



*Two years earlier how I loathed* and feared the prospect of driving cab. *It's the lowest job on earth. You don't even consider it unless you are desperate. It's the very last resort, lower than selling Fuller Brushes, lower than selling encyclopedias, lower than a telegraph messenger,* I told myself. I remember that I never really intended to take the job. I kept seeing the add in the Oakland Tribune however. I kept reading Our drivers average over two hundred dollars a week. Back in 1969 that wasn't bad money. You could get by on a couple hundred dollars a week. I kept putting it off, though. I told myself that I'd be out on the streets a couple weeks at the most, that a teaching job was sure to come through any day now. So, I kept putting it off. Putting it off and thinking about the dark streets of Oakland, remembering the T.V. news up in Willows, news about Black Panthers, rape and murder, hold ups and muggings, rioting and looting, streets not safe anymore even in broad daylight. I put it off until I ran out of excuses, until we were down to our last fifty bucks in the bank with only Anne's check from the Credit Union coming in.

*Jus' finding the place must knock out half the applicants,* I told myself when I finally slipped under the freeway overpass and doubled back a block above the one-way street. I parked behind the cyclone fence and peeked into the lot full of cabs. *There must be a hundred of them,* I told myself. I had just finished a hamburger and coffee at the Doggie Dinner down on San Pablo. I had been turned down for a job at the Pepsi Cola Company. I had convinced myself not to go back to American Rubber where I worked nights while earning my degree. I had been laid off at the cannery for over a week. *I know it's a waste of time putting in an application. A teaching job's bound to come up in the next couple days,* I told myself as I stepped my way between holes in the sidewalk.

At the concrete block building, I rang a bell and waited for a buzzer to unlock the door. Inside, were doors and hallways, dark wood and dirty glass and four middle-aged men with coffee cups in their hands. Under an arrow that said Employment! Straight ahead, I saw an open door on which I read Personnel Office backwards through the glass. I peeked inside and saw two huge cluttered empty desks. Three boys at a side counter were filling out applications. Before I could ask them where they got them, a pimply-faced twenty-year-old kid walked into the room with a coke in his hand. He waved me to the first desk, and gave me a one-sheet application. Fill it out over there; he said pointing to the counter. There was no room at the counter for another body. I stood in front of the desk and watched the kid walk to the second desk and take a brown bag from a desk drawer. I reached for my shirt pocket and realized that I didn't have a pen.

I left my pen in the car, I told the kid.

He gave me a look that said, You don't own a fucking pen, you asshole, and got up from his desk.

*Fuck you, cock sucker*, I say to myself eyeing the textbook on his desk. *I already finished five years 'a college. You ain't no better'n me....* I take the pen he offers and thank him. The very thought of filling out the application fills me with dread. I look at the empty lines and wipe my sweaty hands on my good dress pants.

One of the bodies leaves the counter and walks toward me. I'm gonna take this home and bring it back tomorrow. There's some information on here I got to look up, he tells the college kid. The kid nods his head and bites into his bologna sandwich. I wonder if I shouldn't take my application home also as I squeeze into the vacated spot at the counter. I print my last name first and tell myself I might as well get I over with. When I get to the place that says list all employment for the past ten years, I tell myself, *Well, at least I don't have to go back East no more.* A heavy-set man in his late forties walks in with middle-aged man in a black and red sweater and bow tie following him. The first man closes the door and sits down behind his desk. I glance at his heavy-set body, his deep red face, his wrinkled suit, his tie. A sign on his desk says Tex in big gold letters. *He's the boss*, I tell myself. The kid in back hangs up the phone. The man in the sweater stands head down in front of Tex's desk. Accusations and excuses fly between them. I hear them talk about company policy and falsifying waybills as I try to remember if Limpkey is spelled with an i or an e. The guy next to me takes the place of the chastised driver. I listen to him answer questions while I try to remember my foreman's name at American Rubber.

When I finish my application, Tex is interviewing the next applicant. I sit down in a folding chair in the corner and look over my hastily scrawled application. *I should'a taken it home*, I tell myself. Then I think of the dozens of applications that I filled out for teaching jobs in the past two years. *This one is nothing. What am I worried about? What's wrong wid me?* I ask myself.

So you're a school teacher! Tex says as he looks up from my application. I nod my head yes, and watch his eyes go back to the paper. He scans a few more lines. Well, he tells me, you'll find a lot of your friends on the second shift.

I'm jus' substituting right now. But, I should be landing a regular job any day, now, I tell Tex.

Lots of teachers driving after five o'clock. Times are tough. Jobs are hard to come by. When I find myself in here taking applications all day long I know something's wrong. Taxes. Government interference in everything a man tries to do. People not willing to take care of themselves. He pauses and looks me straight in the eye for a moment. Is there anything you didn't put on your application that should be on it?

Well, I did lose my driver's license once. But, dat was over ten years ago. Drunk driving charge, I say biting my tongue.

Do you drink every day? Tex asks.

I hesitate a second as I watch Tex scrawl a line on my application. I wasn't even twenty-one when that happened. I learned my lesson. You know, the only drinking I do now is maybe a glass of wine with dinner, or a beer when it's hot....

Do you use dope?

Naw, I don't mess wid dat.

Well, you might not believe it, but some old boys think they can fool me. Been on this job too long. I can always tell when a man is lying. They sometimes wonder how I can know. When you've been on a job some thirty years, it's second nature. He looks up and smiles at me. I return his smile. He tells me about his early years as a driver in Dallas. How he worked his way up to manager. How he brought the company out of the red and made it a going concern. How he came here ten years ago, put ten times as many cabs on the street. We'd do even better if those idiots in San Francisco would just keep their nose out'a my business, he tells me.

He explains that he doesn't stay behind the desk. That he still takes a cab out every now and then. He knows every trick there is to high flagging; every way there is to dead head. And some old boys still think they can fool him with a doctored waybill. He tells me he never drove a night when he didn't make book if he followed all the rules. The rules are set up to make a driver money. When you're making money, so are we. The radio is the key, taking radio orders, he tells me and explains how it works.

I'm only listening with half an ear, though. In my mind, I know this is all a waste of time. I know my last interview was a really good one. I know they'll be calling me in a day or two. *Maybe they called already. I could be teaching tomorrow*, I tell myself as I watch Tex pull several forms from a drawer.

We don't allow no heavy drinkers, or dope addicts. Helps a lot if you can read and write, too, he says and shows me the first set of forms. He explains that they are for police clearance. I'm to take one to the Oakland Police and the other to Berkeley. Before you go you get two sets of pictures. One for each department, he says and asks me what size hat I wear.

I'm not sure. Six and seven-eighths, I think.

He yells for the kid to get me a hat, and explains that I have to have my picture taken with the hat on. They'll issue a temporary right away. You can start work tomorrow if you get your forms filled, he tells me. The third form is for the physical. You don't have to pay for the physical. We take care of that, he explains and gives me directions to their doctor in San Francisco.

I listen to a description of an incident that happened when Tex was still in Dallas, and take the closest hat to my size that the kid can find. The kid tells me there is a mirror outside. I can change it if it don't fit. I figure I'll never have to wear it and ease my way out.

On the way to my car, I recall how Alex had put in an application to drive cab when he was just starting back to school. He even went out on the one-day training session. He took a job at a root beer stand instead. More steady money, he told me.

*I won't even go on the training run. Dis is all a game to me. Jus' a way to keep Anne off my back,* I tell myself and think of Anne's words from a week ago.

What are you going to do when you get laid off at Hunt's? We still have to eat you know. The rent has to be paid. You haven't even put in your application to sub. Who's going to pay the bills while you sit around and wait for someone to hand you a job?

When I get home, there's no calls or letters waiting. I show the forms to Anne and try on my hat. A wave of shame and humiliation sweeps over me. In the kitchen, I ask, Anybody need a cab? We laugh and talk about the job at Moraga. When I tell Anne I have to cash a check at the Co-Op tomorrow, she tells me I can't. We're overdrawn, already! she says. I tell her I can pick up my two-day check from Hunt's on Thursday. The Co-Op check won't go through before then.

Next morning, there are still no calls. I go through the motions. Cross the Bay Bridge and catch the sights on Ninth Street. Eyeing the other patients in doctor's waiting room, I'm wondering if there is anything wrong with me. A young hip looking intern gives me a quick exam and declares me fit for work. *Fit, but not willing,* I tell myself and wonder why my teaching job hasn't come through.

Back in Oakland, I park in front of the brand new police station, walk through the glass doors and ask for directions. The blue clad man in front of the permit desk hands me four sets of forms and sends me to another office. Another blue clad man feeds my name into the computer. The computer comes back with a warrant for my arrest. Instead of putting the handcuffs on me, the officer explains that it's a parking ticket from Cal-State-Hayward. It can't be. I always paid my parking tickets on time, I tell him, but vaguely remember my very last ticket a few days after graduation when I was still working as a graduate reader. *Didn't I tell myself that I'd be splitting for the junior college job in Michigan? The computer is probably right,* I tell myself. The police officer tells me that I'll have to pay the fifteen-dollar fine before he can give me clearance for the permit. I think I did pay that ticket. Could the computer be wrong? I ask.

You'll have to clear that up with Hayward. You can arrange for a court appearance to plead innocent if you want. We can't do nuthin about that here, he tells me.

I'm surprised that he lets me away from the desk with just a promise to check it out in Hayward. I figure the ticket cinches it, *No way I'm gonna pay out fifteen dollars to get a job that won't last more'n a couple days,* I tell myself. But, when I get home, there are still no messages. Next morning, no phone calls. I drive to Hayward to pick up my final check from Hunt's. It's nine dollars less than I expected. I see that they took out union dues for the one day I worked in October. At the Hayward City Court, the clerk tells me I'll have to wait fifteen days for a court appearance. I pay the fine and wonder how we'll eat next week. I get pictures at the Fun Center in Hayward and return to Oakland. In the final processing room they tell me I have to have three sets of references from people who have known me for at least ten years. I drive to San Leandro and have Liz fill out one set. In San Ramon, Sara fills out another set. I try to think of someone else that I've known for several years. I can think of no one else in the Bay Area. When I get home, the girl up front fills out the third form. When she checks the part where it says she's known me for ten years, she tells me it almost seems like that long. I think of the three months that we've been in Walnut Creek waiting for a teaching job. I think of the trip back East, and our decision to return to California. I think of how I quit my teaching job in Willows just five months ago. And I tell myself, *She's right. It has been a long summer.*

In Berkeley, the clearance goes a little faster. A girl feeds my name and numbers into the computer. While we wait for results we chat about how the city's grown in the past ten years. A plain clothed detective interviews me and signs my clearance. They don't ask for any references. I come back in an hour and find that the police chief has signed my temporary permit. I'm ready to go to work!

But, still I'm certain of a last minute reprieve. Just as I'm getting ready to report for duty, I get a vacancy notice. It's a high school history position. I already have an application filed with the district. We set up an appointment for the next day. At the interview, they like what they see and tell me so. The assistant superintendent takes me to the school. We talk to the principal, talk to the head of the history department, talk with the head of the P.E. department. Everyone agrees that I'm perfect for the vacancy. I have taken just the right college courses, just enough previous experience. The P.E. man is just a little hesitant. I could learn a lot as an assistant tennis coach, but if I've never played any tennis.... However, I'm sure the others will over rule him. They will let me know by the end of the week.

On Thursday, I go in for the one-day training session just for the experience of it. Tex introduces me to an old timer named Casey, He's a regular high booker. You listen good to him and you'll do all right here, Tex tells me. I gulp at the knot in my tie and nod my head up and down. Casey tells Tex that I look like I'll be able to handle it and points me toward the door. Be sure you buy the ole boy some lunch. He looks like he could use some fattening up, Tex yells after us.

In the front seat of Casey's cab I feel the cold leather against my body. I tug at my tie and loosen it a little. I rub sweaty palms on my good dress pants and smooth out a wrinkle. My temples throb against the too tight fitting cap. Taking it off, I run a hand through my hair, and watch Casey lay his hat on the dashboard. I figure I'll do the same. Ye gotta wear de hat all de time ye're in the cab. Otherwise, dey get me for high-flagging, he tells me. I return my hat, and listen to Casey explain how he always wears his hat when he's on the street. Not wearing de hat is a signal to police ye need help. I'm sure that I look like a complete idiot with the hat, and figure that this is going to be one long day.

Casey begins an explanation of how the radio works. I nod my head that I'm listening. Just passed the office door, he pulls the cab to a stop and we get out. He shows me a yellow phone on the wall. Ye check outa de garage here, he tells me and lifts the phone to his ear. Dey told me ta check in at de Hound. Things is slow. If dere moving, dey give ye an order. We're on channel one now. Downtown, West, and North are on one, and so is Alameda. Lake, Berkeley, Piedmont, and East is on channel two. Ye gotta switch channels when ye go into different areas. Dey got a map a' de whole city. Takes up de whole fucking wall. It's divided into different sections wid de radio channels. Ye gotta go inside and see how it works. Ye gotta use yer radio ta make money, he tells me.

I nod my head that I'm listening and tell myself that I'm not going to be out here long enough to worry about making money. *Christ, I don't even get paid for today. I got to sit here the whole day with this fucking hat on my head, and I won't make a fucking dime....* I listen to Casey's chatter as he points out this and that, but my heart isn't in it.

Just above San Pablo, Casey pulls into the Doggie Dinner and tells me it's time for his second cup. He explains that he likes to sleep late. Dat's why I work de ten-thirty t'seven shift. Yu can sleep late and still get home before it's too dark outside. Yu still got time ta have dinner wid de family and watch a little T.V. He shows me how to check out of the cab, and I follow him inside. At the counter he orders a coffee and doughnut for both of us. I wonder if I should offer to pay since the company is buying lunch. *Fuck it; I'm putting in a whole day of my time. I ought'a get something,* I tell myself.

Back in the cab with our breakfast, Casey says into the mike, One-O-Five back inside.

One-O-Five in, the dispatcher answers.

Te make money around here, ye gotta know what's moving. Right now, the Hound is dead. De next bus don't get in 'til eleven-ten and there ain't nobody on it when it does come in. Some guys would spot dere anyhow. Some guys would rather sit and wait for de long one. I figure four two-dollar trips is as good as one long if you gotta wait an hour for de long. Ye don't got to worry about no shot down neither. Casey tells me.

He explains that the morning action is over on Pill Hill. Ye don't get no long trips off de Hill, but one will set ye up for de next one. Dey don't take you all the way de hell out to nowhere. Usually dere good for a small tip too. Get yer cigarette money.... I watch the streets and traffic, and keep nodding my head that I'm listening. Casey explains which Pill Hill stands are best. I notice a couple other cabs are moving in the same direction on different streets and realize that we're in a race for the best stand. When we're about a block away from a vacant white curb line, Casey puts the mike to his lips and says, One-O-Five on Four-Sixteen. The dispatcher answers that he already has a cab spotted there. De fucking stand's empty, Casey tells me pointing with his mike across the street. One-O-Five.... Casey starts as we see a cab speed off Broadway and slide into the stand. We pass the stand and Casey and the other driver exchange angry looks. Dat fucking Harris. He spots on a stand when he's five blocks away. De cock sucker....

We turn on to Telegraph and spot. Casey explains that Four-One-Six is a vicinity stand. Ye spot wid in a couple blocks. Dey ain't as good as a marked stand. But, there's a lot a radio action, he explains. He pulls a pack of Pall Malls out of his pocket, takes one out and offers the pack to me.

No, thanks. I quit a couple years ago, I tell him. The instant the words are out of my mouth, I'm sorry. *A smoke would help pass the time*, I tell myself.

Casey pulls out a stand sheet and starts pointing out different areas. Dis here is district Four, he says and underlines Four-Sixteen in blue ink. Dis is North. When you cross Grand you're downtown, dat's One, he says and points his pen to a number on the stand sheet. De quicker you learn dese de quicker ye start making money, he continues and points to all the stands that are worth spotting on in the North District. He's giving off an order to that cock sucker, Harris, Casey says pointing to the radio. The radio answers with an order for us.

We pull to the curb at a four-story box of doctors' offices. An elderly lady approaches from the red brick steps. Casey points to the curb door and tells me I can get out an open it. I catch a glimpse of my face beneath the beak of my yellow cap as it reflects off the rear view mirror. A wave of shame sweeps over me. *It's even worse than the National Guard*, I tell myself. The old lady slides into the back seat and thanks me for holding the door. I nod my head and think, *What a dull dead ass day this is gonna be*.

Casey tells me and tells me and tells me as we race from one end of Pill Hill to the other. I find that I'm the perfect companion for him as he shows me the ropes. I don't have to say a word; just a shake of my head will suffice. He never shuts down for more than a split second. Even with fares in the cab he's explaining things. He shuttles between me and the passengers, who are some times old friends, explaining and gesturing, talking the local gossip, discussing the economy and current events. All he needs is the ear and a nod now and then. In an hour or so, I begin to fade out on him. I only listen with half an ear. I watch with one eye.

Ta make money on dis job ye gotta be wide-awake. Ye gotta be fast on your feet. Got to plan ahead where yer going. Gotta use de radio. Soon as you get your fare's address, you shot off your destination. Dat way, if dere's an order where ye T.C., de radio's got to give it to ye. He's got a pin wid your number on it. When ye call in going, he sits your pin sideways. When you call in T.C. he turns it right side up. He either gives ye an order, or spots ye to the closest empty stand. Ye gotta keep an ear on de radio all the time. Find out where de orders are going off. Work your way in that direction. Dere's ways to do dat.... Ye gotta switch channels every now and then te see what's going on de other one. Ye gotta take her where the action is if ye wanna make money! Casey tells me.

All this and so much more as we speed through side streets of Oakland that I never saw before, as he greets each fare and continues conversations from their last ride, as he demonstrates how to use the radio, as he marks the waybill with four different colored pens. We make our way towards Lake Merritt as he tells me and tells me and tells me. I nod yes, yes, yes. But, inside my yellow cap I tell myself, *It's all a mistake. It'll cleared up by this time tomorrow. I know I got that history job. All this is a waste of time....*

By noon, Casey is telling me his life story, how the company fucked him, how he was the first god damned division manager to ever make money on the school bus division. He handled all the handicapped kids in the Oakland City Public Schools. Used V.W. buses. Had to work out the routes just perfect. Had to cover every one of the widely spaced schools in the city. Dey don't put dem all in de same school. Dey got 'em spaced out all over de fucking place. Dey wanna keep dem in dere own neighborhoods. Den, all the buses got to be dere at de same fucking time...

Yea they all want to leave as soon as school's out.

Dere's a lot of public relations to de job. I use ta call a mother personally myself if something happened te make a driver late. Ye know some times de unavoidable happens. Heavy traffic. An accident. Rain. I always called de mothers myself. De kids were handicapped, you know. Dere mothers worry more about dem than normal kids.

He tells me how much he did to increase the division revenue, how he had combined runs, cut down the number of drivers, began running field trips on off hours. He had plans for negotiating the new contract that would have tripled the income. De fucking big wigs in Frisco wanna do de contract dereselves. Now, dat de division is making money dere interested in it. Dey fuck things up so bad dey lose de contract. City buys it's own V.W. buses. Den, dey try to blame it on me. I'm back in de cab, but fuck 'em. It's dere loss, not mine. On a good week I can make jus' as much out on de street. I'm my own fucking boss. I ain't got all that responsibility....

It's hard ta make both ends meet now' a days, but I'm not worrying 'bout it, Casey tells me. He explains that he's got to get three hundred dollars together to make up the difference on the down payment and what they'll get from the sale of his mother's house. We gotta get out' a de old neighborhood. De niggers are taking over de place. Dere moving in like flies. Prices are coming way down. De house won't be worth nuthin if we don't get out'a it soon. I got nuthin against 'em. I ain't prejudice or nuthin. Some'a my steady fares are colored. I jus'

don't want my little girl going to school wid 'em. You know, she's only in the fourth grade. She ain't had too much trouble yet. But, in another year or so. You know how fast kids develop now a days....

He tells me he has to support his mother all by himself. His lazy God dammed brothers won't kick in a penny any more. His sister don't even come over to clean the house. He and his wife have to do it all themselves. Den they kick up a big fuss when I put de house up for sale. I'm buying de house in San Ramon for my mother, putting it in her name. Dere around like vultures crying for dere share a' de house....

Just as we are crossing Lake Shore on to Eighteenth, Casey breaks off his monologue and cocks an ear to the radio. He grabs for the mike and pushes the gas pedal to the floor. I grab for the side of my seat as we speed through the orange light on Park. One-O-Five on Seven-Fourteen. One-O-Five on Seven-Fourteen, he's screaming at the top of his lungs.

One-Five-Eight inside for Mr. Sidney, the dispatcher says.

Thank ye, Casey screams and pushes harder on the gas pedal. Did ye hear de radio calling cabs going to Seven-Fourteen? Casey asks.

Yea, Seven-Fourteen, I answer. To me the radio is just a steady static. I don't understand a word it is saying.

Seven-Fourteen's a good stand at certain times of day. I had a hunch it was de psycho ward. Some times ye get a trip to Napa out'a dere. Ye gotta watch it though. Lot'a drivers T.C. around Seven-Fourteen. Dey hear inside, and dey try to steal yer fare, he says and whips up a back street toward Highland County Hospital. I hang on to my seat as the speedometer creeps toward seventy.

We wheel into the hospital driveway and Casey slams to a stop in front of the locked iron gate. He tells the gate radio who we are and the gate opens. We park in a narrow brick alley beside a door marked Mental Health Services. Inside, a nurse gives Casey a voucher and a patient for Stanford Mental Health. I see right away that he is black and mean looking. I wonder what he's being treated for. *Could he be dangerous?* I ask myself as Casey hustles him out to the back seat of our cab. I get a closer look as he slams the door shut. He's wearing a wrinkled sports jacket and a crumpled white shirt. Casey is off down the brick driveway like it's us that's stealing the fare. When we stop at the iron gate, I shot another look at our fare. He has rough black stubble on his face and a glint of hard anger in his eyes. *Damm, I'll be glad when we get rid'a this guy,* I tell myself. Casey doesn't ease up on the pedal until we hit the freeway.

Which bridge ye wanna take, Casey asks our passenger.

Which bridge? What the fuck I care? Any fucking bridge.

I always like to give the passenger de chance te pick de way. Some think San Mateo faster. Others think Dumbarton.

Dumbarton. Go the Dumbarton, our fare tells Casey.

Got ya, Casey answers and turns to watch traffic. He has stopped telling his life story. He's explaining that it's always better to take the freeway on long trips, that the meter runs on both time and mileage

Dem mother fuckers back there is fucking wid me, man. The cocksuckers don't know what the fuck they doing. Next thing you know, I'm gonna lose my fucking job. I can't be fucking taking off work all the time like this, the man tells us.

I slouch down in my seat and look straight ahead at traffic. I can't bring myself to say a word. *Dis guy is from the mental ward. Maybe they let him out too soon. Maybe he's still violent. He may think that Casey and me are a couple of white devils that are fucking wid him,* I tell myself.

Dat's the trouble wid our governmental institutions. Dey don't think 'a people as anything but a bunch 'a numbers. Dey don't think ye got 'a job or nothing like dat. It's de God dammed bureaucracy. Government putting its nose into everybody's business.

No, you don't understand, man, they fucking wid my fucking life. The mother fuckers are talking 'bout putting me away for a couple years. Institutionalize me. All I need is a little medication, man. Something for my nerves. There ain't nothing wrong wid me. My old lady might be right. She say I got to waste some honky mother fucker before they listen to me. I need some fucking help, man. But, who the fuck gonna lisen? Who gonna lisen?

The hum of our tires on the road, the sound of the freeway traffic, the click of the meter hits our ears while our fare waits for an answer. I'm too scared to turn around and face him. I stare straight ahead, and tell myself he's Casey's problem. I don't even want to be here. Casey

takes out his pack of Pall Malls and offers one to the man in back. When they both light up, I curse myself again for telling Casey I quit smoking. You're right, Casey tells our fare. Nobody in government is gonna listen to ye. Dat's de whole trouble. De government is too big. It's all rules and regulations. One agency interferes wid de other....

No, you don't understand, man. I'm under a lot of fucking pressure. You know, man. You try to get the fuck ahead. Going to school. Working two jobs. I got car payments, house payments. There's family hassles, personal hang-ups. All I need is something to mellow me out a little. A little time to think. They're supposed to know what they doing. They got the degrees. The mother fuckers don't know shit, man. They're a bunch a' mother fucking butchers. Talk about aggressiveness and violent overtones. I'll show them some violent overtones. Break a mother fucking honky head....

You're right, Casey tells him. I'm wondering if he doesn't have a knife or something as I picture a muscular black arm coming over the backseat and wrapping around my neck. *It's daylight. We're on the freeway. What the fuck could he do?* I ask myself. I think of the hot cigarette in his hand. I want to turn my head and check him out but the white lines on the road hold my eyes fast. Casey continues to talk about government interference in our lives.

Our fare says, No, man, you don't fucking know, and clamps his mouth shut. Casey switches to giving me instructions about how to check out when leaving Oakland City limits.

When we get off the bridge, Casey stops at a liquor store. He asks our mental patient what brand he smokes, and gets out of the cab. I stare straight ahead racking my brain for something to say. I feel stupid as hell staring straight ahead. *What the fuck's wrong wid you?* I ask myself. The seconds tick by like hours. I watch for Casey and breath a deep sigh of relief when he comes hustling out of the store. Casey hands two packs of smokes to the guy in back. I listen to him light up while Casey explains the best way to get from here to our fare's destination.

We're all going to the same place. Don't matter what you doing. We all on a dead end street. Don't nobody know what's happening. I seen it coming a long time ago, man. The end is in sight. We gonna be tearing each other apart instead 'a putting shit together. It's all lies... all lies... all lies.... our fare whispers from the backseat.

I realize from Casey's directions that our destination is not Stanford University as I thought it would be. Instead, we stop at a small storefront building not far from the bridge. Our fare gets out and slams the door shut. I breathe a sigh of relief as Casey hotfoots it from the curb and heads back for the main road. Casey beams a big smile as he tells me, You don't know how lucky we are! I figure he means about getting our fare out of the cab.

Not only do we get a long trip, but we're here jus' in time for lunch. We pull up to an off the road diner and park. Casey explains that we don't have to check out for lunch since we are out of radio range. Some drivers think dey can make more if dey eat on de run. Not me. A man deserves to sit down for his lunch, ta have a second cup a' coffee. Besides, sometimes a little break sets ye up for a long one. Ye can never tell, Casey explains as we sit down at the counter. He tells the waitress that he'll have a hamburger deluxe wid fries. I order the same. We wolf down our food, and gulp down our second cup of coffee. I fee a little sense of guilt when it comes time to pay. *Maybe I should make at least a gesture to pay,* I tell myself. But I answer, *No, he might take you up on it, and you only three bucks and some change in your pocket.*

On our way back, Casey tells me that we'll save four or five miles taking the San Mateo Bridge. It ain't my fault de nigger picked de longest way, he says with a hearty laugh, and explains that we can run off the miles that we're saving later tonight. Dat's de way ye get back de cigarette money, Might as well keep 'em happy. Dere paying for it, he tells me.

And, I try to remember where we went from the San Mateo Bridge. *Didn't we deadhead straight to the airport?* I ask myself. *That's right,* I answer. *And we turned right into the Port without waiting for the cabs on the back up stand. The first out rushes in to let Casey know that there are two other cabs on the back up. They come screaming in and put Casey eighth out on the four-cab airport stand. One of the drivers tells me that if I learn all of Casey's stand jumping tricks someone will put a bullet through my mother fucking head.*

And, I remember that we got a Berkeley from the Port, a trip to the Hotel Claremont. We took the Macarthur Freeway. I would have taken the Nimitz. At one point going through Berkeley, Casey drove up over the sidewalk and apologized to the passenger. And, I remember, one of our last fares of the night an old lady that we picked up down on Telegraph and Alcatraz. It was just getting dark outside. I got out to open the door for her. Took her bag of groceries and, slid them into the seat beside her. Casey explained that he was breaking me in right. The old lady told me she thought I'd make an excellent cab driver. You look both honest and scared to death, she told me.

*It must be de fucking hat dat makes me look scared. I ain't scared lady. Jus' indifferent. I ain't gonna be no cab driver. I know I got dat history job,* I told myself. I remember the old lady gave me two quarters when she got out of the cab.

Give this to your little boy and girl, she told me. We must have been talking about the kids. That was my first tip. I remember the weight that pulled down on me when it was dark outside and we still weren't off the streets. Even when Casey told me we were heading for the garage we didn't go straight in. We had to hit the Berkeley Freeway to run off the extra miles we saved by taking the San Mateo Bridge. There were fifteen cabs ahead of us when we pulled into the gas pumps. Casey showed me how to add a couple short trips to the waybill. Ye gotta cover all yer miles, he explained. He showed me how to count your bills all face up and stacked in numerical order. In any other business ye train a guy right and ye make more money for everybody. In dis job ye train a guy right and ye only make more competition for yerself. But, yer not like a lot a guys I've trained. I kind'a like ye. Ye can answer more than dis yea a no, he told me. Because he liked me, Casey marked all the best stands in each district in black ink. He circled the so so stands in blue, and underlined the worst stands in orange. (I carried the stand sheer with me for over a year before I realized that he judged the stands by day time standards. The whole flow of traffic is different during the night.) By seven-thirty we still hadn't turned in our waybill. We stood in the little three-walled concrete booth where the slower drivers count their money and chat about how much they booked today and all their good trips. I thought about home, and a late dinner, while Casey showed me this and that. I remember the hurt look in his eye when I left him making a final count of his money telling him that I had to get home.

***Christ, has it been two years since I started driving cab?*** I ask myself as I peer into the frig. I take out a cold beer and pop an English muffin into the toaster. With my feet on the coffee table, I sip my beer and look at my watercolors. I stop at each one and focus for a second. My eyes come to rest on my favorite, always the one I did last. I let myself be drawn into the watercolor and the silence of the one thirty A.M. morning. *Time to paint... time to write... when did I ever have it so good?* I ask myself.

It was some thirty years ago when I asked myself that question. 1971 was my second year driving cab. But, it was in seventy-four or five when I typed this version. Now, in the year 2008 I write my final revision. Things have changed since then, but I'm still writing, still searching after the truth. And today, I read that Jesus taught a special kind of truth, that his whole purpose in life was to bear witness onto the truth. Nicoll argues that Jesus did not come to teach morality, but to show man how to reach a higher level of consciousness. How to be born again in spirit. Jesus is connected with schools of teaching that taught first of all the knowledge that could lead, if practiced to the higher level of development inherent in man.

In fact, the central idea of the gospels is not grasped—namely, the idea of individual evolution and re-birth, Nicoll continues.

And, as I type this final revision, it strikes me that I ought to cut this chapter out. That it distracts from the story of the cab driver. But then I realize that this is not the story of a cab driver, but the story of a writer and how he evolves from a man totally identified to one who is beginning to awaken.

Back then; in 1971 I talked about Bergson's *Creative Evolution* as if I understood what Bergson was saying. As I re-read him in the year 2008, I see how little I understand. Evolution is a very complex matter not a forgone conclusion from Darwin as most of us think. Bergson describes the evolution of the eye, a very complex mechanism with intricate parts and structure. I never did care for the facts and measurement of science. And, I find myself skipping over some of the technical description of the three basic theories

More or less Bergson says that—Man, life is a continual process of change. We are constantly changing. Imperceptible change is going on at every instant. Generally speaking, unorganized bodies, which are what we have need of in order that we may act, and on which we have modeled our fashion of thinking, are regulated by this simple law: the present contains nothing more than the past, and what is found in the effect was already in the cause.

Continuity of change, preservation of the past in the present, real duration—the living being seems, then, to share these attributes with consciousness. Can we go further and say that life, like conscious activity, is invention, is unceasing creation?

Further on he says We do not think real time. But we live it, because life transcends intellect. The feeling we have of our evolution and of the evolution of all things in pure duration is there, forming around the intellectual concept properly so-called an indistinct fringe that fades off into darkness.

And still further Whether we will or no, we must appeal to some inner directing principle in order to account for this convergence of effects. Such convergence does not appear possible in the Darwinian, and especially the neo-Darwinian, theory of insensible accidental

variations, nor in the hypothesis of sudden accidental variations, nor even in the theory that assigns definite directions to the evolution of the various organs by a kind of mechanical composition of the external with the internal forces.

And he goes on to say If now we are asked why and how it is implied therein, we reply that life is, more than anything else, a tendency to act on inert matter. The direction of this action is not predetermined; hence the unforeseeable variety of forms which life, in evolving, sows along its path. But this action always presents, to some extent, the character of contingency; it implies at least a rudiment of choice. Now a choice involves the anticipatory idea of several possible actions....That adaptation to environment is the necessary condition of evolution we do not question for a moment. It is quite evident that a species would disappear, should it fail to bend to the conditions of existence that are imposed on it. But it is one thing to recognize that our circumstances are forces evolution must reckon with, another to claim that they are the directing causes of evolution. This latter theory is that of mechanism. It excludes absolutely the hypothesis of an original impetus, I mean an internal push that has carried life, by more and more complex forms, to higher and higher destinies. Yet this impetus is evident, and a mere glance at fossil species shows us that life need not have evolved at all, or might have evolved only in very restricted limits, if it had chosen the alternative, much more convenient to itself, of becoming ankylosed in its primitive forms....The function of intelligence is to organize matter.... But it is to the very inwardness of life that intuition leads us-by intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, capable of reflecting upon its object and of enlarging it indefinitely....

All this is very difficult for me to understand. But, I do see how it ties right in with the Nicoll's contention that Jesus taught that man is an Unfinished Animal. And, so I continue to search for real meaning, to evolve to a higher level of consciousness. So much of that meaning comes from my nighttime dreams.

It is the second of May in the year 2003. I'm with some kind of military party. We are in a long line marching along the ocean. We come to a twenty-foot drop. Another soldier and I make it down to the bottom. The sergeant throws down a rope and tells us to hold it tight while the other troops slide down. My partner holds the rope telling me he'll take the first turn. Troops begin sliding down the rope one at a time. I watch the waves breaking.

In a short while, it's my turn. Let me wrap the rope around the bedpost, I tell my partner and proceed to make a couple twists around a wooden bedpost. More troops begin sliding down. When there is only four or five of our company left, the guys begin slowing down and hanging around the landing spot. A group of Mexican kids begin passing up the troops on top and hurrying by us close to the shoreline.

Hey, you're holding up a military operation, I shout at them. Three or four older kids on motor scooters shoot by followed my three bad looking gangster types. What the fucks wrong wid you, taking cuts in front of our men, I shout at the last one a real tough looking guy in his early twenties.

Move, move, move! I shout at the guys around the landing area. The last couple troops come down the rope. The tough guy that I shouted at comes back to fight me. I'm really scared as he looks like he could stop a tank. However, I charge at him, flip him on his back, and give him a karate chop to the forehead. He seems unhurt, but lays there somewhat stunned. I'm wondering why the officer in charge doesn't come to my rescue.

I'm in some kind of kitchen making a pizza for the kids' lunch. I walk over to a large pizza oven to get the pizza out. When I return to the kitchen table Sara and Alex are there talking to Anne. Sara and Alex. I must be dreaming, I say thinking Alex finally decided to visit again. I wonder if it is a dream, but tell myself No, this is too real to be a dream.

I notice that Sara is about six months pregnant. She pats her belly and smiles. Yea, I wrote Alex a letter about six months ago. He answered it, and we decided to get together again.

I get to have a kid of my own after all, Alex tells us. I begin cutting the pizza wondering if I shouldn't add something to the lunch.

It's a couple of days later. I'm in some kind of college lecture hall. The professor shows us a film that concludes that man is nothing but an eating and evacuating machine. When the film is over the professor asks if there are any questions. I raise my hand and say If what the film says is true then there is no purpose to life.

That's right, there is no purpose, our teacher answers.

It's the next evening. The professor shows the same film again. When it's over, I'm trying to think of some kind of question that will impress the teacher and other students. I can't think of a thing. No one has any questions. There is only a minute or two of class left. One of the students goes up on stage to talk to the professor. I think that I should go up too, but I can't think of anything to say.

A girl sitting a couple seats down is putting stuff in her backpack and getting ready to leave. Why did he show the same film again? she asks.

It's a throw away lecturer. He doesn't believe the film's premise. He just wants to get it out of the way, I tell her.

It's the last day of June. I'm teaching again. The teacher I'm working with is in charge of audio-visual equipment. We have two movie cameras in stock. She tells me I can take both of them to my classroom. I ask if the other teachers won't be mad. She tells me that they don't get much use anymore.

I'm working with my eighth grade students. One of them is a special ed. student. I tell him that I'm going to be very busy getting started with the new class, and that he can only stay if he behaves himself and works independently. I won't have any time to help you for the first couple weeks, I tell him.

I'm taking my class into a large hanger. We are practicing for a school wide play. The whole eighth grade class is involved. As the students line up and begin to march and sing their songs, I'm having a hard time hearing what they are singing. I try to compliment what they are doing, and I'm hoping things will work out.

It's a month or so later. I am working on the assembly line at Fisher Body. The line breaks down and we get out of the cars to take a break. After a few minutes, the line starts up again. Someone says we have to line up to pick up our paychecks so there is no sense starting back. The line stops.

I'm standing in a long line with my fellow workers. I see an old high school friend, Alan Strange. I tell him I'm planning to move to Seattle in a couple weeks. He doesn't respond to me, but just turns his head to the front of the line. I figure he's mad at me and wonder why. The line makes an S turn and it's hard to hold my place. I think I might have cut in front of a couple workers, but they don't say anything. There are two real tall guys standing a few feet up the line. Another tall guy comes in and stands with them. What... are tall guys allowed to take cuts? I ask them.

I'm in front of a counter in a large room. The line is gone. I stand all by myself. I'm here to pick up my check, I tell the lady behind the counter. She gives me a large envelope. Instead of a check there are some papers from 1961. I'm not sure what the papers are for. She hands me another envelope. I'm disappointed when I see the check is only for sixty-six dollars. The lady explains that I only worked one day last week. Oh, I thought I worked the whole week. Well, it's better than nothing, I say.

You know, I have an idea that could save the company a lot of money. Instead of having us pick up our checks, we could have the lead man in each department take the checks to the men in his department. You know the line was down for almost an hour while we picked up our checks, I tell the lady.

That sounds like a good idea. You ought to tell your lead man, she tells me.

A couple of days go by. I'm in some kind of government building. A voice asks me if I want the information I'm seeking in technical or plain language. I say that I want it in plain language thinking that it will be easier to write it.

The scene shifts. I'm in a private dwelling with a fourteen year old girl and her twenty eight year old mother. The girl is wearing a long black dress with a lace bodice and is very attractive. She has tears in her eyes. I ask her why she is so sad. Her mother explains that she was sexually abused at a very young age. This happened over a period of several years and she has three babies. She had to drop out of school to take care of them and she's missed all the joy of childhood, the mother tells me.

I take the girl in my arms and hug her. It wasn't your fault. You didn't do anything wrong. You're not to blame, I tell her hoping to make her feel better. She gives me a slight smile and I hug her again. I feel a slight sexual attraction, but mainly want to make the girl feel better.

I'm on my way to a high school psychology class. I've been sick and missed the last night's class. I'm carrying a ten-gallon planter to the class. I want to transplant a plant that I've grown there. I'm wondering why I'm taking a high school class. *Do I need the units?* I ask myself. *If I don't need the units I'm wasting my time.* I figure I'll go to the office and see if I really need the units.

When I get to the school entrance, I see a high school friend. Why don't you come out to the garden area with me? I have to transplant my plant, I tell him. As he follows, I ask him if I missed anything last night.

I'll let you borrow my notes, he answers.

How come we're still in high school? I ask. You know, I wrote two short stories last week. They were both based on dreams that I had during the week. I had a really interesting dream last night and instead of writing it down, I'm wasting my time at a high school class.

When we get to the plant area, I look for my plant. I picture it as a plant with long green fern like leaves and two phallic like white stems in the middle. All of the plants here are dried up with brown leaves, and I'm not sure which one is mine. As I look at the planting area, I see that one of my fellow students has brought tomato plants from home. He is going to plant them in the school garden. *Why didn't I think of that?* I ask myself feeling a touch of envy. I see that the planting area has lots of transplanted student plants and think maybe I should put my plant here instead of taking it home.

It's the next morning. I pull up in front of Alex' house in a pick up truck. I have a load of gravel that I want to leave in his front yard. I get out of the truck and place four matted wreaths near his front window. I set them in the ground and place a little dirt around them to hold them down. The guy that is with me turns the wreaths around and tells me they'll show off better if they turned. I don't agree with him but I don't say anything. We begin shoveling the gravel off the truck.

Alex walks up and greets us in Spanish. I don't understand what he's saying but pretend to talk back in Spanish. I'm actually just making up words and talking gibberish.

It's later. Anne and I are in the front room of Alex's house. I walk into another room and see Cassie and Vickie. They're arguing over a toy. I figure I'll not interfere. I tell myself that Vickie has to learn to handle situations. Back in the front room, Alex tells me that instead of paying me the five bucks he owes me he'll buy me a beer.

We enter a small bar with a third guy who I don't recognize. The bartender is cleaning up I hand him several glasses that are on the bar and two or three from a nearby table. He draws us three beers. This one's the coldest, this one's okay and this one's the worst, he tells us. He puts the worst closest to me. I take a sip of it and find that it's luke warm. *I should'a taken the coldest*, I tell myself.

We enter a second bar. I figure I better pay for this round. I reach into my front pocket and pull out a wad of over a hundred bills. Most are ones, but there are some fives and tens. I start to pull out a ten but think I have too many small bills. I pull out a five instead. The guy behind the bar tells asks us if we are real thirsty. If you are, the best drink in the house is aqua. It cost way less, but it will quince your thirst better, he tell us. I figure he must pocket the money that he gets for the water. Alex nods that we should move to a table in back. I pick my five off the bar, and follow Alex to one of four tables.

As we sit down at the table, I notice that the third guy is missing. I figure he'll show up later. I put my elbows on the table and it rocks back and forth. Two girls join us. That's something. This in the only table that is unsteady and we both pick it, I tell the girl next to me. She smiles and takes hold of my hand. I slip my other hand between her legs. Her legs open slightly as I press into her crotch. Can we go over to your place tonight? I ask as I rub deeper.

Not tonight, but tomorrow, she tells me.

Next morning, I'm in some kind of message room. I can read or post a message. To read a message I have to take a long pole with a hook to pull down the message. I have to do the same thing to post a message. To post I have to pull down a message that is already written.

I'm thinking that I want to post a message about Johnny's football schedule.

I'm in a doctor's waiting room with my older brother. There's another male patient waiting also. My brother says something about his apartment. I tell him in all these years I've never been to his pad. Well, maybe you'll come over now that we've gotten together again, he answers.

A matronly looking doctor comes out and calls my brother inside. The other patient is called next. Before they call for me my brother is finished and leaves the doctor's office.

When I am called inside, the doctor tells me The first thing I want you to do is wash up. She points to a tub and adds If you don't take a bath, I'll wash you myself. I look at the dual tubs that are three quarters filled with water and wonder if the other guy and my brother already bathed in them. The water looks clean, so I climb into one of the tubs, but feel a little suspicious about the water as I quickly wash. I get out of the tub and dry myself with a large gray towel.

Next evening, I'm driving down a curvy two-lane road with my granddaughter Natsie. It's just getting dark. We stop at a curve next to a large old house. Natsie leads the way to the front door, opens it, and hurries inside. I rush after her thinking we shouldn't be entering a strange house. When I look back for my car it's not there. I think it must have rolled down the hill and around the curve. Can we stay the night? Natsie asks as she hurries down the hall to the back of the house. I look in at a side bedroom and see that one of the grandkids has left their dirty clothes on the floor. I pick them up and lay them on the bed.

We'd better go, I tell Natsie. She asks again if we can spend the night. I tell her no, thinking that someone else must be living here. When we get back to the front door, I find a pair of Jake's shoes. I put them on the bed and we hurry out to look for the car.

We're at the old farmhouse in Byron getting ready to go to bed. Anne is yelling something from the bedroom door. When I look inside, I can't believe my eyes. There are two of her. Both are standing by the bed wearing look alike nightgowns and angry scowls on their faces. *She's dreamed up her double*, I tell myself growing very frightened. I look at the bed and see something under a lumpy blanket. *It could be another one growing*, I tell myself.

I'm lying in the back bedroom with Natsie. I'm still very frightened. I hear Anne moving around in the kitchen. I wonder where her double is. I get up to peek into the bedroom. The bed is empty. *Good. There's only one of her in the kitchen*, I tell myself.

I'm bouncing on a large trampoline with a dozen or so young kids. The trampoline is set up on a sandy beach. A cool breeze is blowing off the ocean. There are really good looking young girls on either side of me. We are loosening up for a dance routine. Anne is toward the front of the trampoline with one of my sixth grade girls. I wave at them and take a couple bounces. I'm hoping I'll be able to do the routine without messing up too much.

I'm at a computer trying to write down the dream of Anne's double. I go over the dream in my head so I can remember it. As I start to write, I'm telling myself that this won't help. You'll still have to remember it when you wake up.

The following morning, I'm standing on dirt road with a racecar driver. Taking that last turn at a hundred twenty five miles an hour was the hardest thing I ever did. It really messed up my back, the pressure from the steering. But, it won the race for me, I tell him.

I walk across a field where the cars will be parked to start the race. I'm wearing a red sweatshirt that is attire for all the drivers. Lisa comes hurrying to the field. That's my sweat shirt. I wore it last year. Give it to me, she tells me.

Just because you wore it last year doesn't mean it's yours. You should have got here early before all the shirts were gone. There are eighteen drivers, but only sixteen shirts, I tell her.

I'm walking down the track where the cars will race. I see that the race begins with a sharp turn to the left. It looks like it could be a turn off for stalled cars. I'm hoping that they give instructions before the race so I'll know whether to take it or not. *You could lose the race if you turn in there and you don't have to*, I tell myself. As I continue down the track, I see that it is very narrow with little room for cars to pass. There are bales of straw in the middle of the track and it looks like we might race down one side of the road and come back on the other. I walk on looking at curves and turns and wondering how I should take them. I'm telling myself that the racing instructions will be crucial to winning the race. I go about halfway down the track and figure I better head back so I won't be late for the start.

When I get back to the infield, Lisa is waiting. Give me my shirt. I wore that shirt last year, she yells.

It's not your shirt, but I'll give it to you. There's nothing in the rule book that says we have to wear red sweat shirts, I say peeling off the shirt. I have a white T-shirt on underneath and figure I'll look pretty cool driving in a T-shirt.

I wake up for a second and think, *I can tell her I gave her the shirt off my back. Except maybe they'll disqualify me for not having the required red shirt. Naw, they wouldn't do that not after I gave her the shirt off of my back.* I picture Lisa writing her name on the back of the shirt in big black letters....

I'm in the front yard of the old farmhouse in Byron. Everything looks different and more modern. Jim, our next-door neighbor here in Salida walks up. I look up from the weeds I'm pulling and say hi. I ask him if he'd like some cherry tomatoes. No, thanks. We put in our own again this year, and have more than we need.

We move around to the east side of the house. If I were to put a deck in this is where I'd put it, I say pointing out how it is so very shady here.

You could add it right to the porch, Jim tells me. I look at the roofed porch that I had never seen before and think that Jim is right. He

points out a pair of windshield like wipers on the edge of the roof and shows me that they can be pushed right to the windows.

When you clean the window with one you don't have to worry about doing it perfect. It just makes it smell better, he tells me demonstrating how the wipers work. You have a really strong foundation here. It's connected all the way to the other side of the house, he says shaking the pillars of the porch and showing how solid the structure is.

Are you having a hard time keeping up the payments? Jim asks.

Oh, sure. But, you know we could always move, I answer.

Yea, you could always move. But you can get some help, he says and gives me the name of a loan company that does partnerships on houses. He tells me I can look it up on the computer.

A day later, I'm in a strange city walking with a fellow walker. We both agree that walking through the city is one of the best past times a person can have. It's inexpensive and you get to see some really interesting sights, my fellow walker tells me.

Yea, I hardly ever spend a dime when I'm walking. I don't want to stop to eat or drink 'cause there's too much to see, I tell him. We're walking through a run down section of the city. It's after work, but there are only occasional city dwellers going about their business. There are lots of factories and older houses. Everything is black and white with shades of gray thrown in.

I remember one of the very first walks I took through the city. It was in Philadelphia. I was holding my father's hand. He told me that the one gift that he had to give me was to make me an American citizen. He changed our last name from Sunelaitis to Daley, I tell my friend.

Oh, he must have been Lithuanian, my friend answers.

Your right. How did you know? I ask

Sunelaitis is a common Lithuanian name, he tells me.

The following morning, I'm walking down a path that leads to trails that spread out through the redwood forest at science camp. I'm telling myself that the reason I get to go on lone walks is that I don't take any responsibility for little projects at the camp. I come to a clearing where several light aircraft are parked. I start filling out a form to take one of the planes for a spin.

I realize that the plane lands at two hundred twenty miles an hour. I figure I wouldn't have any trouble getting it off the ground, but that I could never land it at that speed. As I start away from the clearing, a flight inspector comes up. He wants to see my pilot's license. I tell him that I have a student ticket. I figured I better get checked out in that plane before I try to solo in it, I tell the inspector. He points out another single engine aircraft and tells me that it takes off straight up just like a chopper.