

EMPTY PAGES  
(in D-minor)

Gary Snodgrass stared at the empty page before him, yet unfilled with words. He would have to come up with something, but somehow the words just wouldn't form in his brain. In his brain, the RNA that the words consist of, didn't seem to be forming in its proper molecular order, and Gary was screaming at the fucking molecules to do something, but, no way, the RNA molecules weren't going to lift a finger. Did they expect Gary to do all the work? His pen was waiting in his hand, his hand waiting for the words that his brain would dictate to it, and the RNA molecules in his brain were on strike. It was as if snatching the words out of thin air to set them down on paper, was the feat of a magician, never meant for him. Arrange the words in a certain order and it's a masterpiece. Arrange them in the wrong order and you flunk out. But Gary had to come up with something. But, try as he might, try as he would, he could not perform the magical act of conjuring up the words out of the empty top hat. Although he had drunk a few cups of coffee to induce the words to speed up through his head, the words would not come and the page remained empty.

Finally, he said, "Fuck it!", and dropped the pen beside the paper. He walked to the window and looked out. The leaves were golden, but this didn't do anything to him. He was depressed, creatively impotent. He vaguely remembered a Druidic song by a group that few people have heard of, but it didn't do anything to him. He was losing it, losing everything. He had a remotely repressed thought of what good is it to be a writer. Why couldn't he be a hedonistic dope-dealer, for instance, and just fuck around? But, unfortunately, he was too paranoid for that kind of business; he was the sort that would give himself away very quickly. Gary

was wondering if he were going a bit mad. Gary has been going crazy for a long time, but somehow never enough to be put away.

It was not because of chemicals that Gary was going looney. His last trip on a major psychedelic had been a few months ago and he smoked very infrequently. No, he could not quite put his finger on that. Although lately, very strange things would happen inside his head, whenever he smoked. He'd hear multiple voices inside his head, some of them demonic and others that might be from higher planes, but they could be lower entities disguised as higher disincarnate Masters. It was as if he were receiving messages on a busted radio receiver, and he couldn't get any particular station clear enough, a lot of bad stations, and occasionally, several stations at once. Poor Gary didn't know which one to trust and came to the conclusion that it would be better to trust none at all, than to be led astray by the wrong one. He'd hear celestial music, but sometimes it would burn too brightly inside his head. His heart would beat too quickly. Yet, this didn't use to happen to him on plain grass. Gary decided that after he had finished what was left of that lid, he was going to stop smoking for awhile. He wanted to see what he could find on esoteric meditation. Yet, these things that happened to him when he was stoned: was this the formation of a latent psychosis?, what psychologists might call being totally at the mercy of unconscious id impulses or having all the archetypes of the collective unconscious flare out at once in a lovely rainbow of schizophrenia. Gary just didn't know what to make of it.

Things just weren't going right with Gary. He was isolated, alone, alienated at the south end of a big city, living with his parents. He lived twenty miles away from the University he was going to. He couldn't have much social life in that kind of situation, couldn't waste the gas. Also, Gary was becoming strangely introvert-

ed, shut away, losing the energy he once had to relate to people he once knew. One by one, people who were once friends to him had become strangers again. Recently, he told someone who had been visiting him to quit coming to see him, because the ulterior motive for this dude's visits was to convert him into a Jesus freak to enhance his own self-righteousness. Two years ago, this same dude was trying to convert him into a Ba'hai. This dude used to be Gary's best friend and tended to be very influential on him. Gary couldn't have it; he had to find the Ultimate Truth on his own.

To increase his loneliness, he deliberately blew it with a girlfriend by laying his psychopathos on her. She had psychological problems of her own in making it at relationships and he had an abrupt psychological reaction, so thus, he very neatly blew it. Now she is afraid of him and he is afraid of her. They became mirror-images of one another, precisely reflecting their neuroses back and forth at one another. She was his last link with humanity and Gary very cleverly burned that bridge behind him. Recently, he went back to his psychologist to tell him that he did it again, he did it again. A few nights ago, Gary was convinced that he was receiving telepathic messages from her, but concluded that it must be a figment of his imagination. Gary was writing a play called, "The Raving Maniac and the Moon Woman", somehow befitting his present life situation. Maybe he started identifying just a little bit too much with the Raving Maniac. Writers are like that.

Although Gary had a large dose of caffeine pulsating through his veins, he felt tired, out of it. He sat on his bed. He noticed the two books he was supposed to be reading for his creative writing class. One was "Trout Fishing in America", by Richard Brautigan and the other was a collection of stories by Robert Creeley. They both had their pictures on the cover of their books. Gary had read "Trout

"Fishing in America" a bit more than three years ago when he was staying in a ghetto-commune in Boston. That was before Brautigan was particularly well known, and Gary sort of wished he could live that kind of life, but he was bound for a first year of bullshit college at the time. Gary had a remote flashback about a drunk friend bugging him while he was trying to write a serious story about an Indian, saying, "Forget it, Gary, you're never going to be a famous writer with his picture on the cover like Robert Creeley. Better give up, Gary." It can be discouraging to be a writer, when people on all sides are telling him that it'll never get published.

Gary made an attempt to read some of the stories by Robert Creeley, then gave up and slumped down on his bed. Gary just didn't have it that day. He just lay down on his bed, breathing deeply, feeling totally lazy as if he were in his mother's womb again and being alive was all that mattered. A few days ago, he had been on pain killers because a tooth had been taken out, and he was thinking that smack wouldn't be a bad way to go. It would be like a living Nirvana; you just lie back, daydream on it, and don't worry about a damn thing. He could do it. He could get a room in a boardinghouse somewhere, score enough smack for a week, and by the end of the week, shoot up enough smack to kill himself. Or, he could get a month's supply, keep shooting up to kill hunger, and be dead within a month. Perfect euthanasia, absolutely painless, even blissful. Not a bad way to go, if you're sick and tired of it all, fed up with struggling to live in order to struggle to live until the inevitable end. But Gary knew himself well enough to know he didn't have the nerve to do it. Still, he might consider it sometime. He couldn't handle knives and guns, and he had already tried sleeping pills. He remembered his telephone call to a place called "Contact" one night:

"You see, I kept popping them one by one, to see if I could finally do it. Then this nightmarish darkness closed around me, and I figured I couldn't take it. So what can I do? I can't stand to live and I can't stand to die and I can't be in-between." (an impenetrable riddle.)

"Yes," the girl answered in her calm, undisturbed voice, "but can't you find anything positive to live for?"

"I can't live and I can't die, and I'm never crazy enough for them to put me away."

"Why do you want to be put away?"

"Because I can't handle life anymore. I can't live and I can't die."

"But why do you want to die? I think that's horrible."

"Because I can see no meaning in life. They say it's all an accident."

"But how can it be? Look at nature, at our bodies, it's so perfect, so harmoniously organized."

"Yes, I've thought of that before." (In fact, Gary once used that as an argument in a philosophy of religion class as proof that a Cosmic Mind-Force was making it all happen.)

"Don't you have anything that you can do, you know, something special?"

"Well," Gary admitted begrudgingly, "I can write and I can play music. I'm very good at those things. (He muttered it as though it were actually a curse.) I suppose the fucking Higher Powers won't let me off this damn planet until I create what I'm supposed to create."

"But that's good. I sort of wish I could do things like that. What kind of music do you play?"

"Sheer cosmic celestial plane music, and if I could get a moog synthesizer and a recording device, I'd put it down on tape." (Gary

was playing into her hands. He was being side-tracked away from his obsession with suicide.)

"Well, maybe that's something you could live for. But can you tell me about what led you to do this?"

"I fucked it up with a chick today. I don't know what happened, but I don't think she really cares about me."

"Find another."

That was sound advice, but Gary kept talking in circles with her, around and around. ("I can't live and I can't die.") He didn't know what the Ultimate Truth was, and was unable to believe what people say, what books say, what he conceived of himself, and, nay, not even the Visions or Gods themselves, so what could he do? Death, Gary reasoned, was the only way to find out. The next day, Gary had a throbbing headache and made up his mind that he just couldn't commit suicide, no matter how badly he wanted to.

Sohang would laugh. Sohang would say, "So four times laid, four times rejected. So you tried to commit suicide, eh? Over a chick; they usually do. You take it all so seriously, but it really doesn't matter, you see. Someday, you will leave this all behind, and it won't matter to you anymore. Just take it easy. That's all you have to do." Sohang is an enlightened Zen Master that Gary fantasizes about. Gary meditated, using Sohang's name as a mantra. Gary is certain that this is what Sohang would say if he had been there at the time. Sohang is flying among wisps of clouds right now, kicking stumps in the woods as he goes by. Sohang can turn a koan upside down and blow your mind. Sohang would say, "The results of trying to commit suicide with sleeping pills is a throbbing headache the next morning." Sohang was Gary's teddybear.

Gary, lying exhausted on his bed, was aware that he wasn't getting anything done and yet felt it was futile to try to do anything. You spend your whole life doing this or that, but you eventually die. Gary thought about the chick he screwed things up with by his rampant dramatizations. Maybe it was just bullshit, his attempts to prove some romantic love for her by jumping off Lover's Leap for her, his wordy attempts to win her back. Maybe the problem was that he talked too much or blew things up far out of proportion. Gary sank back into the bed and thought that maybe it'd be best to forget all about it, that he's really just bullshitting with her and with himself, that he was just making a big, serious thing out of it.

He lazily picked up the two books he was supposed to read. He looked at the pictures of the two authors. Then he had a fantasy about something to write about:

"So, I look at old Brautigan standing in Washington Square with what I take to be his old lady. She has crooked teeth. I wonder if that's really his old lady or if it's just someone who agreed to sit there with him to pose for the picture. The chick that was with him on the front page cover of "In Watermelon Sugar" was pretty good-looking. I guess he changes old ladies every now and then. Brautigan's looking good enough in the picture. He looks sort of freakish, but it would be hard to place him in any particular culture. Benjamin Franklin looks like he's doing okay, but he's not smiling. He's a bit out of focus, so it's hard to tell. I wonder what the picture would be like in color? But you can't take a picture like that in color; it just wouldn't be right. I guess basically black and white is okay.

I wonder if Brautigan makes a living from his books. A few

years ago, he probably didn't, but today his books are standard freak literature, so I guess he does.

Robert Creeley has a bad eye. He looks a bit like my brother-in-law in California who compiled the book, "Altered States of Consciousness". He has a shot of whiskey beside him. It makes him look tough. I wonder if he likes to drink? He also has a model of a crow beside him. I wonder if he identifies with crows in some very strange way? He observes the flight of pigeons very closely. He looks like someone who would write "Black Humor". Yes, I definitely get a sensation of blackness about him. Almost everything in the photograph is black, except for Creeley's shirt and his skin. I wonder if Creeley had an inferiority complex because of his bad eye and took up writing to compensate for it? Maybe that's why the midget made him nervous.

I notice on the back of Creeley's book that he attended Harvard and got a B.A. and an M.A. I wonder if he would have made it at writing, without those degrees? Did Brautigan finish college? Will I? Maybe Creeley made it because he knew how to bullshit with the higher uppers. I notice that in high status magazines that the contributors are usually professors. I might even go so far as to suspect that they refuse to publish mere undergrad's work or non-students' work, without regard for the intrinsic merit of the writing itself. But this is only a suspicion, if not anything else.

Yes, absolutely, Brautigan and Creeley represent the pinnacle of literary achievement. Dare I aim that high? Can I possibly attain their utter straight-forward simplicity? They use so few adjectives. Their writing is absolutely immaculate. Not a single unnecessary word do they use. Will I ever get to where they are?

Or will I always be locked in an attic somewhere, cold and starving, having perhaps ten books written beside me, neglected,



unpublished. On my desk is a bundle of rejection slips. In fact, I get so many that I use them to start fires in the woodstove in the morning. But I'm beginning to get too poor to pay the postage to send off any more manuscripts. And after I am an old man, dying unknown, all I can hope for is that someone will notice the pile of books I have stacked beside me. Perhaps I can leave my last will and testament on my dusty bedside table saying:

"Please don't burn these books. They're my life's work. Take them and see if you can publish them. You can even take credit for them, but please, please don't burn them. (There are dried tear drops on the paper.)"

"Also: I have another request. Bury me not in a coffin, but under a large oak tree in the middle of the woods upon a high hill. I wish that the flesh and bones that once made up this body be re-absorbed back into nature again. God forbid that I be locked up in a coffin. I can't stand small, cramped places."

Then the landlord comes in and stores the looney old man's books in his attic. They'd burn well, but may as well grant the looney old bastard's request. The landlord takes the old man's body and dumps it in a nearby river; he ain't worth digging a hole for. Then ten years later, the landlord's brother-in-law who is a professor on his summer vacation from Harvard, just happens to be helping the landlord clean out the attic. Then he notices the books, reads one, and says, "Hey, this is really great stuff. Where did you get this?" The landlord mentions something about some looney tenant he once had that wrote them; didn't think they were good for much. The brother-in-law, impressed, takes the books and sees that they get published with his influence. The river that the landlord dumped my body in, gets named after me.

Maybe I can take that story I wrote about an Indian who went to

the Western Mountains and expand it into a book-length novel. I'll have him getting diverted into different places and by various personalities, you know, make it into a far and wide odyssey, before he finally reaches the Great Mountain Range where he will finally be enlightened by the Great Spirit.

And, when that book gets published, I think I'll have a picture of myself on the front cover. Why not? Author's privilege. Let's see. What shall I do? My hair would be a lot longer than it is now, and I could have a band around it. Maybe I could be dressed like an Indian, have war-paint on my face, and have my bow-and-arrow poised to shoot, right straight at the reader. Naw, that would freak them out, scare away the conventional, average middle class reader. I could have myself, wrapped in furs, being photographed from long distance, sitting on the top of a snow-capped crag. Or maybe I could be standing in front of a fire, facing the reader, with my arms outstretched, as though I were invoking the nature-elementals.

I can see the comments on the back cover:

"Great writing! John Creola (I'd have to change my name; Gary Snodgrass just doesn't swing it, if you know what I mean) shows considerable potential in the field of literary accomplishments. A truly breath-taking odyssey! Of course, we all know that the Great Spirit is superstitious Indian nonsense." - New York Times.

"Most interesting to read. Powerful! Invoking! But why would that Indian want to jump off a cliff for? Me think he been drinking too much firewater." - Viking Press.

"Your buildings are going to crumble because of their sheer weight, white man." - Redman Journal.

"Elves and dwarves in North Carolina? John Creola should try some of our special fortified "White Lightning" and he'll see more than that. And we have a fire that'll warm him up." - K.K.K.

"In my professional opinion, I think John Creola has an acute inferiority complex and identifies with this super-hero that he himself created in order to compensate for it. He shows marked anti-social tendencies. I would prescribe heavy doses of Librium for him to keep his fantasies in check." - A psychologist in Los Angeles."

Gary Snodgrass could imagine receiving a phone call from New York, after his published book becomes well-known:

"Hey, John? Listen, man, I'm calling up from the City and do I have an important message for you. Listen, there's going to be a big party up here and you've got to come, because all the big authors are going to be there. I mean, Ken Kesey's gonna be there, Wolfe's gonna be there, Brautigan, Vonnegut, Creeley, Barth, Burgess, all of them, the whole works, man. You've gotta complete the scene and be there, too.

Listen, there's gonna be plenty of hard liquor to go around, and, dig this, a big stash of dope, too. There's even gonna be electric orange juice, if you happen to go that way. You get any chick you want, man. And, dig this, there's gonna be..."

"I'm sorry, but I cannot come. There is a woman waiting for me. I must go to the mountains. A cabin is there. I must be away from the clamor of this civilization to see what I must see with a vision that is clear."

"But you've got to come, man. All the publishers are gonna be there. This is your big chance, man. Instead of merely getting by, you could become a millionaire, man. If you don't come, you're going to blow it, man. The publishers are all expecting you to come. They'll freak, if you don't, man."

"Tell the publishers that I have all that I need, now. I'm going to be gone for a long time. When I come back, I may have a

message for the people of this world, a message which I must give before it is too late. Then again, I may decide not to return, for perhaps the people of this world may never listen, and foolishly destroy themselves."

"Listen, man," the voice on the phone is almost crying now, "I'll even pay you to come, but you've got to come. Don't you see? The scene's got to be complete and..."

"This 'scene' that you speak of is of no importance to me and of no ultimate importance to anyone. Sorry." John Creola hangs up the phone. He looks at it. It rings again. He takes it off the hook and leaves it that way. Then he puts his gear in the car and drives to the mountains. He leaves no address behind.

"Beautiful!" thought Gary, snickering at his fantasy. But it was only a fantasy, nothing more, a tidbit to sustain him through the long afternoon. What else could he do? The years of his life were slipping through his fingers. Nothing he wanted to do without was coming out right. He wasn't really sure what he was going on for, except all he knew was that he had to keep going on. He would die and his voice would never be heard. His body would wither to ashes. His pages would turn to dust; nothing would be read. It would all be swept away by the wind, leaving nothingness in its wake.

But again, the clear laughter of Sohang rang between his ears. "So, you aspire to be famous, eh? They usually do. Waste of time. No matter what amount of fame you happen to achieve, you'll eventually be forgotten, whether it be within a century or a couple of thousand years. So why hassle with it? Better to chop wood and carry water, see mountains and smell flowers. So vainglorious are your ego-trips, when someday you'll have to leave that piece of luggage

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"Beautiful!" thought Gary, snickering at his fantasy. But it was only a fantasy, nothing more, a tidbit to sustain him through the long afternoon. What else could he do? Somehow, the phrases from a particular Pink Floyd song began to go through Gary's mind:

"Every year is getting shorter, never seem to find the time...

Plans that either come to naught or half a page of scribbled lines...

Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way...

The time is gone, the song is over, thought I'd have something more to say.... "

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behind. Don't you ever get tired of it? You fantasize in your cynicism; it will do you no good. Just leads you around in circles. Psychologists create so many theories out of thin air to explain why there is worry, why there is anxiety, why there is madness. All in vain. Thought is the source of all worry, anxiety, and, ultimately, (Sohang even yawns at this point) insanity. And what are thoughts? Units composed of smaller units called words. But what is the use in explaining? Can the mind transcend mind?

"You may fill up pages and pages with words, words, and more words, but generally they're really just empty pages. Every now and then, someone may have something real to say, but this is rare. How authors revel in their word games, their literary tricks. Empty pages. More words to create worry with, fat on the fire. But you'll see. You'll see. Perhaps when you finally exhale your dying breath, you'll realize that experiencing is what is important, not the generation of words." Sohang disappeared and flew back to the Himalayas.

Gary lay back on his bed, and stared listlessly out the window. What a dead world it all is. What was happening to the energy he had that past summer? It was all somehow seeping out and had been for two months. Everything seemed to be piling on top of him and he was unable to resist. Gary wondered if maybe his biorhythm was on a low slope or something. Or did it have something to do with the dying plants outside? Maybe it was the hot southern sun that past summer that catalyzed his fierce energy. Well, it was getting close to his astrological month, Leo. Also, he got laid at the time and did some tripping, peak experiences in Gary's life. Or was it the excitement of transferring to a different school, instead of the dead-end school he had been going to? What has happened to him?, Gary

thought in despair. Could he ever get out of this gutter that he had somehow inadvertently flown into? And whatever happened to the non-chemical visions he promised himself he'd be having by now?

"Just don't fight it so much," Sohang answered. "You fight it too much. Ride along with it for awhile. After all, you have to die every now and then to be born anew. Everything has its summer and its autumn. Just relax. Don't worry. There are times to repose and times to create. You take it all as such a tragedy. It's nothing; nothing at all. Let the undertow pull you for awhile and afterwards, you'll be surfing on the high waves again."

Gary sighed and looked out the window at the half bare trees. Then he fell into a light sleep. He had a dream that he was walking along a path in a deep valley, alongside Sohang again. It was always the same valley. Sohang was showing him the pattern of the cosmos on the veins of a fallen maple leaf.

The page remained empty with the pen sleeping beside it.

## GARY SNODGRASS GOES TO SCHOOL

(in Bb-minor)

After Gary Snodgrass had finished his little verbal transaction with his theater advisor, who for the third week in a row was too busy to talk to him for more than a few minutes, he glanced around campus for what might be his girlfriend, then again, for what might no longer be so. Gary Snodgrass was not quite sure. Gary Snodgrass wasn't even sure that the pavement that he was standing on was real.

In fact, they even had a discussion about that in his psychology class that morning. The empiricists could be completely wrong if the phenomenologists were right. The empiricists say that the objective world is quite real, but the phenomenologists are not quite so sure of that, because everything you receive through your senses is being processed inside your head and given a certain interpretation, so how do you know that what is "out there" is really the way it is and not just what your senses are telling you? For example, the atomic physicists tell us that quite contrary to what our senses tell us, solid objects are not really that solid but are actually trillions of swiftly spinning atoms and molecules in constant motion, atoms and molecules that just happen to be packed together more tightly than they are in liquids and gases. Gary brilliantly made a comment that if we were intelligent insects, we would see the world as a series of hexagons and in ultra-violet light so we'd revolve all our interpretations of the world "out there" in terms of intricate hexagonal patterns. No sooner had Gary said this than a bee began to whirl angrily around his head. Perhaps by thinking about an insect, this induced one to pop into Gary's phenomenological field of consciousness. Gary sweated at the possibilities of this thought; he tried not to think of an angry bee. And now, it might not be solid con-



crete that Gary was standing on, but actually a vast sea of quantum waves.

Not seeing her anywhere on campus, Gary walked towards her dorm. Maybe he had got her scared into thinking he was a psychopath. Yes, he could have written his name in bright red blood upon her door. Watch out, here comes Gary Snodgrass, the mad psychopath. Gaze into his eyes and you will turn to utter butter and melt away into the floor. Oh, he is quite unassuming on the surface, but you better watch out when you penetrate the interior and discover what a madman he actually is.

Maybe he could try his hand at being a rapist. It might be an interesting hobby to take up, full of fun, chills, and thrills. But he wouldn't be a mean and nasty rapist, he'd be a gentle, kind one. He'd hide behind the bushes at night and wait for a good-looking chick to come by, probably on her way from the library. Then paddy-paddling on soft tennis shoes, he'd come up behind her, gag her with an anesthetic, and drag her behind the bushes. Then, certain that no cops were watching, he'd drag her into his car and drive her to his apartment. He'd tie her down to the bed in such a way that she couldn't interfere with his intended actions. But he wouldn't get her pregnant, oh no, not Gary Snodgrass. He'd even shoot up some contraceptive foam inside her. He'd have to put something over his face though, maybe a mask, of either a werewolf or a skull. It'd be uncomfortable, but he couldn't let her recognize him if she saw him again. Then he'd wait for her to wake up.

As he's about to get into her, she asks, "Why are you doing this?"

"Shit, man!" Gary answers, almost on the verge of weeping, "I just can't get laid the regular way. I've tried it, but it just doesn't work for me."

"You poor dude," she answers, "and so you have to do this. Go ahead and take off that silly mask. It's okay. I won't tell on you."

"You mean it? You really mean it?"

"Sure, man, you don't have to go through all this bullshit. I can dig it."

"Well, I'll be damned," Gary answers, and takes off his mask.

"No shit!" the chick exclaims. "You're the very dude I've fantasized about for two months. I mean, I've seen you around, but I didn't know how to approach you. Untie me. I'll do it willingly. Man, I can't believe this." Gary didn't either. They had a nice round of sex, talked to each other, and had a good relationship afterwards.

The daydream faded as he stood before the chick's door. He rolled his eyes up into his head. Here goes again. Knock! Knock! Who's there? No answer. He knocks again. Still no answer. Whew! No confrontation yet; he actually wasn't in the mood for it. He tried the door. Locked.

As he walked down the stairs, Gary started wondering if maybe she was actually in there and refused to answer, knowing that it probably be him. Perhaps she listened in terror as he tried the locked door, hoping he wouldn't try to break it down. In a note, he asked her to call him, but she didn't. For all he knew, whenever he called, she'd ask her roommate to answer and tell him that she wasn't there, if it was old psychopathic Gary calling. These thoughts, of course, could be just another product of his elaborate paranoia mechanism, but still she hadn't called. Gary sighed and supposed that she was hiding from him.

As Gary walked out of the dorm, he decided to walk down a backroad he had walked along when he lived in the dorm that past summer. He wanted to see how a certain road was doing. Yep, his expectations

were confirmed, it was paved over, damn them! He remembered how he had once tripped on clear windowpane in the illustrious moonlight here when the trees had just been sawed down. He remembered watching, from his high dorm window, watching the cranes lift aside the trees and watching the bulldozers plow aside the dirt to smooth it out. And, as he watched, he wrote a flaming essay on how needlessly the industrial complex destroyed nature. And he wondered what the farmer would do when they started tearing up his land.

Gary sat down on the straw beside the road. "Damn them," he said aloud. "This used to be a nice, mellow woods and the motherfuckers have transformed it into a paved road. And I wonder how many barrels of petroleum they've wasted here, making this unnecessary road. Just think. I used to trip here and it was a beautiful place to be, a lovely piece of nature where no one can come and hassle you. Now, everytime I come here, I'll have to be paranoid because there's a road here, where there used to be nature. Just how long do they think they can go on like this? How long before they no longer have any petroleum or shale oil to do it with? Oh, shit!..."

And Gary looked down at what he was sitting on and discovered that it wasn't just straw. It was tarred straw and by sitting on it, he got it on his pants and on his shoes. When you get tar on your clothes, it won't come off. This made Gary very angry. Then, Gary remembered that it was Halloween. So he got tricked, not treated. Either that or it was a treat with razor blades in it. And the straw looked so soft and inviting, so he sat on it. A policecar pulled by near and stopped. Gary was in no mood to show them his identification. He got up and walked away in disgust, picking the straw off his pants and shoes.

He went to the cafeteria and sat on one of the balconies, hoping

to spot her going in or coming out of the cafeteria. While he was waiting, he opened up his notebook and wrote down the following things:

"1. Enlightenment is a stereotype experience. It is nothing new. It could just as well be induced by electrodes implanted in the brain.

2. They built the road behind the dorm. They are getting too close to the farmer's land. Next they will be installing more sterile, white buildings along its side. I know this for a fact; I went there and took a look for myself. The asphalt from that damned road is on my shoes and my pants. When I say the road is damned, it is not just a figure of speech with me; I'm planning to blow it up, with either dynamite or fiery psychic energy. I know this, just as sure as I'm sitting here.

3. I'm not even sure that I'm sitting here. I may be just imagining that I'm sitting here. Where are my feet?

4. Never believe a word I say; I'm absolutely mad. You can be sure of that; I'm absolutely mad. But wait: I just said never believe a word I say. So you don't really know whether I'm absolutely mad or not. So what are you going to believe, that I'm sitting here? Just don't let anybody in on the secret. The entire universe is a joke. Don't tell anybody. I won't if you won't. O.K.? O.K."

Gary got tired of waiting and went to the lake to sit by it. Gary Snodgrass was watching the ducks and the ducks were swimming towards him for some ducklike reason of their own. Someone once told him that their wings were clipped off and they had no choice but to swim in this lake, to be fed, ridiculed, and watched by human students. Gary envied them. When they got good and close, Gary hissed the following words at them:

"You stupid ducks. You don't have a fucking thing to worry

about." One of the ducks quacked nervously. "You don't have to decide where to go to. You don't have to live according to a schedule. You don't have to bullshit with words and concepts. You don't have to do a damn thing except to serenely swim around and around, while the human beings sit by and contemplate you at their leisure." The ducks started bobbing their heads under the water. They didn't understand what this human being was lecturing to them about. "That's right. Bob your heads under the water. Eat the algae and ignore me. But gladly... gladly would I exchange my position for yours."

Then Gary felt sorry that he said that. After all, they were just ducks and they couldn't understand what he was talking about. They're just ducks; that's all they'll ever be, Gary thought. The ducks walked up on the grass and walked towards him. Maybe they thought he was going to feed them. For some reason, Gary suddenly wished he had something to feed them. Their quacking was very lovable, Gary decided. Gary had never particularly seen anything in ducks before, but now he was astounded by their utter duckness. He tried to quack back but he didn't quack quite right which made the ducks feel a bit troubled; human beings don't usually act this way. They hurried back to the water and swam away, gliding towards the other side.

Then Gary got up and headed towards his car. "'Tis no joy to be a human being," he muttered. "'Tis no joy. 'Tis no joy."

One night later, Gary Snodgrass, stoned out of his mind, was heading out of the dark, moonlit woods, with astral vampires and werewolves surrounding him. Trying his best to ignore them, Gary chanted again and again, "And I'm thinking about what she's thinking about me and she's thinking about what I'm thinking about her and I'm thinking about what she's thinking about me and she's thinking about

what I'm thinking about her and I'm thinking about what she's thinking about what I'm thinking about what she's thinking about what I'm thinking about..." And good old Sohang would wink his eye and say: "If you smoke grass on a moonlit night following Halloween night and if you're all alone, you're whistling in the dark."