

FOREIGN EXPERIENCES

An Opera

BY ROBERT ASHLEY

There is a peculiar, eerie, indescribable loneliness in all of California. It permeates everything. Maybe it's just the water. Maybe there are other places of the same sort in other places on Earth. But California could be special, the place where the early European-American settlers, upon arriving — if they got there, realized they would never get back. California is the end of the Earth. That feeling is passed on from generation to generation without anyone recognizing that it is part of them. And it is passed on to the most recent arrivals. Even today in the precious palaces of Malibu, in the vast developments between Los Angeles and San Diego, in the spreading domestic comfort of the San Francisco Bay area it's there. It poisons our movies and TV shows. It generates the most violent and interesting mystery novels. Even now jet travel doesn't cure it. It comes down on you hard when you get off the plane and step outside the terminal. It drives some people mad.

Don Jr. has come to California with his family — Linda and Jr. Jr. — and his friend, "N," to take a job at a small college. They have moved from the Midwest of fractured identities to the world of no identities.

On arrival, the four of them go, on a Sunday afternoon, to visit the campus to see what is in store for them, and they discover that the campus, and especially the building where Don Jr. is to work, is haunted by some evil force from the past.

A ghost, documented in campus history, roams the area that includes the building where Don Jr. is to work and the "Faculty Village" that lies directly behind that building. The ghost is frequently encountered on the road to what was once the Main Gate — closed now ("because it was too dangerous") and now referred to as the "Back Gate."

During the months that follow the ghost becomes more and more of a presence and more fearsome, and Don Jr. becomes more and more irrational. Don Jr. has gone mad.

His family has disintegrated. He lives alone in a small, cheap apartment near the campus where he cooks rice and vegetables in a single saucepan, drinks vodka and reads books on esoteric subjects.

He has terrible problems with his teeth, a genetic disease. The constant work on his teeth means that he is always in pain and that before one part of him has healed another part has been invaded by the dentist. He imagines that this violation of the skin has made him vulnerable to the presence of the ghost.

In his madness and isolation Don Jr. has concocted an elaborate plot to explain to himself the situation he is in. This is all in Don Jr.'s imagination. In reality (Don Jr. would love to discuss that word with anyone) we never leave the sordid apartment. Don Jr. has many adventures, all in his imagination. He remembers important and unbelievable premonitions. He remembers events and people whose lives he should have seen in premonition. He confuses his past with the present. The adventures in the past and in the present lead to amazing adventures in the future. He learns a lot of things about himself and about the world. Maybe madness of a certain sort is not so bad.

He imagines that he has been called to some secret purpose other than the work at the college and that this purpose will be revealed by a message that he is to find in the “personals” of the local newspaper. Finally, he finds what he is sure is the message meant for him. It is a simple statement, “Higher than eagles he wanted to learn to fly,” along with a phone number. He calls the number.

The message from the phone number tells him that he is to go to the place of a secret, government sponsored project, somewhere near the Mexican border. The purpose of the project is to learn to act on premonitions, to take premonitions as instructions. In order to achieve this state of mind he is told to learn to curse. Cursing overcomes emotions embedded in language and clears the mind to recognize premonitions as they appear. Don Jr. learns to curse. He curses in almost every statement.

In his imagination Don Jr., along with his wife Linda, goes to the secret government facility. He meets important government people and is congratulated on his acceptance of the dangerous job he is about to undertake. He is instructed to meet a guide, who will take him to a powerful man who will teach him about premonitions.

In a motel, before the meeting with the guide, Don Jr. and Linda have some serious disagreement about the wisdom of this undertaking. Linda thinks that the project is foolish, but Don Jr. is obsessed.

He meets the guide, an “Indian,” and is taken on a wild ride through the Mexican desert, with the guide taunting and insulting him about his ignorance. The guide recounts incidents of his own brushes with the law.

The guide leaves him in some remote place, where he is to be picked up by other guides in order to arrive at his rendezvous with “the man” who is to be his final introduction to the wisdom of premonitions. Twelve times he is left alone to be picked up sometime later. During this long and lonely travel Don Jr. begins to remember premonitions he has had in the past. He loses his ability to distinguish the past from the present, though he believes that eventually he will be taken to the place of “the present.”

Finally, he is taken to his destined meeting. The place is crowded and noisy. Before meeting “the man” he gets two lectures from persons in the crowd. Strangely, the lectures are not about premonitions. They are lessons about the economics of oppression and the deceitful language of the oppressors.

Through all of the noise (“These fuckers talk all at the same time . . .”) he gets the first lecture (“Probably none of them could get indicted for price fixing that old-fashioned way . . .”). This lecture is about the way the game is played between those who have and those who don’t.

Then another voice takes over for the second lecture. This is about the way the game of politics is played. ("Have you ever thought about why your uncle who was so smart about everything and who was so admired in town and was a great success at being a human being wasn't President? Naw shit no.")

Don Jr. realizes that he is not going to learn about premonitions. He is in the presence of revolutionaries. They couldn't care less about premonitions. He is learning about politics and economics from the people who don't have anything. ("I am dumbstruck. I came all this way for this?")

Finally, he gets to "the man." ("This is what I came for.") "The man" is not well educated and defiant like the "Commandante" of the Chiapas. He's not logical and persuasive like the legendary Che Guevara. He's not ironical like Castaneda's Don Juan. He's a screamer and the subject of his lecture is nothing less than the history of commercial civilization. He wants to go back to communally owned land. His adversaries are the banks and what they represent in the way of dividing things up.

This is all happening in the sordid apartment in the middle of the night. ("Middle aged man lives alone in a shit apartment. Across the courtyard a woman with an artificial larynx. Down below the neighbor has a bar self-standing. And he plays disco records until late hours. Donna Summer and Al Green without the words. Just strong beats.")

Too many broken dreams. Too much vodka. Too many esoteric books. Too much loneliness. Too much California. We will never find out what happens to Don Jr. It seems doubtful that he will ever become a revolutionary, since it's all in his imagination anyway. Maybe he will go into writing screenplays.

— Robert Ashley

ACT I - The Flying Serpent

We come down from Truckee surfing against that sun
As if off a great wave but in the
Wrong direction certainly the wave is frozen
Or just moving so slowly that no one can know
If you've done it though you know the feeling
It's all down hill from here love
The hard part is over
The gold is in sight El Dorado
End of scene one
Make camp in bedrooms of friends
Just until we find a place of our own
A three-year-old car and a U-haul loaded with junk
Another caravan has seen America
End of scene two . . . It's getting dark now
Let's jump in the car run over and look at the place
This is where we're going to work
This is where we're going to live
Let's drive over and look at it quick big mistake
We should've come in the daytime
We should've come on a weekday
I didn't get this 'til later smack into it
The worst time of day worst day of the year
We drove smack into it leftover dreams
Back Gate of the College remember the
Back Gate part later they closed it forever
It was how shall I say this
It was too dangerous
The layout is stupidly simple
An iron gate and a road that goes straight
Ahead slightly uphill and to the right
We've passed the dead fountain and the shingled names
We are into the trees a quaint wooded area
About two hundred yards the whole thing
Then you come out in the campus
A stop sign a cross street a strong smell
Eucalyptus came in from the Far East by mistake
I can't even describe how dumb this is
On the right there's a square building in shadows
On the left and just behind is Faculty Village
So-called how nice hidden in trees
We passed because it's hidden seeing
Now here's the hard part (pause) something
Happened here once and it is still here

We just drove through it scared to the teeth
N's dog's whining nobody says a word
The New World and we're gonna work here
Starting tomorrow in the presence of this thing
My heart turns to stone I have become
One of those explorers long gone now
Led his men and women through all kinds of
Dangers laughing drugs to El Dorado
Then suddenly you're in the heart of it
Before you know that you know that it's happened you are
There with a common knowledge that you are in trouble
M, S, N and I are in trouble
This place is haunted end of scene three
Work late in the studio very end of the building
I don't like the building at all
Somehow the layering is blurred
Even now I couldn't tell you
After a thousand times up and down (up and down)
Whether the studio is floor two or three
The confusion is right there a part of it
To explain I'll tell a story (naturally)
Medical students intern in two ideas (I know this)
Six months in the private skin (so-called)
You go around with Trapper John, M.D.
Notebook ready deciding what possibly could be wrong
With people who are simply dying in bed
Then six months in the public skin (so-called)
Emergency entrance first floor hose off the
Tiles again another guy just came in without an arm
The skin is the (so-called) soul in other words
That thing you read about them looking for for centuries is
Right there in front of you to see the soul
It's not a bag you're inside of (you knew that of course)
It follows the body keeping some distance
And it is indifferent
All knowledge comes through it
It transmits receives and reveals
A flaw in the structure the skin will reveal it
And a flaw in the structure the skin can't protect it
And it follows from this like one and two equals three
A break in the skin lets in spirits
I'll say it again a break in the skin lets in spirits
Segue from scene four to five four will come back
I go to the dentist week after week after week
The bad genes have finally caught up with me

I forgot to say this is years later
The four of us hopelessly lost from each other
I live in a shitty apartment
Near to the Back Gate unfortunately
Now I have to cross that place on foot
When I have the courage which comes and goes
To pick up bread and some vodka for dinner
Back at the shitty apartment alone
But I have learned something now to explain
When the skin is violated the spirits come visiting
I'll say that again the spirits come visiting
You go to a dentist he cuts a hole in you
That night and until it heals
The spirits come visiting
I can't say it to make it sound civilized
It's something you wouldn't notice maybe
If the skin violations were infrequent
You mostly forget in between times
But when the schedule gets heavy
When the tearing and the healing overlap
And you are aware of the holes in you the condition they're in
That's when you learn it the spirits come visiting
And you start paying attention
To where you have chosen to live
Segue back to scene four working late the studio
The building itself scares the shit out of me
It was designed to have holes in it
Jesus designed to be violated
Daytimes you can't tell daytimes
It is as beautiful as an old woman in makeup
Nighttimes watch out my office oh Jesus
A place to keep things you don't want at home
It's on the far other end of the building
Also I don't know what floor it's on
Ten years and I don't know what floor it's on
Where I keep stuff I work with so as
To unclutter the studio to make room
For people who don't have an office
Between studio and office there are two ways to get there
At say three in the morning one way is down outside
Across and up that's a long walk at say
Three in the morning the other is straight through the building
Straight through the back of the Concert Hall across the
Very back row hope the Exit sign is working
This night in question I made four trips

Each one a little more weird than the last
Full-grown man each more weird than the last
Finally I can't do it
I have to admit I'm afraid
I am afraid to go through there
That's the only way I can say it
I am afraid to go through there
Not afraid of the dark
Not afraid of the silence
Just afraid
End of scene four El Dorado scene five
I have to get out of this shitty apartment
It's starting to follow me home
To finish up with scene five everything is different
Broken changed however you want to think about it
The four of us who came through the Back Gate years ago
Forty miles away M is trying to survive
I don't know where S is living on the street I guess
Waiting for a broken heart to mend
I see N almost every day
But I know he strains to keep trusting me
Something has happened that nobody understands
The dog is dead of course even the red car is gone
It started to be accident-prone
F says it's just cosmetic I say everything's
Cosmetic it's gotta go I pay a guy to take it
So for the first time in my life I walk or take a bus
If the distance is too great this is scene five
In order to get something to take home at night
Vodka and a loaf of bread I have to walk through the place
I mean the place between the building on the right
At the cross street and the Village so-called
Hidden in the trees and that's the problem
Something happened here once and it's still here except that
Now it follows me home at night it hangs around
Vodka bread vegetables lots of soy sauce
Read a lot of Velikovsky he's on to something
Everybody hates him even his detractors
Science gone bananas in the academy
Or else he couldn't write that well his detractors
Write like high school seniors editing the paper
He writes ideas fuck your approval that has its charms
And besides you never know when a colleague
Might need an idea for an opera
Velikovsky and that other guy Einstein lived next door

To each other I bet I couldn't tell them apart
A pariah and a Brahmin equally contagious
How's the wife and kids Immanuel pretty good Albert how's the dog
Wha'd'ya hear from Science nothing much I think it's dead
Gotcha what about technology it'll be the death of us I think
Sorry about that A-bomb that's OK it wasn't your fault
Besides the circle's only half completed
Violins at twilight two old guys arguing with Moses
What was that oh shit it's still here
It followed me home again
It prowls around the bedroom
I fall asleep in the plastic chair
End of scene five
This is difficult terrain hillbilly madness
Middle aged man lives alone in a shit apartment
Across the courtyard a woman with an artificial larynx
Down below the neighbor has a bar self-standing
And he plays disco records until late hours
Donna Summer and Al Green without the words
Just strong beats end of scene six
This one's for Carl Welcome to El Dorado
A man is seated at his desk
Looking over his shoulder we see the telephone
Cradled to his ear he's calling someone
It rings on the other end Answer
Hello Scorpio this is Phone Future
Today's another big one you might get killed
Save toward a big project or big investment
Take care on short-term gratifiers
Take care on instant pleasure etcetera
He mocks the phone voice we see him
Apply something to his teeth or gums
We look down on a plate of cocaine
Tongue-time so you don't go out the window
Enter his secretary a male
The Senators are here Don the tour is ready
OK I'll be there in a minute
End of scene seven
The Laboratory doesn't show you what it does
Cleanliness is next to Godliness so everything is clean
Science without test tubes so nobody's dissecting
Rats here notice how pale and how green
The light is notice too how comfortable
Senators behave in the expensive leather chairs
Notice how closely they pay attention notice how the

Temperature of the coffee is exactly right notice
That there are no women this is a secret meeting
Don makes a few casual remarks
Others have been there nothing formal of course we have just
Finished the preliminary stage the reports are very encouraging
Though this is very different from what has gone before one
Could call it except for the poetry another realm
We don't know in any way what it could be good for what
Is proposed is simply that we follow through in the circum-
Stances we should expect no publicity to speak of we could
Call it trivial for the moment who knows maybe it will
Come to nothing possibly I will not come back etcetera
A Senator philosophizes on the value of
Uncommitted research end of scene eight
Don and his secretary discuss the demonstration tour
Very successful research will continue support came
In the form of handshakes Don is off tomorrow on a well-
Deserved vacation Southwest car tour sightseeing rock
Hunting family rest he might not come back end of scene nine
Don considers his options while Linda's in the bathroom
This kind of research is full of problems (social)
You can't see what you are seeing until afterward the delay
Effect in what is called understanding so we watch sports
Try to get the idea of stop thinking old-style
To stop thinking hopefully the term is used right
At all stop thinking for instance an insert
In the form of a joke the requirements to
Recount the story tell what happened make it interesting
Imagine here an old-school Laboratory
There is of course the anomaly that is unsolvable
When some one of you comes up with the answer it's the Nobel Prize
I'll make it short the British deny any practice of oral sex
Researchers have thrown themselves against the rocks of intimacy
Since Kinsey and before trying to crack the story
The National Enquirer offers a fortune for the answer
Pardon me I mean between the sexes this fact
If it can be called that that from Elizabeth Astraea until
Approximately Margaret Thatcher nobody ever took a bath
The evidence is pretty solid coinciding with what
They deny has made for a stock answer in three parts
In order to get a Nobel Prize you have to get by stock answers
Which are accompanied by stock characters for instance
Imagine the smartest guy at Harvard he was raised on
Portnoy's Complaint you mention this old problem to him
This is what you get One obviously they're lying

That shouldn't surprise you the British as distinct from the Irish
But like the Scots almost unique among cultures of the world
We can't get into name calling here have made
A national culture famous everywhere based on
Deceit the evidence is all over nobody cares of course
God doesn't care and everybody down here knows it so there's
No problem but it is amazing who would have thought it
Who else would have invented theater remember
That in many cultures around the world
John Le Carré is inconceivable very British
Two who gives a shit Three they might be
Telling the truth in which case who could blame them
All the world's people revel in oral sex
We had to stop asking the question except the British
We don't do it OK you don't do it and we know why
Nobody takes a bath Jane Austen didn't take a bath
She wrote her ass off but she didn't take a bath
Mr. Darcy never took a bath Disraeli never took a bath
The whole place smelled to high heaven whole
Cults jumped on boats to the New World they knew
Something was amiss Charles Dickens never took a bath
Until he met Mark Twain who kidded him so bad about stinking
That he took a bath he hadn't seen his own legs in 15 years
The fucker almost drowned End of insert back to scene ten
One other bizarre thing has to be recounted
Don leaves he takes his secrets with him
Linda goes home this is what dreaming is
One thing leads to another thing things are not
Necessarily connected though sometime prior to or
After the accident it happened he thought he saw Eleanor
She was sitting in the shade at a cafe table she nodded
We can't go into family histories here there's no time
But it was a nod in the affirmative a yes
As if some unsolved social problem from the past
Comes back I told you it followed me home
Attachments are complicated right millions of
Years ago there were rumors Linda cried
Junior, Jr. jumped up in the night screaming
Don hears himself saying Jesus Holy Fucking Christ
I didn't do it and he doesn't even swear
But in those small towns there is no truth except in
Belief G. D. told me this one
The witch killed his dog the witch set his house on fire
Opinion blew him up against the wall
Then having suffered enough or having

Been cleansed depending on your point of view
He was accepted as a neighbor they even started
Speaking English he could buy a loaf of bread he could
Get his shoes shined end of scene ten
Farther and farther into the interior
Shuffled from one shack to another
No hand-tying understand
No blindfolds no need
What do you escape to and believe me
That more than once the feeling was that strong
But where to which direction
See you later Agitator there are some beans
On the stove don't eat the mushrooms don't
Drink the water don't wipe your ass on any plant that
Happens to be nearby do a spot test first
It'll save a lot of aimless running we'll be back
In a while keep cool thanks a lot Mex
There have never been nights as cold as
This lizards sleep in their tracks
This must be almost Argentina
A tango (Berlin) end of scene eleven
Finally he gets there (pause)
He thinks he gets there (pause)
I think he gets there (pause)
It had to stop someplace
This is like a scene from
Some old James Bond movie
A Santa's Workshop of violence
At this point you're supposed to see your hands
The idea is to have control
The idea is to distinguish between
Dreams and waking the idea is to know
That they are the same personally I think
The idea is shit about this time I'm ready for
Six cups of tea a cigarette a cup of coffee
Drugs whatever's left over from the night before
The hair of the dog etcetera
Take a shower shave and sauce
Kiss the wife good-bye
Wash the dishes
Finish up the drugs
Make a few phone calls
Check with my broker
But he is ahead of himself
In a shack somewhere the river is

As red as blood two more dreams to go
End of scene twelve
This scene is simple he is in a crowd
Impatience is more than tangible this is
A mob scene the purpose is not clear yet
What is ominous is the fear and joy mixed
A lot of fear a lot of joy
A lot of people he is reminded of the
Excitement of the football crowds of long ago
He is reminded of the growth of mistrust in
Things behind him he is reminded that
Some sensitive people avoid shopping malls
He is reminded of a friend shot down on
Broadway high noon musta been some otherbody Sheriff
We didn't see nothing then it's obvious
A man comes forward as if from nowhere
He places himself on a pile of sticks of wood
The guys assigned to tie him are in a state of shock
Some asshole in a fancy suit asks him to recant
Who knows recant what he says no God taught me
That the world is good and you can stick it up your
Ass the fire is lit in a field of flowers end of scene thirteen
This is sort of future in the tropics
Detroit Science Fiction Car of the Future
Speeds into the Future problems
Of rust all solved Atlantis lay on
The Equator and that's why we don't have it anymore
Nothing lays on the Equator long except for terror
Read Velikovsky read Plato it says here
Read anybody it's always there between the lines farther
North you get more done farther south you have more fun
I read a book that said dying in the Arctic is actually
Sublime more than easy sublime 'course he never did it
Thirty words to describe what we call snow and they don't
Know what writhing is I don't want to live there of course I
Don't like spring floods too much but what's going on to me as
Of now is dangerous and that's because of the Equator Islands
Of the Future Gone Now end of scene fourteen

ACT II – The Jaguar

After the accident
I had a hard time
Regaining any sense of myself
The clock stopped it seemed
For one or changed
Time passed unmeasured or
Sometimes measured sometimes not
That's more precise to speak about
The uncertainty the matter of
My relationships with people
Was never certain for another
Moments of clarity interrupted
To stress this with an error
Of tautologic add suddenly
Suddenly by a sense of foreignness
And without knowledge of whether
Foreignness can be graded
Add of the most extreme kind
Again for stress
That should do it
One is reminded existentially
Whatever that word meant of course
One is reminded that people complained
In the recent past of the same problem
People who had been close to suffering
In particular complained of this problem
Moments of clarity moments of
Foreignness of the most extreme kind
But not in reassuring patterns alternating
In pattern off shadows on
And on off of course
This is something different
Personally I would say more interesting
This is that alternation I stop
Think succession might be a better word
This is the succession of finalities
Interruption is the essence of change
To know it's coming back who gives a fuck
Little joke
Thus the uncertainty of the clock working
In clarity and stopped in foreignness
Or the opposite
Or no connection between the two

Clarity and foreignness interrupting
With finality time and not time interrupting
With finality in the same body
Connected in some way to the accident
Or not connected
She speaks to me and I to her:
Maybe you're too old for this.
I know.
Did you hear me?
Yes.
I can see it in a younger man.
I know.
But the danger would be the same.
I know.
And I wouldn't be so fearful.
I know.
And I'm sorry I have to keep saying this.
I know.
It's because I care, you know.
I know.
And I don't understand.
Higher Than Eagles He Wanted to Learn to Fly.
But why Mexico?
You've asked me that before.
And you haven't answered.
I've always answered,
And told you all I know.
You told me the message.
Higher Than Eagles He Wanted to Learn to Fly.
That's code, if I ever heard it.
I suppose so.
What else could it be?
Maybe there's another form.
I think there's only code and not code.
I know.
Then, how could there be something else?
Maybe there's something else.
Maybe maybe could be a little less dangerous.
I'm not sure about the danger.
I am.
I know.
She is in the bathroom all this time
The door is open
He is at the window
The window is a picture window

That word dates the architecture
They speak as if across a great distance
As if to be answered later
The window opens onto south and west
The mirror in the bathroom faces south and west
So they are looking in opposite directions
Except that for the magic of the mirror
They are looking in the same direction
They have tried to solve this puzzle before
Speaking as if across a great distance
Facing in opposite directions
Looking toward the same destination
A word that comes up frequently in their talk
Luckily there is the wall between them
To keep the puzzle unrecognized again
So the scene is ordinary on the surface
She is in the bathroom
She faces away from south and west
Seeing what is south and west in the mirror
He faces directly south and west
He turns and leaves the room
She pauses for a moment
Then she finishes
Without apparent urgency
Some of the lights are still on
Television on but without sound
Second key on a veneered surface
This is the way people leave motel rooms
She speaks to me and I to her:
Don't you think this is unfair to me?
I guess so.
In other words, this is all you?
More important than us together.
Not more important.
More important, if I have no say in it.
What you've said has changed it.
What I've said hasn't made you more cautious.
It has made me more cautious.
This is not what I would call caution.
It has to be done, and I am cautious.
It doesn't have to be done, and the world will go on.
Well, then, I have to do it.
Thanks a lot.
You are in every thought I have.
We could turn around, go back to the motel, pack and leave.

The chance would be gone forever.
There are chances all over the place.
Not of this kind.
Yes, of this kind, dangerous and stupid.
Maybe dangerous, maybe not, not stupid.
Stupid, if the consequences are trivial.
The consequences are not trivial for me.
Nor for me. That's what I'm afraid of.
We're talking about different consequences.
This conversation obscured partly by the sound of the car
And partly by the intervals irregular between statements
She speaks to me and I to her:
There's your contact. Good God!
I know.
Jesus!
An Indian.
Remember, he's an American.
If he's an American, what are you?
If you mean it that way, I'm a foreigner.
Well, at least you've gotten that idea.
I will be as safe as you are.
If you don't hear about an air disaster, you'll know I'm safe.
I know that you'll be all right.
If the future is that clear, what are you doing here?
It's only that clear. That's why I'm here.
I return the car and fly home.
And I will meet you at home.
In the meantime, I'll learn to knit.
The schedule has been made clear.
I have no reason to believe in any schedule.
I know you think that.
So, for me there is no schedule. Don't forget that.
I have a schedule and you are part of it.
That kind of wisdom doesn't impress me much.
There won't be a way for me to call, you know.
Maybe the pickup truck will need gas someplace.
I had to agree not to try to send messages.
Maybe you could ask somebody in on the secret to call.
I'm not looking for the answer to a secret.
Well, if you run into somebody who's already there,
There's always little me, just waiting.
This is hard, I know.
Thanks a lot for understanding.
I know you will begin to feel the certainty.
In the meantime, I'll learn to knit.

I will be safe, and you will be safe.
I don't think I'm here because I wanted safety for myself.
I'm here because I want it for both of us.
Personally, I prefer the short-range view of things.
This is only some time out of a huge time.
Maybe you could take up smoking and become a poet.
We are already separated in some way.
So I've noticed. You can't even see me.
I've stopped seeing myself in the mirror.
Well, good luck, Science. Send vibrations, if you need help.
I have to go now. I love you.
Fuck that kind of love. I love you, too.
Don't drink the water.
Good-bye.
The pickup truck is almost new
The ordinariness is more than I expected
Ordinariness in the extreme is indescribable
I speak to myself and she answers in me:
Ordinariness in the extreme is indescribable.
You've been reading People Magazine too much.
The sound of the truck designed to be exciting
Noise as an ideal replaces quietness
The effect is mainly architectural
Too much space enclosed makes noise
Every act of driving has noise added
The pickup drives itself of course
He smokes he steers
He looks forward talks about the pickup truck
He likes cassettes better than the radio
He resents adopted accents
He stresses the great space between us
The cassette goes in at more than arm's distance
Space as though captured and hostaged
As though kidnapped with the arrogance of kidnapping
As though transported to an unforeseen destination
As though the transporting is the essence
As though a capsule of noise kidnapped
In violation of a larger space of silence
Naturally the sun is setting
Together now we wait for meaning
Words accumulated shared inaccurately
Friction as inaccuracy is a lesson heard: ("Song on the cassette")
"Baby's off the magic powders
She don't like a good mood all that much
Nothing getting done for me

Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
"Baby's off the magic powders
She just couldn't get unloaded
Nothing getting done for me
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
"Baby's off the magic powders
They approved of everything
Nothing getting done for me
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
"Baby's off the magic powders
Celebs agree that things are fine
Nothing getting done for me
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
"Baby's off the magic powders
Empty gas pumps going nuclear
Nothing getting done for me
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
"Baby's off the magic powders
Positive opinion hungers
Nothing getting done for me
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
"Baby's off the magic powders
Read the sign Eat Here Delicious
Nothing getting done for me
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
"Chord change: meanwhile back on TV
In between channels I prefer
Are the pictures
To be passed through unless
I am more careful
Than my habits will allow
Little brown runs
Who have never eaten
All curled up about to die
Makes the sign look funny
Out of date
Had to come down
"Baby's off the magic powders
Stations fall in disrepair
Nothing getting done for me
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
"Baby's off the magic powders
Unloading got to go on
Nothing getting done for me
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed

“Chord change: meanwhile back on TV
Baby feels a great relief
Go straight to the
In between
Little brown runts
Who have never eaten
All curled up about to die
Be here for a little while
Unloaded disrepair
Be here for a little while
Hands between my legs
Try to look them in the eye
“Baby’s off the magic powders
All the pumps are broken
Nothing getting done for me
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
Very Great Hip Book I Keep It By My Bed
Etcetera etcetera
Etcetera etcetera
Parts of Words Return In Echo Y’know”
He speaks to me and I to him:
What the fuck you suppose that means?
It means he doesn’t like things like they are.
Goddamn singers never learn.
I guess so.
Ghost Dance.
I’ve heard of it.
Goddamn singers.
They were sad.
Shut the fuck up.
Yeah.
Memory fills the cab along with
Why it’s here with me
The question I have come to answer
If Minds Be Read Who Reads Them
Does this man know we’re joined now
With another color darkening everything
Can you know about the great past unless that
You were there or read about it or you heard
What about Malcolm, Mr. X, Sir
Which is (in parenthesis) all I know
Except in reading him written by himself
The ultimate paradox of literature
Everybody knows the end except you
In which if memory serves there is

The idea one can never know a black man's
Age or as nearly as in another color
This is true no matter what your color
Written for the black reader and for me
Wonder how Mr. X would place this guy in time
Except for generalities like thoroughly matured
Hostility more weight than youth can carry
Clothes that weren't grown into and so forth
Which might be just cultural of course X
Meant something more subtle what do I know
Which is why I'm here and does this Red man
See feel know that Mr. X is here with us or
Is this just a courier untrained on purpose
In order that the source stay hidden
In short how old is this guy just told me
Shut the fuck up and took yeah for an answer
He speaks to me and I to him:
We're going to pass these rocks soon.
Yes, that's one of the reasons
I'm not slowing down, but you can look.
What should I look for?
You wouldn't know if I told you.
I know.
I'm supposed to tell you something.
Is it important that I understand?
You have to understand the story.
I'll try.
Smart answers get a lot of guys in trouble.
Try is the only word I know.
I can tell that.
I know.
Blood red rocks in sunset fifty miles an hour
Every curve on the down side no rules here
Certainly I'm too old for this she's right
A kidnapped space in violation of a larger space
Enhanced by Naugahyde
Improved by Science
Tight as a drum Detroit
Knows the Red man if he came
Across the Straits and down by generations
Must have left the taste for we are driven
Long behind this guy will never jump up
To be frozen in time TV he likes 'em big
Imagine his opinion about the oil crisis
Fucking Oklahoma and the Arabs fuck 'em

This is getting complicated
And I'm in it
He speaks to me and I don't answer:
Every place is special.
Assholes like to try to get away.
You try to get away as far as possible.
Everywhere assholes like you are piling rocks.
All lined up with paste made out of little rocks
Between to hold the lines together, Jesus.
Assholes like you live on top of each other.
So you can't never understand the story unless
You were buried up to your neck for a couple years.
Just to get the feel of it.
Ashes to ashes dust to dust.
Assholes like you and all cars rust.
That's the first thing.
The Earth is not divided.
There is no difference between assholes.
Assholes are all the same.
You don't have that idea.
See this curve?
What if I don't turn the wheel?
What if we just blast into that rock?
You and me side by side.
And this piece of shit we're riding in.
Make a little mark on that rock.
Sheriff comes.
He thinks he's Clint Eastwood.
Well, Clint, what's the good news?
Same old shit, honey.
Goddamn Indian and some other guy marked up the rocks.
Clint, don't talk that way.
The kids might hear.
Jesus, there was blood all over the place.
You couldn't tell the red meat from the white.
Tried to knock the fucking mountain down.
Maybe they were just drunk.
Just drunk, shit.
What if the kids was on that road?
Goddamn Indians.
Clint lives over the garage.
So he can get down to the car fast.
He wears his guns to bed.
Clint couldn't we do it without the gun?
Without the gun?

Are you crazy?
It's savage out there, hon'.
It's just a bunch of fucking savages.
You don't have no idea.
Clint wouldn't go no place without his gun.
Clint lives over the garage.
So he can get down to the car fast.
And to satisfy his idea of on top of.
He'd live three times higher if he could work it out.
He'd be willing to break his fucking legs,
Sliding down the pole, the higher the better, Jesus.
I knew a couple of guys they put in the paratroops.
Those fools were crazy on fear.
They told it like it was a drug.
They always made the drinking room up high.
Second or third floor away from home.
Everybody good and drunk they could try the fear.
Somebody yells last one down's a whatever.
They all jump out the fucking windows.
They break bones all the time.
The Officers pretend this is bad business.
If we have any more of this behavior, etcetera.
But it's not too secret they are proud.
God, last week four of my best men got busted up.
Jumped off a fucking four-story building drunk.
They'll heal before the war starts, though, ha ha.
All around the table everybody went through it.
If you ain't broke a leg, you aren't a man.
Satisfies the on top idea.
Some Indians are the only ones can build bridges
Because they don't have no idea of falling.
They are crazy for the money.
But for them everything is Earth.
They don't have the idea of down.
They are down.
All the time.
One slips and dies, it's like he caught a bad cold.
You can make anybody crazy.
What the outside does to satisfy the inside.
The inside is what nobody understands.
The inside wants to be on top of.
The outside piles up rocks.
That's crazy.
Why are some of the marks so high?
You say why are they so far off the ground?

You think it has to do with crazy.
It's crazy to go up so high.
Just to make a mark.
So let's do it.
That's wrong.
They are not up high.
Get that idea out of your head.
I could teach you in a minute how that mark was put.
It didn't have nothing to do with last one down.
It didn't have nothing to do with falling.
Where it is is what it means.
You got to think about what it means.
It doesn't have nothing to do with falling.
Nobody ever fell making one of those marks.
Are you crazy?
Look at the marks right next to the ground.
You think that cowards made them?
And the other ones made the others?
You get any help from that?
First off, where it is is the main meaning.
Where it is from where you see it is the main meaning.
First off, you have to learn where to see it from.
After you learn that, then comes the meaning.
Line of sight after you learn to walk a
Straight line. Don't expect to learn that
Part. You're too old.
Maybe you can learn to figure out where to see it from.
Maybe not.
But the line of sight part you will never understand.
I can tell that from the rock piling shit.
You will never learn to walk a straight line.
You are too old.
I park by the side of the road to think.
Here comes Clint.
Sleepin' it off, huh, Red?
No, Officer, I was just looking at marks.
Nice time of the day, don't you agree?
Look at that light.
When you see that light, it's time to read.
That's why I'm parked by the side of the road.
Red, we been through this shit before.
Get outta that cab and walk a straight line.
Officer, I could walk around the world and meet you here.
I could meet you here and not miss it by ten feet.
You wait here, I'll be right back.

OK, Red, gimme the keys and get in the car.
You're gonna sleep this one off on concrete.
After this a few times you go crazy, y'know.
Outside has to satisfy inside, sleep it off on concrete.
I seen truck drivers come into the jail at night,
Pale as a ghost. Jesus, Clint, you can't believe it.
Yeah, I can, I know what you're gonna say.
One of them was sleeping right on the road, right?
You couldn't stop. Nobody blames you.
Just fill out this form. Have a good drink.
I'll send out a couple of prisoners to wash the truck.
As though
As though in one long lesson
As though in an uninterrupted series
As though a drama of the state of mind that
Makes a straight line the bearings are not such that
I have experienced before I must
Forsake the notion of bearings even though
They are at work as though almost tangible
A foreign language spoken without compromise
Spoken by a person innocent for whom no
Language is foreign that idea is unknown
As though there were a universal language
What's so hard about that?
One language that everybody knows.
Find it in yourself pay attention to yourself.
Act only in self interest.
Practice on the language everybody knows.
Make any noise you want in private.
Practice the universal language.
Want to be a poet in the universal language.
Nobody is around make any noise you want.
Speak the universal language.
Learn to walk a straight line.
Check your weapons at the door.

ACT III – The Coyote

After weeks of this stuff, I, Don first class
Citizen, who, in first classness, never thought of
To Not Curse. Who would Curse? What is cursing?
Class to know not that you're not bad,
Started cursing. This discovery that,
As the man said, it's the tune,
Not the words, came as a strange relief.
A kind of speeding up where before
There had been caution, now there's wild abandon.
Holy Jesus, Jesus Christ,
Whose blood was shed that we should
Be absolved of all Sin, be redeemed from
Hell, is on my lips in almost every sentence.
A simple advertisement in the newspaper,
Buried in the Personals, but obviously for me:
Higher Than Eagles He Wanted to Learn to Fly.
I, Don, Jr., Secret Scientist of
The Occult took it at face value:
The Message I Had Been Waiting For.
I am but one among many existing outside
Of the Establishment of Science, but definitely
In the Business. We are Inventors.
Money is no problem. No Faculty Meetings.
We just provide what people need. Period.
An Ideal Existence, of a sort.
Our attitudes on government vary with the weather.
I drifted, over a period of years,
From material comforts and what they mean,
To a different interest. More avant-garde
No more aluminum siding. No more linoleum.
I got interested in things of the spirit.
"It was my intention, when this work was
Begun, to make an illustrated tract, so to
Speak. The Difference between etcetera."
I'm sorry for this short biography,
But I wanted you to know who I am.
So, there has been a gradual deepening in me.
Projects have become more long range.
I read more and I read better.
Then, I got interested in looking-reading,
Thinking – you know how you think at night, just
Before the light goes off – thinking about,
For instance, the possibility of the Secret Message.

We live in a constant state of premonition, of course.
Personally, I always knew this. Everybody does.
Officially, it's treated like a well-kept secret.
Nobody cares why, and for good reason.
It's too deep, so facetious serves:
Everybody has their own. The one I like is:
Try to sell a publisher the idea of a book
Called Famous Premonitions, and he would say,
That's a title like I Pissed In the Ocean.
Big deal and nobody buys the book.
The guy that married Bobby Fisher's sister
Taught me this. Talk about fertile women:
She taught Bobby Fisher how to play chess,
So, she probably taught this guy the idea.
So, it's probably hers, but never mind.
The idea is that if we are to trust mathematics,
Which is among the best we have as an alternative
To thought, we have to trust it, even when it
Comes up with something that requires thought.
To wit, mathematics says that both sides of
The equation have to equate, that's the answer.
We are taught by mathematics that an Event (!)
Has to have something out in front in the same
Shape as the consequences. So, you can read it,
The Event (!), in either way. The problem is that
Since we had to give up thinking as too
Time Consuming and haven't yet got hold
Of the short cuts (e.g., Time
Savers In Thought) the confirmation of the
Fact that the equation works always mostly
Comes in another language, and languages don't
Always match. For instance, since the proof is
Mathematical, which is not spoken, the
Confirmation, say it's anecdotal, which is
Always spoken, takes too long, so we
Don't believe it, don't take headlines like,
Boy Knew His Grandmother Was About to Die!
Seriously. I think I said that right.
It got so premonitions were the only thing
I thought about. This guy, Bobby Fisher's
Brother-in-law, really put me on the case. I
Dropped everything, then I saw this in the paper:
Higher Than Eagles He Wanted to Learn to Fly,
And I thought that one's for me. I
Grew up with my grandmother, who liked to drink.

So, we had this thing between us, like Everybody
Has with Somebody. We liked to drink together.
We did this for years and years. Get drunk together.
She'd be sixty and I'd be five, and we'd get drunk together.
Then we sort of broke up, when I had to go to school.
To learn not to think, we never really
Picked it up again. I'd stop in for a
Quick one now and then, but y'know.
Anyway, twenty years went by.
I went around the world, etcetera.
I moved back to Headquarters, for reasons that I'll
Never understand. I worked nights at the Post Office.
I had a terrible disease called Tinnitus.
My ears rang so fucking loud I would hallucinate.
I went to the best Ear Doctor in the world.
He said, In seven years you will be deaf:
Totally, except for dog barks and thunder.
Thank God I didn't sleep nights or that night
I wouldn't have slept. Seven years until the test.
Blind people take it smiling. Ain't that something.
But when you lose your hearing, there's a test.
Lot of people can't take it. That's a fact.
They take their life instead. Little Joke.
So, it's not the pathos that I'm worried about.
It's that fucking test. Just seven years.
So, I don't have time for Mama (as we called her.)
Christmas, just to hear the jokes. Maybe New Year's.
So, I'm driving home from work one day –
This is ten-thirty in the morning and
I am listening to Big Ben at ten times
Fast forward in my head, and I think,
I ought to go to visit Mama for a drink.
Quick U-turn, like in the movies. Put the pedal
To the floor. Get there. Urgency.
Run in. Mama, Oh, Jesus!
She is wedged between a cabinet and the stove.
Looks like a rag doll that's been thrown there.
I pick her up. Oh, Mama, are you alive?
And she says, I thought you'd never get here.
That was the second big one. Premonitions!
So, I saw this message in the paper, and I thought:
That's the guy I want to learn from. I called.
Naturally, what I had in mind was different.
I don't remember what it was, but it was different.
Instead, I learn to swear. Fuck, how simple!

It's so mother-fucking simple. You swear.
Instead of talking all the time, you swear.
And since foul language fucks the tempo,
The fucking thing slows down, and you start
Thinking again! Why didn't I think of that?
So, I'm in this training course to learn to swear.
There's a lot of weird phone calls, with swearing,
And I wind up in a motel room near Mexico
With Linda. She thinks I'm crazy.
The fucking cunt thinks I'm crazy, but she goes
Along with it. We've been through a lot together.
It's like Spring-Training in real football.
Nothing personal, but let's forget the star-in-
College shit. Now you're going to learn to
Play Football. Let's try running into things.
First you have to learn to throw your weight
Way out in front. It's got to be ahead of you.
As close to ground as possible. If you
Don't run into something, you fall down.
Like when you run down hill and lose control.
But in practice here and in real football
You will almost always run into something,
Equal and opposite, and the result will
Lift you both up, like continents colliding.
And the stronger will go forward. That's
What you're getting paid to fucking do.
Me and some fucking Indian in a pickup truck,
And he says, what if I don't turn the fucking
Wheel? Linda's probably right. I am too old for
This. Gradually, I get the idea.
Sign up for Premonitions, and I learn to swear.
I remember when I had it in my mouth, finally,
He put two fingers in the corners of my mouth,
With it, and stretched my mouth open.
Then, he pulled my mouth down on it.
He pulled my mouth as if he were
Fitting my mouth to it. He pulled
My head down until it touched the
Back of my throat. I choked.
It made my mouth open as if
There were nothing between my mouth
And my stomach. I felt hollow. Then,
He lifted my head. Then, he pushed it
Down again. I remember it was very
Slow. I got the idea. Gradually.

Remember, I'm still looking for the Man.
Or, the woman, as the case may be.
Going to teach me about Premonitions.
I have this idea to live in real time.
I have this idea to live in pure bliss.
Let's not get into churches and shit like that.
Architecture has its fascinations, but
He gave His blood so that we could
Be Redeemed from Sin. In real time. Jesus.
Fucking governments get in there and want to
Move rocks around. See, I'm learning.
Meantime, twelve stops 'til the man.
Twelve times those fucking Indians leave me
Out there in the desert in a shack alone.
Colder'n a witch's tit, and I don't have shit
To think about. I just swear.
I guess that you would say she had bad
Posture. That's the first thing you
Would have noticed about her. She carried
Her shoulders badly. It was
Almost as if she stooped.
It was ugly actually. And, she wore
Those short dresses that were in style then.
They were well chosen, I suppose, but
Not extraordinary. And she seemed
To be, because that kind of dress
Especially made her look bad, a
Victim of style. She was obviously
Concerned with being attractive. She said,
Where would we have gone? Back to the dormitory?
Boy, that got me. This would go on for an
Hour'r so, and then I'd swear. Holy Jesus.
Holy fucking Jesus. Wake up, Don.
Good money paid to learn about Premonitions,
And you just sit here shivering your ass off,
Making up some goddamn story about the past.
There I was, a little boy of fourteen, first
Job, first bike, standing at the intersection.
What's nearby is a huge semi just
Rolled over where I would've been
Except for the Premonition. Always take a
Book to read. You get tired of jacking off.
Two hours between shifts, so I
Take a book to read. This day I
Forgot the book. Four hundred yards

From home and I remember I forgot
The book. Now, ordinarily,
I would just go on. Either jack off
Or sit near the fountain. But,
Today, I had to go back.
I can feel the feeling even yet.
Ten minutes late for work. The fucking boss is
Screaming at you. I don't give a shit.
I have to go back. Get the book.
So, I'm ten minutes late, exactly.
And ten minutes ago this fucking semi
Jack-knifed and rolled the intersection
Where I would've been just waiting for the light to change.
The driver is OK. He's out.
He's talking to the Sheriff, or to somebody.
I've been through here a hundred times.
There was never no fucking light before.
Then, I see the fucking light, it's turning
Red. There's no way anybody could stop.
But I think I see this kid on a bicycle,
Waiting for the light to change, and he don't
See me. Gonna jump out on that light.
So, I hit the fucking brakes, and it
Jack-knifes. I could've just gone through.
I was clear, except for this fucking
Kid on the bike, except it must've
Been in my mind. I'm not kidding.
I pedal out of there as fast as I can.
Late for work's nothing compared to this.
Stupid as I am I get that idea.
I am the kid on the bike. Except that
I was not there. Just then. I was
Not there because of the fucking book.
That's what I would call a Premonition.
That's why I'm here, looking for the man that's
Going to teach me about Premonitions.
Higher Than Eagles He Wanted to Learn to Fly.
You don't have to be smart to get that.
What I don't know is how to do it. What
I don't know is how to read it as it comes.
I don't know how to read the present.
Finally, I get to the Main Man. After
Weeks at sea, I don't know where I am,
Then weeks in the desert. Time stands still.
Then, finally, I get to the Promised Man.

Wouldn't you know it, he lives in the city?
I don't know what name this city has,
And, frankly, I don't give a shit. We are
In some goddamn city. I don't know where.
Walking down a street to meet the Man.
This is not Des Moines. Don't get me wrong.
This is out west. And down south.
El Dorado. The guides have changed a dozen times.
I never quite get the names straight, but they are
Different, and this one's taking me to the Man.
I am going to get the message. I passed.
Almost. Last minute there is one more –
Hallucination. I think I see Eleanor.
Eleanor is Linda's closest friend.
Linda thinks that I fucked Eleanor.
Linda doesn't get the idea that
Eleanor and I would never fuck.
Once, out of desperation,
She asked me if we could
– This story is hard to interpret –
Do it together I said
I would think about it
Thinking that sometime somewhere
It would just happen simple
I knew that I wouldn't like it
She knew that she wouldn't like it
She knew that we felt the same
People acting in the extreme
Make you sick at your stomach
It's always shocking always
You just can't get over it
That first moment of looking
Pompeii Oh Jesus
Cooked in the act
Then comes the next part
Whatever that is
It leaves the body forever
Wanders in looking forever
Seeking a new soul, oh yeah,
Seeking a new form of outside
Formless and seeking, an audience
Outnumbering thousands to one
Cheering and singing along
Maybe I will be chosen
Maybe I will be needed

That never happens of course
It does it all by itself
It does it right there in front of you
Does it because you are there
Because you are there it is done
Are there and it's done
Otherwise there's no connection
None at all Tom Dick and Harry
None at all, Jane, and
That's what we try to remember
That's what we always forget
Once, out of desperation, then,
She asked me if we could
Do it together I said
Anytime Eleanor honey
She said doodledydoo
I said doodledydoo
Then there was that weird smile
Boy, that was something to share
Wish I could see that again
Just one more time to remind me
Anyway she went ahead by herself
She was a visitor (pause)
Sorry, I got ahead of myself.
Actually, I got behind.
Weeks at sea and weeks in the desert.
And I still have this goddamn problem.
I fall out of touch. Y'know what I mean? She's sitting
At a table in the shade at a cheap cafe.
Like in some goddamn Banana Mystery.
Graham Greene eats shit. Money made from murder.
Go to this cafe across the street from
My apartment building. I'll call you on the phone there
When I know that it's about to happen. Then, you
Sit there with the phone in your hand like
You are talking to your agent back in Hollywood
And you describe everybody that goes in.
Here's the code. Etcetera. Etcetera.
There won't be time for adjectives.
I will know which one it is that's come for me.
If I don't get out of this one, Love, Your Brother.
I have this problem with imagination.
It just touches down without warning.
Like tornados in the high Midwest.
You don't see the fucker coming.

It's not like Kansas or Nebraska.
Fuckin' kids out there dressed like Sheriffs.
Driving around with radios in cars,
They're all excited. Why not? Acts of God.
Well, Wilber, it took away the Kopple Farm.
This is Morgan County. Ten-four, out.
Anyway, it's not like that. I don't track it.
It just pops in, uninvited. You hear the roar.
Next thing you know the barn is gone.
That's the problem with my imagination.
Here today. Gone tomorrow. Where the fuck was I?
Oh, Yeah. Going to meet the Promised Man.
Almost cured. I think I see Eleanor.
Linda thinks I fucked Eleanor. Oh, God.
If she only knew. Well, here we are,
Professor. I am where I wanted to be.
Higher Than Eagles He Wanted to Learn to Fly.
Am I ready? Do I have it in me? Already
I can hear the cursing from somewhere inside.
I have gotten to the big leagues of words.
I wonder if I can take it on the short hop
Behind me and then turn and jump and throw
And get the guy at first. Roars from the crowd.
Back in the dugout one of the guys says,
Dumb Shit, you saved him two steps.
Wake the fuck up. This game's played for money.
This part gets to be a blur.
In Hollywood they'd make it look like Casablanca.
Unfortunately, this is the New World, I think.
This fucker's never heard of Sydney Greenstreet.
He looks sideways when he talks. My knees are shaking.
This guy's been up against these mountains for a
Million years. He's not civilized.
You heard me. He's not civilized.
He's been run over by the people that move
Rocks. He's been run over by the Church.
They came out of the sunrise in white ships
Waving a white flag and singing Jesus Saves.
Then when they got that fucking costume off
They started killing all the kids. Welcome.
This is the New World. Welcome to it.
Take home what you can. Take home El Dorado.
Take home an Indian, if you want one.
We got a lot to spare. Why'd'n't you go, Brother.
You can get to meet the Queen of Spain.

She looks like a runt, but she's a Queen.
Welcome to the Old World, Indian.
After you get washed up, w'c'n have dinner.
You can tell some stories nobody believes.
Then, you can sleep in the basement.
So, this guy is permanently pissed off.
He is born that way, and it won't change.
He's got a lot to say, if I could understand him.
Mostly sounds like curse words, blasphemy.
Strangely, it matches (finally) the template
In the ear. Notice when you shut them up real tight,
And this is years after Big Ben stopped ringing.
(I'll tell you how to stop the ringing later.)
You can hear the talking, but you can't
Understand the words. That's what I mean by template.
This kind of talking fits the template
Exactly. It exactly fits.
So, at least I'm home.
What comes next is harder to put in words.
I think I have given the wrong impression.
Cursing in the Old World comes in loudness.
Loud means bad. Check it out in music.
But there are other systems, obviously.
It's not too clear, and I don't get it, yet.
There is cursing and there is silence.
And there is nothing in between.
When the guys get into that kind of cursing,
Silence as huge as the Andes,
Silence as huge as the Amazon,
It's too fucking scary to try to understand.
George C. Scott, the General, wants to
See you, Private Don, Jr., and he's mad.
Private Asshole, I got this letter right
In my hand. Let me read it to you.
Dear General, these are trying times, as
We all know. And, God knows, you must
Know better than any of us mortals, etcetera.
Vaguely, I remember a sentence about rabbits.
But maybe I'm getting ahead of myself again.
I, Private Don, Jr., standing at attention,
And he is reading this great letter to me.
It's a letter to him from my wife and friends.
They have made this stupid, stoney fucker
Do a Command Performance, right in his office.
Now, that's Communications-Art, Oh, Boy!

I can remember the last line clearly:
And so the worry grows. Yours Sincerely,
M for Music, B for Betty Boop's Revenge,
S, incubated (five pounds four ounces),
Smiling, Lyrics by Chrysostomos,
Who taught me everything I know (almost).
Private, if I ever get another one like this, I'll
Boil your fucking skin off. Yes, Sir. I'd deserve it.
That's competition. And I'm out here all by myself
Trying to learn swearing fucking fast as
I can. I am really trying. I promise.
I came here on my research project.
Research on living completely in the present.
And you have caught me fast asleep.
I thought I was clear awake. Aw, fuck.
And I was dead asleep. And so the worry grows.
Indeed, boil my skin off. Fuck it.
I mean, what am I doing here? We had
Mountains at home, but this is crazy.
Those fucking Andes go where you can't breathe.
You can paddle on the Amazon for weeks
And never see either side. A fucking ocean,
Tipped toward the Equator. Let me outta here.
Tough Shit, Private. This is a permanent assignment.
You signed up. God Have Mercy On Your Soul.
This guy in front of me is cool as a cucumber.
I don't mean General Scott. He's gone.
We're back to where we got to after Eleanor.
I am about to get the Message.
This is what I came for. Still, I'm surprised.
I'm prepared for one on one. Y'know,
You talk and I listen, just like at home.
Instead, they talk all at the same time.
Those fuckers talk all at the same time,
And what happens of course is that slowedownness
Gets lost as a reason to get together,
And fastness gets in there, just like
The idea of the Devil in the Church,
And everything starts flying then.
But remember this is all in almost silence.
There is a lot of humming and guys talking real fast.
I have got to the Man, and this is the way it's done.
This is the way Premonitions come.
The reason you can't understand them is that
You are too stupid! Or, you are badly trained.

Depending on how you think about Good Breeding.
Premonitions are like tornados.
The other Acts of God are important, God knows.
But at least we have a little warning.
But at least you have a little time to get out.
At least you have a little time for humility.
At least you have a little time for prayer.
But tornados are like jokes. Little joke.
It goes by fast. It happens once. No
Explanation, and it's funny, whether
You get it or not. A New World Joke.
The way to stop your ears from ringing is simple.
Take this prescription to your doctor, and he'll just laugh.
Haw, Haw, isn't fiction wonderful. Fuck him.
He told me I'd be totally deaf in seven years.
He picked seven. It's so Biblical. Especially
When you don't know shit. I don't hold grudges, though.
It's just that if it weren't for Premonitions, I could've
Done something silly. With Eleanor. I said,
You can try anything. I'm not afraid. I mean,
I'm not afraid of anything except deafness.
I don't know if I can pass the test. What can I do?
He said, I'd learn lip-reading, if I were you.
One: You've got to sleep a lot.
Tinnitus and Sleeplessness are Pals.
Two: Write your own words. It's your song.
Three: Go back to sleep. Y'know what I mean?
Four: Stop eating meat. Drink water.
Five: Go back to sleep. Y'know what I mean?
At a certain point you have to blast it out.
Get some heavy-duty earphones. Ninety deeBee.
Play that music like there's no tomorrow.
Never stop. Don't take advice. Just blast the
Fucker out. That'll do it. You'll see.
Seven years and you're cured. A miracle.

ACT IV – Eagle Tearing Hearts Out of Chests

Probably none of them could get indicted for price-fixing
That old-fashioned way now there are just
Newer forms of collusion and if
You're not in the business you don't see 'em or
How they work but the machinery is the same
The ones that have the most draw a line and if
You're below that line it's just too dangerous to stay
In the game one mistake one piece of bad luck and
You're wiped out now when the nation needs something like
Food the line goes down and people are
Encouraged to get into the game I mean
People who weren't in the game before people are
Encouraged to get in the business and the way they are
Encouraged is through all kinds of money lending
Outright guarantees for what is being produced
And other kinds of support that give the feeling that
The whole industry is working together toward a goal
Which is to produce as much as possible and
Share what comes from that work according to how
Much you have been able to put in how long you've
Been in and how much of you there is but
At a certain point it always happens the ones that
Have the most decide that they can run the whole deal
By themselves and so therefore get all the money
The only sharing will be between
The guys that have the most and
I don't mean that they are known to be
Generous even about that and that's when the wars
B'tween the families start but in the meantime or
At that point there is a drastic change in ways
The business of the industry works that's what I mean by
Draw a line those lines don't just evolve
That idea is bullshit and everybody knows it
At a certain point a certain number of them known to
Each other by reputation other ways decide to
Draw a line and they draw the fucker overnight almost
They know that drawing lines is going to mean war
Between them all but what the hell war is fun and
B'sides it gets rid of all this complexity of
Thinking that goes with the idea of a collective
Purpose I mean it simplifies life war does
And baby when that line is drawn I mean
You wake up one morning and there it is the longer

You try to hold on the more suffering you are
Going to get just because the whole idea
Of the line is just to get you the fuck out
Of the game and everybody who was in on the
Line drawing has got one thing they agree on
Which is to get you the fuck out of the game an'
So first thing you've got to realize is that . . .
It's you against a lot of guys every one of which's
More'n you or you wouldn't be in the situation to
Begin with that's what the silly fucker meant by
If you have to ask you can't afford one I always
Thought we ought to have that carved into that stupid
Mountain with the four guys heads right across the whole deal
If it was up to me I'd carve it right across the fucking faces
But that would universally be thought of as rash
Artistically which is a kind of crime the way
We see art so if you wanted to stay
Out of jail and just be remembered as a wise man
You would carve it down below
Like a kind of motto for us all
If you have to ask you can't afford one
Now you've got to understand that this is just one
Early stage in the life cycle of the industry
At the even earlier stage when you want to
Get as many people involved as is needed
To make things work the exact opposite is true
Whatever you need just ask we are all in this together
We all need the same things in common and those things
Can be had if we think about it in the long run
You can't start a farm without land and you can't
Buy seeds without money and you can't get water
To the plants without paying people to get water
To the plants and you can't harvest what is grown without
Tools and paying people for the work and we all know that
This is God's Earth and it's due solely to the Grace of
God that all things grow and come to be an'
What we try to do the best we can is take advantage
Of the precious little time that we have here together
Y'know to make life a little easier for all people
So whatever you need just ask that gets 'em
Every time they get this strange look in their eyes
A religious look I mean holy shit why didn't I
Think of that all we've got to do is work together
And everybody will have if not as much as
They need as much as anybody

Else has and all those bad
Feelings will just go away and
We will all smile at each other at what
We have accomplished together sign me up
Have you ever thought about why your uncle who was
So smart about everything and who was so admired
In the town and was a great success at being
A human being wasn't President naw shit no
You thought about stupid things like how does
The plow overcome the friction of the earth nobody
Knows the answer to that except in words which
Are used everyplace except when you are behind the
Plow and it is actually most people on earth
Now don't want to ride in airplanes because you
Can't understand how it can fly you can believe
The words when somebody tells you on the ground but
You can't get nobody to talk their way through
What's going on when the plane is up there it's
Like music or plowing or like talking itself
When you are doing it you can't think about
How you do it or it just stops 'n' you can see this
In kids when they are little everything is in a
Perceptual reality which we share in common but
We don't want them to stay that way otherwise we
Would all be as children and nobody would know that
There is any other purpose except the collective one
So we have to train 'em in as many word routines
As we can jam into them before
The chemistry changes and they start putting those
Routines together in some haphazard fucking
Fashion that will give them maybe what is called a
Personality when you have done as much as you can
You have given them what I would call a destiny
Man is created in the image of God y'know
That's the way it's said but what it means
If you say it in a different way is man and woman
Doesn't know stuffed shit about God and so
If you don't know stuffed shit about something
In particular you are like you are trying to
Think about God knowing something and get
God to answer in some way and we all know that
If somebody created any way at all can't answer
Any question at all then they don't know shit about
Anything it is so fucking simple there is
A potential sucker born every minute except in China

Where the average is about every half minute and
So the reason that your uncle's not President is the simple
Fucking reason that nobody ever told him to be President
You could teach a fucking baboon to be President
It's done all the time and what we can't get past is the
Memory of the time when we were as children and
There was something that we shared in common
And everything was just great the sun shined the grass grew
The dogs barked and so forth and we keep trying
To put words together in a new way so as
To keep that change of chemistry as subtle
In its effect as gradual as imperceptible as
Drawn out as possible even up to ideally the
Moment of our death I mean who the fuck cares
That a plane will fly or that a plow will
Turn over earth and who the fuck cares if you
Get to see a picture of a baboon on the moon nobody
That's the answer in the strength of life most people
Pretend they care mainly because the sun comes up
The mind gets overheated everybody gets confused
Everybody's drunk on some goddamn thing or other
Just wanders around trying to make sense of things
Which is the same as saying trying to remember
Word patterns that you learned before you knew you knew them
Because they are buried so deep you feel that
They must have a meaning but at the start of life
And at the end of life and a lot of times in the
Middle of the night when the muscles are resting from
Rehearsing and reshuffling all those patterns
Nobody gives a fuck that a plane will fly big fucking
Deal or that a plow will turn over earth big deal
Or that you can see a picture of a baboon on the moon
The words don't have no meaning they are just a uniform
You put on to get you in a certain line of work
They don't have no fucking meaning at all we're created
In the image of the state of confusion of thinking
About something that does not have no fucking meaning because
No arrangement of the words whatever is ever going to make it work
It's funny that it's so much in what you do to give the Sign
D'y'know what I mean everybody just waiting it out
Just scared shit then every once in a while
Everybody gets the idea all together and they see the
Sign in somebody and they wait they are just waiting to
See if there is a breakthrough but usually the
Guy dies or else we kill him probably the same thing

Then everybody raises the fist to God and says
This is shit I mean everybody gets mad because
They thought there was going to be a
Breakthrough in the relationship among things everybody
Says together listen Asshole this is getting
Tiresome we cooperate you don't cooperate the
Fucking Pope calls a meeting because there are
Too many Polish Jokes people say to each other
On the sly how can you tell for sure
When lawyers are lying and the answer is
You can tell it because their lips are moving
Everybody God is mad because You
Didn't get the idea didn't get it You
Didn't get the idea that every time one of
Us dies You die in us it's start again from
Scratch no wonder everything's so fucked up
Because nothing in us is taking care of things
When people raise the fist to God
It means they're mad it means the whole
Fucking thing's got screwed up one more time.
I am dumbstruck.
I came all this way for this?
What about the magic and the Premonitions?
This guy talks just like I do. Could be me.
He talks just like everybody else talks just before they wake up.
He's getting close to stream of consciousness.
Too much Carlos, Carl said.
He laughs.
You can always tell when they've got you.
Their vocabulary takes over yours.
It starts as an idea.
Hypothesis among Scientists,
Pretending they speak Greek.
Watching shadows move and that stuff.
Ironical about the Inquisition.
The Inquisitors knew what they were up to.
Not exactly friendly neighbors, but then.
They saw it in the language.
Sit around and watch the shadows move.
Say Eureka when it's proven.
Meanwhile the words change
On the way to Eureka (little joke.)
Sunset on the left.
New World on the right.
Sixty miles an hour.

Percentages of lawlessness allowed.
A kind of daydreaming.
While the words change their meaning
In the shadows, so to speak.
First thing you know, it's theory.
Right 'til proven wrong, in other words.
Magic to the Inquisitors.
Not exactly friendly neighbors,
But they saw it coming.
The words change their meaning,
And you're hooked.
Too much Carlos, Carl said.
Last time it was Viennese.
Sugar, chocolate, heavy cream, raw meat,
Cocaine, caffeine and nicotine
Eventually produced a theory
To explain why we don't sleep well.
Holy Jesus, everybody say.
Eat all that shit. No wonder you don't sleep.
No, it's in the words, they said.
The reason you don't sleep is in the words.
OK, if you say so, Doctor.
Looks like an industry to me,
But you're the boss. I read it all
While the Doctor thought that I was going deaf.
I had to agree with the Inquisitors.
Else, I would be deaf by now for sure.
But Carlos got me dead asleep.
Ralph Waldo Emerson as Low-Rider.
Carl just laughs. He got you.
Except for TV, he would've gotten everybody.
You didn't have TV, so he got you.
It could've been another Christianity.
It just came fifty years too late.
No wonder you've got visitors.
It follows you home at night all right.
It stalks around the bedroom, bumping into furniture.
It makes the chills go up and down your spine.
You should've listened to the Inquisitor.
Gimme that ol' time religion.
Now you've really got a problem.
You can't tell dreams from waking.
You think they think you've reached Azteca.
You think you just got a lecture.
Blasphemy and scary words to teach you something.

Just a little research, Linda. I'll be right back.
And that was just the Intro.
Now comes the Main One.
Now you're gonna get it.
You're gonna say, I came all that way for this?
This Is All There Is? is quite a question.
Lot of people gone down asking that question.
This is all there is?
Higher Than Eagles He Wanted to Learn to Fly.
Sign me up. I'll be right back, Linda.
Three lectures from the underground.
The Main One still to come.
Just time enough until the sky gets light.
To learn how to persuade.
To learn that to not have is suffering.
To learn materialism as transcendent.
If you've got to ask, you can't afford one.
If you've got to ask, you know the answer.
Finally, the singular man appears.
This is what I came for.
Ordinariness in the extreme is indescribable.
I wonder how old this guy is.
I like the kids, too.
It's always nice to see kids in training.
The soft eyes and the guns.
I've seen these kids before.
They gather silence.
Here it comes.
Hope I understand.
In order that the people can get down from the trees, they need a plan.
In order to have a plan, they need a version, a performance.
My mind is full of doubt.
They need agriculture.
To have the idea of agriculture, they need the idea of flatness.
To have the idea of flatness, they need
The idea of containment, the idea of gravity.
If your mind can understand the idea of the room,
The city, it's too late for you.
People who make cities are doomed to moving rocks through struggle.
Rocks do not get up and dance around for people who make cities.
For people who make cities rocks appear to be dead.
The idea of agriculture is not to feed the people.
The idea of agriculture is improvement.
Flatness, as a solution to the
Problem of gravity, confused with the idea

Of feeding the people, is something we have to live with.
Our motto is: In Entertainment,
What Goes Up,
Must Come Down.
The rocks
Have stopped dancing.
But, let's go on.
Later, there will be time enough to talk about
Agriculture, and to try to clear things up.
Let's go on to the message.
The message is:
They Are Armed.
It was inevitable.
I mean, it was inevitable that it should spread among us
To the children. It was inevitable, one,
That it will be seen, and two, that it will spread.
It will spread until we recognize it in
The babies. It is the idea we live with.
Note: It is the flow, not the water.
It is agriculture.
It is flatness, gravity, containment,
The needs of the people.
And the idea of the beyond.
We have given ourselves the question of
The idea of the beyond.
Among high horizons, signifying the idea
Of the beyond, there are, for instance:
The City, the Indians Along the Ridge, the Gargoyles,
Etcetera. The guardians of Up.
The guardians of Up are always lifeless.
Made of stone.
They are known to disapprove.
The guardians of Up, using agriculture as a without which,
Have established in us a fundamental rule:
To Go Around.
That is, to skirt.
We are enjoined to skirt by the children,
Who are armed. They are
Our protectors. They protect us
From ourselves.
There was a blinding whiteness that covered everything.
It was all I could do just to stay awake.
I was beyond thoughts of family and home.
It had become biological.
Me against the whiteness.

The path had disappeared.
How could I trust, then, that I would skirt?
How could I trust, then, that I would not trespass?
Me against the children.
Look at this bank and at the people in it.
Look closely.
The contours of the land are the contours
Of my little mind. The straight paths are gone.
The Bible Camps, the Trailer Camps, the Army Camps
Are mere figures of speech,
Habits to conceal from us the true nature of geometry,
Which is model agriculture.
The questions of geometry are answered in agriculture,
And in the bank.
There is no excuse that anyone can see for banks.
Why have something that only makes things harder?
The bank is not a safe place,
If you have things of value.
The bank is not a camp.
The bank is geometry, a lesson.
The bank is agriculture, our plan.
We need a place to feel the feelings we feel
In the bank. Better there than at home.
For one, you feel so ill-kempt there.
Two, it owns the water.
Three, there is the outward thrust of the
Ostentatious space, a field unplanted.
And the corners.
There is one entrance only.
The laws of fire do not apply to banks.
Among the different degrees of deadness found in rocks,
Deadeast are the rocks from which we build our banks.
A vibrant bank is no bank at all.
There is no wind in the bank.
Nor speed.
Nor velocity.
There is only alignment.
What could be simpler? Thank you.