection away from me and toward you. Because I craved his love so desperately, I could not stand it. So I guess it would be more accurate to say I never stopped loving him any less. But intense jealousy clouded my feelings toward him.

That Sunday morning on our last camping trip to Harmon's Rock, when you were suddenly distant and uncommunicative, I interpreted it to mean that you were ashamed and angry for what almost happened between us that weekend. I figured you were angry at me for making those advances and ashamed of yourself for almost giving in. I presumed, once we were going back to the restraints of civilization, you did not want to face or admit your near seduction into what you no doubt thought of as filthy and evil acts. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that you were angry and humiliated because you had gotten up enough courage to make advances to me and you felt that I had rejected them. If I had only sensed that, then you can be sure we would not only have come so close. We would have made it all the way, baby!

I guess I should admit that in my day I have also seen a few analysts. I think I have identified my problem as being, perhaps, just the opposite of yours. You are not able to achieve your high expectations in the sexual aspects of love, but goodwill and caring apparently flow out of you in great abundance. As for me, I am able to tremendously enjoy physical, carnal love-making, but there is very little on the emotional, caring side. To me, broads are just to be seduced and discarded like the proverbial kleenex. Oh, I can go through the act — affectionate gestures, endearing words - to get into their pants. But that is all it is — an act. I don't feel any emotion, just the erotic

pleasure of my flesh against their flesh. I never loved my wife in the caring sense at all. She had a beautiful body and a charming personality. She was a lot of fun to go to bed with. And that was all. I truthfully hoped I would love my son, Allen, when he came down to visit me two years ago. But there was no real feeling between us even though we went through the motions of being affectionate. I suspect it was all pretense on both of our parts.

Like I said, I think I reached out for love early in life to three people, and I got deserted one time, rejected one time, and - temporarily, I hope — rebuffed one time. In my mother's case I was — in a manner of speaking — deserted by her. And I came to feel I had been rejected somewhat by gentle, kind Jamie. I reached out to you that weekend of the camping trip, Roger. The only way I knew to reach out was sexual. I had learned that way only too well. I think I believed that the only gratifying thing I had to offer was myself for someone's sexual pleasure. I had allowed myself to be used over and over to gratify people's sexual drives. And my way of reaching out to you was to offer myself to you — to give you the chance for sexual gratification I could provide — but without the savage attack, the brutal insertion.

Do you want to hear another side of the truth, now that I have bandied about all that bravado about you being the ultimate trophy? There was a side to me — and maybe it was the side that mattered — that did not give one damn about screwing you. That was just the only kind of affection I knew. What I really craved most was to be liked by you, to be cared for by you, the same way that you seemed to care for Jamie before he died. I wanted to replace Jamie as your best friend, your buddy. But even you, Roger, who was one of the few people who cared for me in some way other than seeing me as someone to be

fondled over, to be patted on the head, to be flattered, the giver and the receiver of a good screw, did not see me as a friend to be cared for, to be liked. To you, I was to be admired, envied, put on a pedestal, competed with, but never just to be liked. You don't know how much I envied your's and Jamie's friendship. I sensed you and Jamie liked each other — not for what you did for or to each other — but just for yourselves. Why could I never be liked only for myself?

My relationship with Chad and Arnold was not the same as with all the others, but that is a long story worth telling at another time. It was only the same in that they looked on me as one to be followed, one to be counted on to make quick decisions, one who was smarter and more cunning than they, but not as a friend. Even the doting Arnold did not look on me as a friend. In fact, I'm sure they liked each other as friends better than they liked me. And they, also, came to view me as an object for sexual gratification. And, boy, did they ever use me for gratification.

And then there was Jamie. I think I loved him with all my heart because he liked me — not my cunning, not my angelic appearance, not my cool confidence — just me. And then he was stolen away from me by you, Roger, and I could not stand that. Afterwards, he was just as kind as ever to me, just as considerate, just as outwardly loving, but it was not the same. You had become his intimate, closest, best friend, and he had just become toward me like he was toward everyone else. The jealousy I felt was almost unbearable. But I played the role of cool detachment and never showed it.

I was mystified as to why Jamie had come to like you better than me. I remember, once, out of spite I confronted him with the accusation that he liked you better

than me because you had a bigger cock than me, which was why he liked to be screwed by you instead of me, and why he liked to suck your cock instead of mine. I guess that was the only form of endearment I could think of, the only one I thought was important. Jamie replied in that off-hand, nonchalant way of his, after thinking for a moment, that he didn't recall that you and he had ever fooled around that way. His reply humiliated me more than ever as I discovered that your mutual attraction was based on just liking each other, that it was not one of sexual gratification. I just could not stand to lose him as a friend.

How did my father and I become close to each other, briefly and gloriously? What happened that I stopped loving my mother? I save those confessions, and others, for another letter and another shot of vodka. This one is beginning to wear off. And I'm beginning to realize that I have already bared too much of the human side of my psyche in this correspondence, this session.

Still looking forward to our meeting in Washington, D.C., and still very much committed to the long-awaited meeting and rendezvous of destiny beyond that, the spring camping trip to Harmon's Rock. Will his reluctance from the past prevail or will the sometimes heartless Tom Peddigrew make that final brutal lunge and ram his stiff penis up the pure, kindhearted Roger Stockwell's ass? Or will he even need to use force? Will the virtuous family man, Roger, hold still while the lecherous Tom bites down on his cock? Or will Roger pull away again, at the final instant rescuing his virtue at the last possible moment? Or is it possible the virginal Roger will be so sex starved with anticipation and lust that he will ravage the ready and willing Tom?

What a glorious triumph! What a fitting conclusion that would be to this twenty-five year climax in the

making! Will the tortured Roger be freed from his twenty- five year bondage to the search for reliving, reviving that glorious sensation? Will he be able to soar to the heights of ecstasy? Will the master seducer, Tom, revel in the glory of accomplishment when he achieves that almost unattainable, unreachable screw? Or will the two, heaven forbid, discover that the spark is gone and no passion is aroused to stimulate the ejaculation of that twenty-five-year screw? Tune in, in the middle of April, for the answer to the last question. Tune in, in June, for the answer to the first six questions.

Your buddy,

Tom Peddigrew

P.S. My six-week vacation will begin on Wednesday, June 12, and I can be in Red Creek on Friday afternoon, June 14, for our long-awaited camping trip to Harmon's Rock. Mark that weekend on your calendar — June 14, 15, and 16 — as reserved for the ultimate climax!

507 Braddock Ave.  
Red Creek, W. Va.  
April 17, 1974

Dear Tom,

Well, I guess you are mad as hell at me — no phone call, no message, no show. And if you are so annoyed that I don't hear from you again, I won't blame you. I am tempted to say that some emergency came up that kept me from making it to Washington, but I'm just going to tell you the truth instead. I've already gone a long way toward baring my soul to you so a few more revelations are not going to make much difference I guess.

The truth is I just could not get the courage to go through with the meeting and talk to you. After the things we have said to each other in our letters, meeting with you was just more than I could bear. As in the past, the anticipation of the pleasure and pain was just too great. I guess it will be hard for you to believe that I actually went to Washington and Dulles Airport; and on those days I knew you were in Washington, Thursday and Friday, I don't know how many times I dialed the long distance number of the Sheraton Inn only to hang up before the call went through. Once, Friday evening, I actually let it ring until I got the switchboard. I asked for you and they rang your room. But my courage faltered after one ring and I hung up.

I was in a real muddle the few days before you were to arrive in D.C. It was like when I was a kid and had a bad toothache and had an appointment to see Dr. Kelly. There would be almost equal motivations to go, to relieve the pain, and not to go, because of the pain I knew I'd feel.

And, as a kid, I managed to back out of most first dental appointments. I would get as far as the door to his waiting room and turn and bolt back outside. If it's of any interest to you, I might mention that I always made it into Dr. Kelly's chair on the second try. I say that so you will keep your options open, if you care to, regarding our planned meeting for that camping trip this June.

I guess you are wondering why I didn't call and leave a message that I was not coming. Actually, I could not bring myself to make the decision not to show up either. I considered calling your hotel during the day on Thursday and Friday, when I figured you would be out, and leaving a message with some excuse why I could not make it. But I found that decision just as difficult as forcing myself to call and say I was going to be there. As with the dental appointment, I wanted to go more than anything and get it over with, and I had a dread of going that I knew was going to be very difficult to overcome. I had indigestion for three days trying to make up my mind what to do.

Actually, what made me get in my car and head toward D.C. after midnight early Sunday morning, after we got the paper out, was that I had told my wife about planning to meet you on Sunday and I then had to go somewhere. I couldn't very well tell my wife and kids I didn't have the courage to go and meet an old childhood chum. That would have baffled them beyond all belief. I guess I could have told them that you had called and were not going to be able to stay over the weekend in D.C. But I never could convince myself that I absolutely wanted to call the whole thing off. Maybe it is me that is the moth being drawn to the fatal flame, and not you. I am still jolted beyond belief, sometimes, when it dawns on me what I am in the process of trying to arrange with you.

To make a long story short, I started driving toward



Washington knowing I could back out at any time short of actually confronting you. I could just turn around on the highway and head back home. I could go to the airport parking lot and turn around and go back home. And I could actually go into the Dulles Airport terminal and turn around and leave. It was these thoughts of being free to turn back at any time that kept me going. It was like with the dentist. You weren't actually there until you sat in the dentist chair.

Well, that is exactly what happened. After stopping a few times for coffee along the way, and pondering my indecision, I arrived at the Dulles parking lot a little after eight o'clock Sunday morning. I knew your plane did not leave until ten o'clock that evening so I would have the whole day, fourteen hours, to get up enough courage to present myself to you. In a moment of anxiety-induced weakness in the Dulles parking lot, I almost started the engine and bolted. Suddenly, I was saying to myself, "What are you doing here, Roger Stockwell, the respectable family man and city editor of the *Red Creek Times*?" Then I tried to placate myself by thinking, 'I'm just here to meet and visit with an old buddy from childhood.' And then I had a vision of all those things I had said in those letters where I stated my real intent, and I started putting the key back into the ignition again.

Finally, I convinced myself I would go into the terminal restaurant, have a cup of coffee, and then I would leave and drive back home if I had not convinced myself to meet you. From the moment I entered the terminal building I became nervous and wary. I knew you would, no doubt, recognize me if you spotted me, and I still had not willed myself to go through with the meeting. At the various airline counters I checked the arrival times of planes from Boston, remembering you had said you would

arrive at Dulles a little after eight o'clock Sunday morning. I discovered that American Airlines had a plane scheduled to arrive from Boston at 8:14 A.M. I asked the girl at the counter if the plane had arrived, and she said it had arrived on time, fifteen minutes earlier. I had planned to get there before you arrived from Boston and stand in some inconspicuous spot and observe you coming off the unloading ramp. That way I could make the decision about meeting you after I had seen you. I figured that seeing you first might take some of the edge off my fear of actually meeting and talking to you. I could have kicked myself for sitting those fifteen minutes in the parking lot, trying to decide whether to come in or not, and passing up the chance of getting a certain glimpse of you when you came off the plane.

I asked the girl at the counter if she had a list of reservations for that flight. She asked me who I wanted to check on and I gave her your name. She informed me that you had been at the counter a few minutes earlier and had asked if there were any messages left for you. Oddly, I was jolted with excitement just by the thought that I was standing in the same spot where you had been a few minutes before; that I was now in the very same building with you, and you could well be somewhere within this very waiting room. She checked the list and said that you had had a reservation for two on that flight. That really baffled me. For an irrational moment I suddenly feared, of all things, that you and your wife had made up and were going to fly back to South America together and while away the years in marital bliss. I was actually jealous. I could not stand to think that anyone was going to come between us before our camping trip to Harmon's Rock in June.

How incongruous that was of me! Here I was, too reticent to keep a meeting with you just to shake hands

and mull over old times for a few hours, but I still had ecstatic visions of joining you for an orgy of seduction. Surely, meeting you for the camping trip would be ten times more difficult, with our intent and purposes well known beforehand, than getting up the courage to meet you there in Dulles under what would have to be considered much less trying and demanding circumstances. But like I keep saying, I always made it to the dentist chair the second time I tried.

I asked the girl at the counter where people on that flight would be picking up their luggage, and she pointed to the waiting room alcove down the hall. I viewed that area from a safe distance, and there were only a few stragglers picking up their luggage and none of them was you. Once I knew you were quite possibly somewhere in the building, I became even more tense and wary. A sudden confrontation with you would be overwhelming — more than I could take. It was important that I see you from a distance first. One of my great fears was that I would see you and there would be absolutely no spark of attraction left. I would never, never be stimulated to complete that long-awaited sex act, and the disappointment would be unbearable. And, if we met and the old attraction did not reassert itself, you would know immediately. I would not be able to conceal my disappointment.

An equally nagging fear was that I would see you and the old attraction would be as strong as ever. I would instantly suffer the agonizing longing to be back on that picnic table in the sleeping bag with you or lying naked with you on that rock beside the Algonquin River twenty- five years ago. The reality of that desire reasserting itself would be just as hard to face as the realization that I was never going to complete that sex act. Either way, as you can see, it was bound to be a ‘no win’ situation. Either

that overwhelming, despised craving would come over me, or I would realize my potentially grandest and most sought-after moment of ecstatic pleasure had unequivocally passed me by forever.

I went to the coffee shop at the end of the concourse, ordered a cup of coffee, and began to sort things out. There was so much time. But maybe there would be little time. Perhaps, when you discovered that I had not left a message, you would leave the terminal building for the day and not return until time for your flight that evening to South America. I consoled myself with the thought that at least I would have one last chance to observe you, as you entered the loading ramp for your flight. I could see that if you stayed at the airport, the day might turn out something like that old ritual of the near seduction that we played at Harmon's Rock. Only, in this case, I would be trying to get the nerve to let you see me, not screw me. The bigger decision of choosing whether to let you screw me or suck my cock was still in the future.

And then suddenly it happened! My eyes peered up over the rim of my coffee cup and there you were, directly in front of me, across the counter and not more than fifteen feet away. You were reading a *Washington Post* and drinking a cup of coffee. And there was a boy who looked to be about twelve years old sitting beside you eating scrambled eggs. And, would you believe it, my heart began pounding excitedly and my breath came in short gulps. Surely any moment you would look up and recognize me. There was no chance you would not know me. People tell me I have changed hardly at all since I was in college. One of my fears, the fear of the spark being gone, vanished immediately. That old, long-remembered surge of excitement shot through my veins. I wanted to reach out and lightly touch the side of your still delicate face.

You were still the same. There were those heavy-lidded blue eyes, that unruly mop of long blond hair, and it appeared, from what I could see, that your slender, lithe body had not changed. Then my eyes focused on those long, delicate fingers holding the coffee cup and the newspaper. Here were those magic fingers that had gently stroked my penis and scrotum, had played over my thighs and pressed into my anus, to generate those unbearable ecstatic waves of pleasure in that sleeping bag twenty-five years before. And there were those moist, cherubic lips that had brushed lightly against my stomach and thighs, trying to find my aching, erected, little penis, and whose touch had shot pains of exalted pleasure through my body. And there were those blue, blue penetrating eyes that, when they were looking at you, seemed to be looking into your very soul.

A tingling sensation ran through my groin and I could feel my penis begin to erect. Oh! If we were only in that picnic shelter in the deserted park, or on that rock along the Algonquin River, I could walk over and stand next to you. And you would press the backs of those long, delicate fingers — inadvertently, accidentally — against the crotch of my pants, applying a little pressure on my stiffening penis that was beginning to make a bulge beneath my pants. And then you would begin to apply a groping pressure with those nimble fingers, molding out the form of my erected penis through the cloth as my penis pressed upward from my belly against my underpants.

The bolts of pleasure would intensify. And then your fingers would cup my scrotum and gently squeeze and manipulate the pliable pouch. The bolts of pleasure would grow nearly unbearable. Then the hand would move, ever so stealthily, down inside my underpants, darting about. That glorious sensation of flesh against flesh would erupt.

First, you would have a gentle grip on my stiff penis, softly rubbing, softly squeezing. Then the fingers would seek out and lock into a grip onto the slippery ovals in my fluid scrotum. The pains of pleasure would rise to new heights. All the while the other hand would have found its way down into the back of my underpants and would be gently digging into the soft flesh of my buttocks, the elusive fingers working their way slowly, steadily into the crevice seeking out my anus.

And then it would be my turn. Beneath the crotch of that tan suit, would there be found that same, uncircumcised little penis that squeezed forth its delicate, pink oval tip from the roll of covering flesh — that little, rock-hard oval tip straining to escape from the covering skin with the little sliver of flesh stretching from the lip underneath holding it back? Would there be that little warm drop of semen coming out of the tiny tip when my forefinger brushed against it? And would that scrotum still be that firm little ridged and wrinkled pouch that bulged out in two little half ovals, but did not hang down limply, saggily? And what would the addition of the surely blond, bristly, surrounding pubic hair make to the sensation of touching those glorious forbidden pieces of flesh? The thoughts rushing through my head were so tantalizing that I feared I might ejaculate into my pants right there without touching my penis. It would have been my very first wet daydream, for heaven's sake!

And then, for a moment, my thoughts came back to reality. And I hated myself. It was now about time for my wife and boys to be arriving at Sunday school at the Braddock Hill Baptist Church. She would go to the first-grade room in the basement where she was the Sunday school teacher, the twins would go to the fourth-grade room, and our oldest boy, Roger Jr., would be having a substitute

teacher in the sixth-grade room. The regular teacher, his dad, had gone to Washington to visit with an old childhood chum. Later, my wife and the three boys would go to the same pew six rows back, not more than twenty feet from where Jamie died of a gun shot wound and not more than fifty feet from where Specs had fallen from the ladder and crushed his skull. My mother would come in late, as usual, and take a seat between the always battling, unruly twins and keep them subdued during the sermon. Would everybody in the church look at them and think, 'Roger is away today. He went to Washington to size up this old boyhood chum that he hopes to fuck and get fucked by in a couple of months. He's at the Dulles Airport having fantasies about getting screwed up the ass!'

But those depressing thoughts were interrupted when I heard you speak. You told the boy beside you that you had to take a cab and go to a motel, where you had stayed earlier in the week, to get your luggage and check out. You told him you would be gone no more than half an hour and that he should stay in the coffee shop. You gave him some money and told him he could buy a comic book when he finished breakfast. And then, without looking my way, you left. And I was glad. The overwhelming sensation of seeing you, the rush of vicarious, long-remembered emotions, had left me nearly exhausted and I needed some relief.

When you left my attention focused on the boy. I was sure he was your son, although the resemblance was not that strong. I decided he must take after your wife's side of the family. His hair was darker than yours, and he had a sturdier, stockier body than you. He did not have those long eyelids but he did have those penetrating blue, blue eyes. Once, he looked up at me and I felt just like I did when you looked at me when I was a boy. He was looking

at me and through me. And he had those moist, cherubic lips of yours — lips that looked like they were about to speak endearing words or about to make sensuous contact with human flesh.

Suddenly, just looking at the boy began to sexually arouse me. I began thinking how this organism was once a seed, a sperm, in that warm, firm little scrotum of yours that I had cupped once in my hand so long ago. This organism had passed through that magnificent stiff little penis that I had gently fondled. This organism was once a microscopic cell in a little drop of warm semen like the one I felt on the tip of your penis so many years before.

When he finished his breakfast and went to the magazine rack, I left the counter and went to the book rack nearby and watched him. He finally chose a “Tarzan” comic book, paid for it, and went back to his seat at the counter. In a few moments I went over and sat on the seat next to him. Just sitting where you had sat a few minutes before sent a small tingle of pleasure through my groin. I ordered another cup of coffee and picked up the *Washington Post* you had left behind and pretended to be reading it. All the while my attention was focused, out of the corner of my eye, on the boy intently reading the comic next to me.

I began to feel the semen start to rise again and my penis start to stiffen. For me, I guess, watching your boy was like it was for you screwing Ellie Bergdorf. I got a vicarious thrill out of being near something that had once resided in your scrotum just as you got pleasure out of putting your cock where you figured mine had been. After a while I got daring, like the time camping when I slid my fingers beneath the band of your underpants. I let my knee fall — accidentally, inadvertently — against the side of your boy’s thigh. I expected him to



pull his leg away, but he did not. A small electric bolt of pleasure shot through my body.

Then I suddenly had another one of those rational, depressing thoughts. It occurred to me that this boy was about the same age as my eldest boy, Roger Jr. What is wrong with me, I wondered? I could touch Roger Jr., or any other boy I had ever seen anywhere, and it would not cause me to have the slightest erotic sensation. I had never seen any other boy in my life that caused even the slightest twinge of sexual arousal, except one. And, until today, there had only been the one twenty-five years ago on a camping trip, at an age when that kind of attraction would not be considered too abnormal.

And here I was being stimulated beyond all belief by a boy I did not know by just being near him, by just brushing my knee against his leg. I pulled my knee back in shame and tried to compose myself. But the attraction and the stimulation did not diminish. I willed my brain not to allow me to touch this boy again and pretended to be intently reading the newspaper. Suddenly, the boy tapped me on the shoulder. I was so tense and surprised that my body jerked straight up like I had been stabbed. The boy looked at me curiously, through me, with those blue eyes, and asked me if I had a pencil. I handed him a ball point pen from my breast pocket and without speaking returned to my pretense of reading.

However, I could not keep my eyes totally off the boy, and I sneaked occasional glances in his direction. He was working a crossword puzzle on the back of his comic book. I began to feel the thirty minutes you said you might be gone may have almost passed. I finished my coffee and put the paper down and started to get up. Suddenly, the boy beside me swung around and placed the comic book down on my level thigh and pointed to a

blank space in the puzzle he was working. He asked me nonchalantly if I knew a five-letter word that was a country in east Africa.

His abrupt action struck me like a lightning bolt because, in placing the comic book in my lap, the hand he was holding it with came down right against the side of my stiff penis. One of those jolts of exhilaration shot through my body. I could feel his little knuckles pressed against — almost like they were digging into — my penis. The pressure of the semen started building up almost to the bursting point again. I raced my brain over his question and answered, “Kenya!” I did not know how I would face the embarrassment if suddenly a big blot of wet semen spread beneath his knuckles. As I answered, I slid off the seat and from beneath his knuckles and breathed a sigh of relief. I do not think I could have stood the pleasure and the pain for another moment.

After paying my check, I went quickly to the rest room and into a pay stall. It took only about three masturbating strokes before the semen shot forth in an enormous quantity. Relieved, I walked outside on the observation deck in the cool air for a few moments. I thought of going to my car and immediately beginning the trip home to Red Creek. But I decided I would try to see you from a distance one more time. I knew I must be really careful now because the boy might recognize me and point me out as the man he talked to in the coffee shop.

I spent the rest of the day, over twelve hours, drifting about cautiously in the airport terminal building hoping to catch distant, passing glimpses of you. A couple of times that morning I spotted you and the boy, once when he was playing a pinball machine in the game room and you were standing nearby, and another time you were in a telephone booth making a call and he was standing outside. I won

dered who you were telephoning. Could it be to my home in Red Creek, checking to see if I had come to Washington? I decided, in the event that you reached my home and asked where I was, I would need to make up some story to tell my wife about why we failed to get together in Washington. Each time, the old excitement — the old longing — would return when you crossed my vision.

My distant observing of you was, like I had suspected, similar to the cat and mouse game of seduction on that camping trip when I would almost be able to let you seduce me and then slide away at the last moment. When I would see you, I would move closer hoping, perhaps subconsciously, that you would turn and recognize me and come rushing toward me. But I could not bring myself to get too close. Early in the afternoon I caught a glimpse of you and the boy on the observation deck, and the boy saw me and his eyes flickered briefly in recognition. But my fears — or hopes — had been groundless. He did not turn and point me out to you.

You and the boy must have gone somewhere away from the airport after that because, for the next eight hours I did not see you once. I tried to nerve myself to wait until you showed up at the Pan-Am counter to check in that evening, before you caught your ten o'clock flight to Mexico City. I had concluded that must be the flight you planned to take because you had said you would be flying out at ten o'clock on Pan-Am. I thought of saying that I had had car trouble on the way to Washington and that had made me arrive in the afternoon, and I had not been able to locate you. I also tried to reason out why your boy would be with you. I remembered you had said that when he visited you in Caracas two years before there had not been much father-son feeling between you. I decided, perhaps, he had just flown to Washington with

you, and you were going to put him on a flight back home or to somewhere else before you left.

As 10:00 p.m. neared that evening I did not have the nerve to stand at the flight counter. I was standing at the far side of the waiting room when you and the boy appeared at the Pan-Am there. After eight hours of searching the terminal building for a glimpse of you, it was almost as startling to me as when I spotted you across the coffee shop counter that morning. I had failed to see you at first because you and the boy had changed clothes. That sensation began to rise again in my groin when I got a good view of your supple, slender body now clothed in blue slacks and a pink sport shirt and not the loose-fitting tan suit you were wearing that morning. Your body was as desirable as ever — no bulges, no sagging. Oddly, my eyes were also drawn to the boy who was now wearing tight fitting jeans and a blue pull-over sweater. His muscular, compact little body was stockier than yours — a broad little chest and muscularly curved buttocks and thighs. His body reminded me of Chalky Bertram's stocky little body as a child.

At the last moment, when you were about to go through the portal to the loading ramp, I was still trying to get up enough nerve to confront you briefly before you had to rush off — like I had nerved myself to submit to you on the rock along the Algonquin River. The boy's eyes looked toward me and he suddenly handed you his flight bag and rushed across the waiting room. For a moment I feared he had spotted me and was coming to me. But he passed and went into the men's room beyond me in the corridor. Not having mastered the nerve to confront you, I followed the boy. For some odd reason, by this time I had begun to feel as much attraction to him as to you. When I followed him into the men's room, I

spotted him unzipping his britches at one of the urinals. Knowing he would probably recognize me, I walked to the urinal beside him, warily unzipped my pants and took out my partly erected penis, pretending I was about to urinate. I looked out of the corner of my eye at the boy next to me and, would you believe it, he was standing there with the comic book and the pen I had loaned him in his hands, working that crossword puzzle as he urinated.

To my horror I spied that the pen I had loaned him that morning was one of those ball points that had my name printed on it. It was one of a package that one of my twins had given me for Christmas. It says: *Roger M. Stockwell, City Editor, Red Creek Times*. I realized that if you saw that pen you would know that I had been at the airport. After I thought about it a moment, that prospect sort of pleased me. It would be like making some kind of contact, no matter how remote. I realized now I was not going to be able to confront you before you got on the plane.

I caught myself peering down out of the corner of my eye toward the penis of the little boy concentrating on the crossword puzzle. For a moment that made me feel horrible — just like I had turned into some kind of dirty old pervert who hangs around men's rooms waiting for a cheap, dirty thrill. When the boy shifted his comic book a little, I caught sight of it. I was startled when I saw it, the yellow fluid flowing unhurriedly from its tip. It was longer than I had expected and the oval tip hung circumsised, free, and loose from the slender stem. His penis was not any larger, I'm sure, than most boys his age. My twelve-year-old boy's is just as large. But I guess I expected him to have a little teapot-spout-like uncircumsised penis like yours was when you were that age.

Seeing his loose, limp little penis sent another bolt of

pleasure through me, and I could feel the semen building up to the exploding point again in my now stiff penis. I tried to avert my eyes elsewhere, but they kept being drawn down to the little penis squirting its yellow fluid into the urinal. Fearing that my total erection would be seen, I pretended that I had finished urinating and, pressing myself into the enclosure, inserted my stiff penis back into my underpants and zipped up my trousers. When I looked again, fluid had stopped flowing from the little boy's penis, but it was still hanging out. And he was still working his crossword puzzle as though he had forgotten what he was standing at the urinal for.

I hate to admit it but I am going to: If we had been in that picnic shelter at Harmon's Rock or on that rock along the Algonquin River, I would have bent down and put that limp little penis in my mouth and begun sucking it with all my might. And I could imagine the little boy standing there without even noticing, still working the crossword puzzle. He would ask me every now and then — as I sucked away on his cock — things like what is a three-letter word in Spanish that means 'gold.' I tell you this because, in all honesty, that was the first time in my life I ever desired to suck somebody's cock. Even when I have my erotic dreams of pleasure about you, and what might have happened in that sleeping bag or on that rock, my imagination never has me sucking your cock. The thought of ever putting anyone's cock in my mouth — even yours — was totally repulsive to me.

Don't misunderstand me. I could envision screwing you up the ass. And I could envision you screwing me up the ass and you sucking my cock. But never the other way around. For a few moments I was horrified. Up until a few hours before there had only been one other male with whom I had seemed motivated to have sexual relations.

And I was able to rationalize that as some kind of unusual sexual aberration left over from childhood. Now there were two, and the new one was a boy. And, in fact, I craved greater degradation with him than I contemplated with you. Would I now start seeing other men and boys I craved to go to bed with? That would be too degrading for words.

How I wanted the little boy to put his penis back into his pants and out of my sight! Then I could be relieved of that horrible, sinful craving. I could not force myself to take my eyes off his limp penis. I was no longer even pretending to be urinating and I knew I would appear conspicuous standing there peering down at the boy out of the corner of my eye. But the little boy continued to study the puzzle, apparently oblivious to my attention. Suddenly, he looked up at me. And I hastily shifted my vision in another direction.

“What is an eleven-letter word that is the highest mountain in Africa?” he asked, casually, as though the two of us were still sitting at the counter in the coffee shop. I had not thought he had even noticed there was anyone beside him before he looked up. At first, I was not sure whether he knew I was the same person he had asked that morning about the crossword puzzle, or if he was, like earlier, just asking the nearest adult available. I was also startled because he must have noticed I was staring down at his penis. My mind raced for the answer.

“Kilimanjaro,” I finally stammered.

He knelt down on one knee and, placing the comic book on his other level thigh, began to fill in the spaces with the letters.

“Thanks a lot!” he said. “I’ve been trying to get that one all day.”

He wrote the first three letters of the word and then

paused. My eyes were still glued to his limp little penis still hanging out of his britches. When he kneeled down the fly opening of his britches spread further apart, and I caught sight of his scrotum laying there nestled against the outside of the white crotch of his underpants. He must have been aware that his peter and balls were showing because they were visible right next to where he was writing in the comic book laying on his thigh. He paused for a long moment and then suddenly thrust the pen up toward me.

“Can you spell it for me?” he asked. He stayed down with the comic book still on the upper part of his leg.

I realized he meant for me to bend down and write in the letters while he held the comic book on his thigh. My first thought was to wonder what people would think — me bending over a little boy who still had his penis hanging out of his pants. My eyes quickly surveyed the rest room, and I was relieved to discover there was no one else in sight. I bent down and began filling the rest of the letters in — ‘Kilimanjaro.’ All the time my eyes were still glued to that limp little penis and scrotum laying in the exposed, open cavity of those unzipped britches. As I bent closer I could see there was a little drop of urine still on the lip of that smooth, pink oval. I craved to brush it away with my forefinger as I had the warm drop of semen on the tip of your penis that night in the sleeping bag.

I could even make out the thin, little blue veins that stood out in the light pink skin just below the rim of the oval tip — the skin that was never visible on your tautly stretched, uncircumcised penis. With his one leg tilted and thrust out the way it was, I could see lying outside his white underpants his full, firm little scrotum bulging forth in two solid, wrinkled and ridged ovals just the way yours had been as a boy. Yes, he had your eyes, your lips, and



your balls! I craved to toss the pencil aside and reach down in the fly opening and gently squeeze between the tips of my fingers that surely warm, soft scrotum and isolate those firm ovals within.

I had the strange sensation that the little boy would not even have blinked an eye if I had done that. All the while he would just be trying to figure out the next word in his crossword puzzle while I played with his balls. As I completed writing the letters, my sweaty, nervous fingers were near, ever so near, to the tip of that little limp penis. Would I dare to brush my hand against it — accidentally touch it? It could be done ever so inadvertently — just pull my hand away and brush my lower palm against that tip, wiping away that little drop of urine. Could I bear to touch? I had let a chance like this pass me by ever so many times on that camping trip and now I was haunted by the huge regret, the huge longing. The chance might pass me by forever. My heart beat rapidly and I held my breath trying to calm my nerves.

Then something almost uncanny happened. The little boy brought his hand downward hitting the top of the pen and the cap tumbled off down into the fly opening of his britches, landing tantalizingly just against the edge of that small bulging scrotum. Do I dare reach for it? Almost instinctively, I put the pen in my other hand and let my fingers slide forward down into the open crotch of his britches. The side of my hand brushed against that limp, warm little penis. And I felt the drop of urine smear gloriously on my palm! And now my finger tips were groping over the ridges of the firm, warm little scrotum! Waves of unbearable, glorious pleasure were surging through my body. Surely my penis would explode! There was a numbing ache in my groin and brain.

Finally, my fingers discovered the cap of the pen.

There was no excuse for my groping fingers being there any longer, and I withdrew them. I could not bear it any longer, anyway. I realized immediately it was by far the closest I had come in twenty-five years to recapturing that glorious sensation — that exalted moment of pleasure so dreamed about for so many years. And it had all been achieved with a substitute for the real thing. I could only imagine how much more glorious it could have been if my fingers had been groping over your scrotum! Or could it have been more glorious? As I put the cap back on the pen, I knew the exalted moment was over. I would dare go no further — at this time, in this place, with this boy. I did not stop because I thought the boy would object. But, like many years before, any more contact and the pleasure would have been beyond enduring.

As I rose the little boy took the pen from my limp fingers.

“Can I keep the pen? I want to finish the puzzle on the plane,” he asked.

It was then I realized he knew he was talking to the same person that he had talked to that morning in the coffee shop.

“Don’t you think you’d better zip up your pants?” I asked, still one part of me craving — and another side of me dreading to be denied - my trance-like stare at his genitals. I looked at him quizzically, amazed that I had been able to touch his genitals without any reaction from him.

“I reckon,” he said. And he stood up and squeezed his little penis a couple of times into the urinal to get the last drops of urine from the tip before zipping up his pants. That sent a new wave of excitement through me. I tensed my muscles in a moment of ecstasy as I imagined my fingers squeezing that urine from his penis or, perhaps, his

squeezing my penis the same way.

When he put his penis back into his britches and zipped them up, I was, at once both relieved and disconsolate; relieved that I was released from my transfixed, uncontrollable stare, and disconsolate that this most glorious moment in years had passed. And I was baffled as to why I should almost be achieving this glorious climax with someone other than you. I was still amazed that my hand could have come in contact with that little boy's genitals with no reaction from him whatsoever. If he had stiffened and pulled away when he realized that a stranger's hand had touched his penis and scrotum that he had absentmindedly forgotten were still exposed, I would have understood that.

Or if his penis had begun to get stiff from excitement, exposure, and the touch of a stranger's hand, I would have understood that. He would just be a little boy looking for some quick, adolescent excitement in teasing and stimulating someone he knew was following him around and was attracted to him.

I say all this because I have never touched but one other person's penis and scrotum in my life besides my own. And that was yours that night on that camping trip when I reached down into your underpants. And I have never had any desire to. Up until that moment in the men's room I had even thought of touching someone's penis — even a child's — as being repulsive. About a year ago my oldest boy, Roger Jr., got poison ivy all over him from head to toe on a church picnic. He asked me to put Calamine lotion on him because he has gotten to an age when he does not like his mother to see him naked. I rubbed the lotion all over him, but I could not bring myself to put the lotion on his genitals. Although it would not have bothered him, I could not bring myself to touch

him in those places. And it was not because it excited me but because it was very repulsive to me. And, believe me, I love the boy dearly. And here I am in a rest room craving to touch the genitals of some boy I did not know. I guess it all has to do with the powers of vicarious and long- awaited pleasure.

The boy rushed from the rest room and I followed. When I reached the entrance to the waiting room, I caught a glimpse of you and him about to disappear through the portal to the loading ramp. For one brief second, I thought I caught a glimpse of your penetrating blue eyes staring at me. And then you were gone. I went back into the rest room and quickly went into a stall and had barely touched my penis to relieve the great pressure when the semen shot forth in a huge discharge. Limp as the proverbial dish rag, exhausted, and disconsolate beyond belief that I had, somehow, missed another chance to achieve that long- awaited sex act that had again come so close, I went to my car, beginning the long drive back to Red Creek to await the next act in this unfolding drama.

I write this letter to answer the previously unanswered question of whether the spark is still there. If you choose not to answer, I will fully understand. I can think of a number of good reasons why you should not answer and continue toward some kind of climax. (No pun intended.) Of course, the unanswered question is how am I ever going to get up enough nerve to be screwed by you if I can't get up enough courage to meet and talk with you. But, like I keep saying, I had a perfect record of showing up for the second dental appointment after I backed out of the first.

Your buddy,

Roger Stockwell

## CHAPTER SEVEN

**CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOM PEDDIGREW**

MAY

19 Rio Pinar Plaza  
Caracas, Venezuela  
May 2, 1974

Dear Roger,

Sorry we were not able to get together when I was in D.C., but I understand. I did spot you that last moment before I got on the plane as you suspected — I was almost sure it was you — when I was looking in that direction, waiting anxiously for Allen. The final boarding call had been given a full minute before that, and, as you know, Allen had gone to the rest room and had not returned. In fact, I almost went after him when he did not return immediately. Then I guess I would have missed the plane for sure! If I had run into you when you were in such a responsive mood and condition, I guess we would have found it necessary to share our great moment a couple of months early, though I am sure you would have found a

public men's room much more repulsive than any cheap hotel room! Anyway, if I had known why Allen was wasting so much time I would have given him a good, swift kick in the butt. Not because of what he was up to — I couldn't in good conscience punish him for that because I have the same conquest in mind that he did; in fact, I would have to compliment him on his good taste — but he almost caused us to miss the plane.

From your letter it sounds like he was up to the same kind of tricks I was up to as a kid. It's hard to believe, but one would have to almost conclude that the behavior had been inherited. It's obvious that he realized you were attracted to him, and he was just up to a little 'horsing around' as you would call it. When he said he was going to the rest room just before we were to board the plane, I told him he could go to the rest room on the plane. But he bolted away before I could stop him. I should have known he was up to something other than just wanting to take a piss. He must have spotted you in the waiting room and knew you would follow him. I guess I can't get too mad at him about that because, when I was his age, I had almost a 'sixth sense' about when someone was attracted to me. Sometimes, I would just play up to them if I wanted to get my way with them. Other times — like Allen did to you, apparently — I would 'accidentally' brush my hand against their crotch and try to stimulate their penis. Or I might 'inadvertently' expose my genitals to them just to watch them get stimulated.

I don't mean to imply that Allen was trying to tease or taunt you. I have found him to be an absolutely good-natured and guileless boy when it comes to trying to please the people he likes. So, perhaps, he was just trying to give you what he thought you wanted. I suspect that you are right. If you had gone further, I doubt if he would have

blinked an eyelash. Maybe he has a little of Jamie Driscoll in him. (They are second cousins, you know.) Incidentally, I was sure it was you I had seen in the terminal when, on the flight south, I borrowed Allen's ball-point pen and saw your name on it. When I asked him where he got the pen, he told me he had borrowed it from a man sitting next to him in the coffee shop — which was true, of course. But the little devil never did say a word about meeting 'that man' again in the rest room before we left.

The reason I took Allen back to South America with me is that my wife asked me to. She is going with the professor from Boston College to the Virgin Islands where he has a teaching job next year. They are going to get married as soon as our divorce is finalized, but he did not want to keep Allen. I can't say that I really blame him. I don't suppose I would want to raise someone else's kid, particularly during those adolescent years when kids can really be disagreeable. I think it almost broke my wife's heart to give Allen up. Her folks would have taken him, but she said she wanted him to be with me if she could not keep him.

There is an American school here in Caracas where I can enroll him next fall, and he is really not all that much trouble. He's very independent and seems to know how to take care of himself. I can't say that our relationship has gotten any closer, but we are kind of like my wife and I were with each other. We get along in an easygoing kind of way, and, at least, we are never hostile. In one way, being responsible for him kind of keeps my evenings and weekends busy, and I don't have as much time to chase broads, nor do I crave the booze the way I used to. And that, I suspect, is a good thing. And the lady who has cleaned my apartment and cooked for me for years has agreed to stay here and take care of him when I have to go to the interior.

The whole thing has worked out pretty well even though it was a real shocker when his staying with me was first proposed. I reckon I had better get used to it because I guess it's a permanent arrangement. It was a part of the divorce settlement that I would have permanent, legal custody of Allen. From a monetary point of view it probably saved me a bundle as my wife agreed not to ask for any alimony. My wife rationalized that I would be able to take care of him better during his 'turbulent' adolescent years — whatever that means — and said she had done her part by getting him beautifully through his 'dependent' years, as she called them.

And I must admit that she must have done a pretty good job because he's very easy to get along with so far. Of course, you have met Allen and may have already formed your own opinions about him. Both my wife and I expected him to be very upset when we told him he was going to return to South America and live with me, but he wasn't. And I think that kind of hurt my wife's feelings, that he did not seem to mind leaving her. She, no doubt, felt that he could have shed a few grateful tears of appreciation for all her years of changing diapers and serving as a cub scout den mother, and perhaps he would have. I can't say he appeared overjoyed at the prospect of going with me, but he was not upset. Anyway, I really feel my wife has decided to let him go out of her life for good.

Allen was sick to his stomach and had diarrhea the first few days we were here. It may have been the water or something but he seems to feel all right now. Of course, if he's been 'horsing around' in public men's rooms, I guess I'm lucky he doesn't have gonorrhea instead of diarrhea. Now that I have heard from you, I'll have to keep an eye on him and see that he does not try to seduce his tennis instructor down at the club. I don't think the old gent



would be able to survive that. There is a college student in the apartment upstairs who is going to take him to his soccer match this Saturday at the college. Allen might get in the locker room and try to seduce the whole soccer team. That would surely distract them from giving their best efforts on the field. Allen and I are still treating each other like casual acquaintances rather than father and son, but maybe that's as good a relationship as any.

As far as us not getting together at Dulles, I am not certain I would have approached you even if I had recognized you earlier in the day. I think it would have been like that camping trip to Harmon's Rock. I could have slipped it to you, but with you, for some reason, I want to feel that anything that happens between us is as much your idea as mine. In a way, just as I am your last chance for the ultimate sensation — that sought-after climax — you are my last link to try and reach people with real feeling, real caring, real love, if you will. For whatever reason, I failed with my mother; I didn't completely succeed with Jamie; but with you I was only stymied, put off, rebuffed, but I have not completely failed. If I can make it with you, then, perhaps, tomorrow the world! Who knows?

It all goes back to that business of you being one of the three people in my life I have ever had any real feeling for. Perhaps, I should say four people because I had a kind of love-hate relationship with my father . . . but maybe I'll say more about that later. If it had been necessary for me to force myself on you, even for just a meeting and conversation, it just would not be the same. If I had seen you before that last moment at Dulles, I would not have run away, but I would have waited for you to come over and begin talking to me.

By the way, as you probably know, I did talk to your

wife on the phone that Sunday. She said you had gone to Washington and had probably got mixed-up about where we were to meet. During the afternoon and early evening hours when Allen and I were away from Dulles, I went and took a room at the Sheraton Inn, thinking you would probably check there if you did not find me at the airport. Anyway, Allen was getting restless at the airport and he could watch TV in the motel room. That is where we changed clothes. I told your wife on the phone that I would be coming to Red Creek in the middle of June to go camping with you. This way it will make it pretty hard for you to back out of meeting me because I will just come by your house if I have to. It will be hard for you to stay away from there too long. I even went so far as to mention that my boy might go camping somewhere that weekend — other than Harmon's Rock, I hope — with your boys. So I guess you are trapped into meeting me whether you want to or not.

Sorry to hear that you had such an agonizing day at Dulles Airport. When I did not hear from you I assumed you were vacillating about whether to meet me or not. I am really chagrined to learn that 'a mere boy' as you called him almost beat me to bagging the ultimate trophy that has been denied me all these years. That would have been the final, most humiliating insult, to have my twelveyear-old accomplish in two minutes in an airport men's room what I had not been able to accomplish in two desperate, grueling days in the Algonquin State Park or in the twenty-five years since then. If that had happened I guess I would have had to abandon my pretense of being the ultimate seducer and give the title to my boy. I would have to introduce him by saying, "Meet Allen Peddigrew, the ultimate seducer!" But everything has turned out all right. Perhaps, Allen just has you well primed, and I can move in

and be there to stir the ultimate eruption — the soaring to the heights — as you might describe it.

I happened to notice two evenings ago, on the coffee table in the living room, that “Tarzan” comic book of Allen’s that he bought at Dulles. I turned to the crossword puzzle in the back and noted that the last eight letters of ‘Kilimanjaro’ are in a different handwriting than Allen’s. Also I have the ball-point pen with your name on it that you loaned him. You were right about what you said about my seeing that pen, that it would make it seem as though some kind of contact did take place between us, tenuous though it was. That is just how I do feel, and seeing those letters printed in your handwriting also made me feel I have been close to you recently. I have put both the pen and the comic book away for safe keeping as mementos of the ‘almost’ meeting I had with you that I can savor until the ultimate meeting takes place.

I hate to admit it — it sounds so heartless and selfish — but my main fascination with Allen, since I got back to Caracas and received your letter, has to do with his contact, his brief relationship with you. I guess I envy him that. In an odd sort of way I have tried to vicariously relive with Allen those moments that aroused you so much at Dulles Airport. Once, when Allen was asleep, I took his right hand — the one he would have been holding the comic book with when he thrust it into your lap in the coffee shop — and pressed the knuckles, just as you said he had done, against my penis through my trousers. Immediately, I got a hard on — not because I was stimulated by his hand but because I could picture your cock getting hard, you getting excited when he pressed his knuckles against your penis.

I have even stood in the bathroom door and watched him pee and have gotten aroused — not because of seeing

his penis but because I could imagine you getting a hard on when you saw the yellow fluid flow from his pecker. The other evening when I was clipping his finger nails for him on the couch before bed time, I even went so far as to ‘accidentally’ drop the nail clippers into the open crotch of his pajamas. When I reached in to retrieve it, I brushed the side of my hand against his penis — there was no drop of urine to recreate that sensation — and played my finger tips lightly over the small ridges of flesh on his scrotum searching for the nail clippers as you had done reaching for the cap of the pen. And, would you believe it, I got a hard on — not because touching his genitals had excited me but because I could picture you trembling in ecstasy doing the same thing. Hell, I had never even noticed if Allen was circumcised until you mentioned it. And lately I have even observed those small blue veins just below the rim of the oval tip of his penis. And I have relived the sensation you must have had seeing those veins.

It has suddenly occurred to me after I got your letter that Allen probably knew all along who you were when he was talking to you at Dulles Airport. I am certain that he knew for sure after you loaned him that pen. I had told him that I might be meeting a friend from my old home town, a Roger Stockwell, at Dulles. And he had heard me ask the girl at the airline counter and the clerk at the Sheraton Inn if there were any messages or calls from a ‘Roger Stockwell.’ And, come to think of it - and this is a real admission — I had even showed him a picture of you I have in my wallet, taken out of the Carlton Yearbook of 1957, and asked him to be on the look-out for that person in the terminal building. One thing I have noticed about Allen, he’s very observant. He probably suspected who you were when he first saw you, and then he became absolutely certain when you loaned him that pen.

This morning before I left for the office, I got out that “Tarzan” comic book when we were at the breakfast table and casually turned to the crossword-puzzle page. I made a couple of remarks about words in the puzzle he had misspelled to make them fit, and then I pointed to the word, ‘Kilimanjaro,’ and asked him who had spelled that word for him, that I did not believe he could spell it himself. He just gave me a curious, knowing smile, shrugged, and got up and walked into the living room. I knew immediately that Allen not only knew who you were but that he was aware that I knew something had gone on between you and him at the airport. He had intended his smile to say, ‘I’ll never tell.’ Like I say, Allen is as sharp as a tack. In fact, I’m almost sure he is aware that there is something more between me and ‘that friend at Dulles’ than a nostalgic meeting of childhood chums. He has that ‘sixth sense’ that tells him when people are attracted to him and, apparently, to each other.

But I must admit to being totally baffled by his motives. Why didn’t he tell me about seeing you? He knew I had planned to meet you at Dulles. And why did he set out to sexually arouse you at the airport? Like you said, he did not do it for his own gratification because you said he did not even get excited when you reached into his fly opening to retrieve the pen cap. I noticed he did not get excited, either, when I reached in his pajamas to get the nail clippers. But I think he is a little more sexually and physically mature than I was at twelve years old. I did not even produce semen until I was well into my thirteenth year, and I have noticed yellow semen stains already in the crotch of his underpants. I guess what I should really admit is that I am terribly jealous that he could excite you so totally when I would have liked to have been the object of that excitement. I am sometimes afraid I am

beginning to see him as a competitor in my relationship with you. And that would certainly be unfair to him. I guess it's just that I can't figure out his motives. Perhaps he has none.

Well, the concluding act of the drama draws near. There is no chance that I will not be motivated for the final moment of passion. That one glimpse I caught of you just before I got on the plane at Dulles told me that the trophy is just as desirable as ever. My appetite has been whetted with the realization that you were almost able to spend your passion on a substitute for the real thing, thus almost denying me my reach for seductive glory. How humiliating that would have been to me - the ultimate seducer!

I hope the stage is well set. Have you got permission from the ranger for two 'ageing but pure-hearted' boy scouts to camp in picnic shelter number seven — see! I still have a good memory, too - far down to the right of the overlook area on June 14, 15, and 16? Allen and I will arrive at the Kanawha Airport in Charleston, W. Va., at 1:15 P.M. on Friday, June 14. I will rent a car for the two- hour drive northeast to Red Creek. I will wait on the Beal Street side of the courthouse where we caught that county bus twenty-five years ago, and I will expect you to meet me there at 3:45 P.M. sharp. That's the time we left on the bus before. Of course, that was in the fall and this will be in the spring. But that will be appropriate. Fall symbolizes the end of a life cycle and spring represents the renewal of life. In this case it can be the renewal of passion.

I even have one of those khaki combat belts with a canteen attached that I thought looked so sharp — sexy would be the correct word — as a boy. I hope it's all right for my boy, Allen, to spend the weekend at your home

with your wife and boys. If it's not convenient, I can drop him off at Aunt Margo's in Canaan. Of course, there is the chance that you might not want that conniving little seducer exposed to the virtuous family man's sons for the weekend. The main thing that I must watch — now that I have discovered that Allen has my old talents, my old appeal — is that he must not be allowed to get alone with you before I have my chance or I might be denied my ultimate prize, yet.

I repeat again, don't think you can get out of the camping trip by not showing up like you did at Dulles. If you are not at the court house, I will simply go camp in your front yard — 507 Braddock Avenue — until you are ready to leave for Harmon's Rock. I guess we can make one concession to convenience and age. We can drive up to the entrance to Harmon's Rock in the rented car rather than take the bus as before. But we will walk those three miles to the overlook area with our packs. Maybe we will even see those thirteen deer, or their grandchildren, that were in the glade down to the left of the road. We can buy the food at a supermarket on the way. We must remember to get that can of corn to bury on Sunday morning in the little sandy spring about fifty feet from the shelter when we pack to leave. And we must remember the peanut butter and crackers.

I hope you are able to bring the cooking utensils. I will pick up a sleeping bag along the way somewhere. I want to get one large enough so the two of us can get in it when we pretend to hear that noise in the night Friday evening. Then we can put one sleeping bag inside the other so we can sleep together - to keep warm we will say, and also, 'to give us some confidence, you will say, when those menacing attackers hover in the shifting fog. Of course, all of this will take place after we spend the early part of the

evening talking about what would happen to us if there was an escaped convict or maniac loose in the park as we lie in our sleeping bags on that picnic table.

I guess what clothes we take will not be too important except that you should wear underpants with the elastic band at the waist so I can have the same sensation when I slip my hand beneath that band to grope for your penis, scrotum, and anus that Friday night. Of course, we both hope for a different result when I finally wrestle those underpants down around your knees. It just would not be the same to slip my hand into boxer shorts. And I will see that the elastic band on my underpants is not too tight so your reluctant hand will not have much difficulty sliding down over my penis and scrotum sometime Saturday night. This time I will see that I stay awake, no matter how exhausted I may be, to feel those first, tentative, ‘accidental’ times you touch my penis and scrotum. I want to make certain that I do not inadvertently turn away this time and inflict on you an eternal humiliation.

And then there will be that glorious Saturday afternoon we will spend swimming and sunning naked by the Algonquin River near the end of that steep trail. Only this time when my probing penis or my anxious lips approach their target, you will not slide away. We will be whipped and thrown in the surging rapids as one — now eternally bound by a connecting link. And this time on the rock when you arch your pelvis invitingly upward, offering me that ultimate prize, I will be ready. I will not be too exhausted and spend my passion wastefully against your thigh. I will receive your aching penis between my moist lips and drain it of its fluid, milky passion. It will not even matter if the skies are grey or if it’s raining. The weather will be incidental, unheralded in contrast to the sunlight —the fire—that will be burning in our bodies—in our minds.



And on Sunday morning when we break camp there will be, as before, very little talk between us. But it will not be because of confusion, shame, and animosity. It will be because of contentment, understanding, and relief. You will have achieved, over and over again, that soaring sensation of climax so long awaited. And I will have achieved that one most important, most sought-after seduction that eluded me — my ultimate triumph. Perhaps, then, there will be no more desire for passion between us. You will be freed and I will have achieved my pinnacle of success. But even if we should try to reach those soaring heights again, it would be but a dim replica, only a shadowy reminder of what happened on the weekend of June 14, 15, and 16. And the effort would, no doubt, be doomed to frustration and failure.

Just as there is a chance for success, there is also a chance for failure. But, since success for me is only an act and not a sensation, it might seem to you that I would fail only if you deny me access. But, unfortunately, I can not achieve success unless you do. Failure for you will be failure for both of us because it will mean that I did not have — never will have — that ultimate desirability, that most fragile touch that can make you ‘soar to the heights.’ Then we will both have to live the rest of our lives with the haunting memory of what almost was many years ago. But there will be no second chance — for me, at least. If I don’t stimulate the passion in you on the first meeting — the first contact — my desirability, my touch, has no where to go but down hill. But there will be no regrets.

Well, like I say, the stage is set and the drama of the final act will begin soon. I have not yet decided what to do with the six weeks of my vacation after the first, all- important weekend. Frankly, I just can not get any enthusiasm for planning anything at this time past that weekend.

I talked to Allen about it and he has not shown any enthusiasm for going to Europe, my original plan. I would like to take him briefly by to see his grandparents outside Boston, but only for a day or two, perhaps. I should spend some time visiting my Aunt Margo in Canaan and then go down and see my mother and Arnold at the hospital.

I have some family business and legal matters I need to take care of in Red Creek, and I will enjoy getting a quick look at the old home town. It's hard to believe it has changed as much as you indicated in your article. But, you don't have to worry, I will not be lurking about complicating your life. I see for us after that weekend—success or failure — only a casual, distant, normal relationship. Failure will be individual failure to be endured solitarily, not shared. There will be no antagonism, no blaming. Success will bring freedom, but no further attraction. In a way, that weekend will be a no-win, all-win, 'nowhere to go' situation.

So let's begin the count down — forty-three days to go. I hope the semen is beginning to rise in your groin. This time we will see if we can keep it from being wasted.

Your buddy,

Tom Peddigrew

507 Braddock Ave.  
Red Creek, W. Va.  
May 14, 1974

Dear Tom,

I will be at the courthouse — Beal Street side — at 3:45 p.m. sharp on Friday, June 14. That will be exactly a month from today. Remember the dentist appointments. I always made it to the chair on the second try. Of course it will be all right for Allen to stay at my home for that weekend, or as long as you want him to. Perhaps a good screwing would do Sonny — that's what we call Roger Jr. — good. I suspect he is something of a prude about sex as I was as a boy. Perhaps I still am. Or, at least, I'm sure that's what my analyst thinks. And I guess there's a chance I 'write' a better game than I can 'play.' I don't know about my irrepressible ten-year-old twins. They would probably end up fighting over who gets screwed first, just like they fight over everything else. It's my wife who would probably enjoy a good passionate screwing the most, but I doubt if Allen will be up to that, yet.

I have the cooking utensils and the other camping gear. Also, I have reserved and rented picnic shelter number seven for that weekend, telling the ranger I was planning a long 'family' reunion. That was the best reason I could think to give on the form where it asked 'purpose.' I'm sure the ranger's eyes would have bulged out if I had written, 'to get screwed.' I even went out and visited the shelter, and it looks just like it did twenty-five years ago, right down to a picnic table in the very same spot where we began this odyssey. It may be the same picnic table. I will avoid rhapsodizing about what the sight of that picnic

table did to me. I did not go down the long trail to the Algonquin River, but I know ‘that rock’ and those rapids are the same because I go through there on my weekend canoe trips in the summer. The old lean-to at the end of the trail has almost rotted down, though.

It’s good that you reminded me about the underpants with the elastic band. I started wearing boxer shorts in the army and never got around to switching back to the other kind after I got out. Like you say, it just would not be the same to have your hand groping around in boxer shorts. The other kind will press your hand more tightly into the erogenous zones. I bought a package of the brief-style underpants two days ago, and I got excited just looking at that elastic band with its thin blue stripe, and thinking about your long, delicate fingers sliding gently beneath that elastic and against my flesh.

Within the last month and a half, believe it or not, I have heard from all the ‘living participants’ of the Troop 44 saga — Chalky Bertram, Jack Magro, Mr. Bertram, and Mr. Magro. I had written them all brief letters and sent them copies of the article at their ‘last-known’ addresses. My editor asked me to try and contact all the living people discussed in the article and ask them for corrections or objections. (He is always worried about getting sued since the paper was involved in a libel suit two years ago.) Also, I had to go to Charleston about three weeks ago, and on the way back I stopped at the Morton State Psychiatric Hospital and visited with your mother and Arnold. I want to tell you about all of them — the letters and the visit — so let me cover them one at a time.

The first reply came from the twins’ father, Mr. Magro. His answer was brief, formal, and not very informative except that he did give me Jack’s address. The letter was only seven sentences long. He said he had read the article

and found it to be accurate and objective, and as he remembered the events. He further said that he was not able to say that he enjoyed reading the article because of the agony and the grieving it recalled, and he thanked me again for my efforts to rescue and revive Wally on that Easter Sunday in 1949. That was all.

The next person I heard from was my special, favorite buddy from old Troop 44 and childhood, Chalky Bertram. His letter was by far the most interesting of all I have received, except yours. In fact, I was as excited and happy opening Chalky's letter as I was nervous and apprehensive opening your first letter. Reading his letter was a truly delightful experience because it sounded just like the indomitable, irrepressible, strong-willed, and resilient Chalky I remember as a boy. If you remember, Chalky went to live with his mother and her relatives in Morgantown, W. Va., right after he got out of the hospital after the accident.

Chalky's letter was as long as my first letter to you — I think he is as full of bullshit as I am. He brought me up to date on everything that has happened to him since he left Red Creek. Oddly, he said very little about 'old times' in Red Creek, but I guess he only lived here a couple of years with his dad, and perhaps it does not seem like a very long segment of his life to him. He mentioned that his dad still worked for the government and is now, he thought, stationed in Lima, Peru. He gave me the last address he had for his father.

I guess that is a great distance from Caracas even if it is on the same continent. Chalky mentioned that he rarely heard from his dad and had seen him briefly only three times since he lived with him as a boy in Red Creek. When you consider that I also discovered that Jack Magro is also overseas — in Brussels, Belgium — it is uncanny that three

of the living members out of the seven — if you include Mr. Magro — are living outside the U.S. And, of course, Chad Hartley died in the Orient. One would never have thought that provincial little boy scout troop would have produced so many world travelers.

Regarding the article, Chalky's letter at times sounded like your first letter. He made the observation that the article would have been a lot more interesting if I had told the truth about what went on when we played 'the game.' He said readers would have found 'the game' much more exciting if they knew that the real purpose for catching the prey was 'to fuck a reluctant but willing little boy scout up the ass.' He also related that about a year after he moved to Morgantown, and he was old enough to be a boy scout, he joined a Troop 41 at the Wesley Methodist Church there.

He said it took him a while to get used to the 'ways' of the boy scouts in that troop. He said he was looking forward to getting screwed and molested on the first camping trip, and all they did was work on scout requirements the whole weekend. I quote, "And, at night, they sang songs around a campfire, for Pete's sake. What kind of square outfit was this?" He said he finally concluded that Methodist boy scout troops were virgin nature lovers and Baptist boy scout troops were evil little rapists and cock suckers! He summed up the experience by saying there was much to be said for both outfits - Troop 44 and Troop 41 — but, like blonds, Baptist scouts had more fun!

The only other comment he made about the article was that he was not so sure all those deaths and his injury were so accidental. Of course, Chalky never liked you at all because, I suppose, he was jealous of your close relationship with his dad. So that is probably his subconscious motive for trying to blame you, Chad, and Arnold for

some of the things that happened. He said that the night he was stabbed in the thigh with Arnold's spear, he did not fall on the spear as I had implied in the article; Arnold had purposely jabbed at him with it. And I am sure, in the excitement of the chase, that could have happened. Or, at least, Chalky could have believed it did. But there's certainly no reason now to try to blame poor Arnold for something that may or may not have happened so many years ago.

However, as I said, Chalky did not dwell on the past. He does not seem to hold any bitterness about it all, even though he does feel that the deaths and injuries may not have been completely accidental. I, of course, have been exposed to all the rumors and gossip over the years here in Red Creek, and I find most of it to be absurd. I would agree, of course, that during that time there was a 'dark side' to our lives, that our participation in 'the game' and our attractions and animosities toward each other may have played a large role in the tragedies. But I do not attribute any conscious motives on anyone's part to having caused the deaths or injuries. But I guess we'll never know with absolute certainty.

Chalky seems to have led an interesting, but fairly unsettled, life even if he has stayed mostly in Morgantown since he left Red Creek. He graduated from West Virginia University and went on there to graduate school after he was in the army. In college he apparently majored in, at various times, English, speech, drama, sociology, and education. He said he could never make up his mind in college whether he was an intellectual, an artist, or an athlete. He wrote for the university's literary magazine, was in seventeen drama productions, and played on the university tennis team.

Since graduation he has been at various times a college

teacher, a guidance counselor and a social worker; he also ran a summer theatre at Mont Chateau State Park, and even operated a showboat for the state of West Virginia on the Ohio River for a couple of summers. He said he had one brief fling at marriage, and that happened when he was in the army and on leave one weekend from basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey. He said his wife — with his encouragement — began divorce proceedings within six months so he could really say he was only married a few weekends. The thing that he is doing now, that he seems to get the most pleasure from, is running raft trips for tourists on the treacherous Cheat River rapids in northern West Virginia during the summer months. That's an odd coincidence, because I run canoe trips on the Algonquin River rapids on weekends during the summer.

Chalky and I plan to get together later in the summer. But not for the purpose you and I plan to get together, you can be sure. I am going to go up there and shoot the rapids on his raft trip, and he is going to come down here and shoot the rapids on my canoe trip. That will be exhilarating — doing something exciting like that with Chalky after all these years. I'm really looking forward to seeing Chalky but not in the way I am looking forward to seeing you. I was really very attached to Chalky in a protective sort of way when he was a little boy, and I am looking forward to getting to know him as a friend again. We do not live so far apart, particularly now that the interstate highways are almost complete. By the way, Chalky said he is a Councilman in the city government of Morgantown. I can just see strong-willed, stubborn, determined little Chalky getting up at a council meeting and telling them how to run the city. I guess I should not say little Chalky. He said he is six foot four now.

Two days after I heard from Chalky, I got a letter from



Jack Magro from Brussels. It was not a long letter and, just as Chalky's letter made me happy, Jack's letter made me kind of sad. Apparently, he is not able to view the 'Troop 44 incidents' with the same distance and objectivity that Chalky can. Of course, Jack lost his twin brother, Wally, in the tragedies, and they were as close as any two people could be. Also something that I did not know, that Jack told me, was that his father and mother separated and were later divorced just after Wally's death. I do remember that Mrs. Magro took Jack and went back to her home in Virginia — where Wally is buried — just after Wally's funeral. I thought they just went there to recover from their grief and were going to join Mr. Magro later but, apparently, not. Jack did say that his mother and father's separation had nothing to do with Wally's death, but he did not say why they split up.

I take it from reading his letter that Jack has had very little contact with his father over the years, just as Chalky has seen very little of his dad. There was some bitterness in Jack's reaction to his whole Red Creek experience which, I guess, like Chalky's was only about two years in length. But, unlike Chalky who seems to have considered it only a minor part of his life and put it behind him, I get the impression that Jack has not gotten over what happened to him here. I guess it would be pretty hard to get over losing your inseparable twin brother and have your parents separate all in the span of a couple of weeks. Even though I was never close to the twins — no one could really penetrate their affection for each other — I always have felt some attachment to Jack because I shared that half hour of mournful grieving while I tried futilely and hopelessly to revive Wally. My heart had gone out to him for the courage he showed in that turbulent descent of the rapids when we were trying to rescue Wally.

When I read his letter I felt my long-held attachment to him kind of fade away. The person writing that letter seemed to have very little connection with the little boy I remembered. I should not blame him for being bitter, but I felt he might have displayed some warmth toward me because I had done all I could to save Wally. But perhaps he recalls it was I who was always so eager to play ‘the game.’ And I guess, in a way, he could blame ‘the game’ for Wally’s death. Anyway, I found Jack’s letter to be cold and distant. I haven’t even been motivated to answer it, and perhaps I never will. Maybe the incident is still so painful to him that he would just as soon not be reminded of it by contact with any of the people connected with it. And he didn’t show any interest or ask any questions about what has happened to the other guys in old Troop 44.

By the way — would you believe it — Jack also went to the Harvard Business School a couple of years before you were there, I believe. He said he went to graduate school there immediately after he graduated from the University of Virginia, and I don’t believe you went until three or four years after you finished here at Carlton. It’s a small world, isn’t it? Here your old scoutmaster ends up on the same continent with you a hemisphere away from Red Creek and a scout chum you have not seen since he was twelve years old ends up going to the same graduate school as you. Jack has been in Brussels about a year. He’s over there for some American firm that builds earth-moving equipment, but he really didn’t say what he is doing. By the way, would you believe that scrawny little devil ended up having six children, four girls and two boys? As I remember, he was a thin, willowy, little fellow, all skin and bones, with big brown eyes and a mop of chestnut hair. I just never would have thought he would have had it in him.

Also, Jack had a negative attitude about the article. He

said he did not see any reason for the incidents to be dredged up out of the past and to be dished out for the public even if it was curious. He indicated that the article was accurate enough, he supposed, and he did not have any specific objection to anything that was said. However, he felt that some of the people portrayed in the article were put in a 'better light' than they deserved to be. And then he really surprised me by mentioning his own father as an example. I really did not say anything good or bad about his dad. In fact, he is not mentioned that much at all, but I guess Jack must still be bitter toward him about something having to do with the separation and divorce. What really amazed me was that me mentioned Mr. Bertram as an example as well. For the life of me I can not comprehend what Jack could have had against Mr. Bertram.

And last, just a few days ago I got a letter from Mr. Bertram. Chalky had given me an address in Lima, where he thought his dad still was, and the letter had been forwarded to his new address in Bogotd, Colombia. He is some kind of technical adviser in foreign aid for the U.S. State Department, and has worked for the government ever since he went overseas that summer of 1949. He wrote that he had married again, a missionary's daughter in India where he was stationed in 1952, and they had three daughters. He said his wife and daughters had been at his family home in Mississippi the past two years while he had been stationed in several South American capitals. His letter was fairly brief. He said he thought the article was well done and he appreciated the complimentary things I said about him.

As you might expect, he was particularly interested in what happened to you because, of course, you and he had been very close, and he had taken you on a lot of hunting and fishing trips. I had sent him your address when I

wrote, and he said he would try to look you up in the near future. He said that he had been in Caracas for about two weeks last summer and was sorry he had not known you were there then. I don't know why I haven't mentioned some of these things to you before now — about hearing from the other guys in Troop 44 and about Mr. Bertram being in South America — but I guess I've been too intent on trying to enhance and define yours and my relationship that I haven't thought of mentioning anything else in my letters. I told Mr. Bertram that you were meeting me here in Red Creek, and we were going on a camping trip to Harmon's Rock for old time's sake. I should have said for old Roger Stockwell's sake!

And, as I mentioned earlier, I visited your mother and Arnold at the hospital. About three weeks ago I had to go to Charleston for three days to cover a special session of the State Legislature for the newspaper. Our regular legislative reporter was in Morgantown — Chalky's home town - doing a story on the new personal rapid transit system the government has installed at West Virginia University. Anyway, on my way back from Charleston, I took the interstate north to Morton where the hospital is located. Like the letter from Jack, the contact left me sad rather than happy, even though both seemed to be getting along all right.

I was kind of edgy about the meeting because I didn't know your mother that well. I vaguely remember seeing her only a few times when I was a child. And, in all the time I had been around Arnold, I had always felt a little uncomfortable and had never tried to communicate with him. I did remember that you and Chad had talked to Arnold and he seemed to comprehend everything that you said. I suppose I was also edgy because I had never visited anyone in a mental institution before.

When I arrived at the hospital in the early afternoon, it was a beautiful sunshiny day and I thought that might be a good omen. I asked the nurse in the lobby about Arnold first, and she said he was out on the grounds. She indicated I would probably find him in a little evergreen park area — it looked like Braddock Hill before it was developed - in front of the hospital. When I went to look for Arnold I was not sure I would recognize him. But when I saw a slumped, gaunt man sitting on a park bench at the edge of the cedar grove, I knew right away it was Arnold.

I realized I should not have worried about recognizing him because I spotted that ugly red scar on his neck immediately. Otherwise, I would not have known him. His black hair has turned totally grey, and his face was lined with deep wrinkles, especially around the eyes. But those deep brooding eyes, that always seemed to be staring at something in the distance but never at you, were the one thing about him that was the same. He was sitting down, but he looked to be very tall, well over six feet. And he was still handsome in that rugged sort of way that he had been as a boy.

I went over and sat beside him on the bench and told him who I was, and he looked at me and beyond me, and I saw no sign of recognition. I found talking to him disconcerting, and I just stared straight ahead, not looking at him. I told him all about writing you and hearing from you and what I knew of all the other boys in Troop 44. Occasionally, I would sneak a glance at him out of the corner of my eye, but I got no sign that he was understanding what I was saying. After I had said all I could think of about old times I began to be sorry I had come. It was not because he bothered me, but because, if I did rekindle some faint recognition or recall for Arnold, it would be of happier — or, perhaps, sadder — times in the past. And what need was

there to remind him of his happier or more tortured past, whichever it may have been?

When I got up to leave, I walked away a few steps and turned and looked at him again. He was still staring vacantly ahead, showing no sign that I had been there. Oddly, at that moment, a strange thought crossed my mind. I momentarily convinced myself that Arnold had been hypnotised by you as a child, and you somehow forgot to snap your fingers and bring him out of it. It occurred to me that Arnold looked and acted just like Chad did at Camp Man-a-toba in the summer of 1948 when he was — or pretended to be — hypnotised by you. As you can see, I have never resolved in my mind whether you really were able to hypnotise me in those campfire skits. Anyway, I had this strange sensation that if you had been there to snap your fingers and say, “Arnold, you are no longer under my power!” he would have blinked his eyes perceptively and looked about with an animated expression.

I went back into the hospital lobby and talked to the same nurse again and asked her how Arnold had been getting along. She had merely shrugged and said there had been no change in him in years. Then I asked if it would be possible to see a Mrs. Peddigrew. The nurse brightened a little when I asked that. She said it would be a very good time to visit with Mrs. Peddigrew because she was in one of her ‘lucid periods.’ I believe that is the way she put it. She directed me to the sitting room on the third floor that was at the end of the hall next to the women’s ward.

As I approached the lounge, I was sure I would not recognize your mother. But I could not have been more wrong. When I walked into the room I saw a woman sitting at an old grand piano in an alcove of windows, in the sunlight, picking out melodies on the keys with the long, delicate fingers of her right hand. There was no doubt in

my mind that it was your mother because she looked exactly like you. I had forgotten how much you two resembled each other. And she is still a beautiful, trim woman with those heavy-lidded blue, blue eyes — not nearly so penetrating as yours but more soft — those moist cherubic lips, the creamy-smooth pink complexion, and the beautiful, soft, fluffy, blond hair with every strand in place. She was wearing a red-and-white-flowered immaculate house coat, and I was amazed that a person who had been in a public mental institution for the past twenty-five years could look so well kept, so beautiful. Frankly, I had really expected to talk to a grey, wrinkled, frightened creature lying lifeless in a hospital bed.

I approached the side of the piano and introduced myself. She looked up smiling. Then she told me that she remembered me as a boy and that I had changed very little. She said that her sister, Margo, who lived at Canaan visited her about every weekend and had kept her informed on what had happened to everybody. She said she had read a lot of my articles in themed *Creek Times*. First, I told her about seeing Arnold but she did not make much response to that. She only said that she saw Arnold occasionally, but he showed no sign that he recognized her, either. She got up from the piano and invited me over to sit in a lounge chair where we could talk.

For some reason — I'm not sure why — I was afraid to bring up your name. I was afraid, I suppose, like with Arnold, that it might recall for her overwhelming, but forgotten, sadnesses or joys. But I could not think of anything else to say so I told her you and I were corresponding and that we were going to get together the next month for a camping trip. Also, I told her that I was sure you would be able to get down to visit her at that time. Oddly, she did not say anything about your possible visit; she just

asked me how you were getting along. I told her about you being in Boston and that your boy, Allen, had gone back to South America to live with you, and that he would be with you when you came to visit in June. She mentioned wistfully that Allen was her only grandchild and she had never seen him, not even a picture.

There was a long uncomfortable silence and I was trying to think of something to say, that would be pleasant and not painful, when she started to talk, as if she suddenly felt compelled to explain something to me. She said that your father had been cruel — unspeakably cruel — to you and Arnold. I said that surprised me because I always thought, even though you had never talked about it, that you and your father had been extremely close. I had always heard how your father had taught you and Arnold how to be excellent hunters and trackers. She said that you and your father had been close and that had made his cruelty all the more horrifying to you. She said that you should not be blamed for anything you might have done in childhood because you were driven to be the way you were by your father.

She said she knew all along, when those terrible things had happened, that you had been the captive of those pictures. That really baffled me. I had no idea at all what she could be talking about, and I still don't. She went on to say that Arnold is where he is now because of the cruelty of your father, and that may well be the reason she was where she was. I really felt uncomfortable because I did not know how to respond to that kind of talk. I tried to change the subject. I said something about you and Allen seeming to be getting squared away all right down in Caracas, but she did not seem to hear.

She said that she could not put all the blame on your father because she had failed you, too. She said that at



first, in trying to protect you from your father, she had held you too close. But then she had realized that had been a rationalization for letting you do things — having you do things — when she was feeling so lonely and unloved. And then, when the moment came when she should have protected you from him, she had not been your protector. She had let you down, deserted you, at perhaps your greatest moment of need.

I was thoroughly baffled, but I did not really want to hear any further explanation. I just assured her that I did not know of anything that you could be blamed for, and that as far as I could tell, you were getting along just fine. I could see the conversation had already upset her tremendously. Her voice had remained steady but big tears had welled up in her eyes. I said to her I would like to hear her play some more tunes on the piano, and I gave her my hand and led her back to the piano bench. She began to pick out some tunes with those long, delicate fingers of her right hand, and the tears began to gradually fade from her troubled blue eyes. As I stood beside the piano, I had this overwhelming desire to cup her beautiful face in my hands and, softly pressing my lips to the lids of those beautiful eyes, gently kiss away the tears.

At that moment, I recalled I had seen you crying once, when we were at Camp Man-a-toba the summer of 1948. You had just lost a rifle shooting match to some older boy from Elkton County and had slipped off by yourself and gone behind the mess hall. I had never seen you cry before, and I've never seen you cry since. I had followed you from the rifle range to try and console you for your loss, and was watching you, unseen, around the corner of the mess hall. In that moment, I had the same overwhelming desire, this huge craving, to go to you, where you sat disconsolate on the ground with the tears welling up in your eyes, just

like your mother's. And I wanted to cup your beautiful, delicate face in my hands and kiss those beautiful eyelids, wiping away the tears with my lips . . . then I would clutch your soft, delicate, tear-stained face lightly and press it protectively against my chest and tell you not to worry, not to cry, that you were really a better shot than that boy from Elkton County. But the moment passed; and I never saw you cry again and I guess I never will.

I watched your mother pick out tunes on the piano for a while and she gradually began to lose herself in her thoughts and did not seem to realize I was still there. The image of that beautiful, tragic, fragile woman with those tears welling up in her eyes will remain in my mind forever. In fact, for a moment the thought brushed across my mind that it was infamous of me to want to violate in an earthy, sexual way the body — the fragile, beautiful only son — that had been produced in the womb of this lovely woman.

As I drove back to Red Creek, I decided it had been a mistake to have injected myself into the lives of those two disturbed, fragile souls. I suspect, when there are no reminders, tragic, troubled people like your mother and Arnold are able to put their distant, unbearable anguishes in a remote part of their mind and create another, less painful reality. And I'm not sure anyone does them a favor by dredging up the painful memories of past realities they may not have been able to face.

Looking forward to your visit and the camping trip with awe and anticipation. I will be ready. And I will be there. Incidentally, are you still a hunter and a fisherman? My boy, Roger Jr., wants someone to take him hunting or fishing. I have taken up fishing some since I've grown up — not hunting — but I'm really not too good at it.

I remember you were an expert. I'm sure you could teach him more in a day than I could in a year, if you have the time.

Your buddy,

Roger Stockwell



## CHAPTER EIGHT

**CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOM PEDDIGREW**

JUNE

19 Rio Pinar Plaza  
Caracas, Venezuela  
June 4, 1974

Dear Roger,

It was interesting to hear where everybody is from Troop 44 and what they are doing. There is something I can tell you that may help you understand about Jack Magro's hostile outlook. If you don't know this, you must have been one of the few people around back then that didn't know. Mr. Magro did not leave Carlton College by choice; he was asked to leave. In fact, I was sort of surprised to hear that he was invited back to Carlton to give a concert. But I guess, fortunately, people forget scandal after so many years. Or, perhaps none of the faculty there is the same as when Mr. Magro was there. He was given the opportunity to resign, but he did not have any choice.

It happened about a week after his son Wally's funeral.

There were those who said he might still be distraught by his son's death and he should be forgiven, but Judge Driscol was in no mood to forgive and he was on the Board of Regents of the college. He let the president know that if Mr. Magro was not fired he would see that criminal charges were brought against him. Judge Driscol was not about to let anybody violate his precious Jamie and get away with it. My mother was back in the hospital at the time and I was staying at the Judge's house so I heard it all. In fact, Jamie told me all about it. As I think about it now, when I was staying at the Judge's house I used to violate his precious Jamie almost every night. Judge Driscol probably would have had me boiled in oil if he'd ever known. He was a stern, moralistic old gentleman.

Anyway, you remember that Jamie took private piano lessons from Mr. Magro at the Carlton Music School on Wednesday afternoons after school, and normally Jamie would walk home afterwards. On the Wednesday a week and a half after Easter, when Wally drowned, Judge Driscol drove down to the Music School to pick Jamie up. It was raining and Jamie still had a slight cold from the Easter weekend camping trip. Judge Driscol knew where Mr. Magro's studio was and he walked up, and without knocking, walked right in. According to Jamie, what the Judge saw made him turn about three shades of purple. Mr. Magro had Jamie on his lap, kissing him, with his hand down in Jamie's unbuckled britches.

Jamie said the old Judge was so upset he couldn't speak. He walked over, yanked Jamie off Mr. Magro's lap, buckled Jamie's britches, all the while giving nervous, petrified Mr. Magro his sternest judicial look of indignation. Jamie said the Judge dragged him from the room and out of the building and drove him to Dr. Milton's office downtown, never informing the baffled doctor what injury

or ailment he should look for. Jamie said the Judge later questioned him closely, after they got home, about whether anything like that had ever happened before, and Jamie told him it had not. But Jamie told me that Mr. Magro had been playing around with him that way since about his third lesson in September. And you know affectionate, wanting-to-please Jamie. If Mr. Magro wanted to suck his cock it would not bother him in the least. Who knows that any better than I!

Judge Driscoll had not intended for the story to get out, but you know how it is in a small town. The Judge had called the college president and demanded that Mr. Magro be fired. He even took the step of having a warrant sworn against him for contributing to the delinquency of a minor, in case the college did not fire him. Pretty soon the story of the incident was all over town, and everybody knew but, apparently, you. I guess Mrs. Magro was humiliated and she took Jack and went back to her home in Virginia. Mr. Magro was allowed to finish the last month of that semester at Carlton. But the Judge made them agree that someone in addition to his student had to be in his studio at all times when he was teaching.

As might be expected, Jamie's reaction was that he was sorry to see him leave. He said that Mr. Magro was a good piano teacher, and when there was any horsing around it was done after his half-hour lesson was over. Only Jamie would look at it that way. On the camping trip to Algonquin State Park over the Christmas holidays that year, when Mr. Magro went along for the first time as assistant scoutmaster, we all found out, except you and the twins, that Mr. Magro could join in all the 'boyhood' games. He caught Chad, Arnold, and me horsing around. We were just jerking each other off behind a picnic shelter. I think he had followed us to spy. We expected him to be shocked

and give us the lecture on ‘abusing ourselves.’ But in his meek, mild way he just told us to keep on doing what we were doing and he watched. Chad finally got him to join in, and, before it was over with, Chad and Arnold had pretty well done the little man in. But it was obvious he was enjoying every minute of it.

It seems odd to me now that Judge Driscoll could be so sanctimonious and wrathful over somebody being loving and affectionate with Jamie because nobody could have fondled Jamie any more than he did. In fact, I think the thing that made puritanical Judge Driscoll so angry was that he saw in Mr. Magro’s lust for Jamie a weakness he had and could not face. It was as though by getting so outraged at Mr. Magro over his transgression, he could prove to himself that he really condemned such despicable and immoral behavior. But — no question about it — after old Judge Driscoll had a few glasses of sherry after dinner, and the housekeeper had gone home, he would take Jamie on his lap and squeeze and caress him in a way that, if it was on film, it would have to be X-rated. But little Jamie didn’t give a damn. He would usually just go to sleep.

I don’t think Judge Driscoll ever really got over Jamie’s death. Maybe he was able to get through the day all right, but in the evening he would hit the sherry bottle harder than ever. Sometimes, he would get high and begin to ‘talk’ to Jamie soothingly and reassuringly, as though he was right there on his lap, babbling on and on about how he would never let anyone lay a hand on him again and how he would always be there to protect him. It was kind of ridiculous and absurd — and heart-breaking and touching at the same time. And you were right when you implied in your article that Judge Driscoll may have blamed Chad for Jamie’s death. He sent Chad to the reform school at Perrytown for some minor offense. But I think he



would have sent him to the electric chair if he could have found a reason.

Old Judge Driscoll, in his dotage and under the influence of his sherry, sometimes tried to pretend I was Jamie. On occasion he would try to drag me on his lap in the evening and maul me over. He would even call me 'Jamie' at those times, and I found all those episodes fairly repulsive. At fourteen, I certainly believed I was too old to be on the lap of a senile old fart, with him caressing and fondling me and calling me 'Jamie, honey' and stuff like that. Once, when he dragged me on his lap, I decided to give him a dose of his own medicine. I reached down and gave his half-stiff old cock a good squeeze through his trousers, and boy! that really sobered him up fast. He reared up, dumping me on the floor, and left the room, shocked and humiliated.

You can bet he didn't try horsing around with me again for a long time. I guess I should not be so harsh on the old gentleman. After all, he did raise and educate me, and, in many ways, he was very kind and generous. I guess what I really resented most about him was not his impotent and feeble sexual advances, but his trying to make me a substitute for Jamie.

You asked in your letter whether I might be able to take your boy on a hunting trip. I don't hunt any more. When I was in high school I had an experience similar to the one you described in your article about killing the cardinal on Christmas morning. I was out on the archery range in the Algonquin State Park practicing with my bow. It was late in the day in early summer, about dusk. Off to the right of the range, about forty yards away, I spotted a doe in a dense thicket. And like you with your air rifle and the cardinal, I impulsively turned and shot an arrow toward it. Just as I released the arrow, I realized how inane

it was because, even if I hit the deer, I would not be able to claim it since it was not deer season.

I was happy to see the deer still standing after the arrow slashed into the thicket, and I immediately went to try and retrieve the arrow. As I approached the thicket I was surprised that the doe did not run away. When I got close enough to see through the bushes, I could see that the doe was hovering over her dead fawn with my arrow sticking from its chest. The doe was whining, the most desolate cry that I had ever heard. Her big liquid eyes even looked like they were shedding tears. It reminded me too much of Judge Driscoll's grieving when Jamie died. And I have never been able to bring myself to hunt and kill animals again.

I appreciate your going to see my mother and Arnold, even though it apparently turned out to be less than a happy experience for you. After reading your letter I have mixed emotions about visiting them, but I suppose I will. Like you say, dredging up the past may only be painful and bring recall of anguish long forgotten. After all these years I can not say that I have forgiven my mother any real or imagined 'hurts' she may have inflicted on me. But, if I take Allen with me when I go to visit mother, that will give us something to dwell on to avoid the past. Maybe you're right about what you imagined about Arnold. Maybe I did hypnotise him and forget to bring him out of it. I'll remember to snap my fingers when I visit him and see if that brings any results.

Has it ever occurred to you that I might have you hypnotised into your apparent huge attraction to me? Maybe my hypnotic powers are drawing the helpless moth into the consuming flame. The time is drawing very near when we will find out. Our camping trip will begin only ten days, four hours, and twenty-seven minutes

from now. (That's taking the difference in time zones into consideration.) Actually, I am as uncertain about my hypnotic powers from childhood as you are. But they did actually seem to work on you and Chad — and perhaps Arnold as well. I'll have to try and hypnotise you again on this camping trip. But if I have to hypnotise you to get you to 'soar to heights,' it just would not be worth it. I'll see if I can't accomplish that without resorting to occult powers.

In your letter you said you were baffled by some of the things my mother said. Perhaps I can explain some things that will help you understand. I don't know why I'm going into this, but since I've already started delving into the past in my letters to you regarding matters that I have tried to put out of my mind, I reckon there is no reason to stop now. I guess one of the main curative powers of psychiatry is that if you can bring things out in the open by discussing them, it will make those things less ominous and easier to face. And perhaps, if we keep up this correspondence after our camping trip, I will be able to delve even deeper. There is no shortage of 'secrets' from my past to sustain a long-running correspondence.

There was one small, seemingly insignificant assertion in your article that was not quite the truth. I did not meet Chad deer hunting. Chad's dad, Josh Hartley, hunted often at one time with my father, but I never went deer hunting with Chad but once. And it was not really a deer hunt — it was a man hunt. But I'll save that story for a later time. The way I met Chad was that he came to my house one evening with his dad to see my mother. He continued to come on a lot of evenings with his dad after that. You see, Josh Hartley was taking Chad with him to keep his wife from getting suspicious when he left the house on evenings he visited my mother. Josh Hartley

had met my mother when he came by to pick my dad up to go hunting in the fall of 1947. At that time, behind my father's back, my mother and he had agreed to get together when my father was out of town.

You see, as hard as it may be for you to believe, that fragile, tragic, beautiful woman you described was a nymphomaniac. In other words, she had to have a cock and be mauled over often or I think she would have gone out of her mind which, of course, she eventually did. My dad was a state trooper and had to be away often so there were a lot of men before Josh Hartley. It seemed the meaner and cruder they were, the more my mother liked going to bed with them. I know that's hard to believe about that 'refined,' fragile, beautiful woman with every hair in place, isn't it? And my father, who had a brutal, sadistic temper suspected there were other men. Whenever he came home there would be horrible scenes of cussing, beatings, and pleading.

In fact, I am sure that my father was just one of her many night visitors before I was born, and he just happened to get her pregnant. So one could rightfully say that he must have known what he was getting. My dad was married to Arnold's mother and divorced her to marry my mother. I don't think he was altogether convinced that he was my father. As I got older, I remember that many times when my father was mad at my mother, he would growl that he did not see how that blond, fragile, little bastard could be his son. My father was tall, husky, and dark-featured, much the same as Arnold.

And of all the crude, sadistic lovers my mother had, Josh Hartley ranked with the best of them — or I should say the worst. When my father was away that fall of 1947, he and Chad would arrive at the house soon after dinner. He was usually still grimy and sweaty from working in the

mines, not even having bothered to change clothes and clean up. Usually, he stopped off at a beer joint on the way and was half drunk and screaming obscenities in all directions when he arrived. They would come into the kitchen and sit at the table while my mother finished washing the dishes. With Chad and me still in the room, he would often go over to my mother at the sink and reach down in the top of her dress and start fondling her breasts. Or, he might bend down and place his hand on her leg below her dress and then slowly run his hand up her leg and reach into her panties. It would not be very long before he would drag her off — with little resistance — to the bedroom, spewing his obscenities, undressing her, and mauling her over as they went.

My mother would be so excited she would often forget to shut the bedroom door, and Josh Hartley could have cared less about privacy. Chad and I would sit in the kitchen, with the animal grunts and moans of love-making coming from the bedroom. There would be occasional screams of ecstasy and delight from my mother. Chad would sometimes go to the door and, self-consciously, make crude comments as he watched. But I usually just sat transfixed, mortified. It was just incredible to me that a person I found otherwise to be so warm, gentle, kind, considerate, and loving could allow herself to be so humiliated and abused, even for the obvious great pleasure it brought her. But I guess it all had to do with the affliction known as nymphomania that seemingly produced cravings and appetites that removed all inhibitions and transcended rational behavior.

And now I will sink deeper into the mire of memory and tell you about something that happened later that fall, after Josh Hartley entered the picture as my mother's sometime lover. What did my mother mean when she said

she had deserted me, let me do things — had me do things — when she was feeling lonely and unloved? Even with her occasional crude and degenerate behavior, which I think my mother was powerless to resist, I still loved my mother very much. I loved her until one thing happened that I was never able to forgive her for. And I still have not forgiven her to this day. As I said, mother was a very warm and loving person. My mother showered her greatest warmth and affection on me as a child.

I was even able to forgive her those animal scenes of seduction that took place in the bedroom because, otherwise, she was really a good person and a good mother. I just tried to wipe those scenes from my mind and pretend they never happened. Sometimes faint blue bruises on my mother's soft pink face were the only reminders of a repulsive scene of carnal lust and satisfaction from the night before. But the time came when a new, frightening, and forbiddingly pleasurable encounter was to take place between me and my mother.

Once that fall, when my father returned home after being away several days, he had seen some faint bruises on my mother's face that she was not able to satisfactorily explain. My father suspected the truth — that she had been with a man while he was away. He was not to learn until later that the man was his old hunting buddy, Josh Hartley. He went into a rage and slapped her, beat her, and cussed her until she begged forgiveness and promised she would never cheat on him again. My father informed her he was going to be home a full month and, to punish her, he was going to sleep in the guest room. There would be no lovemaking for a month, and then perhaps she would learn how to be without a man while he was away. He told her that during the day he would be cruising by the house often and that if he caught her going out alone or any

man coming into the house, he would kill her. And he said the law would be on his side. He told her I was to do our grocery shopping after school.

As the days went by, I watched my mother get more nervous and edgy. She had tranquilizers the doctor had prescribed that she often took, but that did not seem to do much good. I wanted so much to comfort her but I did not know what to do. One afternoon, when I came in from school, my mother seemed to be in more pain and anguish than I had ever seen her. She told me that after I changed out of my school clothes she wanted me to go to the store for her. While I was in my room undressing, I heard a painful sob from her room. Still in my underwear, I rushed down the hall to her room and found her sitting on the edge of the bed with an expression of agony on her face and her hands gripped tightly around the bed post.

I rushed to her and asked her what the matter was. She opened her eyes, looked at me with a terror-stricken expression, and I stepped back in fright. She reached out with shaky hands and grasped my shoulders. I wanted to run in fright, but I could not. She pulled me to her — against her — and for a brief moment I felt her sharp nails digging into the small of my back. Her hands slid down and grasped the back of my thighs pressing my body harder against hers. Then she abruptly released me and ran from the room. Still trembling, I went back to my room and dressed, wishing that I knew a way to relieve her of that terrible frustration and anguish that seemed to possess her.

The next morning at breakfast my mother asked me to stay home from school that morning because she did not feel well. She said she wanted me to run some errands and go by the drug store and get a prescription filled.

After the events of the afternoon before, I was somewhat apprehensive. And I thought my father looked a little suspicious, but he didn't say anything, and he left for the state police barracks at the usual time. As he was preparing to leave I wanted to get out of the house and not be left alone with my mother, so I asked her for the prescription and left for the drug store. I took as much time as I could getting downtown to the drug store and back home again. When I got back to the house I entered quietly by the back door and put the medicine on the kitchen table. I was retreating quietly out the back door and planning to go on to school when I heard my mother's calm voice call from her room.

"Tom, is that you? Will you come here a moment?" she called.

I trudged obediently but reluctantly to the doorway of her bedroom, though not as apprehensive as I might have been, because her voice did not have that anxious quality to it. When I saw her sitting at her dressing table brushing her then long, blond straight hair, for some reason I got very apprehensive again. She was wearing her blue-silk dressing gown and had her back to me, but she could see me in the doorway in her mirror. She got up slowly and walked over to the edge of the bed and sat down. And she motioned for me to come to her. Reluctantly, like the proverbial moth drawn to the fatal flame, I went. When I was beside her she stood up and slowly removed her dressing gown and laid it on a chair beside the bed. I guess I was not surprised to see that she was completely naked underneath. I averted my eyes from her. I had seen her naked in brief glimpses before, from a distance. But never this close, this intentional. I finally looked up at her face and it was trance-like, as though she had willed herself to do whatever she was about to do. She



sat calmly back down on the bed.

“Tom,” she said, “I have a pain in my back. I would like you to rub it.”

She laid back and rolled over on her stomach and indicated a place in the small of her back with her hand. I hesitantly sat on the edge of the bed and began to rub a small area of skin in the center of her back, carefully avoiding the beautifully curved and full buttocks just below the tips of my nervous fingers. After a couple of minutes, as I now fully expected, she turned over on her back and looked up at me.

Indicating with a wave of her hand the flesh inside her thighs, she said, “Tom, would you rub me there for a few minutes?” She closed her eyes in anticipation.

I began to gently rub the inside curves of her thighs. Somehow, I was too frightened, too transfixed, to realize I was getting sexually aroused. I tried to look elsewhere, but my eyes were glued to the little mound of flesh just above her thighs, its bristly blond hair flowing outward in all directions from the center of the mound. Every hair seemed to be in place. I had never seen a naked woman that close before, and I was fascinated along with my fright. My eyes would occasionally dart to the firm, conical breasts which heaved gently and softly as she whimpered with small moans of pleasure.

“A little higher! A little higher!” she finally whispered with her eyes still closed.

I gradually worked my fingers up to the base of the mound with my finger tips making tentative swipes against the blond, bristly hair. I could feel the blood rushing to my head and my heart pounding as my fingers began to caress the edges of that inviting, forbidden mound. A cold sweat seemed to be breaking out on the palms of my hands, and I was suddenly aware that my penis had gotten

stiff and was pressing firmly against my underpants.

My mother slowly sat up and began to unbutton my shirt. A part of my mind told me I should bolt from the room, and another part thwarted my will and forced me to stay. I was being drawn into the flame by a power and desire stronger than my fear and revulsion.

My mother slid my shirt from around my shoulders and tossed it on the chair with her dressing gown. Then she lifted my undershirt over my head and tossed it aside. There was a brief moment when I thought she was going to lose her will and cease. She paused and looked away for a moment, closing her eyes with an expression of mental pain. I desperately wanted her to stop and desperately wanted her to go on at the same time. When she turned back to me, she pointed to my shoes where my feet were still on the floor by the bed. I pulled my feet up on the bed, and she removed my shoes and socks momentarily caressing my bare feet with her hand.

Then, with a look of resolve, she reached up and unbuckled my belt, and unsnapped and unzipped my britches. With a gentle motion, as I lay back on the bed, she scooted my pants and underpants from beneath my buttocks. I arched my thighs upward — the way you said you did on that rock by the Algonquin River — to assist her. She worked them down over my feet and tossed them on the chair.

My stiff little penis stood erect below my belly as I eyed my mother apprehensively but longingly. I suddenly realized how inadequate my little penis was going to be in trying to satisfy the huge craving of this desperate, agonizing woman. My mother reached out and took my head between her hands and pulled my face toward her left breast. She pressed my mouth against the nipple and, with her thumb and forefinger, she squeezed on the

corners of my lips so my mouth was forced open to receive it. Instantly I understood what she wanted and I began to suck, almost instinctively. She reclined slowly back on the bed and my sucking lips followed her nipple down.

Then she grasped my right hand with her hand and gently, forcefully using her fingers to guide mine, she showed me she wanted me to dig and thrust my hand down into the creviced opening in that mound of flesh. Her hand pressed my fingers to dig deeper and deeper into that crevice. With her other hand she began, at first, to dig her nails into my buttocks. Then she clutched and massaged my small erected penis and scrotum between her finger tips. Finally she clutched my buttocks again, pressing my erected penis into the side of her thigh. She inserted her long-nailed forefinger gently into my anus, causing a sharp, pain and an ecstatic sensation of pleasure at the same time. By applying and relieving pressure on her long-nailed forefinger in my anus she set my body in a slow, rhythmic rising and falling motion, rubbing my stiff penis and scrotum against her thigh. At that moment I felt the sensation of a non-fluid ejaculation.

After that sensation had passed I was repulsed by my behavior and more repulsed than ever by my mother's actions. I wanted to get away, to hide, but her trembling, moaning body indicated only more craving for an ecstasy beyond me. Why? Oh! Why couldn't I assuage that desire — that soaring to the heights for one that I loved? I mechanically continued to suck her breast and dig my fingers into her crevice but there was no will to continue.

Suddenly I felt a hand grasp my upper forearm and I knew immediately by its roughness that it was not my mother's. With one brutal motion I felt myself being flung from that trembling, moaning body to the carpeted floor. I looked up and saw my father in his state trooper's

uniform, hovering above and looking down toward me, his face red with rage.

“So you want to suck something!” he snarled. “I’ll give you something to suck,” he screamed. And he ripped the zipper down on his trousers and flung out his long, dark penis and dangled it above me.

“Now, get up here and suck it,” he bellowed.

I did nothing, too frightened to move. He bent down on one knee over me and, with his thumb and forefinger, grabbed and squeezed my small scrotum until the pain was almost unbearable.

“Suck!” he ordered menacingly.

At that moment I saw my mother slip on her dressing gown and rush from the room. At that moment my huge love for her turned to a hate that I am sure is beyond your comprehension — and I still hate her even if I may have some compassion for her condition.

Under the pressure of pain in my clutched scrotum, I crawled forward, tilted my face upward, opened my mouth and forced myself to close my lips around the tip of that long, dark, limp penis. But I could not bring myself to move my lips in a sucking motion.

He slapped me viciously across the face forcing my head back from his groin.

“Suck!” he screamed.

Again I forced myself to press my lips around the tip of his penis. Again I could not bring myself to suck. Again he slapped my face and yelled in rage. Again and again he slapped my face away and commanded me to ‘suck!’ And each time I would try anew, but I was too repulsed to get beyond just putting that ugly penis between my lips. Finally I was able to achieve a faint, half-hearted sucking motion. He slapped my face away again and stormed angrily from the room and went to the kitchen where my

mother had retreated.

And I heard him begin to yell obscenities at her and beat her. Her wretched cries filled the house, but I did not care. She was getting what she deserved. I just lay there on the floor in an exhausted, bruised heap, actually relishing every scream of pain from my mother. I hated her and her suffering was her just reward.

In a couple of minutes, as often happened at the conclusion of the brutal physical fights between my parents, they came into the bedroom and tumbled on the bed in an orgy of love-making. My mother screamed in ecstatic delight, overcoming the drought of carnal contact that she had endured for two long weeks.

I lay there on the bedroom floor, watching them through my tear-stained eyelids and jealous with rage that I had not been able to produce that ecstatic moment — that release from desiring, wanting, craving - that soaring to the heights, if you will, for that woman that I had loved once. It suddenly dawned on me that my mother had intended that I get caught in my feeble efforts at love-making with her. She had known that my father was watching, waiting. She knew he would go into a jealous rage, and the scene would end with this orgy of love-making that she so desired, so craved. And then I hated her in a way that no words can describe — in a way that only a person who had loved so deeply could hate so completely.

Well, that's enough expurgation of the forbidden past from my psyche for one letter. Perhaps, in the next installment, I will cover such subjects as how I both loved and hated my father and why; where 'the game' surely must have originated; those 'unspeakable cruelties' that my mother mentioned were inflicted on me and Arnold by our father; and how, in a couple of instances, 'the game'

was played with death as the ultimate outcome. And maybe even about those pictures that were my captors.

I guess this will be the last correspondence before we meet for our long-awaited camping trip. Incidentally, Allen is looking forward to the trip to Red Creek. I told him I was going camping with ‘that man’ who helped him with the crossword puzzle at Dulles Airport. He just smiled that knowing smile of his and said he would like to go camping with us. I told him not this time — that he could, perhaps, go camping with your boys.

“Shucks!” he said in mock disappointment, “I guess you can’t win them all.”

And then he flashed me that knowing, good-natured smile again and left the room. The more I live around Allen, the less I can claim to understand him any better. But, like Jamie, he sure is one in ten thousand.

Your buddy,

Tom Peddigrew

507 Braddock Ave.  
Red Creek, W. Va.  
June 26, 1974

Dear Tom,

I guess, from what you told me before you left, you will have to be inland at the oilfield camp for a couple of weeks. How bad was the fire? That was sure a tough break to get called back to South America when you had been on your vacation for only part of a week and a weekend. But I guess they would not have reached you and asked you to return unless they really needed you. I suppose they'll let you have your full six-week vacation as soon as you have made out the purchase orders to replace the equipment destroyed in the fire. I believe you said you would have to fly to Los Angeles to place those orders as soon as you assessed the damage and found out what needed to be replaced.

Incidentally, Allen is getting along fine. Don't worry about leaving him here for as long as you need to. My boys think he is the greatest, and my wife just adores him. Roger Jr., who is only a little over a year older than he, is protective toward him the way I was toward Chalky. And Allen seems to have a civilizing effect on those rambunctious twins. My wife never stops raving about what a wonderful little fellow he is. I guess I don't need to go into my feelings about Allen. I'm afraid I have to admit that at times I still feel the attraction come over me that I had for him that day at Dulles. But, with my wife and boys around, I am able to restrain and limit myself to an occasional pat on his rear end. Apart from that attraction, I like him as a person, too. Let him stay here as long as

you like. However, I am afraid if you let him stay with us too long, it will break all our hearts when he has to leave.

If you want, I can put him on a plane so he can meet you when you fly to Los Angeles. But I hope you will let him stay at least part of the summer here. I think he's really satisfied and is enjoying himself. He's looking forward to going on a camping trip with me and the boys over the July 4th weekend. Actually, I don't know why he shouldn't be satisfied. He has all five members of the Stockwell family, and even my mother when she visits, treating him like he's solid gold. I have decided that Allen inherited all the 'loving' qualities of Jamie and all your qualities of 'attraction.' So, in a way I guess he has the best of two worlds, Jamie's and yours. He has the ability to attract people to him and also the ability to satisfy people's need to be loved.

Believe it or not, he went to a scout meeting at the Braddock Hill Baptist Church, Troop 123, last Tuesday evening with Roger Jr. And when they came back they were all excited about plans to go on a camping trip next month — to Algonquin State Park, of all places. Does all that have a familiar ring to it?

Chalky Bertram called me on the phone two evenings ago, and it was really great talking to him again after all these years. He wants me and the boys to come to Morgantown on the July 4th weekend, and he will take us on a three-day raft trip on the Cheat River, starting way back in Tucker County where Blackwater Falls is. I told him about your boy Allen being here and that you might be able to return by then. You did not talk about your plans for the rest of your vacation before you left. Chalky said to bring your boy along, and you, too, if you should get back. He said that even though he was not one of your more ardent admirers as a child, he would enjoy seeing you.



He laughingly said we'd better not plan to get in a session of 'the game' on this camping trip. He said at our age we might have heart failure from all the excitement.

By the way, the first installment of the article about Troop 44 will begin in the "Mountain Scene Magazine" next week. We had been waiting for some pictures, that Mr. Bertram promised to send of the troop, to go along with the article. You remember he always used to be snapping our pictures at scout meetings, on hikes, and on camping trips, and at campfires. Mr. Bertram must have written his wife in Mississippi to go through his stuff and find those pictures because they arrived in the mail from Mississippi the day after you left for South America. I had asked Mr. Bertram about the pictures in my first letter to him. I was really excited in getting those pictures and seeing everybody the way they looked back then, and they were just perfect for the article.

I was so fascinated by those pictures that I hated to give them up so the guys in the composing room could start processing them. The magazine and the newspaper have run ads announcing the article, this past week and there seems to be a lot of interest locally. I guess it's just possible that it's the same old gossip-hungry crowd waiting to see if some new morsels of scandal will be revealed. I'm still considering writing a follow-up article telling about everyone who survived. But, perhaps, not. I can't get up much enthusiasm for the project.

Mr. Bertram seems to have taken pictures of everything. I don't remember him taking that many. There are shots of us at scout meetings at Braddock Hill Church; shots of us on those camping trips to Algonquin State Park when Arnold was injured before I even joined the troop. And do you know who is in the center of just about all those pictures? You, of course! Looking at those

pictures makes it very easy to tell who the photographer's favorite scout was.

The thing that struck me most about the pictures, other than your being the focus of attention, was how we looked in that war paint and the Indian outfits when we were doing our war dance. I remembered us as looking like fierce, menacing and ferocious little savages. We actually looked like what we were — dewy-eyed, innocent little boys masquerading as savages, just as other little boys who put on their cap pistols and hosters and play cowboys and Indians. Even Chad and Arnold, whom I remembered as being particularly ominous-looking figures in that war paint and Indian garb, just looked like two little boy scouts decked out for fun and games. Oddly, the person who looked the most menacing in those pictures is you. Somehow, your lithe, slender, painted body is the only one that looked like it belonged in those poses caught in mid-action of savage abandon. Even the glint in your eyes looks authentic.

Another fascinating thing about those pictures, for a person who knew the people and the relationships, is that the pictures themselves reveal the various relationships. This is revealed by who is standing next to whom for identity, who is looking to whom for reassurance, who is looking at whom with admiration, whose hand is around whose shoulder in a childhood gesture of affection and love. I first noticed this story the pictures told when I looked through them after I laid them out in a chronological sequence. In the earlier pictures, I noticed I was always standing beside you, giving you admiring glances. In the later pictures, Jamie and I are usually huddled together with our arms around each other's shoulders. In most pictures, our eyes are still focused generally in your direction, my expression one of admiration and

Jamie's one of protectiveness and concern.

Since I have begun, I might as well give a rundown of everybody's attractions and loyalties as revealed by those pictures. I'll save my comments about what is revealed about you by those pictures for last because they reveal a rather interesting attraction, or at least, concern of yours. In all the pictures little Chalky, looking as defiant as I remember him, is hovering near me as I would have expected. The Magro twins, too, stayed in my general vicinity but were always clinging to each other as their primary attraction and loyalty. Specs and Luke Washburn were always a little apart, showing their aloneness and independence, but Specs would always be nearer to me and Luke nearer to you. But they did not seem to really identify with any of us. Just as Chalky is always near me, Arnold is always near you, with his vacant stare captured by the camera.

In the early pictures, languid little Jamie is all over the place with his arm draped around somebody's shoulder, and there is his ever-present companion, his dog Plato, either in his lap or by his side, except for the pictures taken during summer camp where he was not allowed to take his dog. But no matter where Jamie was, he always seemed to be casting a protective eye in your direction. Mr. Magro is in some of the later pictures, and he is usually standing next to his twins, but, believe it or not, now that I notice, he is usually casting a seductive eye in little Jamie's direction. In one picture he is even so bold as to have Jamie on his lap with his hands, ever so casually, on Jamie's thighs. And, as might be expected, Jamie looks content and oblivious to it all. Jamie was the only boy scout I know of who would allow himself to be photographed on somebody's lap.

Occasionally, Mr. Bertram would have one of us work

the camera and he would get in the picture. And whom would he always be standing behind, with his hand proudly on his shoulder? It was never his son Chalky, but always you. Chad, like Arnold, was always close beside you. But, surprisingly, he was never looking to you in admiration or even for confidence. He was close to you only, apparently, for identity. He is always staring straight ahead, appearing to be a rock of confidence. The pictures reveal it was you who seemed to have your eyes turned slightly in Chad's direction. It would appear that you were looking to him for something — because of something. And the look of yours is not one of admiration or seeking support. It appears to be one motivated more by fear or anxiety. I do not recall such a relationship existing, yet it is clearly shown in the pictures.

At any rate, I got really good pictures to illustrate the article. Next week, on the cover of "Mountain Scene Magazine" we are using a picture of all of us taken at a scout meeting at the Braddock Hill Church. It is of the opening exercises of a scout meeting, and we are all standing bright-eyed, clean-scrubbed and combed in our starched-and-pressed scout uniforms, grouped proudly behind our patrol flags. It illustrates the title, "Ill-fated Troop 44 Was Known As 'The Sunshine Boys,'" A more angelic, appealing group of little fellows you are never likely to lay your eyes on. We certainly don't look like the 'little band of rapists and cock suckers' that Chalky and you alluded to in your letters. Oddly, the reaction I have to publishing those pictures is to wonder if other people can read the relationships I can see in our poses and in our eyes. Will the love, lust, fear, and hate be as obvious to others as it is to me?

Well, I guess I can't put off discussing our weekend camping trip any longer. In many ways it was like our

original camping trip, a lot of promise, a lot of anticipation, but not much success. In fact, I guess I should say it was too much like our original camping trip. It would appear that our relationship is destined to come just so close and no closer. To say that I am not disappointed that I did not achieve the ‘soaring to the heights’ would be less than the truth, and I will not say it. I still crave that ultimate sensation as much as ever. And yet, I am not totally bleak, totally disconsolate over the failure. In an odd kind of way, in a way that I am not fully able to understand, I still have some vague hope, a subconscious whim, that it can still be achieved. Still, I have no reason, no rational basis, to justify that hope. Can I dare to hope that I can achieve in a second try what did not happen on the first?

Everything went so right, and yet everything that mattered went so wrong. Things started going ‘wrong’ when I was not apprehensive, not fearful about confronting you as I had been about the planned Dulles meeting. It had promised to be a beautiful weekend, even the weather could not have been more glorious. And, in many ways, it was a very moving experience, but not in the way I think we intended. On that Friday, I had hoped I would start getting excited, be apprehensive beyond belief, as the appointed time to meet you drew near. But it did not happen that way. I was excited but not so exhilarated as I would have thought.

You know, in some ways I think we waited too long. We communicated too much before we got together. Maybe it would have been better if we had gotten together in that cheap hotel room in D.C. Now that I think about it, even our letters reached their peak of passion and began to ‘descend down from the heights’ to other subjects before we got together. Perhaps we were like athletes that train too thoroughly, too well, before the event,

reach their peak and start to decline before the contest. Perhaps we seduced each other mentally and emotionally in our letters and had a vicarious ejaculation long before we got together. Now, if we had come together in D.C., it would have been a different story. I am sure one touch then would have shot those lighting bolts of pleasure all through me.

By the time we got together, I believe there had ceased to be a unity of desire for the same ‘soaring to the heights’ for me and the ‘pinnacle of success’ for you that we talked about in our letters. I still craved that ultimate sensation as much as ever, but somehow the belief had crept into my mind that in order to achieve it I would be using you in such a way that oddly, you desired most to be used but should not be used. I still believe that I could have allowed my mind, my emotions, to have let you send me ‘soaring to the heights.’ And that was exactly what you wanted but should not achieve. I had this foreboding that if I allowed you to do that to me, somehow your purpose, your mission in life, would have been expended. You would be like the salmon rushing upstream to die, like the lemmings rushing to the sea to drown, like the moth to the flame. It might take away your will to survive which, to me, seems strangely fragile at best. I guess it worried me that you kept referring to it as the ultimate success. So I subconsciously willed myself not to allow it to happen. But I guess it could be that failure as well as success might be equally fatal to you.

And yet, I do not have a total feeling of failure even though, by our earlier standards, our earlier expectations, it was failure indeed. I did not even achieve an ejaculation from our contact, much less the ultimate sensation. But I did not feel any repulsion or shameful sensations about the things that happened. And that may have been the

whole trouble. Before I got together with you, and except for you, the very thought of sexual contact with another male was — and is — totally repulsive to me. With you, however, it in no way seemed repulsive or even unnatural. Perhaps, if I had had that fearful sensation of doing something terribly forbidden, I would have gotten much more excited for our encounter. But I felt almost relaxed, almost comfortable, about everything as it happened. Normally, just to undress in front of anyone is slightly embarrassing to puritanical, modest me. But I did not feel that way when we were swimming naked down at the river that Saturday afternoon.

Somehow, as we played out the events of the weekend, we were like two fatalistic, well-rehearsed actors who knew our lines, our actions too well. We remembered it all so well, recalled it all so perfectly, that it had a certain predetermined, non-suspenseful quality. Everyone knew their parts from an earlier, well-remembered rehearsal. And there was not to be — there could not be — any deviation from the script. Deviation from the script, or perhaps casting aside of the script, was what was needed to give the presentation its ultimate triumphs and tragedies. Even the sensations, and there were some very pleasant ones, had a very worn, second-time-around feeling. Everything about the weekend was like an instant replay with the instant, in this case, being twenty-five years.

However, I have another impression about the weekend that needs to be explained. I had the feeling I was in a three-act play, and only two acts have been performed, that I am now just relaxing between the second and third acts. Usually, in the first act of a play, the plot is established and possible outcomes or climaxes are discussed, with a little suspenseful action thrown in to sustain interest. (The first act was our letters and our near en-

counter at Dulles Airport.) In the second act there is usually a lull in the action with some unexpected complications and events that serve to make the plot more complex. I have this vague, intuitive feeling — and incidentally, my intuition has been very good in the past — that we have just completed the second act. Our camping trip was the completion of act two.

As the third act now gets underway, the action progresses toward, perhaps, an unexpected climax, one that would not have been expected by the participants or the observers in act one. If it is a tragedy, the protagonist has to fall from a high place. But there has to be some dignity, some ultimate purpose or good achieved by his fall. Only a person of truly glorious dimensions can be the protagonist in a tragedy. If it is a comedy, or even a tragi-comedy -- a realistic play with a happy ending — the ‘good’ have to win out and survive and the antagonists have to be put in their place. It is even possible for the ‘bad’ guys to see the error of their ways and be won over to the ways of the ‘good’ guys. Which of the guys in our play is the protagonist and which is the antagonist? I am not sure. Is our play a comedy or a tragedy? There are certainly some comic aspects and some tragic possibilities. Only the third act will tell.

Let me review the weekend, which was to have been the ultimate climax but only turned out to be the second act, from my point of view. At least I am hopeful there will be another act. There have been some comedies — comedies of the absurd they call them — that only have two acts, go nowhere, and have no real ending. Everything went like clockwork. It had been anticipated so very long. But the production could not live up to its billing. I have to admit that by the time we met I was as curious about meeting Allen again under changed circumstances as I



was about our reaction to each other. But I was not dismayed or disappointed by my meeting with either of you. I was ready and willing to begin the script as planned.

Even Allen's introduction to my family went too perfectly. He took to my boys and wife, and they to him, as though it had been predestined. After loading our camping gear and food, we drove your rented Chevy the fifteen miles to the entrance of the Algonquin State Park. Even though the park gate was open we parked the Chevy and put on our packs. You had your canteen on a cartridge belt to strap around your waist. Then we began the three- mile hike to the overlook area of Harmon's Rock. The only thing between us had been some knowing glances. The talk had been small talk, relaxed and informal: 'How was the plane trip? ... Do you remember the old building over there on the right? . . . You can barely see Braddock Hill Church from the town any more . . . This is where we saw the thirteen deer in the glade.'

Everything was going to be too right — perhaps, too wrong. There was no tension, no anxiety between us. There was not even the anticipation that I remember so well from the only time we went camping alone together. Somehow, going camping with you alone as a boy had been my most silently cherished, unspoken, un-admitted desire. Surely, I thought back then, something wonderful, exhilarating would happen between us. Surely there would be that ecstatic molesting that I so craved from 'the game.' But now it all seemed like an act being played out by dutiful, sometimes animated, but mainly uninspired actors.

As I trudged with you along the road into the park, I was enjoying it in a nostalgic, bittersweet kind of way. I even looked forward to re-enacting those moments of passion. But there was no separate passion building up, no new excitement. It would be just another performance.

Once, when you were adjusting my pack along the road, you let your fingers linger lightly on my sides just above my waist. I thought to myself that that had been the first affectionate touch and I anticipated a reaction. I did feel slight stirrings in my penis and a slight tingle in my groin before we proceeded. Later you stopped and urinated along the side of the road, and I watched your penis dis- affectionately draining the yellow fluid, thinking this too should make me excited. Again I felt the slight tingle in my groin and my penis made a slight effort to erect. But it had none of the fire, the burning passion in me, that had erupted when I watched Allen urinate in the rest room at Dulles Airport.

We even arrived at the overlook area just at the right time, just as it was getting dark, and took the same trail down to the right of the overlook area to picnic shelter number seven. I guess it was really hard to tell what either of us was thinking by observing each other. The conversation remained relaxed and casual, with no mention, no hint, of the earlier much-anticipated events that were expected to take place. When we rolled our sleeping bags out on the picnic table, you made the first comment that referred even indirectly to our reenactment.

"I suppose mine will fit into yours," you said, indicating the sleeping bags. And then you laughed, realizing the possible double meaning of your statement.

"I mean my sleeping bag into your sleeping bag, of course," you added with a smile.

I laughed, also, when I caught the double meaning. That really surprised me — that I would be able to laugh at the other implication of your statement. We made a fire and cooked our dinner in the fireplace in the shelter as we had done before. We laughed and talked and, for me at least, the weekend was taking on a pleasurable dimen

sion I had not suspected possible. I was beginning to enjoy the here and now of the situation, quite apart from the anticipated events.

After a while you undressed down to your underwear as we sat on the wooden bench by the fireplace. To protect yourself from the cool night air, you pulled your sleeping bag from the table and got into it and sat next to me on the bench. There, in the half darkness of the shelter, with only the flickering, dying fire to give light, your face looked just like the young Tom Peddigrew I knew as a boy. There were the same gentle mannerisms, the same lowered and sad, downcast eyes, the same heavy eyelids. . . . Suddenly I had an urge to convey a deeply held affection I've always had for you — apart from my passionate longing. The best way would have been, I am sure, just to have told you how I felt. But we had not talked that kind of talk, and I felt helpless to express it. I had an urge to let you know that you would not always have to be the aggressor, the seeker, in our relationship. I wanted to show you that I could now meet you halfway. But I did not want to do anything that would seem to be a part of the play of passion that was to be acted out over the weekend. Those acts must be completed, played out in their own time and place.

At that moment, as campfires often will, the smoke billowed out from the fireplace and engulfed you, causing you to cough and rub your eyes as you pulled your head inside your sleeping bag. When the smoke changed its direction, channelling itself up the chimney again, you uncovered only your face.

In the firelight I could see the tears welling up in your eyes because of the smoke. That reminded me immediately of the time at Camp Man-a-toba when you had lost that rifle match and had gone behind the mess hall to cry

alone, and I had followed and, unobserved by you, had seen those huge tears welling up in your eyes. I had wanted then to comfort you so badly, but I had not. And I thought I had missed the chance forever to comfort you when you were crying. There in the picnic shelter I had thought, this is my last chance. And I reached over and took your face between my hands and guided your head gently down so it was lying face upward on my lap as you reclined on the bench. There was only your tear-stained face showing, the rest of you covered, wrapped in the sleeping bag. And then I bent down over your face and gently wiped the edges of those tear-stained eyes with my lips, brushing against those beautiful, long, soft eyelids.

I had known right at that moment that the most moving and meaningful part of the weekend for me had been achieved. There had been no sexual fulfillment about it, and that was good. I had not used you; I had comforted you. Even if my most memorable and sought-after craving for you was to achieve a sexual climax, there had been another, more dimly perceived desire to comfort you when you were crying. I had never expected, even dared hope, to achieve that unfulfilled longing. Right then I realized I had achieved a goal I had not sought, and I knew I was doomed to fail in the goal I had sought so desperately. I kept your head in my lap a long time relishing that moment of attainment. The tears had been produced by smoke and not heartbreak. Nonetheless, they were tears and I had brushed them away, comforted you.

After a while you rose and I got undressed down to my underwear and, without speaking, we put one sleeping bag inside the other and got inside together, our bodies clinging and pressing against each other. We had not even bothered to go through the pretense of being awakened in the night by a noise from the woods to frighten us to

sleep together. We had not even bothered to talk about escaped convicts and maniacs. I waited, with a kind of calm anticipation, for you to reach down into my underpants and begin the gentle groping and stroking of my penis and scrotum. When you did, the sensation was wonderful as my penis began to slowly erect, but it was not beyond all enduring. Then you slowly worked your hand around my buttocks, gently stroking my thighs and working my underpants gradually down around my knees. I even assisted you by raising slightly at my hips allowing the underpants to slide down more easily.

When you worked your head down into the sleeping bag so that your moist lips were brushing against my stomach and thighs, I did not pull my erected penis away, but let you take it between your lips and gently rub your tongue lightly over its tip before you drew it further in to roll and ply it gently about against your soft cheeks and palate. The sensation was wonderful but there was no 'soaring to the heights.' Over the next hour, with your lips and gentle fingers, you tried so desperately to bring that climax for me. And I so much wanted to tell you that I was not ready to let it happen, that it was only the second act. We could not have the play end in the second act. There was still another day, another night, to race to the climax. I did not pull away from your touch, your lips. But, as before, you finally gave up and masturbated your passion away and went to sleep. But I did not have that bleak feeling of an opportunity missed that I had had so many years before.

The next day, even with our failure from the night before, there was no tension between us. We dutifully, and with lighthearted anticipation, began our trek down the steep trail to the Algonquin River. It was a beautiful, sunshiny spring day with the birds chirping and the

mountain laurel blooming. Again we stripped naked. I was totally unselfconscious about it this time, and we swam and played in the rapids. In the swirling current I allowed, even helped, you to insert your stiff penis in my anus as we hurled linked as one down the cascading rapids into the quiet pool below. The sensation was good, even tremendous at times, but in a calm, warming sort of way. But there was no 'soaring to the heights.'

Then we lay on the rock in the sun and you played your hand over my thighs, lightly dancing your finger tips over my penis and scrotum. I lay with my eyes closed, unconcerned, waiting for the pleasant moment to come. When I felt your moist lips on my thighs, I arched my pelvis upward again, but this time your lips were there to receive my erected penis. It felt good, but there were no electric bolts of pleasure. You worked so hard with your fingers and your lips to achieve a climax for me. Again, I wanted to say to you, 'Not yet! The second act is not over. No climax, yet!' Finally, exhausted, you pressed your stiff penis and still firm scrotum against my thigh and, after a few pressing motions upward, you ejaculated your warm semen. That, too, was a delicious sensation from memory, but not overwhelming.

We continued to play out our well-rehearsed drama. That evening in our sleeping bags I became the aggressor. I, with no reservations this time, slid my hand gently down into your underpants and slowly squeezed and massaged your soft, warm genitals for over an hour, occasionally running my hand over your buttocks and digging a finger into your anus. There was the new sensation to my finger tips of the bristly pubic hair around your penis and scrotum and down in the crevice of your buttocks. Your scrotum had remained firm and bulging like a child's, not sagging and limp like most adults'. The sensation was

good but not beyond endurance.

I even had the added sensation of feeling you ejaculate warm semen into my massaging hand, letting me know I had, at least, brought a bolt of pleasure for you. That warm semen should have brought a pleasure far transcending the one twenty-five years before when I had felt only a small drop of semen, but it did not. When your ejaculation came, I withdrew my hand knowing that your passion had been spent again, for the last time, no doubt, on that camping trip. But there was not that disconsolate feeling as before. I still felt we were just winding up the second act . . . that there was more, another act, to come.

My heart went out to you that evening when, after you had been drained of your semen and your passion, you worked so hard to try to let me have my big moment, my 'soaring to the heights.' It was as though you thought it was your last chance, and I wanted to tell you that somehow I was not ready. It was not time for the big climax. At the end of the second act, there can only be a minor climax and that one had already occurred. Of course, there was every reason for you to believe it was your last chance. To you it must have seemed that when the camping trip was over the next morning, the chance for success, for that ultimate triumph, would be over. I knew how difficult the mechanics of sex must have been for you with your passion spent. And, as I said, my heart went out to you for the effort.

As though the script must be followed, no matter what, after I went to sleep I had a wet dream. It was the first one I had had in years. I guess it was not so unusual because I had not had relations with my wife the past week, saving up, getting ready, for our big moment. No doubt, I had a large supply of unspent semen waiting to be released. I had not had a wet dream since my wife and I

stopped having relations for over two months when she had complications in her pregnancy with the twins ten years before. I guess it is hard to believe that, having abstained from a release of semen for a week before our meeting, I could hold back an ejaculation through all we did, all you did to bring it about. But, like I say, it was as though I knew it was not time for the big climax. The right sensation was just not there, and I was just not about to allow it to happen until that right moment. I was still saving it for that 'soaring to the heights.'

Like you said it would be, when we packed and left that Sunday morning, there was no blaming, no remorse for our failure. I had my small victory, the wiping away of your tears with my lips, and I felt my big moment was, somehow, still in the offing. Even when we got back to town and you had that message at my house to fly immediately back to South America because of the fire, I was not disconsolate. When we put you on that chartered plane at the Red Creek Airport to take you to D.C., I somehow felt that the second act was just now ending.

By the way, I forgot to mention that when I had that wet dream on Saturday evening, in my dream I was watching Allen urinate in the rest room at Dulles Airport, of all things. Write soon and let me know your plans.

Your buddy,

Roger Stockwell



## CHAPTER NINE

**CORRESPONDENCE WITH TOM PEDDIGREW**

JULY

19 Rio Pinar Plaza  
Caracas, Venezuela  
July 4, 1974

Dear Roger,

I came back from the oil field today to Caracas to get packed to fly to Los Angeles, and I found your letter waiting. I am happy to hear that Allen is getting along well and appreciate your willingness to take care of him in this emergency. I have to come back to Caracas after I am in Los Angeles so I am still not sure when I can get back to Red Creek or will be able to arrange for Allen to meet me somewhere. If he should get to be too much bother, or if you and your family planned to go somewhere and can't take him, you can always leave him over with my mother's sister, Aunt Margo, in Canaan. While I'm thinking about it, because one never knows what can happen in all this flying and in fighting an oilfield fire, if anything should happen

to me, would you see that Allen is taken care of for me? I can't think of anyone I would rather have watch out for his welfare than you. I guess in my small, limited way, I have come to care about him — just as my father, Jake Peddigrew, in his limited way, cared about me. Incidentally, I have two rather sizable life insurance policies with Allen as the beneficiary so he would not be a financial burden.

My father, as I have already told you, had a mean, sadistic streak in him. He, similar to me, had been raised by a loving, caring mother and a cruel, drunken father who was a railroad engineer. At least, I guess I should be grateful my father was not a drunk like his. But then, perhaps his mother was not a nymphomaniac like mine. So he, no doubt, got his mean, sadistic streak from his father. Occasionally, and I think no one realized this because he had a reputation for being as mean as a rattlesnake, he had a 'caring' side of his nature that he must have gotten from his mother. He kept her picture on his chest of drawers and only spoke of her in the most reverent tones. But he only revealed his 'caring' side for brief moments and in hard ways for anyone to observe.

My father was something of a local legend concerning his ability to track and capture criminals and escaped convicts in the wilderness. Any time in West Virginia when escaped prisoners or fugitives from justice were thought to be on the loose outdoors, my dad was always called to the scene to lead the hunt. He was the bloodhound, so to speak, of the West Virginia State Police Force, and he could usually be counted on to get his man. It was tracking a criminal that brought about his death. As might be expected, my father's hunting and tracking skills were taught to him by his cruel, alcoholic father. So maybe there was some of the same kind of closeness between

my father and his father as there was between me and him. It was in the teaching of hunting and tracking skills that there existed a closeness between me and my father. But if there was such a closeness between them, my father never mentioned it. He always talked about his father's meanness and cruelties.

One of the reasons I think Judge Driscoll raised me was because, in a way, he felt partly responsible for my dad's death. I was not a blood relative of Judge Driscoll's. His only son was married to my mother's sister, that was Jamie's mother, and they were killed in an automobile accident. Anyway, there was this old moonshiner who lived over on Shaver's Mountain that kidnapped a sheriff's deputy at gun point in the fall of 1947. They sent my dad to track him down and, after about three days of tracking, he arrested him and put him in jail. However, Judge Driscoll let him out in a few weeks without pressing charges when the old moonshiner promised he wouldn't go back to operating his still. He could have gotten years for kidnapping a sheriff's deputy. As puritanical as Judge Driscoll was, he could be really compassionate when it came to mountain people and their law-breaking.

However, when he was captured, the old moonshiner had vowed he would one day get Dad. I remember Dad being really mad when Judge Driscoll let the moonshiner go free. Dad said he had gone to the Judge and pleaded with him to keep the moonshiner behind bars, but it had not done any good. It wasn't long before the moonshiner got in trouble again, and again they sent Dad to arrest him. That was between Christmas and New Years of 1947. Sure enough, my dad tracked the old moonshiner down and he shot my dad and killed him like he promised. I guess that's why Judge Driscoll felt kind of responsible for me. If he had not let the old moonshiner out of jail,

I wouldn't have been without a father.

When my dad was killed, I had mixed emotions. One part of me was glad because I would no longer have to put up with his cruelties and abuses. It had only been a few months since he had beaten me so badly when he caught me on the bed with Mother. And I would never forgive him for that just as I would never forgive her. But there had been some close, moving moments between my father and me when I had felt a strong attraction to him, a trust in him, that is hard to explain considering his cruelties. That is why, I guess, when I joined the newly- formed Scout Troop 44 two months later, at Judge Driscoll's and Jamie's insistence, I had been drawn to Mr. Bertram in the same way I was attracted to my father. That relationship too was to be one in which I was to be attracted and, eventually, repelled.

There was one story about my father, which he never denied, that was perhaps part legend, part truth. It was a story that held a lot of fascination for me and probably provided the germ of the idea that was to motivate me into promoting 'the game.' In the story, my father ends up killing a man, an escaped convict. It is interesting to me, now that I look back on it, that I have substituted seduction for killing as the object, the outcome, of 'the game.' There can not be much question that 'the game' was patterned after my father's legendary escapade. Could it be, in my scheme of things, that I substituted seduction as appropriately synonymous with dying? That perhaps seduction was a form of dying? I know that in my scale of values, seduction had nothing to do with love. My mother screwed Chad's father but she did not love him. Love-making occurred most often and most violently and completely when my father was in a rage at my mother.

One time, as the story goes, they called out my father

to track down an escaped convict, Hulitt Jones. Some people believed he'd murdered eleven people, including two state troopers, before he was captured and sent to the state penitentiary at Moundsville. But they were only able to convict him on one of the murders. When he was captured he was injured in a gun fight, and he was able to bust out of the prison infirmary at Moundsville over on the Ohio River. My dad, who incidentally was part Cherokee, tracked him for two days and discovered he was hiding on one of those wilderness islands on the Ohio River; an island, no doubt, like the one on the Algonquin River where we played 'the game.' My dad stripped, much like we did when we played 'the game,' and swam out to that island with only a knife for a weapon.

Dad was determined to find Hulitt on that island and take him back to the penitentiary. He tracked him until he found him holed up in a little cave. Hulitt had only a knife, like my dad had, for a weapon. He called out to Dad that he would rather die there than go back to Moundsville and be locked up all his life, and that he was not going to go back alive. Dad told him that since he was accused of killing two state troopers he would just as soon take him back dead as alive. Well, Dad is supposed to have made a deal with Hulitt.

He told Hulitt that he would give him a five-minute head start before he came after him . . . and only one of them would leave the island alive. Well, Hulitt turned out to be an elusive prey in the woods, and Dad spent the whole night tracking him. At about dawn, Hulitt leaped out of a tree on him and just missed stabbing Dad in the heart by a few inches. (Dad had a big scar down his side where Hulitt was supposed to have slashed him.) They struggled in a marsh until Dad was finally able to slide a knife between Hulitt's ribs. Thinking he was done for,

Dad got off him. Suddenly Hulitt came up reeling and staggering and leaped on Dad catching him by surprise. Dad swung his knife wildly and fiercely, jabbing the long, sharp blade to the hilt up Hulitt's rectum. That finished Hulitt off and he fell dead to the ground. Dad just buried him right on that spot and never reported that he had captured him. Dad said he did old Hulitt a favor because he was a mountain man and never could have stood being penned up in jail.

That capture was Dad's biggest one, his ultimate triumph. It seemed only right that it had been a personal triumph, one that others could not confirm or deny for sure. My sought-after goal, my ultimate triumph, was to accomplish a less brutal insertion in a rectum. Dad's prize was to finish off the meanest convict alive by a brutal stabbing; my prize was to screw the most unobtainable, untouchable, unreachable virgin. Just as I could imagine the orgiastic release of pent-up desiring, striving, craving when Dad jabbed his knife in old Hulitt's rectum, I too had my dreams, my fantasies, to slide my penis to its hilt in your rectum . . . thus the whole — thwarted — point of 'the game.' After twenty-five years, my obsession for fulfillment came within reach — the last hope, the last chance — and I prevailed! The joy, the satisfaction, was beyond words, beyond imagining.

For a while that day, the two of us and the river became the only beings left on earth — bound together in harmony, yet separate entities — with an ecstatic link between us. That link was the ultimate triumph for me, the long-awaited climax of 'the game.' For you, it was just another moment of passionate abandon on the way toward the minor climax of the second act. Ecstatic moment followed upon ecstatic moment . . . one minute, three minutes, six go by ... a tranquil pool . . . more rushing

whitewater . . . the green saw-toothed ridges rising sharply and swiftly gliding by, their passage leaving no trail. Our bodies and their fragile link rode the current's ever-rippling energy; and the roar of the water over submerged rocks, whirlpools careening around projecting boulders, made the passing moments seem an eternity of ecstatic sensations and pleasures. But always there was a sense of vague and lurking finality - the moment when the all-consuming ecstasy of the ultimate triumph would be over. 'The game' would be done.

As our naked bodies guided their way down the turbulent water chutes, in the grip of the current and the passion of the ultimate insertion, I felt neither conquest nor surrender. It became for me life on the level of survival — just as my dad's final struggle with old Hulitt must have been — exhilarating as I soared through my moment of destiny. And then it was over. We were lying naked, exhausted, next to each other on the rock. Daylight began to fade into twilight, a declining sun silvered the water and turned the far ridges soft as smoke. Long shadows dimmed the river's jagged rim and edged their way out into the meandering channel. Cool breezes began to stir through the shadowy deep gorge, sending an occasional shiver through my body as I tried desperately to raise your passion to the heights I had just reached and descended from. Just as I felt the first time I traveled to this remote spot twenty-five years ago, so I felt this time: very much alone and cut off forever from everything I had ever known. The ultimate triumph had come and gone.

I am inclined to believe totally the story about my dad and his fight to the death with Hulitt because I knew for sure that my father killed Chad's father playing that kind of deadly game. And I'm sure that Chad knew as well. A few days after that incident in the fall of 1947, when

my father had caught me on the bed with my mother and had beaten me unmercifully, he took me out hunting and tried to make amends with me. He said he was sorry for what he had done, he had just been in a rage, and he hoped I would forgive him. I did not answer because I knew I would never forgive him. But he may have felt I had forgiven him, because when we were hunting he held a kind of hypnotic power over me, so admiring was I of his hunting skills and knowledge.

Before very long I discovered why my father sought my forgiveness, something he had never done before when he had punished me. He asked me who it was that had been visiting my mother those weeks he had been away. I had always refused to divulge such information when my dad had questioned me in the past. I had always told him that there were no male visitors that I had known about. But before, I had always wanted to protect my mother. Now, no such motive existed. I hated her and would gladly see her punished. I also hated the filthy, obscene Josh Hartley just as much, and I did not care what my father did to him. So I told my dad it was Josh Hartley and that he had been there often. My father accepted the information without any comment, but I knew there would soon be retribution.

The next weekend, just after Thanksgiving, was the beginning of deer season, and my father arranged to go deer hunting on the first day of the season with Mr. Hartley, and Chad and I were to go along. We went hunting in the Big Sandy Canyon section below Algonquin Park, where Arnold was to get shot about two months later. I suspected that my father had something in mind besides hunting, and I relished the idea of something bad happening to Josh Hartley. It would remove his abusive presence from my home when my father was away, and it would



deny my mother what appeared to be her most sought- after, most craved bed partner.

From where we parked the car along the trail, Dad and Mr. Hartley went down the valley floor and told Chad and me to stalk high along the ridges on either side. That would drive any deer up there down into their path. My curiosity caused me to stalk along the lower edges of the hillside, and I was able to keep Dad and Mr. Hartley in view from behind them. My dad taught me to be such a skilled tracker that even he was not aware that I was following them. Or, perhaps, he just had his mind on other things. Before too long Dad and Mr. Hartley stopped, and then I heard them begin to argue. I sneaked up to a rock about thirty yards behind them and listened to their loud, abusive exchanges.

My dad told Mr. Hartley that he would give him a five-minute head start into the wilderness valley up ahead, and then he'd come after him with his deer rifle. Only one of them would come out of the valley alive, the other one having died of a 'deer-hunting accident.' Angrily, Josh Hartley agreed to the challenge and disappeared hastily into the wilderness. After five minutes my dad followed, carefully circling up along the ridge to the right where I was supposed to be. I dared not follow him now because my dad and Josh Hartley would be listening for every snapping twig and, perhaps, firing at every shadow. I returned to the car on the trail knowing it might be hours before either of them would return. I had little doubt it would be my dad.

Chad returned after a couple of hours, and he was in a quiet, pensive mood, as if he, too, knew something of great peril was in the air. Every so often a distant shot would ring out and we would both jerk our heads nervously in that direction. Chad finally said that he was tired of

waiting and went back down the valley in search of his father. After I waited about five hours, my father stalked out of the valley. He informed me, with no emotion, no urgency, that Mr. Hartley had been killed by somebody in a hunting accident. I can't say that anyone was sad that he died except, perhaps, my mother. Not even Chad registered much outward emotion when we told him after he returned to the car. I had seen his dad be more cruel to him than even my dad had been to me, so maybe he was not sad to see him die. Deer-hunting accidents on the first day of deer season were not uncommon and there was not even much speculation about how it happened. Anyway, Dad conducted the investigation so whatever report that was written up was his.

I was to find out later that Chad also knew that my Dad killed his father, but he never revealed it to any authorities. I suspect that Chad hated his father totally. I doubt that he had even experienced any of the love-hate kind of feelings that I had for my father. Anyway, one can truly say that Josh Hartley had no obvious redeeming qualities. Once, when my father was away and Mr. Hartley was at our house and in one of his homy moods, he caught Chad peeking in the bedroom door while he was mauling over my mother. In the darkness of the room from the kitchen, I saw Mr. Hartley grab Chad by his long, curly black hair, drag him over to the bed, and push Chad's face right down into my mother's exposed pelvis.

"That ought to give you a good, close look! And a good smell, too!" he bellowed, following the remark with uproarious laughter.

Then he had forced the frightened, trembling boy to take off his clothes and made him try to perform sexually on my mother. When he was too nervous and frightened to even get an erection, Mr. Hartley proceeded to make

crude remarks about his failure. Finally, he had hurled the boy from the bed, just as my father had done to me, and resumed his lustful love-making, all the more stimulated by his son's humiliation and shame.

In a little while, Chad sneaked quietly from the room with his clothes in his hand and meekly dressed. All the while his eyes were averted downward, the very picture of disgrace and degradation. In that moment I felt some sympathetic bond of identity with Chad, seeing in him a suffering that even I had not had to endure. And even though I was to come to hate and fear Chad, I was always to retain that sympathetic identity. But there is little wonder that Chad hated his father.

I guess one of the unanswered questions in all this is why I had any attraction to my father. It is a very hard question to answer. My attraction to him was one of sharing a striving for perfection in a unified effort at hunting and stalking. It was a communication of like spirits, and I suspect it was the same bond that my father shared with his cruel, alcoholic father years before. My father had a very deprived early life. Brutality and the testing of wills were the traits learned for survival. The only bond of caring, the unity of effort in like spirits, was in the hunt when the food sought was necessary for survival — and that was the attraction, the unspoken communication, that existed between my father and me.

He shared the same bond and communication with vacant, uncomprehending Arnold. My father believed that the important gift that a man could pass on to his sons was the ability to survive in the wilderness. If there happened to be a pleasure, an attraction that developed while pursuing that survival, that was good, because it often helped in the wilderness for two beings to have some attraction, some unity of spirit, to reach that perfection

of stalking and hunting motivated by dimly remembered instincts of survival.

Once I remember my dad and I were on Baker's Ridge in early May, and we spotted this old fourteen-point buck. Dad could count the points from a hundred yards. He had nothing but his bow, but he decided he was going to kill that buck even if it wasn't deer season. There was some unspoken sympathy, some communication, that joined my father and me that day like it never had before or did afterwards. I performed my task of stalking the buck, perfectly, first heading him off to the right and then to the left — at a great distance from my father and with no spoken communication. I had only my intuition — and that gift of empathy — to guide me. There was this ecstatic feeling that engulfed me when I realized I was doing my part superbly, totally satisfying the demanding standards of my father. Finally the old buck just got so mad that he turned and charged my dad. But Dad was ready and dropped him with an arrow through the heart.

The same ecstatic feeling engulfed me when I stalked you, floated in the swift current beside you, first heading you gently off to the right and then to the left. In the beginning there were the hesitant, tentative withdrawals when I edged forward to insert my stiff penis in your anus. And finally the magnificent moment of coupling! The moment of total acceptance! I stated in one of my letters that my great moment, my ultimate triumph, could only come when and if you achieved yours. I was so wrong. All I really needed was your calm, placid compliance when I made my longed-for penetration. And I got that. My ultimate triumph was for you to receive me, accept me completely.

On that stalking expedition with my father, the important moment, the ultimate reward, was when my

father walked over and gently squeezed my shoulder with his thumb and forefinger. That gesture from him said more than a thousand words could have said. It said you have been accepted completely — you did your part well - in our magnificent stalking team. I glowed in the praise of that cruel, sadistic, ‘caring’ man. That hunt, that moment, was as close as we ever got. But, in a way it was a closeness like no other I ever experienced until you and I floated together in that turbulent river channel. He was the first and last person I ever satisfied with some quality completely apart from physical attraction until you and I came together for those brief moments in the Algonquin River rapids. It matters little that it was only a ‘good’ moment for you. It was the greatest of moments for me!

My dad could also be cruel, to both me and Arnold, when he was teaching us to track and hunt. Sometimes when there no animals to track, he might make Arnold and me strip down like we were animals. Then he would give us a head start and tell us to stay hidden so he could see if he could find us. He might track us for hours until we were exhausted and too weak to go on. We knew he was capable of dishing out punishing cruelties if we did not make the chase interesting. Then, when he would find one of us, he might shoot at the ground, terrorizing us, to let us know we’d been caught. Once, when I had hidden in a tree, he spotted me and shot the limb right out from under me. I had tumbled, terrified, to the ground.

I guess you must have observed that I am scared of the dark. I must always be able to have some light in the darkness or I panic. That came about because my father used to punish me when I was a child by locking me in the cellar where it was absolutely pitch black. I would scream and scream in terror for hours, sometimes, before my father would relent and permit my mother to let me out.

I think my dad enjoyed other people's suffering and I suspect, as a boy, I learned that from him as well.

Hope all of you are having a good time on your camping trip and rafting excursion on the Cheat River over this weekend. July Fourth, of course, is not a holiday here but, since there are so many Americans down here, there is a lot of celebrating anyway. Give my regards to Chalky. You mentioned that Chalky had implied that the seduction of 'the game' might be too much excitement for us at our age. Tell him I would probably have a heart attack if I had to perform again the kind of screwing he demanded as a little boy. Thanks again for taking care of Allen. I will let you know my plans when they can be more definite.

Your buddy,

Tom Peddigrew

507 Braddock Ave.  
Red Creek, W.Va.  
July 10, 1974

Dear Tom,

I have 'soared to the heights' and all is right with the world!

The third act has finished, the climax has come, in my story at least. My play turned out to be something of a tragi-comedy, a serious drama with a mainly happy ending. I guess I turned out to be the antagonist, the selfish seeker of pleasure with little care about who was hurt in my quest to achieve it. And you — or, I should say, an extension of yourself — turned out to be the protagonist, the 'good' guy who is threatened but survives and prevails in the end. And did this drama take some strange, strange twists! As is often the case, an outcome that the observers would never have expected in the first act was the climax.

Incidentally, I am writing this letter from Charleston. I came down here for three days to cover another special legislative session. When I called my wife this morning to tell her I had arrived safely, she said a letter had just arrived from you. I have nothing to do here this evening at the hotel so I'll write without having read your letter. If there are any questions or arrangements I need to respond to from your letter, I'll write again as soon as I return to Red Creek and read it.

It has just recently occurred to me that you and I may well be performing in a different drama — that you have been 'marching to a different drummer,' as they say. At one time I thought the outcome of our mutual

plight would, for better or worse, have a synonymous climax. But I'm not so sure, any more. At one point it seemed to me that our intermingled desires, our different though like needs, could be resolved by an all-encompassing bond of pleasure. But somewhere along the way it became apparent that that might not be the case. Sometime before our weekend camping trip our unfulfilled, changing fantasies took separate courses, different paths. The difference between our desires was that mine was created by one unaccomplished and short-circuited climax of passion; and yours had been created by a lifetime of misguided, misdirected expressions of love.

My intuition told me that the July 4th weekend I planned to spend rafting on the Cheat River with Chalky and the boys was to be an ultimate, climaxing experience. Could it be with you? Was it possible that you would return from Caracas and go with us? Could it be with Chalky? I may as well be truthful about what I felt. I think I have vaguely known, since my trip to Washington to meet you at Dulles, and I met Allen instead, that you had been replaced in my fantasies.

Allen had totally usurped your role as the potential 'ultimate seducer.' Our camping trip then became only the preliminary act, the warm-up, for the big event to follow. That is why I could be so calm when I met you. That is why those only partly stimulated erections did not result in ejaculation that weekend. That weekend was just the priming for the big climax to follow.

The boys — Roger Jr., the twins, and Allen — and I met Chalky at the Blackwater Falls Lodge on the headwaters of the Cheat River Friday morning. We had risen at four o'clock that morning to arrive there by nine o'clock. A hard rain had fallen during the trip north to Tucker County, but by the time we reached the lodge



the sun had broken through the clouds and a summer breeze was blowing the storm clouds away. I spotted Chalky right away in the parking lot of the lodge, standing beside a white Ford pick-up loaded with three inflated, yellow rafts. Meeting Chalky again was a joyous but not overwhelming experience. Perhaps talking to him on the phone had taken some of the edge off the meeting.

In appearance he had changed a great deal. His hair is now a wavy dark brown, and when he was a child it was white and straight. He is well over six feet tall — six foot five, I would say— and built like a lean, lanky, pro football receiver. No longer the stocky little fellow, he is a big fellow with broad shoulders and narrow hips, built about like his father but taller. His face seems now to be longer and more angular, not as full as when he was a child, but he still has that strong-willed, determined glint in his hazel eyes.

My boys took to him right away as I did, but Allen remained aloof from him. Oddly, there was nothing in Chalky's manner to indicate that he was meeting a close friend he had not seen in twenty-five years. He began to treat me casually right away, as though we had been together the day before. It was the same with the boys. After I told him their names, he conversed easily with them as though they were the boys down the block he had known all his life. The only disquieting thing I noticed about Chalky — he is still called that even if he no longer has white hair — was that he did not voluntarily make any reference to the past and the days he lived in Red Creek. When I made such a reference, he would answer in a terse, disinterested way, and then usually change the subject to something about the here and now. Could it be that the strong-willed, resilient Chalky had some forbidding, hard- to-face, memories about those distant events and people?

We drove our separate vehicles to Rowlesburg in Preston County and left Chalky's truck with the rafts in it at an Exxon Station there where Chalky knew the owner. Below Rowlesburg is where the really big rapids begin on the Cheat River and where we planned to start riding the rafts the next day. However, we had decided to run the less treacherous fifteen-mile section between St. George and Roslwesburg in canoes. I had brought two of my aluminum canoes on the top of my station wagon for that purpose. Roger Jr. and the twins were so enthralled by Chalky that all three of them piled in the front seat of his pick-up to ride to Rowlesburg with him. Allen displayed his loyalty to the suddenly deserted father by saying he would rather ride with me. We all rode back to St. George in the station wagon where, after loading our camping gear, we launched the canoes.

Roger Jr. and Jason, one of the twins, rode in the canoe with Chalky. Allen, continuing his loyal ways got into my canoe along with a disgruntled Jamie, the other twin. Jason and Jamie had decided they would take turns riding in Chalky's canoe. They had flipped a coin to see who rode first and Jamie had lost and had to ride with Allen and me.

You can imagine who was winning my heart in all this conflict over who got to ride in Chalky's canoe. It was Allen who stated emphatically that he was certain I knew a lot more about canoeing than Chalky and he wanted to ride with me. I guess that statement is something of a rationalization — that I am being less than honest. Allen had actually won my heart, my fascination, and my intense attraction long ago at the Dulles Airport, and there had been no deviation from, or lessening of, that attraction since. No small gesture of loyalty now on his part would add to my already overwhelming attraction to him.

We were on the river by noon and the day had turned out to be magnificent. As we paddled down that serene, beautiful river, passing through those tranquil wooded islands, down the crystal-clear cascading channels, with those green shimmering mountainsides rising above us, a kind of profound sense of destiny began to come over me. I somehow felt that the long imprisonment of my frustration was approaching its end.

It was as though the final act of the drama was already charted, already planned, just as there was only one course to follow along the channel of that mountain river. I would not have to do anything, make any decisions, exert any effort. It was inevitable. There would not have to be any connivances for the ultimate moment to come. Somehow events would fall into place, as they already were doing, and it would just happen.

Late in the day, as we were descending a fairly steep rapid, I was guiding the canoe between two boulders in a chute of white, foaming water when the canoe struck a sharp rock on the left side that slightly ruptured the aluminum hull. When we reached the quiet pool below where the river flowed around a wooded island, I beached the canoe along a sandy shore on the island. I unloaded the equipment quickly because water had begun to seep rapidly into the small hole in the middle of the canoe below the water line. Only Allen's sleeping bag, the one you bought to take on the Harmon's Rock camping trip, had gotten really wet. I could see even in this small event, Allen's sleeping bag getting wet, a preordained occurrence leading to the climax of the third act.

After surveying the damage, Chalky said one of us should take the other canoe and make it down to Rowlesburg before dark. He could camp at Rowlesburg and the next morning find his way to the mountain road which

we could see along the river across from the island, with the pick-up and haul the damaged canoe out. We would still be able to get on the river again fairly early the next morning at Rowlesburg to begin the two-day rafting journey. We decided that I should camp there on the island with the ruptured canoe since Chalky knew that part of the country better than I and would, no doubt, have less trouble finding the mountain road into the area. Again I could see in that hastily made decision that providence was continuing to take its course toward the big moment.

Just as Chalky and Roger Jr. were about ready to shove off, the twins got into a loud argument over whose turn it was to ride in Chalky's canoe. Jamie claimed they had agreed he would ride the rest of the way. Jason claimed they were to have switched canoes before the end of the day's trip. Finally, with a kind of mock exasperation and a secure feeling that the script had been planned to perfection, I told them they both could ride to Rowlesburg with Chalky — that Allen and I would camp there alone! As Jason happily tossed his sleeping bag into Chalky's canoe, they shoved off and the canoe disappeared quickly around the lower end of the island. I was as confident as ever that fate was still on its charted course.

The beautiful orange ball of a sun was barely glowing through a smoky haze as it hovered above the steep green ridges to the west. I took a deep breath of the clean mountain air, savoring this glorious moment on the brink of the on-rushing climax. The ultimate moment was now so near after twenty-five long years of frustrated, craving anticipation. I turned slowly and looked at Allen who was standing nearby. He looked directly into my eyes, giving me a knowing smile that let me know that he, too, was aware that all the twists of fate, all the coincidences of events,

were falling into place for our rendezvous. For some reason, ever since our encounter at Dulles, there had never been any question in my mind that he was as ready, as desirous, as I was. There had been knowing looks that had passed between us during those three weeks, starting with the moment you arrived with him at the courthouse that day which said, 'Our time is coming! Our moment will arrive!' From that very moment I had seen him on that counter stool in the coffee shop beside you in Dulles Airport, I had know he was the one and not you!

I knew all of the time I was writing you and arranging the camping trip that it was Allen and I who were to achieve that ultimate moment. Destiny had begun to chart its course then. I knew he would come with you to Red Creek, that I must play out our preliminary charade first, that my chance for the big moment would come later. Even the oilfield fire and you being called back to South America and having to leave Allen to stay with us seemed part of the scripted plot. Everything was falling into place so right. I could savor the moment of waiting, wondering when it would happen. And this day's events had been so correctly and thoroughly played out. Here I was, isolated on a wooded island on a beautiful, tranquil mountain river in a deserted wilderness, on what promised to be the most ideal of summer nights. The setting was almost too perfect for words.

The blue haze along the high mountain ridges to the west was blurring out the last, faint rays of the sun, bringing dusk down to the river valley and my island world of tranquillity. A night in paradise loomed ahead. The gathering of wood for a fire on the sandy beach, the barefoot walk out into the gently rippling silvery crystal waters that encircled this magic island, the symphony of chirping crickets and the distant moos of lonely cows in the

meadowlands and pastures far up on the mountain ridges across the river, were heralding the approach of climactic action. I felt apart, removed eternally, from everything I had ever been or once known before, in another world, far removed and insignificant.

The passage of time for us was paced, leisurely, calmly, with no rush of passion, with no fear of failure. There was little talk and no touching as the stars appeared, shimmering, twinkling, first on the grey-blue misty horizons at dusk, and then like sparkling specks of wildfire across the entire satin blackness of the night. Maybe three hours passed as we sat on the still warm sand by the campfire that carved a patch of warm serenity out of the deep valley blackness. The talk was idle. 'Where are Chalky and the boys, now? Would they be able to find the mountain road down to the island tomorrow? Would our rafting trip on the lower Cheat be more eventful than our canoe journey?' I watched Allen idly, but intently, tracking every deliberate motion, every easy smile, every movement of the supple curves in his body. Everything about him made me want to go over and totally consume him, be totally consumed by him. But I watched and waited, serene, knowing there was no rush. The moment would come. And he knew I was watching and waiting. He had been born with this predestined mission in life. And he was about to achieve it.

When I got up and rolled my sleeping bag out on the sand, Allen, as though the rehearsed actions must be played out, got up and went over and inspected his sleeping bag where he had hung it across an overhanging limb to dry.

"My sleeping bag is still wet," he said, as he came back over next to me, dutifully, knowingly acting out his part.

"That's all right. You can sleep with me," I answered, the lines flowing from my lips almost mechanically as

though they had been rehearsed, spoken a thousand times.

I got undressed down to my underpants. I had even worn a pair with the elastic band, so sure was I that this moment was coming. I brushed the sand from my feet and slid into my sleeping bag, lying there on the sand near the almost burned out embers of the campfire. Allen undressed slowly down to his underwear and stood there momentarily by the last flickering flames of the dying fire. The soft silhouette of his gently curved child's body consumed my vision. I knew my moment was almost at hand. As though he knew instinctively to restore the passion of our until then closest moment — in the men's room at Dulles Airport — he pulled off his underpants and laid them aside, leaving him now only wearing his white T-shirt. He began a slow, deliberate urination on the dying embers of the campfire. The sight of the loose, circumcised stem of his penis, that firm little protruding scrotum, and his soft buttocks curving out from below his T-shirt against the dim light sent bolts of longing passion through my body. I could feel the semen begin to rise from my groin into my stiffening penis. And I knew for the first time in my life that I was going to 'soar to the heights.'

When he finished urinating, he came over and gently slid his partly naked body into the sleeping bag beside me. The warm sensation of his bare flesh rubbing against mine was ecstatic beyond belief. My hands and arms strained to reach out to grasp him, to dig my fingers in his soft curved buttocks, to grasp those tantalizing morsels of flesh that were his penis and scrotum. I held back, knowing that such an action would cause a premature explosion in my now rock-hard penis. I allowed myself only the indulgence of brushing the side of my hand quickly against his limp penis, rubbing a drop of urine on the side of my

palm to relish, to relive that earlier encounter. As I lay on my back, face upward, Allen rolled his body onto mine. He then nestled his face down between my head and right shoulder and pressed the warm side of his face against the side of mine. My whole body, my whole being, soared with ecstasy. And I waited.

The pressure of his firm scrotum and still limp penis against the bare skin of my stomach was almost unbearable. Bolts of pleasure seemed to radiate from that spot to the far reaches of my body. I could not restrain my hands any longer. I slid my fingers along the backs of his thighs and gently cupped his soft, bulging buttocks in my palms and fingers. Again a bolt of unbearable pleasure shot through me. Then Allen gently shifted his hips to one side so that his thighs and genitals were cupped against my side, and next I felt the touch of his gentle fingers of his right hand begin to edge their way under the elastic band of my underpants. My stiff penis, now aching to the exploding point, seemed to stretch tautly upward of its own accord reaching toward those 'electric bolt' fingers.

The finger tips, with each new contact against my flesh, caused another bolt of ecstatic pleasure to rip through me. As those finger tips approached the tip of my upward straining penis, my mind was suddenly lucid. I knew that touch, those precious, magic finger tips against the bare tip of my craving, longing penis would be the culmination of twenty-five years of agony, longing, frustration, craving for the release. Now, two inches away! Now, one inch away! Now, a half inch! A brief pause! Can I stand it? The pain and the exhilaration! The finger tips move again! Almost touching! The touch. . . .

And then the first explosion! The bolt of pleasure that shot through me was more exhilarating, more pleasurable, more liberating than I could have ever imagined in my



wildest dreams. Bright sparks shot into the darkness of my closed eyelids! Twenty-five years of longing, craving, desiring exploded in the night! My body went totally limp, collapsing instantly from the most taut readiness it had ever assumed. With my eyes closed I became an eagle soaring over that island in the Algonquin River where we played ‘the game!’ Now soaring high above that picnic shelter! Now soaring over that steep trail down to the river! Now soaring over those cascading rapids and over the rock below! I was dead from exhaustion, but so joyously alive!

Gradually sensation returned to my limp, liberated body. Allen had not ceased methodically massaging my now limp penis and scrotum, his fingers sticky with my abundantly ejected semen. When I became aware his penis against my side was not erected, I realized he had not been motivated by passion. He was driven onward instead by an instinctual mission that had been implanted in his being at conception: The mission to satisfy, to free that tragic, longing soul that his father had left suspended in passionate animation, in that brief and glorious moment of its first near seduction when the promise was so great and the fulfillment was so close.

Over that long, glorious night there were many more explosions, not of the same magnitude as the first, perhaps, but explosions, nonetheless. How many explosions there were I can not remember. Twenty-five years of unrequited desire had to be fulfilled that night. I would pass out, sleep, only to awake and feel that little groping, massaging hand starting to ‘raise me to the heights’ again. Each time I would think it was not possible, that I was spent. But each time my penis would start to gradually rise again. There would be that slight tingling sensation anew, then the unbearable bolts of pleasure, then the

explosion. Then again I would be an eagle gloriously soaring over that valley as I drifted back into peaceful sleep . . . only to awake again and feel those still-groping, never- ceasing fingers resuming their mission again and again.

Toward morning and the first light of dawn, I awoke to find the exhausted, near-naked little boy asleep, in the contented sleep of one who had accomplished his mission in life and could now savor a job well done. I realized immediately that a new relationship now existed between us, and he would be aware of that, too, when he awoke. It would now just be a deep, deep attraction of the spirit and not of the body. I would never need to seek gratifying, physical contact with him again. I would care for him more than ever. But it would only be expressed in my wanting that he be happy, that he be well. Even now, as I shifted my body and my arm accidentally came in contact with his genitals, there was absolutely no — not even the slightest — feeling of sexual stimulation. There would never be any again. I had been freed from that curse, that longing. I wrapped my arm around his shoulder only to protect him from the early morning chill.

As the first beams of sunlight shined into the wilderness river valley and my eyes scanned out over the gently rippling river, I knew I had been freed, liberated. No longer would my thoughts be inexorably drawn to that picnic table, that rock at the edge of the river of long ago, to a pregnant moment that never came. No longer would I hate myself, punish myself, with thoughts and dreams of debasing perversion and desire. The impossible had happened. The past had been relived. The anticipated pleasures of long past events that are always supposed to be much, much more glorious in memory had been more glorious in reality. The writer Thomas Wolfe had said, 'You can't go home again.' But I had proven him wrong. I had gone

home again and to an even more glorious reception.

As I lay there in that sleeping bag that dawn with your partly naked son's head resting on my shoulder, I began to think about you. You had accomplished your mission, too. But, no doubt, it had been done in such a way that it had no meaning for you. There would be no way for you to feel your glorious triumph, your ultimate seduction. A seduction, to have meaning, would have to be accomplished in reality, not vicariously, for there to be any thrill of glory. And there might well be the galling sensation that your most sought-after triumph had been stolen away, removed from your reach. Now, there would never be the chance, even the remote possibility, that your most sought-after prize would be attainable. But there was no doubt in my mind that your predestined mission had been passed on from you to your son. And, in that way, you had achieved it.

Also in that clear, cool early morning air, disturbing thoughts began to emerge from my newly purified mind. It was as though there could be no triumph without a corresponding dose of despair, and the thoughts that ran through my mind provided that aftermath. It was as though connections in my brain were suddenly plugged in, and a foggy mist of non-memory was swept away. I could suddenly see things from my childhood as they were, things that I had never allowed myself to see before. The knowledge had always been there, stored away in the untapped recesses of my brain, but I had never allowed the thoughts to surface. I had had a passion for you, a desire for you, and I could not let disturbing acknowledgment of reality come between it and its fulfillment. Those disturbing thoughts had surfaced anyway at times, but I had willed them away. No barrier could be allowed to come between you and me. But now it did not matter.

My mind was clear, no passion to cloud it.

Was it not you that shot and almost killed Arnold? How could anyone be sure it was an accident? I knew from what I had heard and seen that night on the island in the Algonquin River, in the sycamore tree and afterwards, that it was you most likely who could have caused Luke to fall from that ledge and die. You could have driven him over the edge in the chase after he tried to escape. And hadn't you been careful to wash and dress Luke so no one besides us would know that he died playing 'the game?' At the basketball game when Chalky fell, hadn't you been the one who was sitting on the other side of him on the top row of the bleachers? Who else could have pushed Chalky but you? Didn't you dislike him because he came between you and his father? And on the island that Easter morning when Wally had drowned, how could one be sure that you rushed out in the river and tried to reach Wally with your spear to pull him out of the rapids? Would it not be more realistic to believe that you intended what had happened — that you intended the point of your spear to puncture the inflated raft, making it collapse as it was washed down the treacherous water chute?

And the night Jamie and Specs had died and Chalky was injured, it was you who could have been most responsible for their deaths and Chalky's injury. It was you who gave Chad what was supposed to have been a blank bullet which turned out to be real. It most likely was you that followed Specs and caused him to fall from the ladder to the bell tower. It was you that was with Arnold when he stabbed Chalky in the church basement. And wasn't Arnold always totally under your influence and control? There is another incident that I have always remembered, one that I was never quite able to put out of my mind or

rationally explain to myself. I remember it so vividly, but it was an incident that I never revealed. When I had come down out of hiding from the bell tower that night Jamie and Specs were killed and entered the sanctuary, you had charged at me viciously with your spear raised and ready to thrust. There was fear and hate in your eyes and you looked ready to kill. And it had been Arnold, of all people, who had stopped you just in time. And I remember it was you that tightened Chalky's tourniquet after I came back to the sanctuary. Could it have been you that loosened it earlier so that Chalky would bleed to death?

But ... it had also been you who had pulled me up and kept me from falling when we climbed back up the mountain at twilight on that last camping trip of childhood. And it had been you that had befriended me on that first day I attended school in Red Creek when I had felt so alone and friendless. Even so, I guess I have come to believe that you may have been largely responsible for the deaths and injuries of all those childhood friends. In fact, I guess I have always believed it but never allowed myself to admit it. I was too driven by my selfish craving for that ultimate climax between us to allow anything to deny me that.

I also believe that whatever happened was thrust upon us by fate and forces that we young boys could not overcome. Our lives and actions were guided by circumstances and stimuli far beyond our control. Now that I have gotten more insight into the tortured lives of some of the participants, I am more firmly convinced that it was more fate than human will or choice that caused all those tragedies. I can certainly see now where I played my unintentional, but important role in causing all that happened. I can't say I have forgiven anyone, including myself, for the things that occurred. But I hold no

animosity even if I am not able to forgive you or myself. I guess the conscious guilt feeling is the price I have to pay for my freedom, for my 'soaring to the heights.' With the new rays of sunshine in my psyche there must now also be those dark clouds of doubt.

Your buddy,

Roger Stockwell

P.S. One installment of the article has appeared, and now I view much of what is said as perhaps a mockery of the truth. But who knows what the real truth is? I guess it will be forever locked in the flawed and scarred memory of us all.

19 Rio Pinar Plaza  
Caracas, Venezuela  
July 26, 1974

Dear Roger,

Before you judge me too harshly I want to relate to you a perhaps final chapter in the saga of what made angelic little Tom Peddigrew tick.

There was a visit that Chad's father, Josh Hartley, made to my house that must be revealed before some of my later behavior can be understood. The events of that visit were to have a tragic hold on my life and, perhaps a fatal effect on the lives of some of our childhood buddies for the next year and a half.

The day before Thanksgiving, in 1947 my dad was called away to the southern part of the state for two days. And that evening Josh Hartley made his last night-crawling visit to my house. Three days later he was to die in that 'hunting accident.' Chad came along with him, as usual, and I noticed Chad was carrying a small flashbulb camera on a strap around his neck. He sat there at the kitchen table, nervously fingering the camera, after his dad and my mother had disappeared into the bedroom. Finally he got up and strolled silently into the dark bedroom. I was surprised and mystified. Often Chad had sneaked to the door, peeped in for a few moments, and then come back to the kitchen and made vulgar remarks about what was going on. I knew he just did that, made the vulgar remarks, because he could see that it irritated me.

But this time he had walked purposefully into the room. And I realized right away that his bold action had something to do with the camera. In a few moments a

bright flash came from the room, and after a few moments more, another. I then realized that Josh Hartley had instructed Chad to take the pictures. And I knew that once my mother became enthralled in the throes of love-making, nothing would distract her. And by her moans and squeals of ecstasy, I knew that she was under the spell of that agonizing delight.

When I realized what was happening, I was horrified. The thought that there would be pictures, evidence to substantiate those repulsive scenes, in the clear light of day, was devastating. It had been almost beyond enduring that this filthy, obscene man could come into my house and abuse my mother at will. I had come to view my mother's inability to resist men as a sickness, and in my view, anyone who would take advantage of her weakness was no better than a vulture. But it was even more horrible to think that strangers might be able to view and make sniggering, vulgar remarks about this filthy man in lustful contact with my mother's naked body.

After a few minutes and more flashes from the room, Chad came back into the kitchen carrying the camera still on the strap around his neck. I determined that I was somehow going to get that camera away from him and destroy the exposed film. I was hoping of course that he would put the camera somewhere within my reach, but he did not. Finally, I went to the kitchen table and sat opposite him where he had sat down by the window. I had decided that if I could grab the camera, I would run to the sink, smash it against the edge, and plunge it down into the dishwasher my mother left in the sink. Chad would be hemmed in by the table, and it would take him a few moments to get to me. But I knew when I grabbed the camera, the strap around his neck must break. And I would only have one chance.



“What did you take those pictures for?” I asked, trying to sound casual and not arouse Chad’s suspicions.

“My old man wants some insurance with your mother. Just in case she ever tries to cut him out,” Chad replied knowingly, “and the pictures I took I don’t reckon she’d want shown around town. And I ’spect she’d do anything to keep your old man from seeing them,” he added.

Chad turned for a moment and looked out the window, and I saw my chance. I lunged across the table, grabbed the camera, and gave it a yank with all my might. I felt the strap break, and I swung around to make the dash to the sink. I was horrified to see Chad’s dad standing between me and the sink buckling up his trousers. He looked at me and, without saying a word, held out his hand for the camera. Startled for a moment, I paused, and then I drew the camera back to heave it at the sink, hoping it would bust open and land in the water. By this time Chad had gotten around the table and grabbed the camera out of my outstretched hand. Chad obediently handed the camera to his father, and they both stood facing and glaring at me.

“If you don’t give that camera back to me and let me destroy those pictures, I’m going to tell my dad you’ve been here and what you’ve been doing,” I threatened defiantly.

Josh Hartley continued to eye me menacingly and then walked over to me and locked a tight grip onto my arm with his large, grimy hand.

“You little bastard!” he hissed. “You’re not gonna tell your old man anything! And do you know why?” he added, “Because we’re gonna take a few pictures of you that will make you keep your mouth shut.”

He handed Chad back the camera. “Put another roll of film in while I get this little bastard ready to have his

picture took,” he said. “Be hard to tell whose little bastard you are. You mother’s screwed about every man in this town at least once, I reckon,” he continued, “I don’t know why your old man let her get away with putting the blame on him.”

I did not answer.

“Strip down, bare-ass! Or do you want me to have to do it for you?” he commanded.

I made no move to obey. With one yank of his free hand he ripped my shirt open. I saw there was no way I could resist so I slowly undressed down to my underpants. I could see Chad was enjoying my humiliation. It had been only three evenings before that he had been caught peeking into the bedroom, and had been forced to strip down and make an effort to perform on my mother. He had been sorely humiliated, and I could see that he was now gloating over my similar plight. At that moment I hated myself for having felt sorry for him.

“Aren’t you gonna take your underpants off? You ain’t afraid to show us your little pecker and balls, are you?” barked Josh Hartley.

He reached down and yanked the front of my underpants down so they fell around my feet.

“My! That’s a might pretty little pecker you got there,” he said, leeringly. And he reached down and ran his grimy rough thumb and fingers over my genitals. A cold chill ran through my body at his touch.

“Well, I reckon the little stud is ready to get his picture took,” he sneered and, taking the camera from Chad, led me by his grip on my arm into my mother’s room. Josh Hartley flipped on the light as he entered, and I saw my mother lying on her back naked, limp and exhausted, on the bed. She opened her eyes when the light came on, but she never spoke a word the whole time we were in

the room. She just closed her eyes again knowing that some unspeakable tyrannies were in the offing and would have to be endured. I noticed that Chad had come to the door to watch my humiliation. And I hated him more than ever for that.

“Get over there on top of her and make like you’re humping her,” Josh Hartley ordered me with a shove.

This was about two weeks after the incident when my mother had lured me into a compromising scene with her to make my father jealous. Seeing her naked flesh no longer fascinated me. And I felt no stimulation, whatever, only humiliation and rage. But I knew there was no use in trying to resist. That would only make Josh Hartley madder and, perhaps, prolong his sadistic torture. I got on the bed and laid myself prone across my mother’s body.

“That ain’t gonna make no good picture. You got to look like you’re enjoying yourself,” Josh Hartley commented. “Grab a hold of her tits!” he ordered.

I raised up slightly and draped my palms and fingers lightly over her breasts. And he flashed the camera.

“Now, how about us getting a picture of you sucking one of them tits?” he ordered, with a kind of mock sweetness in his tone, like a photographer’s when he is trying to get a baby to smile.

I moved my head to where my lips barely came into contact with one of her nipples. Josh Hartley moved in closer, aimed the camera, and the bulb flashed. He then moved down to the bottom of the bed behind us and aimed the camera.

“How about spreading your legs apart so I can get a shot of your little pecker and balls laying on your mother’s pussy,” he commanded. I spread my legs apart a little. My penis was totally limp and unstimulated, lying on my mother’s thigh.

“How about spreading your legs apart a little more, so I can get a good shot of your mother’s pussy,” he ordered. I spread my legs a little further apart. “Spread a little more and I can get your little ass hole in the picture,” he added with a laugh. I obeyed and the camera flashed.

“I’ll get one of you eatin’ a little pussy,” he said, “and that ought to be enough to keep your mouth shut, don’t you think?”

I knew what he had in mind. I raised up on my hands and knees and lowered my face toward the little mound of flesh above my mother’s thighs. I was afraid there would be another scene like I had with my father when he ordered me to suck his penis. I just did not believe I could voluntarily bring myself to touch my lips to that mound of flesh. And I was afraid that Josh Hartley would not be satisfied until I did. But, apparently, he had tired of his sadistic game since I was giving no resistance so he snapped the picture with my lips within a few inches of making contact. Without another word he turned and walked out of the room and out the back door of the house with Chad following.

Through the whole episode of picture taking my mother was trance-like, not moving a muscle and her eyes closed. When Josh Hartley left she turned and buried her face in the pillow and still did not speak. I went back in the kitchen and got dressed, all the time hoping with all my heart that dad intended to kill Josh Hartley. I had already told him about Josh Hartley’s visits with mother, and I knew he had some revenge in mind. My agonizing fear was that Josh Hartley would somehow, find out I had told my dad about him and my mother, and that he might show someone, anyone, those pictures.

Josh Hartley was to die in three days in that ‘hunting accident,’ and there was not to be the least bit of remorse

or guilt feeling on my part. But the tyranny, the total control that was to be wielded over me, because of my absolutely paralyzing fear that someone might see those pictures, had just begun.

I may have had the power to hypnotise Chad. But, after those pictures were taken, Chad had the power to control my life with merely a glance. I never saw those pictures, but, after Josh Hartley died, Chad claimed he had them. He would take great delight in describing what was in those pictures if I balked at carrying out any of his demands. I strongly suspected there was not really any film in that camera. I did not see Chad reload the camera when his dad told him to, and I do not remember Josh Hartley winding the camera to a new exposure between shots. But I never had the nerve to test my suspicions by disobeying one of Chad's commands. In fact, I have a horror even today that those pictures might be lying about some place - that someone may be viewing me and my mother in our humiliation and shame and making sarcastic, vulgar comments.

Chad was, perhaps, the product of abusive hatred much more than I was. Both of my parents gave me a perverse kind of love, and I suspect that was better than what Chad received. Chad's father treated him with nothing but disdain and hatred, and I did not know his mother. After his father died, and there has never been any question in my mind that Chad knew how his father was killed, Chad was seized by an all-consuming hatred of me.

It was as though he blamed me totally for his father's death. And there was, no doubt, some justification for his hatred because he probably believed I had told on his father. I could not comprehend Chad's total hatred of me. Even if he did blame me for his father's death, I had also

then freed him from his hateful, sadistic father. In Chad's tormented mind he seemed to have projected on me the blame for his own suffering. Just as you developed a passion for a sexual climax with me, Chad developed a passion to destroy me and all the people around me. And he was determined to do it slowly, painfully, by making me do his evil bidding, and I would be the last to be destroyed. It was far more rewarding for him to watch me suffer slowly, die slowly.

I guess you have concluded in your own mind that I was mainly responsible for all those deaths and injuries. That is not true. I may have been a tool, but I was an unwilling tool. And why was I even remotely drawn into Chad's sinister plot? Because Chad held the "pistol" at my head — the specter of his revealing those pictures of me having sex with my mother, showing them to my friends, my classmates, leaving copies about for adults to see, teachers, strangers. The threat of that would make me — did make me — his agent. But I did not kill anyone. Not even the threat of showing those pictures could cause me to do that. If there was one person in the world whom I might have been able to kill, after Josh Hartley died, it would have been Chad. I had the chance more than once, and I could not bring myself to do it.

Perhaps, you are thinking it is a lame excuse to have allowed myself to be a compliant tool in acts that led to deaths. And looking back now, of course, I can see I should have defied Chad, called his bluff, and, maybe, prevented some of the tragedies. But the absolute horror, the unbearable shame and humiliation I would have felt if Chad really had those pictures and began showing them to people, controlled my life, put me in total bondage to him, made me rationalize all my actions.

Once, when I was twelve years old, a boy at school

showed me a dirty picture. It showed a man hunched over a woman about to screw her. The picture was shot from an angle above and behind looking down between the man's thighs with his legs spread apart. You could see his long, ugly, dark penis and sagging balls emerging from the scruffy, black, bristly pubic hair. You could even see down into the crevice of his buttocks and the outline of his anus surrounded by bristly, black hair. And below his penis was the ugly, distended mound of flesh of her vagina sprouting scruffy, black pubic hairs and stretched open ready to receive the dark penis. It was, I thought, the most repulsive sight I had ever seen.

The thought terrified me that such a picture as that existed of me and my mother, and that it might be shown to everybody in town. It sent cold chills of terror running up my spine, exploding in my brain. Chad would, no doubt, tell them that this was Tom Peddigrew and his sex- starved mother. To keep such a thing from happening I would have done almost anything. But I would not have killed. As I said, if I could have brought myself to kill anyone, it would have been Chad.

Arnold's accident, for example, did not happen the way you believe it did, the way I said it did. Arnold was shot by Chad. We were hunting in the same area where my dad and Josh Hartley had been when the 'hunting accident' occurred. In fact, I'm sure that is why Chad wanted to go hunting there. Chad had challenged me to play 'the deadly game' just as my father had done with his father. That is when I first knew for sure that Chad must also have heard the exchange between them on that hunting trip — when they agreed to play that deadly game — that I had heard.

Chad had told me to disappear with my rifle down into the valley, and he would come after me with his

carbine that his dad had brought home from World War II. And only one of us would come back alive. I refused, and Chad had begun to fire rounds near me just to show he meant business. I don't think he had any intentions of killing me then, even if I played 'the game.' He just wanted to scare me, to harass me, to intimidate me. Arnold had not been with us when 'the game' had been talked about. So he had not understood what had happened, and he had come running to me when he heard the shots. Chad had not seen him - I will give him the benefit of the doubt - and one of his stray bullets that was intended to scare me had struck Arnold in the neck.

Chad made me promise that I would say it was I who had fired the shot that hit Arnold. He said that he had been in trouble before with his rifle, and the sheriff had told him that he would take it away from him for good if he ever got in trouble with it again. When I balked at taking the blame, he said he would show the pictures. And I meekly gave in to his demands.

I could go through all the incidents and show you how that fear of having those pictures shown forced me to play a part in those tragedies. But I am sure you would still feel that I was guilty for not telling on Chad and continuing to succumb to his blackmail. And I guess, in a way, you would be right.

Of course, there is 'the game' which may have contributed much to what happened; and I must take the blame for the motivation, the inspiration to play 'the game.' I wanted to satisfy my aggressions, and my desire for human touch and fulfillment, through forced seduction. But Chad could only satisfy his aggressions through inflicting suffering and pain and eventually death. What about you, Roger? You must remember you were a willing participant — even an eager one — in playing 'the



game.' You, too, must have had your own deep, dark cravings to satisfy.

There was something else you were wrong about in your last letter. I was not in the least envious of Allen for his conquest. I had already had mine so why should I be envious of his? If anything, I was pleased that the climactic moment, the ultimate seduction for you, had been achieved in my name, if not by me. Perhaps, as you say, Allen's conquest did have a certain inevitability about it.

The person I am envious of is Chalky. And I always have been since we were boys back in Red Creek. Chalky was able to capture and hold your attraction because of some indefinable quality of spirit. I was only able to hold your attraction through physical and lustful desire on your part. And I think that has been true of all my relationships in my life except with my father and, for a time, Jamie.

I got a letter yesterday from Mr. Bertram saying that he would be in Caracas for a week beginning this Friday and he would look me up. I would have much preferred you had not given him my address because I know what he will want. But, of course, you could not have known that. In a way Mr. Bertram was a bigger villain in my life than Chad. With Chad, at least, I always knew where I stood. With Mr. Bertram I was more vulnerable. I had trusted, relied on him and he was able to take advantage of that — may still be able to take advantage of it. But that is a long story, and I'll save it for another time, just as I would like to give you a detailed account of what happened, from my point of view, in each of those tragic incidents after Arnold's 'accident.' While Mr. Bertram is here I'll see if I can't fortify myself with a few good stiff shots of vodka, a very popular drink down here, and survive the week with him.

Things are still hectic here after the fire. I still am not able to make definite plans yet, but I will let you know as soon as I do. Take care of Allen for me. But, of course, I know I don't have to worry about that.

Your buddy,

Tom Peddigrew

## CHAPTER TEN

### **NOTES ON THE ORIGIN AND BACKGROUND OF THE WITTEVEEN TAPE**

AUGUST

This is a transcript of a tape found in the wall locker of the boy scout room in the basement of the Braddock Hill Baptist Church in December, 1973. I was not able to listen to and transcribe the tape until August 3, 1974, because I was not until then, able to find a recorder that would play it. The tape is wider than that used in modern tape recorders. Written in ink on the label is 'Troop 44 Boy Scout Meeting, June 14, 1949.' The single reel of tape was ninety minutes long. The transcription has been divided into three parts only because the cassette tapes used to re-record it were each thirty minutes in length.

In the spring of 1948 the ladies auxiliary of the Braddock Hill Baptist Church had purchased a World War II surplus battery-operated tape recorder and playback machine. These were used to record the Sunday morning church services for the elderly confined to the Trobe Hill Nursing Home. The recorder was installed in the pulpit at the Braddock Hill Church. I recall that this particular

recorder was chosen because of the long recording time, ninety minutes, that would make it possible to record the entire church service on a single tape.

The events recorded are not actually a boy scout meeting, but a gathering that took place in the church sanctuary during the early evening of Friday, June 14, 1949. This tape is of special significance because, during the period of the time covered by the taping, two of the troop members were killed and a third seriously injured. The troop had gathered that evening at the church before they were to go to a boy scout jamboree and weekend camping trip to Camp Man-a-toba in Walton County.

Snooks Larson, then the Braddock Hill Church custodian, who was responsible for operating the tape recorder for the Sunday morning services, probably listened to only a brief portion of the tape at the time to identify it. He no doubt realized that the voices were those of the boys in the church scout troop, labeled the tape, and put it with the troop records in the locker in the scout room. Since the troop disbanded, following that evening's tragic events, the recording apparently never came to anyone's attention until I found it almost twenty-five years later.

I was a participant in the events that took place that evening. In fact, as is revealed by the tape, I was the one that inadvertently started the recorder. It was accidental and not intended that the events should be recorded. In fact, none of those present, including myself, was aware that the recorder was on. I have included in the transcript, in capital letters, my comments about the things I remember taking place. In those portions of the tape where I am not present, I have, from my knowledge of the individuals involved and from what I learned afterwards, given my interpretation of the events that were taking place.

A storm of near cyclone proportions was going on

outside the church during much of the taping, and at times, small portions of dialogue are unintelligible because of the loud thunder. Otherwise, the tape had remarkable clarity. People are identified in the transcript by their first name, and the full names of the participants involved are listed below. Only those conversations carried on in the front of the church sanctuary were recorded because the microphones were installed in that area. The names are listed in the order that they first appear on the tape. Arnold Peddigrew was present but his voice does not appear on the tape as he had a permanent injury to his vocal cords that rendered him unable to talk.

Roger Stockwell	Arnold Peddigrew
Jason 'Specs' Stockwell	Chad Hartley
Jamie Driscoll	William 'Chalky' Bertram, Jr.
Tom Peddigrew	Mr. William Bertram

Two Red Creek volunteer firemen, Mr. Sheets and Mr. Hollis, were in the sanctuary briefly during the latter portion of the tape. A few of their comments are recorded. Since I was unable to distinguish between their voices, their comments have been labeled Fireman One and Fireman Two.

About a week after publication of the last installment of a three-part article I had written about the tragedies of Troop 44, I got a call from the lady who manages the Trobe Hill Nursing Home. In the article, which had appeared in the *Red Creek Times'* Sunday supplement, "Mountain Scene Magazine," I had mentioned that I was looking for a machine that would play a tape from that old recording machine which had been used in the Braddock Hill Church. The lady at the Trobe Hill home told me that the playback machine was still in the attic of the nursing home.

I was at home at the time she called, and I had almost forgotten about the tape. I went downtown to my office at the newspaper to dig it out of the bottom drawer of my desk. The moment that I saw the date on the box again, June 14, 1949, it struck me suddenly that this was the same date that was on Specs' and Jamie's tombstones, the date of their deaths. And it came back to me immediately what must be on the tape — I remembered fiddling around with that tape recorder and the red light coming on when Specs and I first entered the church that evening long ago. If anything was recorded or remained on that tape, it would be a recording of that tragic evening of their deaths.

That tape could unlock some mysteries, and if the tape ran long enough, there was just a chance that I might find out once and for all whether my worst fears were correct or groundless. Was one of the Troop 44 members deliberately responsible for killing my adopted brother, Specs, and my best friend, Jamie, or was it an accident? I had no way of knowing whether voices on a tape recording lasted twenty-five years. Would the voices from the past have faded into oblivion long ago? Just on the chance that there might be only one opportunity, one successful playing of the tape, I took with me a small, battery- operated cassette recorder and some tapes I kept at the newspaper office, to make a second recording on the first playback, if there was to be one.

I drove out to the Trobe Hill Nursing Home and the manager, a Mrs. Snodgrass, took me to the attic. She had set the dusty, old playback machine out on a table. It looked to be in good condition. I brushed some of the dust from the metal name tag and saw the familiar words, Witteveen Voice Recording Company. I noticed that battery cables extended from the back and realized the

playback machine worked on battery power like the recorder had. Brushing some more dust from a label titled 'Instructions,' I noted that the machine worked on a twelve-volt system. I went down to my station wagon and hauled my car battery back up to the attic and connected it to the machine. Anxiously, I snapped the 'ON' button, and watched with relief as the light came on behind the dials.

Reading the instructions carefully, I threaded the recording tape through the recording head and on to the large take-up reel. So much did I want to hear those voices out of my childhood that I was almost afraid to press the 'FORWARD' button, afraid my ears would hear only a rumble of static, or dead silence. Just to be ready, I turned on the small cassette recorder and placed the microphone near the large speaker on the machine. Then I held my breath and pressed the 'FORWARD' button. Almost at once, I heard my voice, clear and precise, from childhood. I was arguing with my adopted brother, Specs. It made cold chills run through me the first time I heard Specs speak, knowing that in a little more than an hour from that moment he would be dead. Not only did I hear the voices, but the voices stimulated my recall so I could also perfectly visualize the action as we spoke.

The transcript of this tape recording was completed on August 7, 1974. The original tape is still in my possession.

Roger M. Stockwell

## WITTEVEEN TAPE TRANSCRIPT (1)

ROGER: Hey! Look here! I think it came on! When I pressed these two buttons the same time, that little red light, there, came on.

SPECS: That needle there . . . When you talk . . . Look! That needle goes back and forth when I talk.

ROGER: I wonder how it came on with the electricity off. There must . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) SPECS: . . . better turn it off. If Snooks Larson finds out you fooled around with it, he'll tell. You'll most likely get your butt beat.

ROGER: Big deal! You're not gonna tell Snooks Larson nothing. All I got to do to turn it off is press that little button that says 'OFF.' See there it . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) ... if I press this one.

SPECS: The red light didn't go off. And it's still making that whirring sound. You better. . . .

ROGER: If I could get these two buttons to come back up. Then it would ... I know why it came on with the electricity off. It works on them car batteries. They're right under there.

SPECS: You better just put the cover back on. I don' reckon it's got any tape in it. But the batteries will run down. Maybe Mr. Bertram will know how to turn if off when he comes.

ROGER: You're not gonna tell Bertram. And if . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) ... got to be off. I pushed the 'OFF' button.

SPECS: Just put the cover back on and I won't tell nobody. But. . . .

ROGER: There! You satisfied? You know what you are, Specs? You're a little hunky bastard!

SPECS: You know what mother said she'd do if she ever



heard you call me that again. She said. . . .

ROGER: She ain't your mother. You're a dirty little bastard and I bet you was born in a whorehouse, somewheres! SPECS: If you call me that again, I'll . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . think I'll do it.

ROGER: Sometimes you can be a real pain in the rear end, Specs. You little. . . .

SPECS: I'm warning you. I'll. . . .

ROGER: Skip it! The lightning that struck when the lights went out... it must have hit the transformer station down on Market Street. When I looked out the front door, all the lights were out all over town above Fayette Street. And . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE)

I CAN RECALL THAT WHEN I WAS FOOLING AROUND WITH THE TAPE RECORDER, SPECS HAD ALREADY UNDRESSED AND GOTTEN INTO HIS INDIAN OUTFIT, AND HE WAS PUTTING THE WAR PAINT ON HIS FACE AND BODY. WITH OUR CAMPING GEAR EACH OF US KEPT A PACKAGE OF BOTTLES THAT HAD SIX COLORS OF WATER PAINT THAT WE USED AS WAR PAINT. THIS RED, YELLOW, GREEN, BLUE, BROWN, AND WHITE PAINT WE COULD BUY IN POWDER FORM AT THE HOBBY STORE, MIX IT WITH WATER, AND IT WOULD WASH OFF EASILY. THE PAINT COULD BE PUT ON BY SIMPLY DIPPING OUR FINGERS IN THE BOTTLES AND SMEARING IT ON OUR FACES AND BODIES. AFTER I PUT THE COVER BACK ON THE RECORDER, I PROCEEDED TO GET UNDRESSED, INTO MY INDIAN OUTFIT, AND BEGAN PUTTING ON THE WAR PAINT. THIS WAS SOMETHING OF A RITUAL WE ALL WENT THROUGH EVERYTIME WE SCOUTS GOT TOGETHER AND WERE GOING TO PRACTICE THE INDIAN DANCE. ONE MIGHT QUESTION WHY WE HAD TO PUT THE MAKE-UP ON WHEN WE WERE ONLY GOING TO PRACTICE, BUT, FOR SOME REASON, WE ALWAYS DID.

WHEN WE PRACTICED AT THE CHURCH, THERE WAS A SHOWER IN THE BASEMENT WHERE WE COULD WASH THE PAINT OFF WHEN WE FINISHED. WHEN WE PRACTICED ON CAMPING TRIPS, WE WOULD USUALLY GO SWIMMING IN THE RIVER TO WASH IT OFF. ON THIS OCCASION MR. BERTRAM HAD TOLD US WE SHOULD PRACTICE THE WAR DANCE UNTIL HE ARRIVED AT THE CHURCH TO TAKE US TO CAMP MAN-A-TOBA. THE STORM HAD CAUSED THE ELECTRICITY TO GO OFF AND THE LIGHTS TO GO OUT WHEN WE FIRST ENTERED THE CHURCH. IT WAS ABOUT NINE O'CLOCK, THE TIME WE WERE TO MEET, AND IT WAS DARK OUTSIDE. SPECS AND I HAD LIT OUR KEROSENE LAMPS AND HAD TAKEN OUR CAMPING GEAR DOWN TO THE FRONT OF THE SANCTUARY. THE STREAKS OF LIGHTNING LIT UP THE STAINED GLASS WINDOW ABOVE THE ALTAR IN THE FRONT OF THE SANCTUARY.

SPECS: That was sure close. It sounded like it hit the bell tower up there. Boy, the . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) ... in the wind.

ROGER: I heard on the six o'clock news there are storm warnings out for eleven counties in this part of West Virginia. They said a tornado hit over in Deerfield, just across the line. And that's only fifty miles away. It may be heading this way!

SPECS: The fire department siren went off just after the lights went out, when the lightning struck. I can just see old Charley Miller down there in the fire house blowing the siren.

(I CAN RECALL SPECS IMITATING CHARLEY MILLER PULLING THE LEVER THAT WORKED THE SIREN IN THE FIRE HOUSE.)

He'll just be hoping the lightning bolt has started a fire somewhere!

THERE IS ANOTHER CRASH OF THUNDER FOLLOWED BY THE SOUND OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT SIREN IN THE DISTANCE.

ROGER: There it goes again. The lightning must have struck something down in the town. Specs, bring the other lantern and some paint over here. I'm ready to put mine on. SPECS: You know why Tom Peddigrew got the idea we should do this Cherokee War Dance for campfires and jamborees? That's so when we practice, we got to strip down and put on this war paint. That way we're ready to play 'the game' when Mr. Bertram isn't around.

ROGER: I saw where a tornado hit once. A twister hit a trailer park only a few miles from Grandmother's down in Kentucky. You were sick in the hospital. It just toppled them trailers over . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . where the fire is.

SPECS: You go. It's more'n a mile back to town. And I'm sure not gonna walk it again in the rain. Anyway, if a tornado was to hit, I'd just as soon find out after it's over. ROGER: The volunteer fire department is out. That means Mr. Bertram won't be here on time. The storm warning is supposed to be over at nine-thirty. We might have to wait till after that for Mr. Bertram to come. We may be late getting started to Camp Man-a-toba.

SPECS: Huh! That volunteer fire department! What a bunch of clowns! If there ain't a fire, they'll probably start one just to have some excitement. They broke just about every window in the Franklin Hotel, and there weren't nothing on fire but a mattress and. . . .

ROGER: Some of the others ought to . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . I'm gonna camp with Jamie this weekend. You and Chalky can stay in a tent together. SPECS: I don't mind camping with Chalky. But he'd be a lot happier if he could stay in the tent with you. That way

he wouldn't cry half the night if he was to wake up and be scared.

THERE ARE A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE.

SPECS: Roger, maybe you ought not to pal around all the time with Jamie. I heard them guys talking about you behind your back.

ROGER: Who? What did they say?

SPECS: Nothing, much. You know how those guys talk, especially Chad. Anyway, they weren't talking about you exactly. They said Jamie's kind of weird for you. You know. . . .

ROGER: Who said that? Chad? Tom Peddigrew? Huh! Them guys have a lot of room to talk! Everybody knows what them guys and Arnold was caught doing when we was camping up at Harmon's Rock over Christmas. They just want to put everybody in the same boat with them. If the . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE)

SPECS: . . . mad at me. I was just telling you what I heard. They said they saw you and Jamie in the movie last Saturday. And they said you all were horsing around, being all lovey-dovey and everything. I'm just telling you what they said.

ROGER: So what? Tom's just mad cause Jamie told him he might drop out of his patrol and join mine. I'll go to the movie with who I want to. And I'll camp with who I want to.

SPECS: I'll tell you one thing! I ain't going camping no more if we start playing that weird game Tom Peddigrew dreamed up any more. It weren't so bad in the beginning when it was like 'release.' But then they began acting like a bunch of savages, running around in the woods half naked in that war paint and them spears and screaming 'Kill! Kill! Kill!' like we do in the dance. I sometimes think if it weren't for that weird game, Luke and Wally would

still be alive today. (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . Peddigrew's got more screws loose upstairs than his half-brother, Arnold. That Arnold. All he ever does is look at you with that weird look. . . .

ROGER: Betcha Tom Peddigrew won't make any cracks like that to my face. Or Chad, either. That Chad thinks he's such a tough guy — thinks everybody's scared of him. I'm not scared of him.

SPECS: It's that weird game that got Luke Washburn killed! And Wally Magro, too! Everybody's just afraid to tell. It's Tom's crazy game. Boy, if they was to do anything to me, I'd tell.

ROGER: Who's scared of Tom's old game? It's just a kid's game.

SPECS: Why do Tom, Chad, and Arnold always got to be the hunters and we got to be the prey? Peddigrew thinks because he's got some Cherokee blood in him, he's got to always be . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . like he was a savage. And them sharp sticks they carry. What do they need them for? It weren't so bad at first when . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) ... got caught. They just took you back to camp as a prisoner until somebody came and released you. (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . they got to tie you up and leave that creepy Arnold to guard you. He scares me with that gurgling sound he makes and them weird looks. They say he weren't all there, even before he got shot.

ROGER: Arnold's harmless. All's wrong with him is he can't talk 'cause Tom shot him in the throat and tore up his voice box.

SPECS: I bet that weren't no accident, either. Them guys have got a mean streak in them a mile wide. Once, Luke told me Arnold poked him in the belly with that sharp stick . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) ... he found

him hiding in the crevice of a rock up on that ledge over on the island. He said Arnold poked him so hard he fell and cracked his arm. He said he just missed by a hair splitting his head open on a sharp rock. And Wally and Jack was afraid to tell on them, too. Wally told me, once, after they was captured and Chad was taking them back to camp, he made them crawl on their hands and knees. And when they didn't move fast enough, he poked them in the rear end with his sharp stick. And they had the marks to prove it.

ROGER: They've never found me. I got a hiding place they'll never find. I can just hide out there all night if I need to.

SPECS: When Mr. Bertram's around, they don't play their weird game. You'd think they was a bunch of saints. (HE IMITATES) Yes, Sir! Mr. Bertram! No, Sir! Mr. Bertram! Boy, have they got old Bertram fooled. Then that siren blows, or somebody calls him on that walkie-talkie, and off he goes to play fireman. Then Tom Peddigrew is ready to . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . wish Mr. Bertram could see his pet, Tom Peddigrew, when his back is turned. Boy, he'd get a surprise!

I RECALL AT THIS POINT IN THE CONVERSATION I WAS STANDING ON MY HEAD MAKING A FACE AT SPECS. BUT HE RARELY PAID ANY ATTENTION TO MY ANTICS.

ROGER: I ain't afraid of them. They'll all back down if you call their bluff. And that dopey Arnold, he's harmless. And Chad, he acts big! But he ain't nothing but a big cry-baby if he don't have Arnold around to back him up.

SPECS: You . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . game got started. Chad used to steal them white rabbits out of old man Sizemore's hutch over on Laker Street. They let them loose to track them. And when they got close enough — them rabbits was just about tame — they'd

stab them with their spears. Then they got bored with rabbits, and now they want us to be their prey. One . . . (UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . told old Bertram about Tom's game when he came back from a fire call. You know what he said? He said, (SPECS IMITATES) 'I don't like tattletales, Specs. You got to learn to take care of yourself out in the wilds, Specs.' And all the time he was sitting on his butt by the campfire.

ROGER: Tom's game's all right. More fun than sitting around the campfire and telling ghost stories. That's what Mr. Magro wanted us to do when Mr. Bertram had to leave when we was on that camping trip up to Harmon's Rock over the Christmas holidays.

SPECS: That's easy for you to say. You never get captured . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . them painted savages poking at you with them sharp sticks. And why we got to strip down and have this war paint on us when we play 'the game?' That's the only reason Tom wants us to keep doing this Indian dance, so we can play 'the game.' The last time we was playing over on the island, I almost got ripped to pieces in a briar patch. We was playing . . .

ROGER: Oh! Shut up, Specs! All you do is talk, talk, talk, all the time. That's probably the reason you get caught so easy. You probably never stop yapping. . . .

SPECS: I'm just warning you, Roger. Something else bad is gonna happen if we keep playing 'the game.' You just wait and see. Luke's dead and Wally's dead. And I think 'the game' had a lot to do with it. When they captured me the last time we played here in the church, I was hiding down in the furnace room. They came charging at me and poking at me with them pointed sticks yelling, 'Kill! Kill! Kill!' I heard them say, 'It's Roger!' And they drew them spears back and started to leap. When they saw it was only me, they lost interest and just made me a pris-

oner. After they got me tied up, Chad said they was going to torture me and make me tell where you was at. But they never done that.

ROGER: If you know where any of my hiding places are, you better not tell.

SPECS: I don't know any. And I don't want to know. But you better be real careful. For some reason Chad Hartley hates your guts because . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . and started your own patrol. He didn't like that one bit. And Tom Peddigrew don't like it 'cause you're pals with Jamie. Tom Peddigrew thinks he's got to run everything. Once, last summer when we was up at scout camp, Tom Peddigrew lost to you in a canoe race and he just about cried. He got big tears in his eyes. I seen him. He didn't know I was watching.

ROGER: Talk! Talk! Talk! Specs, you're the windiest kid alive. What do I care what Tom Peddigrew likes and don't like. Specs, why don't you go down to the scout room and get the patrol cooking kit and all the other troop gear packed. Here, you can take my flashlight. I'll keep the lanterns. And bring the first aid kit up, too.

SPECS: OK, don't listen to me. But when you get one of them sharp sticks through your gizzard, don't say I didn't warn you. I reckon you'll wish you'd listened then.

ROGER: I ain't afraid of them. I'll . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE)

SPECS: . . . that Arnold done. He may not say nothing. But he's mean as the devil. I never told nobody, but once, when he didn't know I was watching him, I saw him run a frog gig right through one of old Mrs. Taber's cats. He didn't do it fast, neither. He done it real slow, while the cat was screeching and howling. And Arnold had that dumb look on his face like he was enjoying it.

ROGER: Specs, I think you make half this stuff up. Just



like you told me there was a copperhead out in the coal bin and it weren't nothing but an old black snake.

SPECS: OK. So I was wrong about that being a copperhead. But you better believe what I say when I tell you Tom Peddigrew and them guys are really after you when they play 'the game.'

ROGER: Go get the stuff packed!

THERE IS ALMOST A FIVE-MINUTE INTERVAL HERE ON THE TAPE WHERE THE ONLY SOUNDS ARE THUNDER, WIND, AND RAIN. I REMEMBER I FINISHED PUTTING ON THE WAR PAINT AFTER SPECS LEFT. BRIEFLY, ON THIS SEGMENT OF THE TAPE I HUM AND THEN SING A FEW LINES OF 'IT AIN'T NECESSARILY SO' FROM THE FOLK OPERA, PORGY AND BESS.

ROGER: (SINGING) 'It ain't necessarily so. It ain't necessarily so. The things that you're liable to read in the Bible. It ain't necessarily so.'

MY MOTHER HAD TAKEN SPECS AND ME TO PITTSBURGH TO SEE A TOURING COMPANY PRODUCTION OF 'PORGY AND BESS' THAT SPRING. THAT LINE OF VERSE FROM THE SONG HAD SHOCKED PURITANICAL ME. AND NOW I WAS BEING DEFIANT, DARING TO SING IT HERE IN THE SANCTUARY OF THE CHURCH. I REMEMBER I WAS STANDING AND WATCHING THE LIGHTNING AS IT LIT UP THE HUGE STAINED GLASS WINDOW BEHIND THE ALTAR. AND JAMIE SNEAKED UP BEHIND ME AND TACKLED ME WITH A WAR WHOOP. WE SCUFFLED ON THE CARPET FOR A FEW MOMENTS, AND I WAS ABLE TO GET HIM DOWN QUICKLY. WHEN I LET HIM UP, I NOTICED HE HAD BROUGHT ALL HIS CAMPING GEAR DOWN FRONT AND HIS EVER-PRESENT SPANIEL, PLATO, WAS SITTING BESIDE HIS GEAR. THE STORM WAS SO LOUD THEY HAD ENTERED WITHOUT ME HEARING THEM. AFTER WE HAD SCUFFLED ON THE FLOOR A FEW MOMENTS, THERE WAS A BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT-

NING FOLLOWED BY A DEAFENING ROAR OF THUNDER.

JAMIE: I'm scared of lightning. About two years ago I was over at Lowell's Horse Stable with Grandpa, and lightning struck the old sycamore tree near the driveway — split it to pieces. Part of it fell on a horse while old Walter Lowell was riding it. The horse threw him and broke his leg. Part of that tree almost hit me, too. Now I'm scared to be outside when it's lightning. I got Grandpa to drive me up here.

ROGER: I heard on the six o'clock news a tornado may be heading this way. It hit over in Deerfield in Virginia.

JAMIE: I guess this church is about as safe a place to be as anywhere. It's a lot more sturdy than most of the houses in town.

ROGER: Get undressed and get your Indian outfit on. I'll help you put your war paint on. I'm done.

JAMIE: OK.

ROGER: When Reverend Washburn was here, I heard him say that in 1947 a tornado blew the whole town of Walton Mills away. He was the preacher in their church then. He said three people got killed.

JAMIE: I sure hope Mr. Bertram waits till the storm is over before we start out to Camp Man-a-toba.

ROGER: Turn around and I'll put some streaks on . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . don't have to worry about that. Mr. Bertram probably won't even get here till the storm is over. The volunteer fire department was called out when the lightning struck. Didn't you hear the siren?

JAMIE: Yeh! I hadn't thought of that.

ROGER: Jamie, why don't you join my patrol? With Wally and Jack gone, I only got Specs and Chalky in my patrol. And Chalky ain't even old enough to be a scout. But I guess Tom Peddigrew wouldn't like it too much if

you was to drop out of his patrol.

JAMIE: Let me think about it. We can still camp together. My Grandpa asked me to . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . and I like Tom most of the time. But something happened on our last camping trip, the one to Harmon's Rock over Christmas, that made me kind of scared of Tom, Chad, and Arnold. But maybe they didn't really mean it.

ROGER: You're scared of them?

JAMIE: Well, it's kind of a long story. You have to know some things that happened before you even moved to Red Creek. It has to do with how Tom's dad got killed. And I do kind of feel sorry for Tom.

ROGER: What happened?

JAMIE: You know my Grandpa Driscoll is the Judge. And there was this old fellow over on Shaver's mountain that made whiskey. One of the sheriff's deputies went to arrest him, and he kidnapped the deputy at gun point. Tom's dad was a state trooper, and he went after him and tracked him down and brought him in to jail. Grandpa let him out of jail after a few weeks. That old moonshiner had vowed he'd get even with Tom's dad. And he did. About two months after he got out, between Christmas and New Years a year and a half ago, he got into trouble again. And Tom's dad went after him. He shot Tom's dad and killed him. Since then, Grandpa has kind of felt responsible for Tom. I guess he kind of feels partly responsible for Tom's dad getting killed. If he'd have kept that old moonshiner in jail, it never would have happened.

ROGER: Why should you feel sorry for Tom? Both your parents are dead.

JAMIE: My parents were killed in an automobile accident when I was two. I don't even remember them. (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . like Tom. But, after that

camping trip, I'm kind of scared of them.

ROGER: What happened?

JAMIE: You remember on that camping trip when we played 'the game' down around the face of the overlook at Harmon's Rock? The hunters captured me in a little cave that's down below where the overlook is. After they caught me, they tied me up, and Chad said they was gonna have a trial for me. I thought they were joking, at first, but after a bit I wasn't so sure. Chad went over all that stuff about my grandfather being responsible for Tom's father being killed, and how if they was to kill me, it would make things even with the Judge. And Chad brought up something I didn't even know about. He said that Grandpa had granted an injunction to the mine owners when the coal miners was on strike in August two years ago. He said my Grandpa had made it so his family had to go hungry 'cause his dad was a coal miner. Chad said that injunction made the strike last a whole month longer than it would have, and his dad had said it was all Grandpa's fault. By the time Chad said all that, I was getting kind of scared. But then, suddenly, Tom had laughed that funny laugh of his, and they went chasing off after somebody else.

ROGER: I thought you and Tom were friends. After all, he's your first cousin.

JAMIE: We are, in a way, I reckon. I like Tom most of the time. And sometimes I'm scared of him. He's all right sometimes — when he's away from Chad and Arnold. I'll tell you something if you won't tell anybody I told you. ROGER: I won't tell.

JAMIE: Last winter, when Tom's mother had to go to the hospital like she does when she has trouble with her nerves, Tom stayed . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . and Tom slept with me. And that's when I kind of

got to feeling sorry for him. He was always crying out in his sleep like he was having a nightmare. It was like he was being hunted or something. He even peed in the bed just about every night like he was a baby. That's why, when he goes camping, he always wants to go off and sleep by himself. He don't want anybody to hear him cry out. And he don't want anybody to know he still wets the bed. But I don't guess I got much room to talk.

ROGER: Turn around here and I'll put some streaks on your face.

JAMIE: Once, when Tom was staying with us, a bad storm come up in the middle of the night — just about like the one going on out there right now. Lightning struck something outside the bedroom window. And I peed in the bed! Tom just laughed at me for being scared of the storm. But he promised he wouldn't tell any of the guys what I done if I wouldn't tell on him. So don't you tell.

ROGER: That is fair enough.

JAMIE: Most of the time when he's at Grandpa's, he's not the way he is when he's around Chad and Arnold. When he's with Chad and Arnold, he's not the same, in some way. I know Chad hates Grandpa. I didn't know about the injunction. But I knew Grandpa threatened to send Chad away to Perrytown once, when he got into trouble for destroying some property along the railroad. But I never heard Tom say anything about holding Grandpa responsible for his dad being killed. But if he don't hold it against Grandpa, why did he let Chad talk about Grandpa that way?

ROGER: If he don't like your grandpa, he ought not to stay there. How come . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE)

JAMIE: . . . have anywhere else to stay. I don't know. Tom's all right most of the time. There's another . . .

(THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . don't know. Tom told me. He's scared of pitch darkness, just like I'm scared of lightning. Have you ever noticed? Tom takes a light with him everywhere he goes. He even sleeps where there's a light on so he can see. Once, when he was staying with us, the electricity went off in a storm, and it was pitch black in the house. Tom was whimpering and crying 'til I could get a candle lit. Tom said his dad used to lock him in their cellar where it was pitch black to punish him when he was little, and sometimes he would scream for hours before his dad would let him out.

ROGER: I always heard Tom worshiped his old man. How could he?

JAMIE: I used to think so. And I think he still does in a way. But Tom told me how mean his dad could be to him and Arnold. He used to make them run and hide in the woods and he would track them like they was animals. When he'd find them, he'd shoot near them to let them know they'd been spotted.

ROGER: Wasn't Tom's dad a sergeant in state troopers?

JAMIE: Yeh! He was supposed to be their best tracker in the state. They say he could track down anybody or anything in the woods, better than a bloodhound.

ROGER: The front door just slammed. There's somebody coming. Put your lamp out, and let's hide over here in the choir. Maybe we can scare them. I'll bet it's Tom, Arnold, and Chad.

Mr. Bertram couldn't be here, yet. DURING THIS PAST CONVERSATION, JAMIE HAD GOTTEN INTO HIS INDIAN OUTFIT AND I HELPED HIM PUT ON HIS WAR PAINT. JAMIE AND I PUT OUT OUR LANTERNS AND HID BEHIND THE PARTITION THAT SEPARATED THE CHOIR PEWS FROM THE ALTAR AREA. ON THE TAPE THERE IS SOME CONVERSATION THAT IS MAINLY UNINTELLIGIBLE BETWEEN TOM AND CHAD WHEN THEY ENTERED AT THE

AT THE BACK OF THE SANCTUARY. THEY MUST HAVE LIT THEIR LANTERNS IN THE FRONT HALL BECAUSE THEY WERE LIT WHEN THEY ENTERED THE SANCTUARY. I REMEMBER THEY HAD A RACE DOWN THE AISLE OF THE SANCTUARY TO THE PULPIT, AND CHAD WAS LAST. HE HAD STUMBLER RUNNING DOWN THE AISLE CARRYING ALL HIS GEAR. THIS TRANSCRIPTION BEGINS RECORDING THEIR CONVERSATION WHEN IT BECOMES INTELLIGIBLE AFTER THEY REACH THE ALTAR AREA.

TOM: You lost, Chad. You have to go.

CHAD: I ain't gonna touch one of them bats. They bite you and you get rabies!

TOM: The lightning must have caused the electricity to go off. There's Jamie's dog and his gear. And there's Roger's and Specs' stuff. They must be down in the scout room or up in the bell tower.

CHAD: Did you see that tree that fell over the telephone lines down the road back there? I'll bet . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE)

TOM: . . . agreed the last one up to the pulpit's gotta go up to the bell tower and capture a bat.

CHAD: I'll take Arnold with me. He don't know no better than to grab one of them bats. Right, Arnold? Or maybe I can get that dumb Jamie to catch a bat. I'll tell him Arnold's gonna spook him if he don't.

TOM, CHAD, AND ARNOLD BEGAN GETTING UNDRESSED AND INTO THEIR INDIAN OUTFITS AND PUTTING ON THEIR WAR PAINT DURING THE CONVERSATION THAT FOLLOWS. IT WAS ALMOST AN INSTINCTIVE RITUAL WITH ALL THE TROOP MEMBERS WHEN WE GOT TOGETHER AND WERE GOING TO PRACTICE THE DANCE.

TOM: I'll bet Jamie's going to join Roger's patrol. He told me he might.

CHAD: I reckon those two love birds want to be able

to stay close to each other.

TOM: Jamie'll wish he'd stayed in my patrol. Just wait till we play 'the game.' He'll wish he'd stay in my patrol.

CHAD: Then it'll be too bad for little Jamie. I'll make him suck my cock till he turns blue.

TOM: Everybody's here but Chalky. He won't get here till his dad comes.

CHAD: Roger, Specs, and Jamie are . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . Jamie's dog, Plato.

TOM: I didn't think Jamie would come. He's scared of lightning and thunder.

CHAD: Tom, now that I got my pecker out, how about giving me a good blow job. Maybe Arnold'd like to have his cock sucked, too. Would you, Arnold? How'd you like that?

TOM: I'm not gonna do that. Please, Chad, don't make me do that!

CHAD: Did I hear you right? Did you say 'no?' You don't really mean that, do you? You sure you wouldn't give me a little blow job if I really wanted you to?

TOM: I mean it. Anyway, Mr. Bertram might show up.

CHAD: I ain't a scared of old Bertram. But I guess he'd be really mad if he saw his favorite little boy scout sucking somebody else's cock.

TOM: Mr. Bertram ought not to be allowed to bring Chalky. He ain't old enough to be a scout. Chalky's a big cry-baby!

CHAD: Chalky ain't so bad. It's that big mouth Specs I'd like to see stay home. He's the one who's liable to tell on us.

TOM: Chalky's a big cry-baby. And he won't play 'the game.'

CHAD: Specs ain't no better. He plays, but he's too easy to catch. And you don't dare give it to him up the ass!



He'd tell!

TOM: This time we'll go after the big game. We're gonna capture Roger. I know where he hides on the island now. Last time we were there, before Luke got killed, I hid and waited till dawn on the lower end of the island. And I saw him come down out of that big sycamore tree down there. That's where he's been hiding. I knew where he was the last time we played 'the game' there. But Luke fell before I got the chance to lead you to him. This time we'll capture him sure.

CHAD: We'll get him! (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . brought my carbine along. Did you bring me those blank shells you said you'd get for me?

TOM: Here they are. You better keep your rifle out of sight. Mr. Bertram will take it away from you if he sees it. What are you gonna do with your rifle, anyway?

CHAD: You remember the time we was camping over Christmas and playing 'the game' up at the Algonquin State Park? And we caught Jamie in that little cave below the Harmon's Rock overlook. We told him we was gonna make him pay for what old Judge Driscoll done to your pop, and for what the Judge done giving that injunction to them mine owners.

TOM: I remember.

CHAD: Well, when we capture Jamie this time, we'll scare him good. I got an idea that will scare the piss out of little Jamie. Make him wish he'd never thought of quitting our patrol. I'll tell him we've decided to kill his mutt Plato for what his grandpa's done. And I'll let him see me put a bullet in the chamber. He won't know it's one of them blanks you give me. Then I'll take aim real slow before I fire. Little Jamie will pee in his britches for sure before he finds out it's only a blank.

TOM: He laughed at us before. Remember. Bet he won't

laugh this time.

CHAD: And maybe we can think up some way to scare Specs so he don't want to go camping no more. He's nothing but a pain in the ass. He'd tell on us for sure if he . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE)

TOM: . . . about Roger? What are we gonna do with him when we catch him?

CHAD: After we get through with him, Mr. Tough Guy'll wish he'd stayed home with his mama.

TOM: If Mr. Bertram don't get called away to no fires, we might not be able to play 'the game' on this trip.

CHAD: I thought about that. There's a telephone in the main camp building. I can sneak in there and call in a false alarm for Red Creek. Once, Jeb McFarland and me called in a false alarm from Bertha Hill, and they was up there in no time looking for the fire. If I was to call in a false alarm for way out in the southern end of the county, maybe Lowesville, Mr. Bertram would be gone for hours before he discovered there weren't no fire. He'd leave his walkie- talkie with us, and there wouldn't be no way the fire chief could warn him it was a false alarm before he went all the way there. And then we . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE)

TOM: . . . fire department's out now. Maybe Mr. Bertram won't be able to take us tonight. The storm sounds like it's getting worse.

CHAD: It'll blow over in a little while. The fire department's just down at the transformer station on Market Street.

TOM: Yeh! I was talking to Mr. Bertram at the fire station before we started up here. He said he thought he'd be able to get away in a little while.

CHAD: This is gonna be the night! This is gonna be the night we capture Roger! Kill! Kill! Kill!

TOM: This is gonna be the night we capture . . . (THUN

DER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . storm sounds like it's getting a lot worse. One time the warden at the state prison in Moundsville called out my dad to track down a murderer named Hulitt Jones. Some say he murdered eleven people and two of them were state troopers. He'd busted out of Moundsville. He knocked out two guards . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . Ohio River. My dad was one-quarter Cherokee. He tracked him for two days and found out he was hiding on a . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . swam over there on a stormy night like tonight. He couldn't take no weapon but a knife . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . found him holed up in this little cave. Old Hulitt called to Dad and told him he'd rather be dead than to go back to Moundsville. Old Hulitt said he weren't going back alive. Well, Dad made a deal with him . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . both had a knife and they was even. He told old Hulitt he would give him a five-minute head start, and only one of them would leave the island alive. Old Hulitt turned out . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . out of a tree and slashed him just a few inches from his heart. They was in a marsh, and they fought in the mud and slime till Dad was finally able to put a knife through . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . just buried him right there. My dad said a mountain man rather be dead than locked in a cell.

CHAD: Yeh! I guess your old man was a pretty good tracker!

TOM: He could track animals just as good as people — maybe, better. He said animals was more predictable. Once, he . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) ... old fourteen-point buck. It weren't deer season and Pop didn't have nothing but his bow. But he . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) ... for about five hours. Finally,

that old buck just got so mad, he turned and charged at Pop. Dad was ready and dropped him with an arrow through the heart. Dad was . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . game warden he had to shoot that buck in self-defense, which was the truth. We still got the antlers in the cellar. But Pop said people are more of a challenge to track than animals. Animals ain't got no sense of reason. You can always . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . people it was different. If you ain't careful, they'll do what you least expect. Pop said tracking people, like escaped convicts who ain't got nothing to lose, was the most dangerous game there is. And the most exciting.

CHAD: When old Bertram answers that false fire alarm I turn in, he'll put you in charge. He always does. I think old Bertram's got a hard on for you. Has he been shoving it to you on them hunting trips you go on alone with him? TOM: Mr. Bertram's all right. If he'd just leave that crybaby, Chalky, at home.

CHAD: I don't reckon he has anybody to leave Chalky home with. He ain't got no wife around.

TOM: Let's go up in the bell tower . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . bats are still hanging on the rafters asleep. If we can capture one, I got a piece of that luminous tape that shines in the dark, the kind we used on our spears so we can find them in the dark. I'll put a strip of that tape on the bat's belly. Then we can let him go here in the church. When he flies down low, we'll see who can spear him first. We'll be able to see him in the dark with that tape on his belly. It'll be like 'the game.' CHAD: We can pretend the bat is Roger! The bat can be the prey!

TOM: Maybe I can figure out some way to put some of that luminous tape on Roger and the other prey when we play 'the game.' That way we could spot them a lot easier

in the dark and . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) .. .  
Arnold's good at catching bats.

TOM, CHAD, AND ARNOLD START TO LEAVE TO GO TO THE  
BELL TOWER. THERE ARE A FEW MOMENTS OF SILENCE ON  
THIS SEGMENT OF TAPE. AT THIS POINT THE FIRST THIRTY-  
MINUTE TAPE USED TO RECORD FROM THE WITTEVEEN TAPE  
WAS NEARLY FILLED. A SECOND TAPE CASSETTE WAS  
INSERTED TO CONTINUE THE RE-RECORDING.



## CHAPTER ELEVEN

## WITTEVEEN TAPE TRANSCRIPT (2)

DURING TOM'S AND CHAD'S CONVERSATION, THE TWO BOYS AND ARNOLD HAD PUT ON THEIR INDIAN OUTFITS AND STREAKED THE 'WAR' PAINT ON THEIR BODIES. JAMIE AND I HAD LISTENED TO THEM TALK FROM OUR HIDING PLACE. AFTER A WHILE, WE HAD GROWN TIRED OF LISTENING TO THEM, AND WE HAD CRAWLED QUIETLY TO THE DOORWAY AT THE END OF THE PEWS AND INTO THE ROOM WHERE THE LADDER WAS THAT LED TO THE BELL TOWER. AS TOM, CHAD, AND ARNOLD HAD STARTED TO LEAVE THE SANCTUARY TO GO TO THE BELL TOWER, JAMIE AND I HAD WALKED BACK THROUGH THE DOOR TO THE SANCTUARY AS THOUGH WE WERE COMING FROM THE BELL TOWER. BECAUSE OF WHAT WE HAD HEARD - ABOUT TOM KNOWING MY HIDING PLACE AND ARNOLD PLANNING TO SCARE JAMIE BY SHOOTING A BLANK BULLET AT HIS DOG - WE DID NOT WANT TOM AND CHAD TO KNOW THAT WE HAD HEARD THEM TALKING.

ROGER: I just came back to get my flashlight. Me and Jamie's been up in the bell tower watching the storm blow over.

CHAD: Was that all you two were doing in the bell tower? I reckon you two like to be alone.

ROGER: You want to make something of it, Chad? What are you so puffed up about? Everybody knows what we seen you doing on that last camping trip to Harmon's Rock.

CHAD: We saw you two in the movie last Saturday. Watching you two was better than watching the show.

ROGER: You better watch what you say if you don't want your mouth busted in!

TOM: No need to fight about it! Roger's right. We ain't got no room to talk. Anyway, it's not Roger's fault if Jamie wants to horse around that way.

ROGER: You're just mad 'cause Jamie said he might join my patrol.

TOM: That's OK with me. He weren't no good as a hunter. But I don't guess he's any better as the prey. Leastways, he's not likely to give us as good a chase as you will. ROGER: You haven't ever caught me.

TOM: No, we haven't caught you, yet.

CHAD: But your time is coming.

ROGER: You're just a lot of mouth, Chad. You'd never catch nobody if it weren't for Tom. You'd probably stumble over your big feet if Tom weren't there to lead you around.

CHAD: You just wait and see.

TOM: We was just going up to the bell tower and try to catch a bat. I got an idea for a new game. We can put some of that luminous tape on his belly, throw him up, and see who can spear him out of the air. Did you see any bats hanging down asleep from the rafters up there?

ROGER: I don't know. I didn't look. Let's go see.

JAMIE: I don't want to go looking for no bat. I think I'll go down to the scout room and help Specs get the troop



gear packed. Come on, Plato. (HE LEAVES)

ROGER: You got some more of that luminous tape? Let me see it.

TOM: I got it over there in my pack. I'll show you. Chad, you and Arnold go on up in the bell tower, and see if you can spot any bats. I'll get the . . . (THUNDER —UNINTELLIGIBLE)

CHAD AND ARNOLD LEAVE FOR THE BELL TOWER. ROGER: . . . going to do with that?

TOM: See! Here it is. It's just like that tape Chad, Arnold, and me have on our spears so we can find them in the dark. It shines a kind of yellowish green. My dad had some. The state police used it for night stalking. We can stick a strip of it on the bat's belly. Then we can see him flapping around in the dark.

ROGER: I was gonna camp with Jamie this weekend. But I'll camp with you, if you want me to.

TOM: Yeh, I'd like to. Mr. Bertram always wants me to camp with him. But maybe he'll let us camp together — one night, anyway. Do you reckon we'll be able to get down to the island to play 'the game?' ROGER: I hope so. We'll find a way.

THERE IS A LONG SILENCE.

TOM: I'll find some way to camp with you this weekend, even if Bertram don't like it.

ROGER: He can stay with Chalky. And Specs and Jamie can stay in a tent together.

TOM: I'll tell you something if you won't tell anybody I told you. I guess you'll find out anyway if we camp together.

ROGER: I won't tell. I promise.

TOM: I sometimes pee in the bed when I'm asleep. But if I wake up in the middle of the night and go, I can keep from doing it.

ROGER: I used to do that some. Still do, sometimes. It's nothing to be ashamed of.

TOM: I guess just about everybody knows — Chad, Arnold, Mr. Bertram, and Jamie. And, I reckon, if we camp together, you would've found out.

ROGER: I won't tell anybody.

TOM: I haven't tried to hypnotise you since we was at summer camp at Man-a-toba last summer. You reckon I can still do it?

ROGER: I don't know. You want to try?

TOM: All right. Let me get my belt buckle out of my pants. That's what I used last summer.

TOM WENT AND GOT HIS SCOUT BELT WITH THE SHINY BUCKLE.

TOM: You ready?

ROGER: I'm ready.

TOM BEGAN TO SWING THE SHINY BUCKLE IN FRONT OF MY EYES. AFTER THAT I AM NOT ABLE TO RECALL WHAT HE SAID OR DID. IT IS ONLY HEARING HIS WORDS ON THE TAPE RECORDER THAT GAVE ME ANY KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WAS SAID.

TOM: Watch the buckle very carefully. That's it. Watch it swing back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. Now, look deep into my eyes. Very deep into my eyes. You are beginning to feel very tired — very, very, tired. You feel like you want to sleep. You are very tired and want to sleep. Your eyelids are getting very heavy — very, very heavy. You can hardly keep them open. They are beginning to close. You want to sleep. Your eyelids are closed. You are now under my power. You will do everything that I say, and you will not remember anything. You will not wake up until I tell you to. And you will not remember what I have said when you wake up. But you will do everything that I say after you wake up. You

are . . . (THUNDER- UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . If you hear me, nod your head.

THERE IS A LONG PAUSE WHEN NOTHING IS SAID.

Reach out and put the palms of your hands flat on my hands. Listen to what I'm going to tell you and never forget — never, never forget. Roger Stockwell, you like me very, very much. You like me more than anybody else in the world. You want to be with me more than anybody else in the world. I am your best friend. You like me better than you like Jamie. You like me better than you like Chalky. When we go camping you will always choose me to camp with. No matter what happens, you will . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) ... in the world. You will want to be with me. You will want me to capture you in 'the game.' Then I can show you how much I like you — how much I want you. You want me to screw you up . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) ... in the world. You want me to suck your cock more than anything else in the world. You want to touch my pecker more than anything else in the world. You want to feel me get a hard on more than anything else in the world. That will give you the most pleasure you've ever had. Until you do these things to me — until I do these things to you, you'll never be free from my power. And when it happens, it will be the greatest moment in your life. It will be your biggest thrill. When it happens you will soar to the heights of the mountaintops. You will soar like a mighty eagle. Every time you look into my eyes, you will want to be with me. You will want to touch me. You will never, never, never be free from my power until I do these things to you — until you do those things to me. It will be your greatest thrill. And it will happen. It is destined to happen. Nothing can stop it from happening. We will get together, just you and me, and it will happen. You and I will play 'the game' and it

will happen. It will be your greatest moment. It will be my greatest triumph. You will let it happen. You are powerless to resist it happening. It is . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE . . . soar like an eagle, like the eagle we saw in the movie last Saturday at the Roxy. You will soar like an eagle above the beautiful valley in the satin blackness of night with the stars sparkling like specks of wildfire. We will be on that deserted, beautiful, wooded island alone and it will happen. You will soar to the heights when it happens. There is nothing that can stop us from having our great moment. It's our destiny.

THERE IS ANOTHER LONG PAUSE WHEN NOTHING IS SAID.

TOM: Now take your hands from my hands. I'm going to touch your eyelids gently with my finger tips. Then you will wake up. You will not remember what I have just said to you. There! Let's go up in the bell tower and see if Chad and Arnold caught a bat.

ROGER: OK.

THERE IS ABOUT A FIVE-MINUTE SEGMENT OF THE TAPE AT THIS SPOT WHERE THERE IS NO CONVERSATION AFTER TOM AND I LEFT TO GO TO THE BELL TOWER. I HAD ABSOLUTELY NO RECALL OF WHAT TOM SAID TO ME WHEN HE HAD ME 'HYPNOTISED.' HOWEVER, AS I LISTENED TO TOM ON THE TAPE AFTER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, I COULD VERY CLEARLY RECALL TOM SAYING THOSE THINGS. IN FACT, I THINK I COULD HAVE ALMOST REPEATED WITH HIM IN UNISON THOSE WORDS AND SENTENCES AS HE SAID THEM ON THE TAPE RECORDING. IT WAS A STRANGE SENSATION. IT WAS AS THOUGH I REMEMBERED WHAT HE SAID PERFECTLY AND NOT AT ALL AT THE SAME TIME. IT CAME BACK TO ME LIKE A HAZY, HALF-REMEMBERED DREAM THAT WAS VAGUE IN MEMORY BUT CRYSTAL CLEAR ON AWAKENING.

THE NEXT CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE ON THE TAPE

WHEN MR. BERTRAM AND CHALKY CAME INTO THE SANCTUARY.

BERTRAM: The storm should let up pretty soon. It looks like all the boys are here already. I thought I saw a light up in the bell tower when I drove up. Some of them must be up there.

CHALKY: We gotta go camping tonight? What if the tornado should hit?

BERTRAM: The boys have been looking forward to it. We're not going to let a little storm scare us off. Anyway, the storm's supposed to pass over by nine-thirty.

CHALKY: If it's still storming when we get there, I want to camp with you.

BERTRAM: Chalky, you don't want the other boys to make fun of you, do you? You don't want Tom Peddigrew to have to say that Chalky Bertram's still a baby and has got to sleep with his dada, do you?

CHALKY: I don't want to be by myself. When you're not around, Tom Peddigrew's always talking the guys into going off and playing this game. I have to stay by myself.

BERTRAM: Chalky, I don't know what I'm going to do with you. If you're gonna stay with me, you're going to have to be able to go on camping trips like a man. If you act like a baby and have to be hanging on to me all the time, I'll have to let you go back and stay with your mother and Aunt Martha at the boarding house in Morgantown. I won't have any choice. I reckon I let your mother and Aunt Martha spoil you when we lived with them.

SINCE CHALKY HAD ON HIS INDIAN OUTFIT AND THE WAR PAINT WHEN WE CAME DOWN FROM THE BELL TOWER, HE NO DOUBT WAS PUTTING IT ON WHILE THIS CONVERSATION WAS TAKING PLACE.

CHALKY: Dad, I'm telling you the truth. Sometimes when you have to leave to go to the fire station — like that

time we was camping on the island and Luke got killed — they play this game. Luke's getting killed weren't no accident, if you was to ask me.

BERTRAM: What do you mean it wasn't an accident? You've said that before.

CHALKY: They play this weird game when you're not around. I'm not supposed to tell. And I don't know too much about what goes on because I've only played a few times. But they play 'the game' in these Indian outfits and the war paint we use for the Indian dance. The whole thing was Tom Peddigrew's idea. Tom, Chad, and Arnold are the hunters and the rest of us are the prey. It's kind of like 'release.' But they tie up the prey when they catch them, and the hunters carry them sharp sticks. Tom Peddigrew don't know it, but I sneaked off and watched them the night Luke got killed. He was hiding in some rocks up above that ledge that he fell from. When they saw him, they charged at him yelling, 'Kill! Kill! Kill!' like we do at the end of the dance. After they captured him, they tried to make him do something he didn't want to do. Something dirty. Luke broke free and ran. They went after him. I didn't see him fall. But I just know it weren't no accident. They went chasing after him with them sharp sticks. Luke was just trying to get away. And we was playing 'the game' when Wally got killed, too. I didn't see what happened to him. But I bet it weren't no accident, either.

BERTRAM: Chalky, I sometimes think you just make these stories up. I know the boys play some game when I'm not around. But they're not savages. They don't try to maim and kill each other. Tom Peddigrew wouldn't do that. Now, aren't you ashamed of yourself? Telling stories like that on the boys.

CHALKY: That's the reason Specs didn't go on that

camping trip over Christmas. We don't like to play 'the game.' Once, when the twins was captured, the hunters tied them up and jabbed them with their sharp sticks. And they even had marks on 'em. But they were afraid to tell.

BERTRAM: You know what they'd call you, Chalky, if they knew you'd told me this tale? They'd call you a tattle-tale. That's what they'd call you. But I'll make a deal with you. I won't tell you told me, if you'll promise to behave like a man on this camping trip.

CHALKY: You just don't leave while we're camping, and there won't be any way they can play that weird game. They don't play while you're around.

BERTRAM: Now, Chalky, you know I've got to go and fight a fire if the fire chief calls me. You wouldn't want someone's house to burn down 'cause you're not man enough to stay by yourself a little while.

CHALKY: I don't guess so. But I hope you don't have to leave.

BERTRAM: I'll go down to the scout room and get the camping gear together. You stay here and, if any of the boys show up, tell them where I am. And listen to the walkie-talkie in case the fire chief tries to reach me.

CHALKY: I don't want to stay up here by myself. I want to go with you.

BERTRAM: Now, Chalky, what did I just tell you? I'll leave the lantern here with you, and you can finish getting on your war paint. I guess the electricity will be off a few more hours with that transformer knocked out down on Market Street. Here comes Jamie up from the basement. He and Plato will stay with you while I'm gone. Jamie, will you stay here with Chalky while I go get the troop gear together?

(JAMIE ENTERED FROM THE BASEMENT)

JAMIE: Sure. Specs has already got most of the stuff packed. I've been helping him. I just came back up to see if you and Chalky had got here yet. The rest of the guys are up in the bell tower.

BERTRAM: I'll be back in a few minutes. If the other boys come down, tell them to wait here. You can run through the dance a few times 'til the storm lets up. JAMIE: OK.

THERE IS A MOMENTARY SILENCE. MR. BERTRAM, APPARENTLY, LEFT FOR THE BASEMENT.

CHALKY: What are the guys doing up in the bell tower?

JAMIE: They went up there to look for a bat.

CHALKY: What do they want a bat for?

JAMIE: Tom Peddigrew's got an idea for some game he wants to play with a bat.

CHALKY: Tom Peddigrew's always got some game he wants to play. I'm scared of them games. Bad things happen when we play them games.

JAMIE: What bad things are you talking about, Chalky?

CHALKY: The night Luke got killed. You all were playing 'the game.' I'm not so sure . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . Peddigrew and his old game!

JAMIE: I was hidden on that end of the island. I weren't far away. I saw what happened when Luke got killed.

CHALKY: And Wally. I'm not so sure Tom Peddigrew was trying to rescue Wally when he went out in the rapids and busted Wally's raft with that spear. And why was Wally trying to get away from them, anyway? What was they doing to him? It's that game of Tom Peddigrew's!

JAMIE: I was also hidden nearby when Wally got caught in them rapids and his raft busted. I seen it. I guess it's that game, all right. I don't know what we can do to stop it. I'm kinda afraid to say anything.

CHALKY: I'm not afraid. Just let them try anything on



me. I'll tell. It ain't right. Two . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . got killed. And all because of playing Tom Peddigrew's game.

JAMIE: I don't know who to tell.

CHALKY: I tried to tell my dad, but he won't listen. He don't think Tom Peddigrew can do anything wrong.

JAMIE: Do you reckon we'll all get killed playing 'the game?'

CHALKY: They ain't gonna hurt me. I ain't scared of them.

JAMIE: I'm kinda scared. But I'm not sure they mean to hurt anybody.

CHALKY: 'The game' can be kind of fun, sometimes, just as long as something bad don't happen.

JAMIE: Let's go up in the bell tower and see what the storm is doing.

CHALKY: I wonder if they caught a bat.

AFTER CHALKY AND JAMIE LEAVE TO GO TO THE BELL TOWER, THERE IS ABOUT A TWO-MINUTE BLANK SEGMENT ON THE TAPE WITH ONLY THE SOUND OF THE STORM. CHAD AND ARNOLD CAME DOWN OUT OF THE BELL TOWER WITH THE BAT THAT CHAD HAD CAPTURED. THEY WERE FOLLOWED SHORTLY BY TOM, JAMIE, CHALKY, AND ME. WE HAD STAYED BEHIND TO WATCH TOM TRY AND CATCH ANOTHER BAT HE THOUGHT HE SAW ABOVE THE RAFTERS IN THE BELLTOWER.

CHAD: I don't know what that Tom Peddigrew wants two bats for. Old Bertram must be here, else Chalky wouldn't be here. He must be down in the scout room. If Tom don't hurry up before old Bertram comes back up from the basement, we ain't gonna be able to play his game with the bat. Listen to him screech away like a mad man in my hat. Guess he didn't like to be woke up.

THERE IS A MOMENTARY PAUSE.

CHAD: Arnold, you got the point on your spear sharp enough to bring down the bat when we let him go? Yeh, that ought to be sharp enough, Arnold, to rip his belly open! You know what that point on your spear is really for, Arnold? It's to draw blood, Arnold. It'll draw blood, Arnold. Arnold, I ain't forgot that your old man, Jake Peddigrew, killed my old man. Don't you forget that, Arnold. He did it on purpose, and I saw it. They was playing 'the game,' Arnold. That makes him a cold-blooded murderer. But I ain't told nobody I saw it, Arnold. You know the money that the state give your ma and Tom's ma after old Jake Peddigrew got killed. I don't reckon the state would give your ma and Tom's ma money if they knew what old Jake Peddigrew done — if they knew he was a murderer. You know that picture of your old man they put up at the state police academy honoring him for outstanding service after he was killed? They'd take it down, Arnold, if they was to find out your old man was a murderer. They'd just try to forget your old man was ever a state trooper. But I ain't gonna tell, Arnold, if you'll just do something for me. All you got to do, Arnold, is draw blood with your spear. Just jab it into one of the prey, Arnold. That's what the spear is for. That's what you keep it sharp for, Arnold. Just draw some blood! Then I won't have to tell what your pap did to my old man. I won't have to tell your old man was a murderer! I hear them coming down from the bell tower. Remember, Arnold, all you have to do is draw some blood and I won't tell.

TOM, JAMIE, CHALKY AND I RETURNED FROM THE BELL TOWER. TOM HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO FIND ANOTHER BAT IN THE RAFTERS.

TOM: Chad, I reckon we're gonna have to play 'the game' with just the one bat. I couldn't find another one. Listen to him screech. Bet he won't hang from no more rafters.

ROGER: How you gonna get the tape on him?

CHALKY: Dad said for me to tell you all he went down to the scout room to get the camping gear packed. He said for everybody to wait here.

ROGER: Specs is down there, too. He must have found a book to read.

CHAD: Mr. Bertram'll be down there for awhile. Let's get our spears ready and release the bat.

TOM: OK. Everybody get your spears. And I'll get the bat ready for 'the game.'

ROGER: You got to put the luminous tape on him.

TOM: I got a piece ready right here . . . (THUNDER — UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . hold that piece while I cut it. Put out all the lanterns except the blue shaded one. Chad, hold on to him tight while I get this piece of tape on his belly. Fellow, you're gonna be the prey. There! I got it. Now, when we toss him up, we'll be able to see him in the dark. Roger, here's a spear for you. And here's one for you, Jamie.

JAMIE: I don't want one. I'll watch.

TOM: Suit yourself. Here, Chalky, you take a spear. You can play 'the game.' You can try and kill the bat. Everybody ready? Arnold, put that lamp out over there. We don't need any on except the blue one. Chad, you got the bat ready to throw in the air?

CHALKY: Don't put that lantern out. I'm scared of the dark. And I'm scared of the bat.

TOM: Don't worry. The bat can't hurt you. You got a spear to kill him with if he comes close. And it ain't gonna be completely dark. The blue lamp will still be on. CHALKY: I'm scared of the bat.

JAMIE: Here, Chalky, I'll stay here with you. I won't let the bat get near you.

ROGER: There's nothing to be scared of, Chalky. Just

a little old bat.

TOM: OK, put out that lantern. Chad, get ready. On your mark, get set, heave him in the air!

AS THE BAT FLAPPED BACK AND FORTH AROSS THE DARK SANCTUARY WITH THE GLOWING TAPE SHOWING HIS PATH, THERE IS THE SOUND ON THE TAPE OF ALL OF US YELLING AS WE PURSUED HIM. WHEN THE BAT WOULD FLY LOW ENOUGH FOR US TO REACH HIM, WE WOULD JAB OUR SPEARS IN THE AIR AS HE WOULD PASS OVER US. IT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY THE SEPARATE VOICES, BUT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO RECORD SOME OF THE COMMENTS THAT WERE MADE AS WE PURSUED THE BAT.

BOYS' SHOUTING: There he goes! Get him! He's coming down over there! Kill! Kill! Kill! He's coming down over by the pulpit! Watch out! He's coming over your way, Roger! Jab him! Kill him! He's heading over your way, Chalky! Spear him! You got him, Chalky! Good hit, Chalky!

JAMIE: Chalky, you got him. You get to bury him 'cause you killed him.

CHALKY: I'll bury him on the island up at Camp Man- a-toba. SPECS ENTERED FROM THE BASEMENT CARRYING SOME OF THE TROOP GEAR.

SPECS: What are you guys doing in the dark? You better cut it out. Mr. Bertram's on his way up.

(WE RE-LIT TWO OF THE LANTERNS)

CHALKY: Look! Specs! I killed a bat! I killed the prey! I get to bury him!

SPECS: Chalky, even you are starting to play them weird games.

CHALKY: It's nothing but a bat!

MR. BERTRAM ENTERED FROM THE BASEMENT CARRYING SOME MORE OF THE TROOP GEAR.

BERTRAM: Fellows, gather around over here. Let's see if we can't get organized. Is everybody ready to get underway?

ROGER: Are we gonna leave now?

BERTRAM: The storm was supposed to have passed over by nine-thirty. Up till then there's a storm warning, but it ought to be over soon. The fire chief wants me to stay close by as long as the lightning keeps up. But we should be able to get off before too late. I called Reverend Slater and he said it would be all right for us to bed down here in the church for the night if the storm goes on too long. Then we can get up early and leave for Camp Man-a-toba in the morning. But I figure the storm will blow over, and we'll be able to get off tonight.

TOM: If we have to camp here, can Roger and I sleep out in the picnic shelter?

BERTRAM: We'll see. Let's just wait and see what the storm does. It's just a little after nine-thirty. Nobody'll be able to go outside for a little while, yet. I see everybody has got on their Indian outfits and their war paint. Why don't you practice your dance. That will be a good way to use the time 'til the storm lets up. The storm ought to pass over any time now.

CHAD: Just a minute and I'll get my drum and gourds out of my pack.

BERTRAM: After you've run through it a couple of times, everybody can go down in the basement and take a shower while I get the troop gear loaded and ready to leave.

WE ALL BEGAN GETTING PREPARED TO PRACTICE THE DANCE. CHAD GOT OUT HIS DRUM AND GOURD THAT HE USED TO PROVIDE RHYTHM FOR THE DANCE. ALL THE LANTERNS WERE TURNED OUT EXCEPT THE BLUE-SHADED ONE THAT WAS USED AS 'LIGHTING' FOR THE DANCE. THE REST OF US GOT OUR SPEARS READY AND GOT INTO OUR

FEATHER HEADDRESSES. THE FOLLOWING CONVERSATION WAS RECORDED ON TAPE, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS EXCHANGED IN A LOW WHISPER BETWEEN MR. BERTRAM AND TOM. I ASSUME THEY MUST HAVE BEEN STANDING NEXT TO ONE OF THE MICROPHONES THAT WAS PLACED ALONG THE RAIL IN FRONT OF THE CHOIR.

BERTRAM: Tom, I want you to keep an eye on Chalky this weekend, especially if I have to leave the camp. He still gets scared camping when I'm not there, and I want him to learn not to be afraid and have a good time on camping trips.

TOM: Sure, Mr. Bertram, I'll watch out for him. He'll be all right. But Chalky pals around with Roger a lot more than me. Roger watches out for him.

BERTRAM: I'd like for you two to get along better. He'd pal around with you more, Tom, if you'd just pay a little more attention to him. I know he's spoiled. His mother did that to him. And he's made up some story about this game he says you all play when I'm away. He seems to think it was this game that had something to do with Luke and Wally getting killed. I know he's just making most of that stuff up and imagining things because he gets scared. But I guess, after what's happened, that's to be expected. I think it would help if you would just try to make him a little more part of things when you're camping. You know. Let him tag along with you when you play your games. Show him there's nothing to be scared of. Then, maybe he won't imagine these things. That would give him a little more confidence.

TOM: Sure, Mr. Bertram. We just play this 'release' game. But Chalky don't play 'cause he's scared of the dark. There's sometimes a lot of yelling and screaming in the dark when we play that game. I reckon he just gets scared. BERTRAM: Yes, I'm sure that's it. But I'd appreciate it

if you'd keep an «ve on him. The boys all look up to you. But I don't want you babying him or anything like that. He got too much of that from his mother and his aunt. Just keep an eye on him and see that he doesn't get scared. Here, I'll put a couple of more streaks of that red paint on your chest . . . (VERY LOUD THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) . . . sounded like it struck something down in town.

THE SOUND OF THE FIRE SIREN IS HEARD IN THE DISTANCE.

BERTRAM: Yep, there she goes. Boys, I'm going to have to drive back down to the fire station. That lightning sounded like it might have struck something. You all go ahead and practice your dance. I'll be back as soon as I can get away. If it's going to be real late, I'll call you on the walkie-talkie and let you know, and you can go ahead and bed down here in the basement. The storm seems to be getting worse again so stay here in the church no matter what. This is the sturdiest building in town. You'll be all right. I'll get back as soon as I can.

THE SIREN IS HEARD AGAIN IN THE DISTANCE.

CHALKY: I want to go with you. I'm scared. I don't want to stay here.

BERTRAM: Chalky, remember what I told you. If you need to talk to me, you can reach me on the walkie- talkie. Tom knows how to work it. I won't be gone long. CHALKY: I want to go with you. Please?

BERTRAM: Tom, watch him for me. He'll be all right after I leave.

MR. BERTRAM LEFT TO GO TO THE FIRE STATION. THE SOUNDS OF THE STORM BEGAN TO GET LOUDER OUTSIDE.

ROGER: Hey, Chalky! Quit crying! You're gonna be all right. There's nothing to cry about.

CHALKY: Don't put them lanterns out. I'm scared of the dark.

TOM: Why don't we play 'the game'?

SPECS: I don't want to play any of your weird games. Anyway, Mr. Bertram didn't leave you in charge.

CHAD: He always leaves Tom in charge.

SPECS: Well, he didn't this time.

CHAD: He just forgot.

SPECS: That don't matter. Tom's not in charge.

CHALKY: Why don't we take a vote on who's in charge?

SPECS: That's a good idea.

TOM: That's OK with me.

SPECS: How many want Tom in charge? Raise your hands. Chad and Arnold. And Tom. That's three. How many want Roger in charge? Me, Chalky, and Roger. That's three. Who do you want in charge, Jamie?

JAMIE: I don't care. Roger, I reckon.

SPECS: Well, that settles it. That's four for Roger. Roger's in charge. Now, we can practice the dance like Mr. Bertram said.

CHAD: Tom should be in charge. Chalky's vote don't count. He ain't old enough to be a scout.

CHALKY: My vote does so count. Anyway, Chad, you raised Arnold's arm up for him. That ain't fair.

TOM: Skip it! Let Roger be in charge. I don't care.

JAMIE: The storm sounds like it's getting worse out there.

ROGER: If that tornado does hit, I hope it blows the Red Creek Tannery away. It'll get rid of that rotten smell.

SPECS: If it's got to blow something away, I hope it don't miss Dr. Kelly's office. I got a dentist appointment Monday morning.

CHAD: While it's at it, it can just blow old Dr. Kelly away. Then I'll never have to let that old creep put his drill in my mouth again.

ROGER: If something's going to be blown away, I just as soon it took the Red Creek Junior High School. And I



wouldn't mind if some of them teachers were blown away, too.  
'Specially old Chester Bowden!

CHAD: And ol' lady White, too. I can just see her floating up over the town holding on to her old red wig with both hands.

CHALKY: If it was to blow old Buckwheat Simpson away, I'll be able to go in his newsstand and take all the bubble gum and candy I want.

TOM: What if it was to blow away all the houses and kill everybody but us! What would happen to us?

JAMIE: If my grandpop was killed, I'd have to go and live with my mother's sister, Aunt Margo. She lives over in Canaan.

ROGER: I reckon Specs and me would have to go back and live with my grandmother down in Slaty Forks in Kentucky. We lived there before we came to Red Creek. I don't want to live there. It's ten miles from nowhere!

CHALKY: If my dad got blowed away, I'd go back and live at my Aunt Martha's place. That's where my mother is. They run a boarding house for college students in Morgantown. I lived there before I came her.

CHAD: If my mother and my sisters got blowed away, I'd have to live with my married sister over at Pineville. That wouldn't be so bad. There's a drag-race strip down the road from them.

TOM: I don't know what would happen to Arnold. If everybody was blowed away, I'd go live in the woods by myself, maybe up in the Algonquin State Park. I know places up there where nobody ever goes. I could kill animals for food and find me a cabin to live in.

SPECS: Let's talk about something else. Talk like that gives me the creeps. Red Creek's not gonna be blown away by no tornado.

TOM: You never can tell. It happened over at Walton

Mills. And that wind sounds like it's getting stronger. ROGER: Let's run through the dance once. Everybody get in place and . . . (THUNDER - UNINTELLIGIBLE) CHALKY: . . . you have to turn out the lantern?

ROGER: The blue lantern's still on, Chalky. There's light. Is everybody ready to begin? OK, Chad, start the drum.

CHAD STARTS BEATING THE DRUM AND BEGINS A RHYTHMIC CHANT. THE OTHERS JOIN IN THE CHANT AND THE DANCE BEGINS. THE STORM BEGINS TO GROW LOUDER AND LOUDER OUTSIDE AS THE DANCE AND THE CHANT CONTINUE. THERE IS A PLACE NEAR THE END OF THE DANCE WHERE EACH OF THE PARTICIPANTS CHARGES FORWARD, THRUSTING OUR SPEARS RHYTHMICALLY ABOVE OUR HEADS, SCREAMING 'KILL! KILL! KILL!' AS THE STORM GETS LOUDER, THE CHANTING SEEMS TO GET MORE FRANTIC, AND THE CHANTING OF 'KILL! KILL! KILL! GETS LOUDER AND MORE FIERCE. ALL OF THE DANCERS, BY THE SOUND OF THEIR CHANTS, SEEM TO BE CAUGHT UP IN THE FRENZIED RHYTHM OF THE STORM. SUDDENLY, THERE IS A LOUD CRASH OF THUNDER AS THE DANCE BEGINS TO REACH ITS FRENZIED CONCLUSION. AND SUDDENLY - I RECALL - THE BLUE-SHADED LANTERN THAT PROVIDED THE ONLY LIGHT WENT OUT. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A HIGH, PIERCING SCREAM FROM CHALKY. I SUDDENLY FELT THE SHARP POINT OF A SPEAR GRAZE THE SKIN ON THE INSIDE OF MY THIGH, AND THE SPEAR FALL TO THE FLOOR BETWEEN MY LEGS.

SPECS: What happened? The lantern went out.

JAMIE: That was Chalky that screamed. He's scared of the dark. Somebody get a lantern lit.

CHAD: Just a moment. I'll get one lit as soon as I can find my flashlight.

ROGER: Here! I got some matches. Somebody bring a lantern over here.

CHAD BROUGHT A LANTERN OVER AND I GOT IT LIT.

ROGER: Somebody let loose of their spear. It grazed the inside of my leg. A little bit higher and I'd have got a spear up my rear end!

SPECS: It must have been Arnold. He don't have his spear in his hand.

TOM: It must have slipped out of his hand.

ARNOLD CAME OVER AND PICKED UP THE SPEAR THAT HAD STRUCK ME IN THE LEG.

CHAD: I guess he just got excited when the lantern went out and with the thunder and everything.

ROGER: I don't know why these spears have got to be so sharp. He could have really fixed me good. But it's just a scratch. It isn't bleeding.

SPECS: Yeh! There's no reason why they have to be so sharp. It's dangerous!

TOM: Arnold didn't mean to let loose of it.

CHALKY: I don't want nobody to turn the light out again. I'm scared of the storm.

SPECS: We better practice the dance again. This time everybody hold on to their spears.

ROGER: OK. Does everybody want to go through the dance again?

TOM: We know the dance. We've done it a million times. Let's play 'the game.'

ROGER: That's all right with me.

CHAD: Yeh! Let's play 'the game.'

CHALKY: I'm ready to play 'the game.' You guys can't capture me.

SPECS: I don't want to play. Mr. Bertram told us to practice the dance.

CHAD: You're not in charge. I thought you said Roger was in charge. Roger wants to play 'the game.'

SPECS: I'm not gonna play. I'll stay here while you all play.

JAMIE: I don't want to play, either. I'll stay here with Specs. We can start out as prisoners.

TOM: Suit yourself. We can play with just Roger and Chalky as prey. Chad, Arnold, and me will go out in the front hall. I'll count to a hundred slow before we come after you.

TOM, CHAD, AND ARNOLD LEFT THE SANCTUARY AND WENT TO THE HALL THAT WAS JUST INSIDE THE FRONT DOOR OF THE CHURCH.

SPECS: Roger, you ought not to play 'the game.' You ought to make everybody practice the dance like Mr. Bertram said.

ROGER: Everybody's tired of practicing the dance. We could do it in our sleep. It's not gonna hurt anything to play 'the game' until Mr. Bertram gets back.

SPECS: People get hurt playing that game. Two people have gotten killed because of that game!

ROGER: Specs, you stay here with Jamie. You don't have to play 'the game' if you don't want to. Chalky, we got to go hide. Them guys'll be coming after us soon.

CHALKY: I already know where I'm gonna hide. They'll never find me.

CHALKY HEADED OFF TOWARD THE BASEMENT, AND I WENT OUT THROUGH THE SANCTUARY AND THEN CIRCLED BACK AND CLIMBED THE LADDER TO THE BELL TOWER. THE TAPE RECORDING REVEALED THAT THE EVENTS THAT OCCURRED IN THE SANCTUARY BELOW HAPPENED IN THE SEQUENCE THAT TOM WAS LATER TO DESCRIBE TO ME. HOWEVER, THE TAPE REVEALED THAT - AS MANY PEOPLE HAD SUSPECTED THROUGH THE YEARS - THE FATAL 'ACCIDENTS' THAT TOOK PLACE BELOW ME IN THE SANCTUARY MAY NOT HAVE BEEN ACCIDENTS AT ALL. THE ONLY SOUNDS THAT I HEARD FROM THE LOFT OF THE BELL TOWER WAS THE SHOT THAT KILLED JAMIE AND

SPECS' SCREAM WHEN HE FELL FROM THE LADDER TO HIS DEATH ON THE CEMENT FLOOR BELOW. AT THE TIME, I HAD ASSUMED THAT THE SHOT I HEARD WAS CHAD SHOOTING THE BLANK BULLET HE HAD TALKED ABOUT WHEN JAMIE AND I HAD OVERHEARD TOM AND CHAD'S CONVERSATION EARLIER IN THE EVENING. AND I BELIEVED THAT SPECS' SCREAM WAS ONLY CHALKY BEING CAPTURED BY THE HUNTERS. THE MOST UNUSUAL ASPECTS OF THE TAPE - AS TO WHAT IT REVEALS ABOUT THE EVENTS OF THAT EVENING - IS WHAT OCCURRED AFTER JAMIE AND SPECS HAD BEEN FATALLY WOUNDED. THE TAPE WAS TO CLEAR UP FOR ME WHAT HAD BEEN A NAGGING MYSTERY OVER THE YEARS. IT INVOLVED AN INCIDENT I HAD NEVER MENTIONED TO ANYONE EXCEPT TO TOM PEDDIGREW IN SOME CORRESPONDENCE I HAD WITH HIM A FEW WEEKS PRIOR TO BEING ABLE TO LISTEN TO THE TAPE. WHEN I HAD COME OUT OF THE BELL TOWER AND DISCOVERED SPECS DEAD ON THE FLOOR BELOW THE LADDER, I HAD THEN ENTERED THE SANCTUARY. IMMEDIATELY I WAS ATTACKED BY TOM PEDDIGREW WITH HIS SPEAR AS THOUGH HE INTENDED TO KILL OR INJURE ME. ARNOLD HAD STEPPED BETWEEN TOM AND ME AT THE LAST MOMENT AND HAD TAKEN TOM'S SPEAR AWAY FROM HIM. TOM'S ATTACK HAD ALWAYS MYSTIFIED ME. AND WHY ARNOLD HAD DEFENDED ME HAD ALSO BEEN A MYSTERY TO ME. BEFORE THAT ARNOLD HAD ALWAYS APPEARED TO BE TOTALLY OBEDIENT TO TOM'S COMMAND, AND I HAD NEVER SEEN HIM DEFY TOM BEFORE. THE TAPE RECORDING CLEARED UP THE MOTIVATIONS FOR WHAT I CONSIDERED TO BE THESE VERY UNUSUAL OCCURRENCES. THE STORY THAT TOM PEDDIGREW TOLD ABOUT THE FATALITIES WAS NOT UNTRUE. IT WAS JUST INCOMPLETE. SPECS: Roger shouldn't have run off to play that game. For all the good it's done us, we might as well have made

Tom Peddigrew in charge. Something bad is gonna happen again one of these days playing that game. Just like what happened to Luke and Wally.

JAMIE: I'm scared, too. I guess I should have told somebody what I seen. But it's not easy to tell on somebody and get them in a lot of trouble. And maybe they didn't mean for it to happen that way. It's hard to know for sure. SPECS: Do you know something about what happened to Luke and Wally? It was something Tom Peddigrew done, weren't it?

JAMIE: I started to tell Grandpa, once. But I didn't. I knew what he'd do. And I tried to tell Mr. Bertram, but I don't think he believed me.

SPECS: It's that weird game. I always knew something bad would come of that weird game, and it did. But them guys never learn. They keep right on playing it. Tom Peddigrew and his weird game!

JAMIE: It weren't Tom Peddigrew that did something bad, exactly. It was Chad. Chad has something on Tom Peddigrew. He can make Tom do and say what he wants him to.

SPECS: What did you see?

JAMIE: When Luke fell from that rock and got killed, I was lying in some rhododendron bushes not far away. I saw what happened.

SPECS: What did happen?

JAMIE: Well, they caught Luke, and they struggled with him and they got him down like they do. Then Chad tried to make him do something he didn't want to do. He tried to make Luke suck his pecker. Luke said he weren't gonna do it, and Chad couldn't make him do it. Chad said he was gonna make him do it. He told Luke if he didn't do it, he was gonna jab his spear up Luke's rear end. And Chad started to do it. Tom tried to get Chad to

stop but he wouldn't. Tom even grabbed Chad and tried to pull him away from Luke when he was jabbing at him with his spear. Luke saw his chance and tried to get away. But Chad went after him. When Luke was running across that ledge above the river, Chad caught up with him and jabbed at him with his spear. Luke tripped and fell over the ledge down into the river. He must have landed on a rock below. Then I heard Chad tell Tom he better not tell what happened or he would get even with him. He told Tom he would let everybody see them pictures or something. I couldn't hear too much of what they said. They climbed down below the ledge to the river to see about Luke. I went out on the ledge to see what happened to Luke, and I saw Tom and Chad carrying him out of the river. And then Roger showed up.

SPECS: I knew it weren't no accident. It was that weird game.

JAMIE: I also saw what happened when Wally was killed. It weren't exactly no accident, either. I was hiding down at the lower end of the island when they captured Wally. It was daylight and I could see everything plain. Chad tried to make Wally do the same thing he tried to make Luke do — suck his pecker — and Wally wouldn't do it, either. Chad ordered me to do that to him one time, and I just went ahead and done it. That's better than getting a sharp stick up your hind end. With Wally, the same thing happened that did with Luke. When Wally said he weren't gonna do it, Chad started to try and make him do it. When Wally started screaming, Tom tried to make Chad stop. Wally broke and ran, just like Luke done. But Wally made it to that raft that was down on the sand bar and got in it and tried to paddle across the rapids to get away. Tom and Chad had taken out after him. When Tom saw that those rapids were going to carry Wally off down-

stream, he ran out in the stream and tried to save Wally by reaching his spear out to him. He wanted Wally to grab hold so he could try and pull him out of the rapids. But it weren't Tom's spear that busted Wally's raft. What nobody told was that Chad threw his spear from shore and hit Wally's raft and busted it. But Tom got the blame for busting Wally's raft. He told everybody that his spear must have busted it when he was trying to reach Wally to pull him back. But he knew that wasn't true.

SPECS: Why did Tom take the blame for something Chad done?

JAMIE: I don't know for sure. Later, I told Tom I saw what happened when Luke was killed, and I saw what happened when Wally was drowned. But he made me promise not to tell. He said something real bad would happen to him if I told. He said it was all over and done with, and there wasn't anything anybody could do for Luke and Wally now. And that seemed true enough. I've never told anybody but you. But, maybe, I should have. Maybe, something else bad will happen. Then I'll wish I'd told.

SPECS: I would have told if I'd seen what you seen. It's that weird game that's making everybody behave this way. I always knew Chad was mean as a devil. Why did Mr. Bertram have to ask him to join the troop, anyway? He don't even live around here. Why don't he stay up at Bertha Hill where he belongs?

THERE IS A MOMENTARY PAUSE IN THE CONVERSATION.

JAMIE SEES CHAD NEARBY.

JAMIE: Chad, where did you come from? I didn't know you was there!

CHAD: I'll bet you didn't! I was just hiding back here listening to you two rattle on like a couple of magpies. I think you two ought to be playing 'the game.' Now,



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why don't you two just move out and hide like good little boys before I have to give the two of you a good sharp jab up the ass with my spear. Or maybe you two would like to suck my cock! How would you like that. Now, move out before I decide to make you suck my pecker!

THERE ARE ABOUT THIRTY SECONDS ON THE TAPE WHEN THERE IS NO TALKING. THE SECOND THIRTY-MINUTE CASSETTE USED TO RE-RECORD THE TAPE WAS ALMOST OUT OF TAPE SO THIS SPACE WAS USED TO INSERT ANOTHER THIRTY-MINUTE TAPE.



## CHAPTER TWELVE

## WITTEVEEN TAPE TRANSCRIPT (3)

DURING THE THIRTY SECONDS OF TAPE WHERE THERE WAS NO TALKING, THERE WERE A COUPLE OF BRIEF SCREAMS OF PAIN FROM JAMIE. I SUSPECT THAT CHAD HAD THREATENED JAMIE AND SPECS WITH HIS SPEAR AND HAD ACTUALLY PRESSED THE SHARP POINT OF HIS SPEAR INTO JAMIE.

JAMIE: I don't care what you do, I'm not gonna go hide. I seen what happened to Luke and Wally when they tried to get away from you.

SPECS: I'm not gonna hide, either. I don't care what you say you're gonna do to me, Chad Hartley. I'm not scared of you.

CHAD: Maybe little big-mouth Jamie would like to have his puppy shot between the eyes. That might be what I'll have to do if you don't want to play 'the game.' How would you like that, Jamie?

CHAD MUST HAVE GOTTEN HIS CARBINE OUT OF HIS BED ROLL AT THIS POINT.

SPECS: You better put that rifle away. Mr. Bertram said you was never allowed to take your rifle on a camp-

ing trip again. I'm gonna tell him you got it when he comes back.

CHAD: I'm not a scared of what you tell old Bertram. I'll just put a bullet here in the chamber of my rifle and take dead aim at old Plato over there. I'll bet I can put a bullet right between his eyes. Don't want him to suffer none. SPECS: You better put that rifle away!

CHAD: I'll be glad to put the rifle away when you two are ready to go hide and play 'the game.'

JAMIE: You don't scare me none, Chad. I know you put a blank in that rifle. Roger and me heard you say you was gonna do something like this when you first got here. Roger and me was hiding over there behind the choir rail. We heard everything you said.

CHAD: If you're so sure it's a blank, why you got ahold of your dog. You must not be all that sure it's a blank.

SPECS: You better put that gun away, Chad. I don't care if you do only have a blank in it.

JAMIE: And you better leave my dog alone!

CHAD: You better get away from your dog. Else you might get it between the eyes. I'll give you one more chance to go hide.

SPECS: I'm not going anywhere. I'm gonna wait right here till Mr. Bertram gets back. And I'm gonna tell him what you been up to, Chad Hartley.

JAMIE: I'm not going anywhere, either. And you better not bother my dog. My grandpa will send you away to Perrytown if I was to tell him what I seen you do. He almost done it once before.

CHAD: I'm not afraid of your old grandpa. That old fart is the one who let the mine owners get away with robbing the miners of their pay. My dad said your grandpa was paid off by the mine owners. I seen my family and a lot of others have to go hungry 'cause your grandpa was paid

off by the mine owners.

JAMIE: You better put that gun away. My grandpa will send you away to Perrytown if you bother my dog.

CHAD: You better move back from that mutt. I told you I was gonna put a bullet between his eyes if you two don't go hide.

And I mean it! You better get out of the way. Ready! Aim! ....

THERE IS THE CRACK OF A RIFLE SHOT, FOLLOWED BY A HYSTERICAL SCREAM FROM SPECS. FOR A FEW MOMENTS, SPECS' SCREAMING IS UNINTELLIGIBLE. AFTER A FEW MOMENTS IT IS POSSIBLE TO PICK OUT SOME PHRASES, BUT HIS HYSTERICAL SCREAMING AND CRYING CONTINUES BETWEEN HIS SHOUTING ACCUSATIONS AND ABUSE AT CHAD.

SPECS: You killed him! You killed him! You shot him on purpose! It was you that done all the killing! You killed Jamie just like you killed Luke and Wally! Jamie told me he saw you kill Luke and Wally! Now, you went and killed Jamie! It's that weird game! You're a murderer! You done it on purpose, and I'm gonna tell!

SPECS' VOICE TRAILS OFF INTO MOURNFUL SOBS. THE NEXT VOICE HEARD ON THE TAPE IS TOM PEDDIGREW. ABOUT TWO MINUTES AFTER THE SHOT HAD BEEN FIRED THAT KILLED JAMIE, TOM AND ARNOLD ENTERED FROM THE BASEMENT CARRYING THE INJURED CHALKY. CHALKY HAD BEEN STABBED WITH ARNOLD'S SPEAR IN THE THIGH WHILE HE WAS BEING PURSUED IN 'THE GAME' BY TOM AND ARNOLD. CHALKY HAD FALLEN FROM A LEDGE AND BEEN KNOCKED UNCONSCIOUS IN THE FURNACE ROOM OF THE BASEMENT.

TOM: What happened up here? What's Specs screaming about? Chalky fell and was hurt down in the basement. Arnold accidentally stabbed Chalky in the leg. He's bleeding bad. I think a vein is busted. He fell and he was knocked out.

SPECS: Chad shot Jamie in the head! He killed him! He murdered him just like he done to Wally and Luke! Now, you tried to kill Chalky, too.

TOM: He only shot a blank. I know. I gave it to him. And Chalky ain't dead. He's just hurt bad!

SPECS: I'm gonna call the police. You killed Jamie! And now you're trying to kill Chalky. It wouldn't have happened if you'd listened to me and not played that weird game!

SPECS LEFT THE SANCTUARY TO GO MAKE A TELEPHONE CALL IN THE CHURCH OFFICE. THE CHURCH OFFICE WAS LOCKED, BUT WE HAD DISCOVERED ONCE BEFORE THAT WE COULD GET INTO THE OFFICE BY CLIMBING THROUGH THE TRANSOM ABOVE THE DOOR. THAT MUST HAVE BEEN THE WAY SPECS GOT INTO THE CHURCH OFFICE TO TRY AND CALL FOR HELP.

TOM: Chalky'll be all right, I think, if we can just stop the bleeding. Put him down over here! My God! Jamie did get shot in the head! Chad, you said you was just going to scare him with one of them blanks I gave you! I think he's dead. I can't feel no heart beat! He's dead. There's nothing nobody can do for him! Chad, you ain't nothing but a murderer! Jamie never done anything to you. He never done nothing wrong to nobody. Somebody ought to shoot you in the head, Chad. That's just what you deserve, just like your old man deserved it. You ain't a bit better than he was, and my old man gave him just what he deserved — a bullet in the head.

CHAD: You're gonna tell them it was an accident, Tom Peddigrew. You're gonna tell them you must have given me a real bullet by mistake. You're gonna tell them it was your fault. If I get into trouble, I reckon I can get you in enough trouble, too. They'll figure you and Arnold had just as much to do with what happened to Luke and Wally

as I did. And, remember, I got them pictures showing you doing all them dirty things. When people see them, they'll know you and your ma ain't no good. And I'll tell them who killed my old man. And I can prove it 'cause I seen it happen. You better tell them this was an accident, Tom Peddigrew. They won't believe me. But they'll believe you if you tell them. And you better do it.

THERE IS A LONG PAUSE WHEN THERE IS NO SPEAKING.

TOM: We gotta stop the bleeding in Chalky's thigh. If we stop the bleeding, I think he'll be all right. It was that bump on his head that knocked him unconscious.

THERE ARE A FEW MORE MOMENTS OF SILENCE ON THE TAPE.

TOM: If I can get a tourniquet tight above the wound here on Chalky's thigh, that ought to stop the bleeding. Chad, hand me that tourniquet out of the first aid kit over there. (A FEW MORE MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

There! Arnold, hand me that piece of spear you got left, and I can use it to tighten the tourniquet. He's already lost a lot of blood.

(A FEW MORE MOMENTS OF SILENCE)

There! that almost stopped the bleeding. Arnold, while I hold Chalky's leg, you grab hold of that piece of spear sticking out of his leg and pull hard. Grab it right there. That's it. Now, pull hard. That's it. It's coming. You got it out now.

CHAD: Specs'll blame me. He'll say I done it on purpose. I thought I had a blank in the rifle, but Specs won't believe me. Jamie's grandpa will blame me. He'll send me away to Perrytown.

TOM: The phone lines are down. Specs ain't gonna be able to get nobody on that phone. I'll see if I can reach Mr. Bertram on the walkie-talkie. He can send the fire department ambulance up to get Chalky. There's nothing

nobody can do for Jamie. But we got to get Chalky to the hospital. I reckon there ain't gonna be no more camping trips for Troop 44.

CHAD: I don't want you to call nobody, yet. I got to talk to Specs, first. He's got to believe it was an accident. He's got to believe I thought I had a blank in my rifle. I got to make him believe it. Tom, you got to tell him you give me a real bullet by mistake. You got to tell him that.

CHAD HAD EVIDENTLY REMOVED THE BATTERY FROM THE WALKIE-TALKIE.

TOM: Put that battery back in the walkie-talkie, Chad. We got to call the fire department and get the ambulance. If something happens to Chalky, too, we'll just be in more trouble. I'll tell Specs you thought you had a blank in your rifle if you'll just put that battery back.

CHAD: No, I don't want you to call Bertram, yet. I got to make sure that Specs knows what happened to Jamie was an accident. That's gotta be done first. And you gotta make him believe it, Tom.

SPECS RETURNED FROM THE CHURCH OFFICE AFTER TRYING TO MAKE THE PHONE CALL FOR HELP.

SPECS: The phone lines must be down. The phone is dead. You call Mr. Bertram on the walkie-talkie. Maybe Jamie ain't dead, yet. Maybe if we hurry they can save him.

TOM: I got the bleeding stopped in Chalky's leg. I think he'll be all right.

TOM MUST HAVE MADE AN ATTEMPT TO CALL THE FIRE STATION ON THE WALKIE-TALKIE EVEN THOUGH HE KNEW THE BATTERY WAS MISSING.

TOM: Hello! Hello! This is Tom Peddigrew at the Braddock Hill Baptist Church. Is anybody there? This is Tom Peddigrew calling the Red Creek Fire Department. Calling Mr. Bertram at the Red Creek Fire Department. Is anybody there? Can anybody hear me? I think something



must be wrong with this thing. Sounds like the battery is dead! I don't even hear any static. Maybe something is wrong with the battery. Specs, it was an accident that Jamie got shot. Chad thought he had a blank in his rifle. And Arnold didn't mean to hurt Chalky, either. Chalky fell on Arnold's spear. Maybe one of us ought to walk down the hill for help. I'll go and you can keep an eye on Chalky.

SPECS: That'll take too long. I know how we can get Mr. Bertram or somebody up here. I'll climb up in the bell tower and ring the bells. Mr. Bertram will hear them, or somebody will hear them, and know something is wrong. If I ring them long enough they'll come up here to see what's wrong.

TOM: I guess that might work. Go ahead. I'll take care of Chalky.

SPECS: This never would have happened if you guys would have listened to me and practiced the dance like we was supposed to instead of playing that weird game. And, Chad Hartley, I saw you shoot Jamie with my own eyes. You done it on purpose. And I'm gonna tell. Jamie told me what you done to Luke and Wally, too. He seen that! SPECS LEFT THE SANCTUARY TO CLIMB TO THE BELL TOWER TO RING THE CHURCH BELLS.

TOM: Chad, where you going?

CHAD: I'm gonna have a little talk with Specs 'fore anybody gets here. I got to make sure Specs knows it was an accident. He's gonna tell them I done it on purpose. Old Judge Driscoll's just looking for some reason to send me to Perrytown.

CHAD APPARENTLY LEFT THE SANCTUARY TO FOLLOW SPECS TO THE BELL TOWER. THERE IS ABOUT A HALF A MINUTE OF SILENCE ON THE TAPE. SUDDENLY, A PIERCING SCREAM IS HEARD IN THE DISTANCE, FOLLOWED BY A

MUFFLED THUD WHICH HAD TO BE SPECS FALLING AND HITTING THE CEMENT FLOOR OF THE ROOM BELOW THE BELL TOWER. THERE IS ANOTHER LONG SILENCE AND THE NEXT VOICE HEARD ON THE TAPE IS CHAD.

CHAD: I was just going to try to talk to him. I was just gonna try and tell him I didn't mean to hurt Jamie — that it was an accident. He slipped and fell. I just wanted to talk to him. He shouldn't have tried to pull away.

THERE IS ANOTHER LONG SILENCE. I ASSUME THAT DURING THIS TIME TOM HAD GONE OUT INTO THE ROOM BELOW THE BELL TOWER WHERE SPECS HAD FALLEN AND THEN RETURNED.

TOM: Specs is dead. His head was bashed in on the cement floor. Give me that battery for the walkie-talkie, Chad. I got to call Mr. Bertram. We're just gonna get into more and more trouble if we wait. They will believe it was an accident if we'll just call for help.

CHAD'S TONE OF VOICE BEGINS TO GET MORE HYSTERICAL.

CHAD: Nobody will believe me. Nobody ever believes me. Old Judge Driscoll, he won't believe me. He won't believe it was an accident. He's just been looking for some reason to send me to Perrytown. He thinks I ain't no good. I ain't good enough for him, I reckon. He ain't ever had to go hungry cause the mines was out. He ain't never had to stay home 'cause he couldn't afford no shoes. They didn't do nothing to your dad for killing my dad. And that weren't no accident. Now, they'll try to send me away for what happened here, and it was all an accident. You got to tell them it was an accident, Tom. You better make them believe it was an accident, Tom.

TOM: If you don't give me that battery for that walkie-talkie, Chad, I'm gonna start out walking to town for help. We can't wait any longer. Maybe if we call them now, they'll believe it was an accident. Jamie and Specs are

dead. But we got to get help for Chalky.

CHAD: No, we're gonna keep playing 'the game.' 'The game' was all your idea. We're gonna play 'the game' the way your old man played 'the game' with old Hulitt Jones! And we're gonna play 'the game' the way your old man played 'the game' with my old man. You got a spear and I got a spear! I'll give you till I count to a hundred. Then I'm coming after you. And only one of us is gonna leave this church alive. Only one of us is gonna be around at the end of 'the game.' 'Cause you'll tell what I done, too. You'll say it weren't no accident. Just like you must have told your old man about my old man screwing that whore mother of yours. That's why my old man got killed. We're gonna play 'the game' just like your old man played 'the game' with my old man!

TOM: I'm not gonna play 'the game.' I'm just gonna walk out of here and go down to the town for help.

CHAD: You try to walk out of here, and I'll go up in the bell tower and pick you off with my rifle when you leave the church. And you know I can do it, too. You'd be deader than a rock 'fore you got 'cross the church yard. Anyway, it'll take you more than a half hour to get to town. I'm gonna loosen this tourniquet on Chalky's leg when you go hide. I reckon Chalky will bleed to death if somebody don't get back here 'fore too long to tighten it. That's how long you got in 'the game' to get me. You better make sure 'the game' is over before Chalky has time to bleed to death. If you don't get back here in, maybe, twenty minutes, then you'll be the one that caused Chalky to die. It's just gonna be you and me, Tom, fair and square. You got a spear and I got a spear. You're the hunter and the prey. I'm the hunter and the prey. OK, Chalky's tourniquet is loose. He's starting to bleed! You better get your spear and get going. I'm counting. One,

two, three, four, five, six, seven . . .  
(THE COUNTING CONTINUES THROUGH TO ONE HUNDRED.)  
THERE IS ABOUT A FIVE-MINUTE SEGMENT ON THE TAPE WHERE NO CONVERSATION IS RECORDED. THERE IS ONE PLACE IN THIS SEGMENT WHERE THE FAMILIAR CRY OF THE HUNTERS IN 'THE GAME,' 'KILL! KILL! KILL!' IS HEARD IN THE DISTANCE. IT WAS DURING THIS TIME THAT I CAME OUT OF HIDING FROM THE LOFT IN THE BELL TOWER. I CLIMBED CAUTIOUSLY DOWN THE LADDER EXPECTING ANY MOMENT TO BE LEAPED ON BY THE HUNTERS. WHEN I REACHED THE BOTTOM OF THE LADDER, I HAD DISCOVERED SPECS' BODY WITH HIS HEAD CRUSHED. AFTER I FOUND SPECS, I STUMBLED INTO THE DARK SANCTUARY SOBBING UNCONTROLLABLY. I REMEMBER SEEING ARNOLD IN THE LIGHT OF A LANTERN NEAR THE PULPIT. AS I APPROACHED THE ALTAR AREA WHERE ARNOLD WAS, I SPOTTED JAMIE AND CHALKY LYING ON THE CARPET BOTH APPEARING TO BE UNCONSCIOUS. I COULD SEE THE BLOOD AROUND CHALKY AND KNEW HE MUST BE WOUNDED. I COULD ONLY SEE THAT JAMIE APPEARED TO BE UNCONSCIOUS WITH HIS DOG, PLATO, SITTING PROTECTIVELY NEAR HIM, AND I COULD NOT SEE ANY INDICATION OF WHAT MIGHT BE WRONG WITH HIM BECAUSE THE PART OF HIS HEAD WHERE HE HAD A BULLET WOUND WAS TURNED AWAY FROM ME. BUT AFTER FINDING SPECS DEAD, I FEARED THE WORST. SUDDENLY, ARNOLD CHARGED TOWARD ME AND PASSED ME AS I CAME TOWARD HIM DOWN THE AISLE. I TURNED TO SEE TOM PEDDI- GREW CHARGING AT ME WITH HIS SPEAR RAISED TO STRIKE AND TERROR AND HATE IN HIS EYES. HE WAS CHARGING DOWN THE AISLE BEHIND ME FROM THE BACK OF THE CHURCH. IF ARNOLD HAD NOT GOTTEN BETWEEN ME AND HIM, I AM ALMOST CERTAIN THAT BY THE FEROCITY OF HIS ATTACK I WOULD HAVE ALSO BEEN A VICTIM

THAT NIGHT ON BRADDOCK HILL. ARNOLD BLOCKED HIM, WAS ABLE TO GRASP HIS SPEAR AND DISARM HIM. ONCE I MOVED INTO THE LIGHT, TOM SEEMED TO LOSE HIS DETERMINATION AND ALLOWED ARNOLD TO TAKE HIS SPEAR WITHOUT A STRUGGLE. I NOW REALIZE THAT TOM HAD MISTAKEN ME FOR CHAD AND FULLY INTENDED TO STRIKE A FATAL BLOW IF HE COULD. TOM KNEW HIS ONLY CHANCE FOR SAVING CHALKY AND HIMSELF WAS TO WIN BY THE RULES OF CHAD'S 'GAME.' WHEN TOM WAS DISARMED, HE WENT TO CHALKY IN THE ALTAR AREA AND TIGHTENED THE TOURNIQUET ON CHALKY'S LEG. I WAS IN SUCH A STATE OF SHOCK AND UNCONTROLLABLE CRYING THAT THE DISCOVERY OF CHALKY AND JAMIE INJURED DID NOT APPRECIABLY CHANGE MY GRIEF. I THINK I WAS AWARE IMMEDIATELY THAT BOTH CHALKY AND JAMIE MIGHT BE DEAD AND WERE DEFINITELY CRITICALLY INJURED. ALL MY LIFE SINCE THAT TRAGIC NIGHT, IT HAD BEEN MY UNSPOKEN BELIEF THAT TOM PEDDIGREW WAS PROBABLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF SPECS AND JAMIE BECAUSE OF HIS UNPROVOKED ATTACK ON ME. IT WAS ONLY ON HEARING THE TAPE THAT I REALIZED HE HAD CHOSEN TO RISK HIS OWN LIFE BY CONFRONTING THE ONE HE BELIEVED TO BE CHAD SO HE WOULD BE ABLE TO SAVE CHALKY'S LIFE. AS SOON AS TOM HAD TIGHTENED THE TOURNIQUET ON CHALKY'S LEG, HE CAME BACK OVER AND STOOD IN FRONT OF ME, FACING ME. I DON'T RECALL HAVING SAID ANYTHING TO TOM. HOWEVER, ON HEARING THE TAPE I REALIZE HOW CRUEL I WAS. ON THIS SEGMENT OF TAPE, THERE IS ONLY THE SOUND OF MY UNCONTROLLABLE SOBBING UNTIL I SPEAK.

ROGER: Tom Peddigrew, you did all this! It's all your fault! You're nothing but a bed wetter! You pee in the bed like a baby! I'm gonna tell everybody! And you tried to kill Chalky! You did it! And it was you that pushed him

over the bleachers at the basketball game! You're scared of the dark, Tom Peddigrew! You're a bed wetter and you're scared of the dark! And your mother is a whore, Tom Peddigrew!

I HAVE NOT REMEMBERED SAYING THOSE THINGS TO TOM. I ONLY REMEMBER TOM COMING OVER TO ME AFTER HE HAD TIGHTENED THE TOURNIQUET ON CHALKY'S LEG. I ALSO RECALL THAT CHAD CAME OUT OF THE DARKNESS AFTER TOM HAD ATTENDED TO CHALKY. AFTER ARNOLD HAD TAKEN TOM'S SPEAR, HE HAD RETURNED TO THE PLACE HE WAS STANDING EARLIER, IN THE LANTERN LIGHT NEAR THE PULPIT. I REMEMBER TOM WALKING OVER TO CHAD AND, WITHOUT SPEAKING, HOLDING OUT HIS OPEN HAND. AND CHAD, WITHOUT SPEAKING, HAD GONE OVER TO HIS CAMPING GEAR AND TAKEN THE BATTERY FOR THE WALKIE-TALKIE OUT AND HANDED IT TO TOM. TOM HAD THEN GONE TO THE WALKIE-TALKIE AND PUT THE BATTERY BACK INSIDE IT. BEFORE I OBSERVED THAT, TWO THINGS HAD NOT BEEN CLEAR TO ME. FIRST, I HAD NOT UNDERSTOOD WHY TOM HAD ATTACKED ME OR WHY ARNOLD HAD DEFENDED ME FROM HIM. SECONDLY, I HAD NOT UNDERSTOOD WHY CHAD HAD THE WALKIE-TALKIE BATTERY IN HIS CAMPING GEAR. NOT UNTIL I HEARD THE TAPE WERE THESE MYSTERIES CLEARED UP. TOM: As soon as I get the walkie-talkie working, Chad, I'll call Mr. Bertram. Then I'll explain to Roger how it all happened. I'll explain to him that everything that happened was a terrible accident, Chad. HE WAS SOON ABLE TO OPERATE IT AND REACH THE FIRE DEPARTMENT.

TOM: This is Tom Peddigrew. Calling Mr. Bertram at the Red Creek Fire Station. Can you hear me?

(THE REPLY COMING FROM THE WALKIE-TALKIE IS UNINTELLIGIBLE ON THE TAPE.)

There's been a bad accident here at the Braddock Hill Church. Jamie got shot accidentally. Specs fell from the bell tower ladder. I think they both have been killed! I think they're both dead! Chalky has also gotten badly injured. He needs to be taken to the hospital right away. He's lost a lot of blood.

THERE IS ANOTHER UNINTELLIGIBLE REPLY THAT CAME OVER THE WALKIE-TALKIE. I CAN REMEMBER HEARING THOSE REPLIES WHEN THE EVENTS TOOK PLACE. TOM WAS NOT TALKING TO MR. BERTRAM BUT TO ANOTHER FIREMAN ON DUTY AT THE FIRE STATION.

THERE IS SILENCE FOR A FEW MOMENTS AND THEN THE SIREN ON THE EMERGENCY CAR CAN BE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE, COMING UP THE HILL TOWARD THE CHURCH. WHEN HE FINISHED WITH THE WALKIE-TALKIE, TOM WALKED BACK OVER TO WHERE I WAS SOBBING NEXT TO WHERE JAMIE WAS LYING.

TOM: If you'll just listen to me, Roger, I'll tell you what happened. We've been trying to get help but the phone lines were down and the walkie-talkie wouldn't work. Arnold and I were hunting Chalky in the basement. We spotted him on that ledge above the coal bin in the furnace room. When we tried to capture him, he leaped forward, toward us, and ran into Arnold's spear. Then he fell down by the coal bin and hit his head on one of them drain pipes, and he was knocked unconscious. Arnold and I brought him back up here. When we got up here, we found out that Chad had been playing a joke on Jamie. He pretended to Jamie he was gonna shoot his dog. And he thought he had a blank bullet in his rifle. I brought the blanks for him to use. But when he fired, I guess he got a real bullet in his rifle by mistake. Jamie must have jumped in front of his dog to protect him, and the bullet hit Jamie. When he saw he'd hit Jamie, Chad realized it wasn't

a blank he'd fired. But it was too late to do anything. When the telephone and walkie-talkie didn't work, Specs got the idea of going up in the bell tower and ringing the bells to try and get Mr. Bertram's or someone else's attention. He must have slipped on the ladder after he got most of the way up. The next thing we knew, we heard him scream and then we heard him hit that cement floor. He must have landed on his head. When I saw him, I knew there weren't anything we could do for him. Just like there weren't anything we could do for Jamie. But I think Chalky'll be all right if we can get him to the hospital.

AFTER TOM FINISHED TELLING ME HIS VERSION OF WHAT HAPPENED, THERE IS NO MORE TALK ON THE TAPE UNTIL THE EMERGENCY CAR ARRIVES. THERE IS ONLY MY SOB-BING. TOM CONCENTRATED ON THE TOURNIQUET ON CHALKY'S LEG. ARNOLD AND CHAD HAD NOT MOVED. ARNOLD WAS STILL HOLDING THE SPEAR HE TOOK FROM TOM. THE SOUND OF THE SIREN GOT LOUDER AS IT APPROACHED THE CHURCH. JAMIE'S DOG, PLATO, WAS STILL BESIDE JAMIE AND DID NOT SEEM TO BE AWARE HIS MASTER WAS DEAD. MR. BERTRAM AND TWO OTHER FIREMEN, A MR. SHEETS AND A MR. HOLLIS, SOON ENTERED THE SANCTUARY. THE TWO FIREMEN WERE CARRYING A STRETCHER. MR. BERTRAM FIRST WENT TO JAMIE AND INSPECTED HIS HEAD WOUND. HE CHECKED HIS PULSE AND SHOOK HIS HEAD IN DISMAY. HE THEN WENT OVER NEXT TO TOM AND CHECKED CHALKY'S WOUND. IT WAS THEN THAT I NOTICED FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT CHALKY HAD REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS, BUT HE HAD NOT SPOKEN. MR. BERTRAM SPOKE TO TOM.

BERTRAM: Where's Specs?

TOM: Out there in the room below the bell tower. He fell from the ladder.

TOM AND MR. BERTRAM DISAPPEARED INTO THE ROOM



NEXT TO THE ALTAR AREA THAT IS BELOW THE BELL TOWER.

FIREMAN ONE: My God! What happened here? That one over there — the one that got shot in the head. That's old Judge Driscoll's grandson.

FIREMAN TWO: Why are they painted up like a bunch of savages?

FIREMAN ONE: I don't know. The boy told me on the walkie-talkie that two of them are dead. The one that Bill went to see about must be dead, too.

FIREMAN TWO: The one that's injured there is Bill's boy, Chalky.

MR. BERTRAM AND TOM RETURNED. I SUDDENLY FELT A PROTECTIVE ARM AROUND MY SHOULDER AND LOOKED UP FROM MY SOBBING TO SEE THAT CHALKY HAD HOBBOLED OVER AND WAS TRYING TO CONSOLE ME. I WAS SITTING ON THE CARPETED STEPS THAT SEPARATED THE ALTAR AREA FROM THE CHURCH PEWS. MR. BERTRAM GOT TWO BLANKETS FROM THE CAMPING GEAR AND USED ONE TO COVER JAMIE'S BODY. HE DISAPPEARED WITH THE OTHER ONE, BACK TO THE ROOM WHERE SPECS WAS. JAMIE'S DOG, PLATO, CONTINUED TO HOVER NEAR JAMIE'S COVERED BODY. MR. BERTRAM RETURNED IN A MOMENT.

BERTRAM: I haven't been gone more than an hour. How could — how could all this happen?

TOM: It was 'the game,' I reckon. Everybody's been playing 'the game.'

BERTRAM: Carl, you take Chalky, that's my boy who's injured over there, and this boy, Roger, to the hospital in the emergency car. The Stockwell boy, here, needs to be given something to quiet him down. Fred, here's the key to my station wagon. Those two boys, Chad and Arnold there, both live out on the south end of town. Chad lives all the way up on Bertha Hill. Drive them home and then

come back here. The rest of the crew are still out on that barn fire where the lightning struck. This other boy here is Tom Peddigrew. He's staying at Judge Driscoll's right now. I guess I'll have to tell the Judge about his grandson. I'll take Tom home when you get back. Carl, while you're on the way to the hospital, call the fire station on the ambulance radio. Tell them to call Mrs. Agnes Stockwell on Cambridge Street and have her go to the hospital. Someone is going to have to tell her that her adopted boy, Jason, was fatally wounded. Carl, maybe you better wait for her at the hospital and do that. This boy Roger, here, is also her son. Then come back here and we'll get these two dead boys down to the hospital. And you better call and get the Sheriff up here as soon as you get a chance. FIREMAN TWO: Here, Chalky, lay down on the stretcher. We'll get you out to the ambulance.

CHALKY: I can walk OK.

I REMEMBER THAT CHALKY WALKED OVER TO HIS FATHER WHO WAS STANDING NEXT TO TOM NEAR THE PULPIT WHERE ARNOLD WAS ALSO STANDING WITH TOM'S SPEAR STILL IN HIS HANDS.

CHALKY: Dad, I think I want to go back to live at Aunt Martha's in Morgantown.

ONE OF THE FIREMEN, MR. SHEETS, HAD GONE OVER TO CHAD AND TAKEN HIM BY THE ARM TO LEAD HIM OUT AND CHAD FOLLOWED OBEDIENTLY. THE FIREMAN HAD MOTIONED FOR ARNOLD TO FOLLOW THEM. BEFORE ARNOLD LEFT WITH THEM, HE DID WHAT I CONSIDER A STRANGE THING. HE WAS HOLDING THE SPEAR HE HAD TAKEN AWAY FROM TOM ACROSS HIS UPTURNED PALMS LIKE HE WAS ABOUT TO PRESENT IT AS SOME SORT OF GIFT. HE WALKED SLOWLY OVER AND PRESENTED IT TO MR. BERTRAM LIKE IT WAS A RITUAL OFFERING. MR. BERTRAM LOOKED AT ARNOLD, CONFUSED, NOT BEING SURE

WHAT ARNOLD WANTED HIM TO DO. FINALLY, MR. BERTRAM RELUCTANTLY TOOK THE SPEAR, LOOKED AT IT QUESTIONINGLY, AND THEN LAID IT ASIDE. AFTER MR. BERTRAM TOOK THE SPEAR FROM HIM, ARNOLD FOLLOWED CHAD AND THE FIREMAN UP THE AISLE AND OUT THE FRONT DOOR OF THE CHURCH. I CAN ONLY GUESS WHAT MUST HAVE BEEN GOING THROUGH ARNOLD'S TORTURED MIND. BUT I THINK HE MUST HAVE BEEN TRYING TO SAY, 'THIS MUST BE THE END OF THE KILLINGS! THIS MUST BE THE END OF 'THE GAME!' THE OTHER FIREMAN, MR. HOLLIS, CAME OVER TO ME AND, WITH A GENTLE HAND ON MY SHOULDER, BEGAN TO LEAD ME UP THE AISLE BEHIND CHAD AND ARNOLD. CHALKY WAS LIMPING ALONG BESIDE ME. SUDDENLY, ABOUT HALF WAY UP THE AISLE, I FELT CHALKY FALL AGAINST ME TO THE FLOOR, AND I REALIZED HE HAD PASSED OUT AGAIN. THE OTHER FIREMAN, MR. SHEETS, WHO HAD TAKEN CHAD AND ARNOLD OUT, HAD COME BACK INSIDE THE CHURCH. THE TWO OF THEM, ALONG WITH MR. BERTRAM, PLACED CHALKY ON THE STRETCHER, AND MR. HOLLIS AND MR. SHEETS TOOK HIM OUT AND PLACED HIM IN THE EMERGENCY CAR WITH ME FOLLOWING ALONG AFTER THEM. I GOT IN THE BACK OF THE EMERGENCY CAR WHERE THEY HAD LAID CHALKY ON THE COT THERE. I WATCHED MR. SHEETS GET IN THE STATION WAGON WITH CHAD AND ARNOLD AND DRIVE AWAY. I WAS NEVER TO SEE CHAD AGAIN. MR. HOLLIS GOT IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT OF THE EMERGENCY CAR, STARTED THE SIREN, AND BEGAN THE DRIVE TO THE HOSPITAL. I WAS STILL SOBBING UNCONTROLLABLY. SUDDENLY, I FELT A HAND ON MY ARM, AND I LOOKED UP AND SAW THAT CHALKY WAS CONSCIOUS AGAIN AND STILL TRYING TO CONSOLE ME.

THE SOUND OF THE EMERGENCY CAR SIREN LEAVING THE CHURCH CAN BE HEARD ON THE TAPE. THERE IS THEN

A LONG SILENCE ON THE TAPE AND THE NEXT VOICE TO BE HEARD IS MR. BERTRAM WHO STAYED IN THE SANCTUARY OF THE CHURCH WITH TOM.

BERTRAM: Tom, come over here. I've got a wet towel here. We may as well get that 'war' paint off you while we're waiting.

TOM: It weren't nobody's fault this all happened. I wonder what they'll do? Chad didn't mean to shoot Jamie. It was supposed to be a joke. He meant to shoot a blank at Jamie's dog just to scare him.

BERTRAM: I know it wasn't your fault. Nobody's gonna try to blame you. Get out of that Indian outfit, and I'll get all that paint off you.

TOM: Specs was just going up to the bell tower to ring the bells. He thought maybe you would hear them and come. The telephone and the walkie-talkie didn't work. He must have gotten in too much of a rush and slipped on the ladder.

BERTRAM: Just calm down. Nobody's gonna try and blame you. I'll see they don't. It was an accident.

TOM: Please, Mr. Bertram! Don't start doing that now. Please! Not now!

BERTRAM: I'm just trying to get this paint off you. Just hold still. I'll get all the paint off you.

TOM: Please don't put your hand on me there! Not now, Mr. Bertram. Please, I don't feel like doing that, now.

BERTRAM: Just hold still. It won't take long. You'll feel better when it's over. Just hold still and relax. It'll all be over in a few moments.

TOM: Please don't. It hurts me, now. Don't. Please don't. I got hurt inside the last time you done that. Please don't do it again. Not now, anyway.

BERTRAM: I'll take it real easy. If you'll just relax and hold still. It won't hurt. I promise. Just relax.

TOM: Please don't. It'll hurt. After the last time, the

housekeeper at Judge Driscoll's house, Mrs. Wainwright — when she went to wash my underpants, they had blood on them. She showed them to the Judge. He was gonna make me go to the doctor.

BERTRAM: Hold still. It won't hurt. I'll do it easy. I've just got to. If you'll just hold still, I'll be easy. I promise. TOM: Don't. Please don't. Something got ripped inside of me the last time. I can feel it sometimes. If there's blood in my underpants or in the bed again, the Judge will make me go to the doctor. I told him I just fell and hurt myself before. But he'll make me go to the doctor. Can't you do something else. I'll do anything to you — anything you want me to do. I'll suck it for you, like I done the last time. But don't do that. It hurts too much.

BERTRAM: I just got to. I can't help it. I'll be easy. Now, lay still. It'll be over a lot quicker.

TOM: It'll hurt too much. If you don't let me alone, I'll tell. I'll tell the Judge.

BERTRAM: You won't tell anybody about this. If you do, I'll have to tell them about Luke's death — what you were trying to make Luke do when he tried to run away and fell off that ledge and died. And what you were trying to make Wally do when you chased after him and busted his raft and caused him to drown in the rapids. And you were trying to make Arnold do the same thing to you when you shot him. Chad told me all about it. He told me how you were trying to make all those boys suck your cock before all them terrible things happened. And when I tell the sheriff that and he sees them pictures of you that Chad has, who do you think they will believe — you or me? When I tell them all that and Chad shows them those pictures, they'll just think you got hurt inside getting screwed by the other boys. They'll just believe you're a murderous little pervert trying to get somebody else in

trouble for what you've done.

TOM: I won't tell. But, please, stop doing that. It hurts too much. The last time something got tore inside of me and it hurts sometimes. Please don't. Yours is too big. It hurts me terrible. You can do anything! But not that!

BERTRAM: I'm taking it real easy — real slow. Now, lay real still and it won't hurt. It'll all be over in a moment.

TOM: Please don't, Mr. Bertram. Please stop! It hurts too much!

BERTRAM: Lay still! Any time, any place, if I want you, you just better be ready! Any time, any place! Do you understand? I'll let you know when I want you. And if you ever tell, or if you refuse me, I'll have to tell them the truth about you. You'll do it because you enjoy every minute of it! Don't tell me you don't. I've seen you with the boys. You didn't know I was watching. Sometimes I would just pretend to leave, and I would watch you and the boys play that game. I saw what you did — what they did to you — and you enjoyed it. You loved every minute of it! Don't try to tell me that's not true. I've seen you screwed up the ass too many times. Don't try to tell me different. Now, hold still! You'll hold still for me! Do you understand? I'll make you hold still.

TOM: I understand. But take it easy. Please be easy. Stop! Stop! Not so far! It hurts! Please, it hurts!

THERE ARE A COUPLE OF CRIES OF PAIN FROM TOM AND THE TAPE RAN OUT.

507 Braddock Ave.  
Red Creek, W.Va.  
August 14, 1974

Dear Tom,

I can see clearly now! The tapes provided just about all the missing links in my confused, distorted memories from childhood. I presume you received the transcript of the tape. I mailed it to you a few days ago and hope you have had a chance to read that revealing document. The thing I can see most clearly from that recording is that you were not the perpetrator of all those tragedies in old Troop 44, but were just as much one of the victims as Luke, Wally, Jamie, and Specs and prevented Chalky, at risk to your own life, from being another of the dead victims. The difference between you and them is that they suffered a physical assault which took their life. You have been relegated to a lifetime of mental anguish for those diabolical forces and influences that clouded your childhood. Even poor Arnold has been afforded an escape by being able, apparently, to lock away his tortured memories beyond the reach of guilt and blame. But, certainly, no such blessing has been afforded you.

And another thing I see most clearly — and I refused to see as long as you were an object of lust and passion to me and not of caring and compassion — is that you have been mainly looked on in your early life — and maybe later, as well — like a piece of meat on a hook in a butcher shop. You have been desired, consumed, chewed up, and spat out. But I guess that was destined the moment you were born with your near-fatal physical attraction. Now, as I think back on your letters and realize the number of

hints you gave me — in fact, came right out and told me — I understand that you were more desiring that I see you as a friend, and not as an object of lust to be exploited. But so wrapped up was I in satisfying my long-awaited passion, I refused to get that message, refused to see you in any other light than as an exquisite dessert to satisfy my long- existing hunger.

I can see that you came to rely on your near-fatal physical attraction as the only bait you were sure would captivate people, hold them. I can see that you must have wanted something much, much different than what you ever got in your relationships. If I was insensitive enough to treat you as a ‘piece of meat’ and I consider myself a fairly compassionate person, I think how much worse it must have been with most of the others. That, like I say, must be the price you have had to pay for your near- fatal attractiveness.

Your story reminds me of a tragic drama I saw a few years back in New York, written by the famous playwright, Arthur Miller, presumably based on the life of his dead ex-wife, Marilyn Monroe, called “After the Fall.” In the play the physically beautiful protagonist is destroyed because she is too lovely, too desirable. People viewed her only as a ‘piece of meat’ to be marketed in show business, to be devoured by the fawning, admiring public. And that was her undoing. No one saw her as a human being with human needs and frailties. I think people you have known have so often seen you only as ‘meat’ to be consumed. And, no doubt, you wanted, needed much, much more. Let’s hope that I, for one, have discovered the error of my ways before it is too late.

Two days ago I was talking to old Job Mayfield. You may recall he has been one of the sheriff’s deputies for as long as I can remember. He started talking to me about



the article, and he said he thought I had made an unintentional mistake in one of the things I reported. He said that the people in the sheriffs department had never believed that Tom Peddigrew had shot his half-brother Arnold. He said the Walton County Hospital had routinely sent them the slug they had taken out of Arnold's neck, and it had come from Chad's carbine. He said they knew Chad had that kind of rifle because earlier the rifle had been taken away from Chad by a sheriff's deputy when he was caught shooting the glass insulators off telegraph poles.

However, he said when they questioned Tom Peddigrew about it, he had told the story that he had traded guns with Chad while they were hunting. The old deputy said they all knew that was not the truth. Chad was too proud of that carbine to trade it off to anyone, even for a short while. And he said the slug taken from Arnold's neck had not ricocheted off a rock, as Tom had said, making his story about the accident even more suspect. But Job said that as long as the Peddigrew boy stuck to his story, there was not much they could do about it.

Later that day, as though that day was destined to be the one when all the mysteries about those childhood tragedies were to be cleared up, I had to go down to the old Caldwell Field House at Carlton to interview the ROTC sergeant who was to be the new coach of the rifle team. (The sports editor was away at Pittsburgh at a baseball game.) The old field house is no longer used by the basketball team. A new arena was built five years ago. The place is just used for intramural sports and the rifle range is still there. But the place is just the same as it was during our childhood.

After I had finished with the interview, I walked almost instinctively to the top of those bleachers where we sat that night when Chalky had fallen. To be absolutely

truthful, your role in the other tragedies had always, until recently, been unclear in my mind, but I had always believed that you had pushed Chalky. I wanted to see if being at the scene would make me recall anything I might have long forgotten about that incident. I looked over the back of the bleachers and the old sawdust-filled pole-vaulting pit, long since fallen into disuse, was still directly below. When I turned around, I suddenly saw something in my mind's eye from the distant past. There had not been enough space on the top row of the bleachers for all nine of us. Chad had to sit in the next to the last row directly in front of Chalky!

If you will only give me another chance, I promise I will like you for you. Now that the distortions of tortured memory have been put aside, now that there is no overwhelming passion complicating the plot, I realize that I did — and still do — like you better than all the others. And if it had not been for that near-fatal physical attraction I had for you, an attraction that made me hate myself and want to consume you and reject you at the same time, if it had not been for that attraction, I could have shown you how much I really cared for you.

I liked you better — and like you better — than I ever have or ever will like Chalky. Yes, I even liked you better than the lovable Jamie. It was just easier to be their friends because, with them, I did not have to struggle with what I had believed to be a debased and unrequited craving. I can't say I like you any better than Allen, but I just consider him, in one way, an extension of yourself. When you get your work squared away, come back to Red Creek and we will go on another camping trip, one that will have a different purpose with a different meaning and a different outcome.

Incidentally, with no word from you, my wife insisted

on registering Allen for school here in Red Creek. It starts in less than two weeks, and my wife thought — just to be on the safe side - he should be signed up. Perhaps, she is just indulging in some wishful thinking. She would have him in her class if he went to school here, and she just adores him. And that's a real compliment to Allen. My wife is trying to think of a way to keep from having the twins in her class when they are old enough in two years. And, perhaps, it is not wishful thinking on my wife's part.

Your downfall has always been that your attraction was a threat. People feel the need to suppress anything or anyone that stimulates untapped, hidden, forbidden cravings and desires. We are very early taught that things that might appear to be too pleasurable must be the work of the devil. And one often considers even the object of these 'sinful cravings' as being, somehow, evil. Just give me another chance and I will show you that I have seen the light of day. And then, for you, perhaps, the world!

You remember the camping trip that Roger Jr. and Allen were excited about going on when Allen attended the first scout meeting of Troop 123 at the Braddock Hill Church? It was to have been last weekend, but at the last moment it had to be canceled because the scoutmaster had unexpected visiting relatives. Roger Jr. and Allen had looked forward to it so much that I took just the two of them up to Algonquin State Park on Friday afternoon so they could camp out for the weekend. When I picked them up on Sunday morning, I noticed a big difference in Roger Jr. He had always been a somewhat prudish, unrelaxed, and tense lad who worried too much about whether he was pleasing others. That morning and since he has been tranquil, relaxed, and almost dreamy. Do you reckon it's possible that . . .?

It is ironic that the one childhood chum, Chalky, that

I believed you had deliberately tried to harm is the one you risked your life to save. You risked not only your life but, for you, perhaps, was the greater risk of having Chad reveal those pictures. You dared to rebel against Chad's blackmail and to tighten the tourniquet on Chalky's thigh and keep him from bleeding to death. How unfair I have been! And I owe Arnold a debt of gratitude for protecting me from you that night in the sanctuary when you attacked, mistaking me for Chad. I have been toying with the idea of writing a short follow-up article about Troop 44 and its living members today. But I have discarded the idea. However, if I had written it, I think an appropriate title would have been 'The Sunshine Boy With The Brightest Glow Of All Is Alive And Well And Living In Caracas. . . .'

Your buddy,

Roger Stockwell

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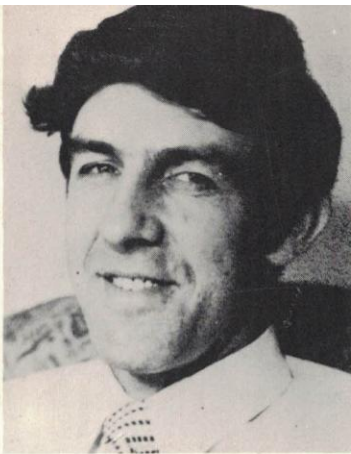
VIA AIR MAIL



Mr. Tom Peddigrew  
19 Rio Pinar Plaza  
Caracas, Venezuela  
South America

Return to Sender  
Addressee deceased X

No Reclamado  
Razon para chequear  
Dirección incorrecta  
Persona no conocida  
Esta casa no existe  
Persona muerta X



**HURSTY RICHET** is an outdoorsman and teacher. He has served on the City Council, City Charter Board, and is a delegate to the West Virginia Legislature. "I've tried to write a kind of neurotic 20th Century man's adventure of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn," he says.

Dear Tom,

Thank you for the quick reply. I was not quite so nervous when I received this letter. But I was excited just the same. Are you ready for the next round of therapy? You certainly broke the ice - or I should say the language barrier - in your last letter. I refer to your description of what I had discreetly called 'horsing around.' I guess I vaguely realized that something more exciting than a chase and capture was going on when 'the game' was played. But, since no one ever talked about it, I could not be sure. I was aware from distant observation and sounds in the night that there was something terribly exciting, terribly forbidden, about being captured in 'the game.' And you're probably right. I did, in a way, crave to be caught and find out what brought those screams of anguish and ecstasy from the hunters and the prey.

In a way, more than you could be aware, you take the same approach in writing to me that my analyst does in talking with me. Once, I spent almost a whole hour with him talking around what happened on that camping trip you and I had. Finally, my analyst, who rarely says anything, looked me straight in the eyes and, in an exasperated tone, said,