

## PHILLIP'S STORY

(A dilemma and its resolution)

The following is a story about Phillip, a rather sad and melodramatic character who is exceedingly down in the dumps of life. Phillip is someone you might see sitting alone on a park bench staring at nothing in particular or all by himself in a bar booth cradling a beer in his hands. Phillip is the sort of person who is apt to wind up on the psychiatric files, one of those elusive characters who fail to adjust to society, a misfit, an outcast, and possibly, in desperation, an outlaw. Phillip is unable to work at those positions in society which we call "jobs" nor is he particularly inclined to. Phillip is living on unemployment compensation. If it weren't for this, he would starve to death. He was a proofreader who was replaced by a computer which rendered his services utterly useless. There are many people like Phillip on the welfare rolls, the people who are psychologically unable to play the game of society. And, of course, Phillip has another problem which he is very concerned about. Would you care to step forward and tell them about it, Phillip?

"Yessirree, I will. I most certainly will. I haven't been laid in three years and I just don't understand it."

Yes, Phillip has had this problem for quite awhile now. Phillip is understandably depressed about this problem and is afraid that he won't be able to solve it. As we all know, everybody needs to get laid every now and then to help them feel complete again. It is a perfectly normal instinct and our friend, Phillip, poor Phillip, just isn't getting any. Well... Phillip did manage to make out every now and then, fleeting graspings at straws really, and he even once had a girlfriend, Susan, with whom he has had, let us say, less than satisfactory sexual relations. Phillip has not technically arrived

at orgasm with a woman in over three years. Phillip is very upset about this:

"I mean, I just can't understand it. It just makes me, you know, doubt my masculinity or something. I mean, what is wrong with me? There must be something fucking wrong with me! Could it be that I don't come on right or maybe my dick isn't big enough? Oh God, I think I'll kill myself if that were true. Or maybe I give off fatalistically bad vibes that scare off women. Do I act too eager or something? Are my hands too cold? Do I seem not quite human which makes them distrust me? I know it takes a long time to get laid, but what's it going to be... two more years, three more years, the rest of my life? Oh God, this is impossible..."

If there are any willing women out there who would like to help Phillip out with his problem, please don't hesitate to contribute. Meanwhile, let's get on with it and tell Phillip's story:

Phillip stumbled around in his kitchen trying to make a cup of coffee. His hands shook and tended to knock things over. A couple of times, he ran into his stove. He felt like a staggering cockroach that just got a lethal dose of Raid. For all he knew, he was a cockroach; he could have died last night and was reborn this morning as a cockroach. But Phillip didn't like cockroaches very much; why should he be a cockroach?

Phillip had been feeling a lot like this for the past several mornings. He had been drinking a lot every night and was splurging all his money on beer. Because of this, he was getting poorer and poorer and every night it was taking more beer to get him to the point of blessed oblivion, dead to the world and all its problems at last. And every day, as usual, he'd wake up wishing that he didn't get drunk the night before. And then the cycle would repeat itself all over

again.

Phillip made his coffee and sat on his couch. He suddenly realized that he couldn't stand to drink coffee when he was hungover; it only made him more nervous, it only made his heart pound harder, it only increased his sense of disassociation from reality (whatever that was). But it was the only thing that would wake him up; he couldn't really afford breakfast. Besides, Phillip couldn't stand to eat breakfast and lunch the way normal people do. He made a point to never eat anything before dinner, his one and only meal of the day.

Sitting on the couch in his living room, Phillip contemplated the apartment he lived in. The walls were filthy and there were burn marks on them where someone had once thrown firecrackers at one of his parties. There were some cobwebs in the corners. The couch he was sitting on was broken in the middle and supported by concrete blocks; he found it in a junkyard somewhere. The floor was covered with weeks of dust and debris. The tables were strewn with beer cans and filled ashtrays. There were a few records on the turntable.

All in all, it had a beautifully depressing effect, Phillip concluded approvingly. It was the perfect place for a misfit to end his life. After all, he might die in this place, smothered by his own stagnation. He did not think he would ever commit suicide or anything quite so rash; he'd just patiently wait and bide his time until it finally all ended. And it could just end here, right in this filthy apartment.

For no reason at all, Phillip started thinking about the puke in the bed in his bedroom. The puke in the bed in his bedroom was made by a particular girl whom he had tried to seduce. He got her drunk enough so that she would not be entirely conscious of what she was doing and he got himself drunk also, not entirely aware of what he was doing either. And so, while the music played, he took her

by the hand and led her to his bedroom, where she immediately proceeded to throw up and pass out. Phillip lay beside her all night, trying to arouse her while she was asleep. He contentedly amused himself with the delusion that she was responding. In the morning, Phillip woke up to find her gone and he wondered what the fuck that puke was doing in his bed. After all, he was trying to get a girl into his bed, but not to throw up on it. Such seemed to be Phillip's ironic fate.

He remembered another time when he had a small party of people at his place. He had recruited them from a local bar and he did not know them very well. One by one, the people got bored with the party and left. He observed one couple frantically making out while listening to the music. Then they suddenly left to go into Phillip's bedroom to consummate what they had begun.

"Wait a second," Phillip thought, "I'm not going to have people fucking in my bedroom when I'm the one who needs to get laid." Phillip was drunk at the time and he didn't feel like being a hospitable host. He took off his clothes and opened the bedroom door. They had their clothes off and had already started. Phillip then told them that if they were going to fuck on his bed, it would be a threesome or nothing. They ignored him. Phillip got a knife from the kitchen and returned. He repeated his demand. They must have gotten the message that time, because they looked at him in horror and hurriedly split. Phillip refused to let his bed be used by other people as a fuck nest.

"Oh well, such is my life," Phillip thought. He then turned his thoughts towards the mystery of women and why they always seemed so reluctant to have sex. It seemed that sometimes they were "on" and at other times they were "off". Phillip could not figure out what made them go from one of these extremes to the other. Maybe it had

something to do with the shirt he was wearing or the type of deodorant he was using. Maybe his feet stunk. Or did it have something to do with a certain look in the eye? Phillip shook his head; there was no way of telling. He'd never know.

He had observed, as a rule of thumb, that most women tended to display greater sexual interest when they were drunk rather than when they were not drunk. But also in this state, they were not very discriminating and tended to go with the most aggressive and outgoing male who happened to be around. This was why Phillip did not particularly like to go to bars. He observed that most women who went to bars tended to be very fickle and were more impressed by the outward behavior of a dude rather than what he has to say or the inner content of his psyche. Phillip felt that he had no chance against dudes who were loud, flashy, or dominating. Phillip just wasn't that aggressive; he didn't have it.

For example, Phillip once spent an entire evening in a bar talking to a girl about all kinds of things. She told him about her problems and he told her about his. It looked like they were truly kindred souls and they even snuggled up to each other. It looked like something was going there for awhile. Then suddenly she left his side and ran up to some goony-looking dude wearing a cowboy hat. And out they went. Phillip was left alone to ponder his loneliness.

Phillip wasn't aggressive enough. He didn't have the flash. He couldn't fight and he didn't seem confident enough. His hair was either too long or it was too short. He wasn't particularly tall and he wasn't particularly muscular. He wasn't very good at bragging and he was no salesman, that was for sure. He wasn't very skilled at playing the games in bars, neither the silly conversation games people play with each other nor the various games of entertainment they supply at bars. Phillip didn't like to play games; that was

the main thing he had going against him. All Phillip had to offer was himself; was that not enough?

He also had the impression that women are usually turned on by money. He found them somewhat more responsive when he bought beer for them. He was able to buy things and take girls around back when he was working as a proofreader. He made considerable money at that job, at least, for his own age group. But even money didn't seem to swing it. He would be buying a girl beer after beer and some guy (again in a cowboy hat) four times poorer than himself would invite her to play foz ball and that would be that. Maybe he should be poor and wear a cowboy hat.

When Phillip was working at his job and making a good salary, he was even willing to support a girl for her to stay with him. Several months ago he offered his girlfriend, Susan, this particular amenity. This was the girl with whom he did not have extremely satisfactory sexual relations. Susan thought about it for an instant and the idea of being supported seemed to turn her on. She wouldn't have to work anymore; she liked that. Then she considered Phillip who was waiting for her answer and decided to turn down his offer. Perhaps Phillip acted too eager and she got the impression that he was trying to lead her into some kind of trap. Susan went to school in another town to study acting. And so, Phillip lost her. Phillip felt bad about this for awhile, but eventually got over it and began to look for other girls. Besides, his sexual relations with Susan lacked a certain something (emotional or spiritual union, perhaps?) that left Phillip unfulfilled.

Nothing seemed to work for Phillip. Once when he was really drunk and desperate, he sat beside a girl at a bar and offered to buy her a beer. She declined to let him. He bugged her with a few preliminary questions and finally blurted out, "Look, I'll even give

give you money for it." Phillip was shocked; he hadn't expected that to come out of his mouth. Phillip was panting hard, sweating feverishly, and had the wild-eyed look of a cornered animal. She looked at him for a second, then she slapped him. Then she told him that he'd better get out of that bar as fast he could and never come back. He probably hurt her feelings; maybe she had just had some kind of traumatic experience with a guy that day. Phillip quickly decided that it would be best not to try that approach anymore.

He even considered the possibility of buying a whore. ("Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Rush on downtown and get yours today! Be the first in your neighborhood to have one! And hurry!") For all the time and money he spent in bars to get it on with a woman, he might as well have spent twenty dollars for intercourse with a whore. But to Phillip, however, this seemed to be an outrageous rip-off. He just ~~couldn't~~ couldn't see spending twenty dollars to just go in, stick it in and out of an uncaring hunk of female flesh who's thinking about how to pay her bills or what she's going to have for dinner that night, then come, and that's that. Phillip would rather masturbate (which he did quite frequently). Besides, believe it or not, Phillip isn't really your typical male chauvinist who just wants to get laid and that's it. Phillip was looking for a genuine meaningful relationship (and that's rare in these days, folks).

So Phillip tried a more romantic approach with a girl named Ariadnine. Ariadnine is the one who threw up on Phillip's bed. Well... it wasn't really a fake, contrived approach by which he was trying to hypnotize the girl into believing that he was really and truly in love with her; Phillip was really into it. Phillip met Ariadnine a few months ago in a bar and was instantaneously attracted to her. He was talking about how human beings use only one-tenth of their real brain capacity and how the moon was really a hollow globe

where the UFO people had their base. He was very much into UFO people and the theory that we are evolved from UFO people. He explained all this to Ariadnine. It was something he was getting into at the time.

Phillip decided to declare a party at his place and gathered up a few people in the bar, including Ariadnine, to go there. When they got there, some people got stoned and some people got drunk. Phillip put on some of his best music and sat on the couch with Ariadnine. They began to make out and French-kissed (which was something that Susan never liked to do). Phillip hadn't made out in a long time and he felt that Ariadnine was the one he was meant to meet. While they made out, someone (probably stoned) kept throwing firecrackers around the apartment. Phillip made a date to see her the next night.

The next night, Phillip met Ariadnine in the bar, which was to be their common meeting ground for a long time to come. Phillip was very nervous because Ariadnine was a very pretty girl and Phillip was not used to being around pretty girls. Apprehensive that she would reject him, Phillip bought a pitcher of beer and declared his love for her. He was so apprehensive that he tried to light up a cigarette and the whole pack of matches flared up in his fingers. Ariadnine found him amusing and decided to see him again. She did not really believe that he was in love with her.

So thus began an involvement which went on for week after week in which Phillip and Ariadnine went around with each other constantly. She would make out, but she would not have sex with him. She was young and a bit hung-up. She found his declarations of love amusing; she had heard it all before from a few whose intent was not as sincere as Phillip's.

"But I really mean it," Phillip would say. "I'm not laying on a line. I'm an honest person. I can assure you, it's not the beer talking."



"I'd really rather not hear all that mushy stuff, to tell you the truth," Ariadnine would reply. "I'd rather just be friends with you. I do like being with you, though."

"I don't understand what's wrong with me. Why don't you want to have sex with me?"

"I'm just not attracted to you, that's all."

Ariadnine could be terribly blunt and it hurt Phillip. One time, Phillip got so exasperated with her that he threw his beer on the floor and left. The next day, he saw her, though, and they made up. He did happen to notice that she had a distinct attraction to guys who wore cowboy hats. Nevertheless, he continued to be friends with her; he didn't want to let go of her. Phillip was the sort who sometimes would rather have any kind of relationship, even if it was not exactly the kind of relationship he wanted, than no relationship at all. A few times, Ariadnine suggested that Phillip find a whore to help him out with his problem. She never offered herself.

"All women are bitches," Phillip muttered to himself, staring at the empty beer cans on his living room table. The beer cans did not appear to hear. "They have no love and they have no compassion, and all they want is money, a big dick, and a cowboy hat." Phillip continued to rave on at himself about this for awhile and then went out to see what kind of mail he got.

He had about two months due on his electric bill and they would be around to cut off his electricity any day now. Well, he was prepared for it. He had his sterno kit to cook food with and a few candles; sometimes that's all you need. He'd camp out in his apartment. He also had a bill from the emergency room of the hospital. There is a story behind this bill:

One night, Phillip invited Ariadnine and a friend of hers over to his apartment and they got drunk. It was Phillip's second rare

and precious night off, and Phillip was anxious to make the most of it. He wanted to spend some time alone with Ariadnine and he knew that his time was limited. But Ariadnine seemed to be paying more attention to her friend than she was to him. Phillip was the sort who gets jealous very easily and for little reason at all. He was also drunk and that had very much to do with what happened that night.

Ariadnine kept talking to her friend and kept excluding Phillip from the conversation. Phillip was very impatient and couldn't stand it anymore. He went into the kitchen and began throwing things around around. He called Ariadnine a bitch. She demanded that he take her and her friend back to the bar. Phillip didn't say a word; he drove furiously, recklessly, and suicidally back to the bar, barely side-swiping a few parked cars and a few telephone poles.

Then suddenly Phillip stopped the car. "I can't stand this anymore. Take me to the hospital. I want to commit myself." They agreed that he was fucked-up enough to be put there, so they drove him to the local mental institution, assuring him that maybe it was the best thing for him. All the way there and all the way through the admitting halls of the hospital, Phillip babbled, "There is no such thing as sanity. I tell you, sanity does not exist. Sanity is pure insanity. There simply is no such thing." Phillip was laughing his head off. There must have been a few people in the hospital who thought he was crazy. They left him there in the emergency room, as crazy as he was, babbling out his inner emotions quite freely. It was a new kind of freedom for Phillip; he could do anything he wanted because he was considered "crazy".

The people in the hospital were quite understanding. They put him in a room while processing him. Phillip thought about what a funny term that was, "processing". While they were processing him, Phillip decided that he didn't really belong in that place and vague-

ly began to conceive of ways to escape. Surely it would not be extremely difficult to just walk out. How would they be able to distinguish him from the other patients? He stood in the doorway of the room they had allotted him, watching the other potential patients, giving all those who walked by his door his strange "Charles Manson" stare, his eyes gleaming, a demonic smile upon his lips. Perhaps they had forgotten about him by now. He slipped into the waiting room to see if anyone would recognize him. The nurse, unfortunately, knew what he was up to and told him to go back to his room and not to come out until they told him to. He grinned madly at the people coming in and out. They were terrified of him. Lunatics are unpredictable; who knows what they might do or what lies buried in their twisted, confused, and demented minds?

When the nurse finally came in and asked him if he really intended to commit himself to the hospital, Phillip was sitting cross-legged on the floor, patiently smiling up at her. He calmly explained that he had gotten drunk that evening and that he was strung out over a girl named Ariadne. In other words, there wasn't really anything wrong with him and he didn't understand what he was doing there. The nurse was young and seemed to be understanding. He was free to leave, she told him, and he should come back whenever he got to feeling that he couldn't handle it anymore. And that is how Phillip got his hospital bill.

Phillip didn't go to work for four days after this incident. It was the beginning of a period when he started calling in sick quite frequently. Ariadne was surprised he wasn't in the hospital and was concerned about him. They stayed friends; Phillip needed her. At his job, Phillip was informed that it would not be long before he would be replaced by a computer.

So Phillip contemplating his dreary past, sitting on his broken-

down couch, wondered what the fuck he was going to do next. He finished his coffee and again wished that he weren't hungover. He did not like hangovers. It was hangovers which made him have the urge to get drunk again. The time was coming when he would not be able to afford to get drunk again and he would be at the mercy of his own mental demons. He would have excruciating withdrawal symptoms from alcohol and he'd throw up and break out in horrible boils that would leave hideous scars on him for the rest of his life. Then he'd be so physically repulsive that he'd never get laid and he'd be forced to be a lecherous patron of blue movies for the rest of his life. Ah, what a terrible, terrible fate for one such as Phillip, who was only trying to get some sort of minimal satisfaction from life.

Phillip noticed a half-empty can or two of beer and drank them off. The beer was stale and tasted flat, but it had alcohol in it and there was no sense in letting it go to waste. It seemed to help a little. It was going to be a long, hard day to go through. He'd have to wait at least until sundown to start getting drunk again. Or maybe he'd change today. Maybe he'd quit getting drunk and devote himself to reading more, walking more, doing more constructive things. His life was in his own hands and all it seemed to be doing was getting more out of hand.

But he had to do something. He figured that Step I. would be to clean up his apartment. So he cleared up all the beer cans and emptied the ashtrays. This was really an amazing feat; he hadn't done that in weeks. Then he actually swept the apartment. The dishes needed to be washed. He couldn't believe it; he actually washed them. What was coming over him? He found a nearly full can of beer and slugged it down. Then he made his bed, brushed his teeth, and was sure to take his vitamins to keep from flipping out. He had done quite nicely, all things considered. If he could clean his apartment,

he could conquer the world.

Phillip sat down on his couch to rest a bit. "Whew, that was hard work," he remarked to himself. Phillip was not used to physical work. All he did at his job was sit on his butt, read proofs, and gain weight. He'd have to start walking and getting more exercise to lose it again. Maybe he'd walk around that day, get some fresh air, not get drunk that night, improve his health a little.

Idly, he observed a cockroach stagger across the living room floor. He kept an eye on it. Vaguely he wondered what its mission was; it must have a long way to go. Then he jumped up, ran across the room, and stomped on it. He stomped on it again and again.

"TAKE THAT, YOU MOTHERFUCKING LITTLE CRUSTACEOUS MONSTROSITY!" he roared aloud to the apartment. "DO YOU REALLY THINK YOU AND YOUR MISERABLE KIND CAN CONTINUE TO MULTIPLY AND EAT MY FOOD CRUMBS AND SHIT ON MY DISHES AND HAVE ORGIES IN MY PANTRY? HA! YOU WILL ALL DIE!!!"

Phillip was out of breath. It was a big one, the cockroach he had killed. Squashed, it looked a little bit like an overripe date filled with greyish-white cream. Hopefully, it was a female cockroach so it wouldn't deposit thousands and thousands of little cockroach eggs all over his apartment to become thousands and thousands of little cockroaches to invade his apartment at night. As Phillip understood it, the multiplication capacities of cockroaches are virtually unlimited. Phillip looked at the cockroach he killed and then began to laugh. It was loud and malicious laughter and no one heard it except the walls. Killing that cockroach made him feel a bit better; it made him feel like he had a little more control over his immediate environment. But where were the others and what could he do about them?

He walked into the kitchen to see what was going on there. He

saw a bunch of cockroaches playing in his sink. He grabbed a bottle of Raid and dealt them a massive dose. He chuckled to himself as he watched them die a hideous insecticidal death. He was doing a pretty good job of being a cockroach death squad.

"Goddamn cockroaches," he muttered to himself as he looked around for more. He opened up the cupboard to check if any were in there. There they were - two of them, copulating. It was getting to be that time of the year for it. They went on with their business, unaware of what was coming to them.

"Jesus," he muttered, hitting them and hitting them hard with the death spray, "I can't let them do that. Before I know it, they'll multiply so fast, they'll eat me alive in bed." This was Phillip's secret fear, that the cockroaches would breed so fast that they would soon fill his apartment and reduce him to a mere skeleton while asleep one night.

Phillip paced around his apartment. He felt very restless. "My life is bad enough without a bunch of cockroaches in it," he said. He saw one by the refrigerator. He put his foot on it and slowly crushed its life out, chuckling satanically. His chuckles echoed throughout the apartment.

He decided that he'd had enough of this. He needed to get out of his apartment for awhile. He took one last look around to make sure that everything was in place and then he left.

And life marches inexorably on. Perplexed fellow, this Phillip, isn't he?

Phillip stepped outside of his apartment and locked the door behind him. He checked it a couple of times to make sure it was locked. The door was securely locked; no one would be able to get into his apartment.

He heard a train coming. He had railroad tracks in his backyard and trains regularly passed by. Sometimes they were a mile long. He went around to the back to observe the train go by.

Phillip found it comforting to live next to the railroad tracks. He could watch all the vehicles carrying raw materials and finished products to all the various states in the country. There was nothing like seeing the wheels of industry moving. Living next to the railroad tracks was a bit like living next to a river of commerce and watching the barges go by. It occurred to him how easy it would be to simply jump on a train in his own backyard and take off away to some other place, far away from the foul, foul city that he despised living in. He would like very much to go somewhere else, but lacked the take-off funds. The train passed by, leaving its echoes to be heard from miles away. Phillip set off for his walk.

Phillip had a car, but he did not use it very often because he could not afford the gas. He took a look at it. It was an old car and he hoped it wouldn't break down on him anytime soon. That would be a tragedy; it was impossible to get a job without a car. He worked long and hard for that car. He wished his car well and went on.

But first he wanted to stop by the local drugstore and get a pack of cigarettes. That was a very important item he would need to sustain him on his journey from his apartment for a few hours. On his way, he passed the great big water tower.

The great big water tower was a rather prominent landmark of the neighborhood Phillip lived in. It would not be very difficult to climb, Phillip mused. The steel ladder was very close to the ground. Phillip always had a fantasy about climbing that water tower. It was huge and towered way above the trees. Phillip knew that he could bet on a good view when he got to the top of that great dome. It could be seen from miles away.

"There must be a lot of water in that water tower," Phillip considered. He thought about all the water that would come crashing down upon all the rooftops if the water tower ever got bombed. There would be tremendous forces behind all that water.

Phillip thought about how one night he would climb the fence surrounding the water tower and quietly sneak towards the ladder that would lead him to the top. It would be late in the night and the moon would be shining brightly. All the population of the city would be asleep and Phillip would be climbing the great water tower, the only one in the whole city to know that he is doing this. They would never know and they would never catch him. And, finally, Phillip would be on the top of the water tower and it would be all his. Phillip would get stoned up there and survey the misty distances in the moonlight. In the wee hours of the morning, he would watch the twilight arriving in the east. The entire view would be his, and no one would know. And secure in this knowledge, Phillip would giggle to himself in glee.

Or perhaps he would hang himself from up there for all to see the next day. How conspicuous his corpse would be from all around, how all the people would gather around and gape in horror at the sight. High up from the balcony of the water tower, he would be dangling and he'd be wearing a sign around his neck, proclaiming to all who care to see:

"YOU BASTARDS! YOU MADE A MOCKERY OUT OF MY EXISTENCE AND NOW I SENTENCE YOU TO WITNESS MY CORPSE ON DISPLAY TO SEE WHAT YOU HAVE DONE TO ME!"

Phillip thought about that for a moment. He wasn't sure if that made a great deal of sense. Uh oh, he was having dangerous suicidal tendencies again. Maybe he should see a psychologist about it. But Phillip decided to strike that one out; he was through with seeing



psychologists and he knew it. He had a suspicion that psychologists were henchmen for society, to make you feel that something is wrong with you if you are not happily "adjusted" to this society. God only knows what kind of files they had on him and what kind of bizarre labels they put on him to have him neatly categorized.

Phillip strolled into the drugstore to get his cigarettes. Creeps, there were nothing but creeps in that drugstore: Old, fat ladies at the counter who probably attended Southern Baptist meetings regularly hoping for a miracle that would make them thin again --- A badly deformed retard standing there staring at him with one eye --- A decrepit old black wino pacing up and down in front of the store trying to bum cigarettes and spare change from unsuspecting customers --- A midget with a bad leg standing on crutches by the weighing machine, hand outstretched for change --- A spaced-out old man with long gray hair just standing there, staring at nothing at all. Phillip had been thinking about making a phone call there, but he decided to forget it. There were too many creeps there. He got out of there as fast as he could. He wasn't sure whether he was hallucinating the whole thing or not.

He lit up a cigarette and thought about the last time he went to see a psychologist. The psychologist was a pudgy fellow with a gray mustache who looked exactly like Captain Kangaroo. For all Phillip knew, he was Captain Kangaroo. Phillip came to him flipping out and poured out all his problems to him, explaining that he didn't like his job, he didn't like this bureaucratic society, and he couldn't get laid. The psychologist who looked like Captain Kangaroo just looked at him and smiled as if he didn't comprehend a thing Phillip had just told him. The following is a transcript of the conversation between Phillip and the psychologist (who will be designated as "Captain Kangaroo"):

Phillip: "Well, there you go. I suppose I've told you everything I know about my case. Now you're supposed to give me some kind of therapy or medication to calm my nerves, or whatever. I'm not really sure if you can help me, but I thought I'd come in here and see what happens. I don't know what else to say."

Captain Kangaroo (grinning stupidly): "Phillip, you can say anything you want in here."

Phillip (slightly irritated by his tone): "Well, you see, it's like this. I'm pretty upset because I can't get laid and I'd really like to have a meaningful relationship with a girlfriend, but it seems that I'm so lonely and desperate that I seem to frighten people off, and it makes me feel like I must be a most horrible person as if I reek of leprosy or give off loathsome vibes that make people not want to get near me, you see?"

Captain Kangaroo (shaking his head): "I see, Phillip, I really see."

Phillip (getting more irritated): "What do you mean, 'you see!?' See what?"

Captain Kangaroo (shaking his head, beaming majestically): "I see that you feel like a horrible person."

Phillip (getting exasperated): "I hope that you will excuse me, but I really don't think you're listening to what I'm saying at all. You just sit there and grin at me, making remarks that are entirely inappropriate and do not help me at all. I'd like to know what school of psychotherapy you are in, anyway. Frankly, your inhuman silence and your stupid grinning makes me feel uncomfortable. Is that what they trained you to do in psychotherapy school?"

Captain Kangaroo (hanging in there, grinning quite moronically): "So, I make you uncomfortable, don't I, Phillip?"

Phillip: "Yeah, that's right. Anybody would feel uncomfortable

with you talking to them the way you are talking to me now. You just sit there hiding behind your inscrutable, chief-psychologist's mask, grinning at me as though you know all the answers. You're probably measuring my reactions to you right now, so you'll know just what ready-made method you'll apply to me in order to 'cure' me. I just wish that you'd talk with me, instead of at me or down at me."

Captain Kangaroo (smiling as if he'd just scored a point): "I make you feel very threatened, don't I, Phillip? Do you always feel this threatened by people who try to give you advice? Or are you threatened by the possibility that I might change you or that your basic psychological structure may change? Just what is it that is bothering you, Phillip?"

Phillip: "I believe I've already told you and I don't think you really listened. See? You're doing it again. You're talking down at me as if I were a little kid. I give up; you're impossible."

An interval of uncomfortable silence.

Captain Kangaroo: "Hmmm, I just happened to notice something on your previous reports. Tell me something, Phillip, do you hear ~~voices~~ 'voices'?" (Leaning forward, grinning significantly.)

Phillip (realizing very well that this is the standard test question asked to determine whether the client is psychotic or not): "No, not any more. I have lost my psychic abilities to perceive spirits of the nonphysical world through the auditory medium."

Captain Kangaroo (writing something down in a notebook): "Very interesting. And do you really believe that these entities exist?"

Phillip: "Well, I certainly don't care what you think."

They spent the rest of the session in the kind of stalemate that has just been recorded. Phillip left and ~~vowed~~ that he would never see another psychologist again. They were just trying to con him into believing that he needed them in order to keep him coming back to the

them, so they could either get money out of him or have a sense of power over him. Phillip didn't need them; all he needed was a girlfriend. A friend who would listen to him and try to understand him would do him about as much good as a psychologist would. Otherwise, Phillip was on his own; he'd have to figure it out himself. It was that meeting with Captain Kangaroo which made him conclude that psychologists could never help him. He'd have to solve his problems himself.

Phillip sometimes wished that he had never gotten involved in psychology. He felt that it makes you analyze yourself too much and take yourself apart into little pieces which you analyze separately, pieces which you, in turn, separate into even smaller pieces which you analyze even further, trying to figure out how those pieces got there in the first place ("Let's see, what did my mother say to me about stealing Catherine's teddy bear when I was three years old?"), until you have finally analyzed yourself into a state of schizophrenia.

It was a schizophrenic girl, as a matter of fact, that got Phillip into psychology in the first place. Her name was Laura. If it had not been for Laura, Phillip would have never seen a psychologist and would have never come to see himself as "crazy". Phillip didn't think he was crazy anymore, but he went through a long stage when he thought he was. Now, he realized that he was just lonely.

Phillip met Laura a few years ago when he was still in school. He met her while he was tripping and was convinced that he was flipping out. Laura helped bring him down by making him horny in the intense condition he was in. She gave him some vitamins for his nerves and let him go to bed with her. By making him aware of certain properties of the physical world, she helped Phillip survive his trip. Having sex with her helped Phillip take pleasure in what was going on

with his body rather than worrying about what was going on in his mind. Laura was a very nice lay and she was aggressive, which was something that turned him on.

The next day, however, she told him that she didn't want to fuck with him anymore, because he was not together enough. This upset Phillip very much and he couldn't understand why she didn't want to do it anymore after the first night. She suggested that he see a psychologist and that if he neglected to see a psychologist, it would be analogous to refusing to see a dentist and letting your teeth rot out. Phillip thought about that; the image frightened him. Maybe he better go see a psychologist and get some help. He didn't want something to happen to his mind that was like something that could happen to his teeth if he didn't go see a dentist. And that was the beginning of a long, long period in Phillip's life when he would go from psychologist to psychologist, as some go from guru to guru, seeking relief from his continuous mental anguish.

Laura was schizophrenic and probably some of it rubbed off on Phillip. That girl did some very strange things to Phillip's head. She was also the last good lay Phillip had.

Phillip ran into her a bit more than three years ago after a long period of not seeing her for a while. She was going to school in the north and was coming into town for a brief visit. It was autumn and she lay on her stomach on the grass. Phillip stroked her back, touching her for the first time in a year and a half. She sighed and indicated that she liked him to do that. They fucked that night and it was nice.

"Life is so complicated," Phillip thought as he strolled along back streets. He suddenly noticed that it was spring and the leaves had already popped out. Phillip had been shut up in his self-imposed prison for so long, that it had been spring and he didn't even know

it. It was strange, he thought, how the seasons tend to just suddenly materialize -- before you even know they're there.

It was the season for vacation and Phillip was glad that he was on one, not having to work all the time. It was a respite that he had needed for a long, long time. If he had been working, he would have had to go to his job downtown that evening. Phillip was taking a vacation on unemployment compensation, about the only way a poor person can get a vacation in this society.

Phillip hated his job at the newspaper. He was a humble, anonymous proofreader and it was boring. He had to work at night, when everybody else he knew was off work and having a good time. He had Monday night off and Tuesday night off. He didn't get holidays off and he didn't get weekend nights off. Towards the latter days of working at this job, he began to call in sick about once or twice a week, complaining of an inexplicable flu which made him woozy in the head and made him see purple polka-dots all over the walls. Since they knew he was going to be laid off anyway, they didn't really care.

The people at his job were terrified of him. There was something alien about him, something uncanny, something that was not quite human, something they couldn't define. Phillip would walk into the room where he was due to read the proofs and make the little corrections on them. There would be a strange look in his eyes. He would stare at the people in the room, then he would take off his coat and sit it down. He would immediately proceed to do his job without saying a word. The people there would regard him with something not unlike fear. All Phillip did there was do his job. During all the months he worked in that place, he never said a word. He just functioned at his work and sometimes he was barely able to do that. Many were the times when he would have liked to just walk out, but he knew his way of making a living was contingent upon his staying right in that

room and doing his job. He was never in a very good mood during the eight hours that he was bonded to be in that office. The people in his office undoubtedly sensed that something was wrong with him, but were unable to discern whether he was retarded in some way or whether he had some kind of abnormal intelligence which he kept to himself. They wondered how he got the job in the first place. Phillip was sure that whenever he was not in the office, they talked about him behind his back, trying to figure out who he was. Or that might have been his paranoia acting up on him; Phillip was not quite sure just what people thought about him in situations like that.

There were many nights when there not many newspaper articles for Phillip to proofread and Phillip wondered what he was doing there. He marveled at the fact that he was actually getting paid for sitting there and doing nothing. He began to wonder what they would do if they ran out of news to print. Newspapers (and proofreaders) would go out of business. Sleepy customers getting up early in the morning would wonder where their newspaper went. Nobody would understand it.

At slow nights like these when there was not much news to print, Phillip would develop little strategies to fill up the time he had to stay there. He would take naps or read books to become oblivious of his surroundings and thus make the time pass by a bit more quickly. He had plenty of time and he just didn't know what to do with it. He had a notebook and many times he would write things down in it just to kill time. Sometimes he was so involved in what he was writing down or in what he was reading, he would simply ignore the proofs he was supposed to read. The notebook he wrote in was a journal which he called "Life in the Cage". It might be illuminating to include an excerpt from this journal; here:

"The reason I write this gibberish here is because I'm bored and

I can't get laid. I haven't been laid in three years and, if things keep going on as they have been, I probably won't get laid again for the rest of my natural life (and possibly even part of my unnatural life). So I sit in this place, keeping pretty much to myself, and watch the clock. It is now 11:28 P.M., Eastern Standard Time. I have more or less two hours to go before I get off work. I really have little better to do than sit here, write this down, and watch the clock. I hate that clock. I'll never get laid sitting around here and I'm stuck here watching the clock which tells me when I have to be here and when I have permission to go so I won't have to sit around here anymore. Ah, slowly, slowly passeth the time and how we are all slaves to its unrelenting tick-tock dance, (perchance to prance away, ~~that hat, from here to there, hat hat~~). This office is a cubicle within a cubicle within a cubicle and I'll never get laid while I have to sit in this place. And now, in the morose here-and-now, I am forced to sit here in this cage, this glass cage, watching the second hand do its infinite ballet around the face of that clock. I hate that clock. I know I said that before and I'll say it again - I hate that clock. It is much too slow for me. They must deliberately program these clocks to run tediously slow just to drive you crazy or to get more work out of you. One of these days, I'm going to bust out of this glass cage; I'll quit this stupid job. And when I do, I'm going to pick up one of those leadweights they have in this place and I'm going to throw it at the clock. In fact, I think I'll smash every clock they have in this place and then nobody'll know when they have to be at work and nobody'll know when they get off or when they have to take their breaks or anything. It would make interesting headlines, too. I can see it now: "PROOFREADER SMASHES CLOCK". Think about what it would imply if there were no clocks. The system, as it stands now, could not function without clocks. Nobody could function



without clocks; they wouldn't know what to do with themselves if there were no clocks. I sometimes find it amazing that people voluntarily submit themselves to being in a prison eight hours a day and call it a job. That's why I want to destroy all the clocks in the world. A worldwide power blackout might do the trick: the electricity flowing through the wires which feed the clocks would cease to sustain the tedious motion of the second hand circling around the minute hand circling around the hour hand circling around in one vicious cycle after another... no more time. If there is no time, there can be no jobs. Then we'll be free to start new lives. Oh well, pitter patter, I'm just frustrated because I can't get laid and I have to sit in this place all the time and I still have an hour and a half before the clock says I can go and everything'll be all right. Ah, life in the cage, ain't it awful? Ah, cage, cage, what would I do without you? Maybe I've become attached to this cage; maybe I love these glass walls which hold me in here. They say that people who are imprisoned long enough can't handle freedom and are eager to get right back in, where the restraining walls offer them at least a kind of security. Anyway, I have a headache and I'd really rather be anyplace else but here. In fact, I can't stand it here. I don't think I'll work at this dumb job much longer. One of these days, I'm going to quit this job and then I'll get out of here. And then I'm going to smash every clock they have in this place. I'll be the "greatest clock-smasher alive..."

That was the way Phillip's thought processes worked while he was on the job. Fortunately, it wasn't necessary for him to quit; he just got into a rut of working at the same dull job, reading endless newspaper articles and correcting endless errors, until one day a computer replaced him. And that was the end of Phillip's long sojourn

as a proofreader and a clockwatcher.

Although the job was better than a menial labor job or a blue-collar job in a factory, Phillip wasn't particularly sure if he liked working in an office. It seemed to Phillip that social behavior was very important in office jobs and he didn't like being pressured to act formal and polite all the time. The people were always so courteous to each other ("Can I get you some coffee?" "Yes, please." "Thank you very much. Next time, I'll bring you the coffee." "Would you like to contribute to the United Fund?" "Ah, yes... a very worthy cause."), but in reality, they were viciously competing against each other to get on top of the seniority list. It drove Phillip up a wall; he was unable to get into this kind of pretentious formality. He just did his job and kept to himself. Every now and then, someone would turn to him and say, "Excuse me, would you please stop clearing your throat? It is interfering with my concentration," or, "Pardon me, but would you please stop wiggling around in your chair? The chronic squeaking is giving me a headache."

Sometimes Phillip would have to run a few errands before going to work and then he'd hurry to get to his job so he wouldn't be late. As it turned out, he would always be five minutes late. Phillip couldn't really understand why five minutes was such a big deal, but there was the supervisor, indignant as usual, not minding her own business as usual, standing there and waiting for him. She would call Phillip into her office and say, "Allright, Phillip. What's the excuse this time? Did the traffic get too heavy for you?" Then she would proceed to give him a lecture on how coming to work on time was vital to the functioning of the newspaper, how she would dock him if it happened again, and finally saying, "Responsible people come to work on time, Phillip." Phillip would just sit through all this and think about what a bunch of bullshit it all was. It was like being

back in junior high school and having to have an elaborate explanation on why he was a minute late (he had to pee-pee and one of the older boys dropped a cherry bomb down his stall) or the big teacher was going to report him to the principal to have him suspended from school. Phillip considered this technique of bugging employees about such trifles a tactic to humiliate them in order to make them more submissive.

Phillip didn't especially like working for the newspaper. One of the things he disliked the most was reading ads. It was high pressure work and he had to make sure that all the dollar and cent marks were in the right place. This sort of work would give him ulcers at a premature age if he worked at it long enough and, at the end of a day of ad-reading, all he could see or think about was dollar and cent marks spinning around and around in his head. The ads, one of the newspaper's major sources of income, had only one purpose: to invoke the reader to "Buy! Consume! Gorge yourself! Hurry up and get it before it's too late! Limited quantities only! Special Sale! Spectacular Savings! Get yours today! And hurry!" Phillip reflected that the whole economy was based on frantic consumption and frantic production which also happened to be splurging all the resources left to maintain this absurdity. So the economy needs advertising to induce people to splurge it all until finally there is nothing more to splurge. The entire system, Phillip concluded, was doomed to a massive nervous and economic breakdown. After a day of ad-reading, Phillip had to get drunk.

The news Phillip had to read was, needless to say, anything but cheerful and optimistic. There were always wars and acts of terrorism. There were always dumb articles on what the President's daughter had for breakfast this morning or new evidence linking the C.I.A. to President Kennedy's assassination. There would be stuff like: "In

Central Idaho today there has been an unprecedented quantity of potato pickers slinging potatoes around and proceeding to mash them with their heavy boots. The potato pickers have formed a union and assert that they are being paid insufficient wages and that they are being forced to work long, insufferable hours under intolerable conditions. "This has been going on long enough," said union leader, Charles Jackson. "It's about time us poor potato pickers got some recognition. We got rights too, and if things are not improved real soon, we will destroy the entire potato crop in Central Idaho." Potato processing plants in the area fear that the situation is going out of control, and if nothing is done to bring it to a halt, there will be a steep rise in the price of potatoes and potato-related products, thus contributing to already spiraling runaway inflation. The governor of Idaho has been informed of the situation and has no comment. Rumors are prevalent that the National Guard may soon have to be called in...

Phillip couldn't stand it. He couldn't understand why the news always had to be so depressing. He didn't think it would have a very good influence on the people reading it. Day after day, he was reminded by the news that the world is steadily falling apart and going more and more berserk. The more gory the news, the more likely it was to wind up on the front page. The newspaper business, Phillip concluded, was pornography of the sensational. ("Like wow, man, get a load of what I just got on the AP wire, five hundred people just died on this gigantic supersonic transport that crashed in the Atlantic Ocean. It's big news, man. Like, this has got to get on the front page. You think we can get some pictures, man?") Phillip just couldn't stand it.

Phillip would have liked to see a different kind of newspaper, one that put out good news instead of bad news all the time. It would

have a very cheerful influence on people and make them feel good about everything. It would report all the nice things going on in the world to make people feel that things aren't all that bad. It would have headlines on the front page proclaiming good news like:

"COOL, CLEAR WEATHER SWEEPS THE SOUTHEAST!"

"FLIGHT 151 MAKES IT TO CALIFORNIA"

"NANNY THE GOAT GIVES BIRTH TO FIVE HEALTHY, WELL-FORMED KIDS"

There would be full page interviews asking people how they felt about things like this and plenty of background information on these subjects. The editorials would comment on what's on the front page and they would rant and rave about how fine and well everything is. And there would be plenty of letters to the editor exclaiming that it is wonderful that so many good things are happening in the world.

Oh well, Phillip was out of it now. He was glad he got laid off. Otherwise, he might had stayed on at that job until he finally had a nervous breakdown and had to be carried off to the loony bin, babbling paragraphs from stale editorials in the newspaper he had to read. Phillip couldn't decide whether he would prefer that job or a nice, simple manual labor job like raking leaves. He made good money at that job, though; that was about the best thing about it. He hoped to buy love with the money he made and never succeeded. Then he got laid off. And now, Phillip was poor, nearly broke, and wandering the streets in destitution. It was hard for him to get used to it.

Living on unemployment compensation was not exactly an ideal way to live, though. Phillip had to stand in line every week in a depressing auditorium with countless other people just as destitute as himself. He had to attend interviews with a job counselor every now and then, who tried to find him jobs. He had to go to job interviews and very carefully and meticulously try to blow it with the interviewer. For some jobs he'd act overqualified and for other jobs he'd

act unsure of himself. He would make it so they'd be afraid to hire him; he might damage something or he might disrupt the organization of the company. Occasionally, he'd giggle inappropriately to convince them that he was a little bit insane, so they'd show him to the door as quickly as they could, thinking to themselves, "There's something wrong with this guy." It was not an easy life, looking for work and trying not to get hired. He was leeching off the government, but he was sure that the government had lots and lots of money to give away. If the government was spending billions upon billions of dollars on manufacturing A-bombs, he was sure that it could spare a few dollars for poor people like himself.

Phillip went on walking and thinking about things like this. Sometimes Phillip felt like he just wasn't getting anywhere. Sometimes he felt that it all led to nothing. Poor Phillip. Will nothing good happen to him?

Phillip finally came to the place where his feet had subconsciously been leading him - within sight of the museum. The museum was a place where he liked to go when he felt tired and troubled. It was a warm day and it was a good day to go to the museum. There was also a park behind the museum and he liked to sit in that park.

So Phillip cut across the park and entered the portals of the museum. There was a huge golden eagle over the front entrance of the museum, that great symbol of America. In the Civil War days, the museum used to be a storage place for gold. This museum was an ancient place and if you stayed there long enough, you could remember the Civil War (and possibly even times before that).

Although ancient, it was air-conditioned inside, and to Phillip's delight, it was nice and clean. Phillip could even be sure that there were no cockroaches in here. It was like having dinner with the aris-

tocratic class for awhile. The museum was like a long, intricate echo-chamber which Phillip could let his mind drift off into, but he had to be careful not to let the guards observe him in that particular condition.

Phillip just took his time, browsing at pictures, wandering from room to room in complete leisure to view the works of art. In one room, there were old pictures of Kings and Queens doing their best to look quite dignified. There was a hallway where there were scenes of domestic tranquility - oil paintings of low, rolling mountains with a homely farm in the foreground and a pleasant picture of boys rafting down the Mississippi. There was one room that had nothing but variations of mandala-patterns. There were mandala-patterns everywhere in that room and you could lose yourself down a long maze of an infinite number of squares. Phillip stopped and gazed at one of these mandala-patterns for so long that he could have sworn that he was in the fourth dimension for an instant. Then one of the guards came in and he went to the china room to look at the china and imagine that he was having tea with the ghosts of plump and prim Victorian ladies fluttering their Japanese fans back and forth, back and forth... ah, sweetness and light. Phillip then wandered off to the room where they had all those Aztec masks, those grotesque demon faces the Aztecs were fond of. Phillip wondered if the Aztecs actually saw things like that in those days. Maybe it was the result of partaking of the sacred black liquid that made them see things like that. He stared at the charms and amulets in a display counter. There was a pretty one of a bird chasing a butterfly in a faraway plain high in the mountains, possibly the Andes. Phillip gazed and sighed, wishing he were there instead of in the city where he was, the city where he might spend the rest of his life. Phillip went to the children's puppet theater and watched invisible puppets act out invisible nineteenth century farces.

When the play was over, he got up to go.

There's nothing like a visit to the museum, Phillip thought to himself, as he walked out of the air-conditioned museum into the bright sunshine of the outdoors. Yessirree, there was nothing like a visit to the museum to take his mind off all his troubles. Being poor, Phillip had to learn to enjoy the simple pleasures of life.

He walked around to the back where the park was. It was a nice place to stroll around and think about things in general. He used to come here a lot in his childhood, the ~~home~~ where he grew up in his childhood being about a half-mile away. It did him good to return to his childhood source from time to time. Phillip used to be a carefree little kid here, contented to simply exist and run around in this park. His life had gotten somewhat more complicated since then. A golfer was hitting balls across the park and Phillip had to avoid being hit. He didn't particularly want to lose any teeth by having a golfball fly into his mouth.

Phillip went behind some bushes and sat by the creek. He used to do a lot of thinking by this creek when he was a child. He mostly thought about what he'd like to be when he grew up. He had megalomaniac fantasies about being great and famous. Once he wanted to be a great prophet, Old Testament style, and inspire the multitudes; he was rather religious in those days. Then he changed his mind and decided to be a great philosopher, ranking with Socrates. Finding philosophy books difficult to understand, he decided to become a great scientist who would think up revolutionary theories that would change all previous concepts of the nature of the universe. Then he decided to go into politics and become the President of the United States (good luck) and revise the political structure of the country so everyone would get a fair share and no one would be too rich and no one would be too poor. In junior high school, he forgot about all



about these aspirations and became interested in girls instead. And now, Phillip was just a washed-up know-nothing, part-time alcoholic, a bum living on unemployment compensation.

Phillip watched the muddy waters of the creek flow by. There were some woods downstream where he used to play a lot when he was a kid. He remembered one Easter when he got a fuzzy duck from the Easter bunny. It was just a flimsy fuzzy duck made out of cotton, but Phillip loved that duck and even gave it a name. He went to this creek and tried to float it on the water, hoping it would swim. But instead, it just sort of sunk in the water and dissolved away. That duck couldn't swim at all. This made Phillip very sad; he was really attached to that fuzzy duck. Just remembering it almost brought tears to his eyes.

Phillip wished for the nth time that he wasn't so hungover. It was getting to be a chronic condition for him because he drank so much. He couldn't think very clearly or function very well when he was hungover. He just didn't feel as alive as he'd like to feel.

He knew that he probably wouldn't drink as much if he only had a girlfriend. He needed a girlfriend so badly and he couldn't understand why he was always being rejected. He wished he could find a girl who would be willing to accept him and love him for what he was, rather than someone who insists on attaching materialistic strings to the relationship. He needed someone who would be a friend with him, but they would also be lovers. He'd even be willing to be a husband. He'd be a good supporter; he wouldn't walk out on the girl; he wouldn't walk out on the girl. He'd be a good lover; he might not have the greatest physical endowments, but he'd make sure she was satisfied. He'd offer understanding and intelligent companionship. Why was it that he couldn't find a girl who would accept that?

He thought about Laura of three years ago, his last good lay.

She was very sensuous and they took a bath together. They splashed each other like children and Phillip felt her slippery nipples. Water always seems to make women horny; maybe there is an affinity between the element water and the femininity of women. She smiled in supreme satisfaction as he entered her and he did it very slowly, savouring each second of it as if anticipating that this would be the last good lay he'd have in a long time. That was a long time ago - ah, the transient moments of pleasure that go by so swiftly and seem to be spaced so wide apart. It made him think of a song by Genesis:

Blue girls come in every size...  
 Some are wise and some are otherwise...  
 They got pretty blue eyes.  
 For an hour a man may change...  
 For an hour her face looks strange...  
 Looks strange, looks strange.

Marching to the promised land...  
 Where the honey flows takes you by the hand...  
 Pulls you down on your knees...  
 While you're down a pool appears.  
 The face in the water looks up...  
 And she shakes her head as if to say...  
 That it's the last time you'll look like today.

Sail away, away...  
 Ripples never come back...  
 Gone to the other side...  
 Sail away, away.

After they were through, Laura fell asleep and Phillip lay awake, unable to sleep. Phillip had a peculiar way of falling in love with every girl he laid; he was that sensitive. He stared at her sleeping body, wishing he could go with her wherever she went. It had been a long time since he last had it and it would be a long time before he would have it again. She was only going to be in town for a few days and the next day, he said farewell to her in a park. Autumn was approaching, the season when all things die and prepare for the long winter, and it was a sad farewell. They rode on a merry-go-round and he told her that she was beautiful. She smiled radiantly at him; she liked to be told that she was beautiful. The background spun behind her as the merry-go-round slowly came to a halt. That moment was timeless. They kissed for the last time and Phillip walked away. It was too painful for him to look back.

The face in the water looks up...

She shakes her head as if to say...

That the bluegirls have all gone away.

Sail away, away...

Ripples never come back...

They've gone to the other side...

Sail away, away...

And Phillip could never understand why it was that girls rejected him after the first night of balling with him. They never seemed to want to do it with him after that first time. He didn't know what he did wrong and Phillip felt very confused about this. He didn't know whether it was something he said or something about his bodily appearance. Girls never seemed to want to get involved with him and

this made him feel wretched, to say the least.

It always seemed to happen that way for some reason. One time there was a girl he was strung out over and he got to ball her - once. She didn't want to do it with him again. He pursued her all over town and he felt that this was the girl that he was to have a meaningful relationship with. At the end, though, he found out that she was a genuine, honest-to-goodness prostitute and her pimp threatened him with a knife.

Well, he did manage to have a form of a steady sexual relationship with Susan, his ex-girlfriend. They did it once a week for a while. It got to a point where that one day a week was "sex day". It wasn't too bad, but it wasn't really all that satisfactory. Phillip never got to ball her very well, because she didn't use birth control and was terrified that she'd get pregnant. He had to use a rubber and it didn't quite go in right that way. Mostly, he fingered her and ate her, getting a kick out of her pleasure. She always felt so guilty after it happened and she'd never let him sleep with her. In all the time he was with her, she came twice and Phillip never came at all, probably because most of the time she insisted that he keep his pants on.

"Ah me," Phillip said to himself, "if only all you women I've ever been with knew what a terrible inferiority complex you all are giving me. One rejection after another, it seems to be the story of my life."

Phillip stared at the waters of the creek some more. Across the creek it looked like they were putting up another building. They were always putting up buildings, which was something else that tended to depress Phillip. There used to be a woods across that creek. The creek was a channel for sewage from various parts of the city. There was a lot of junk in that creek - rusty bicycle wheels and things like

that. It looked to Phillip like he was at the edge of the proverbial "shit creek".

Ah, life was getting him down. He was beginning to feel so tired of it all. He lay down and looked up at the sky. The birds were tweeting because it was spring and the clouds were light and wispy. He just wanted to lie there and forget about everything.

"Those dumb birds," Phillip thought to himself. "Just because the sun's shining, they think everything's okay and they sing their little throats out. Those dumb birds don't know anything." With this thought, Phillip closed his eyes and fell asleep. It was a deep, deep sleep and Phillip was oblivious to the world around him. Occasionally, a stray gnat hovered about him and his eyelids fluttered slightly.

He became dimly aware of voices calling him, chanting in a droning monotone: "Phillip, Phillip, we see you, Phillip. Don't you try to run and hide from us now, Phillip. Yoo hoo, Phillip. Come and get your lulu-pie, Phillip. Come on, Phillip, don't be bashful, Phillip, you silly boy, you. A little fun and games can't be all bad for you, Phillip. Just a dash of this and a dash of that and you're all set up. So come on, Phillip, and join the fun. Don't be a spoilsport now, Phillip..."

Phillip stirred restlessly in his sleep.

He found himself surrounded by a bunch of funny, grotesque creatures, taking turns prodding at him with knobby sticks they all had. Some of them had six legs and some of them had foot-long fangs. They were all grinning eerily. Phillip wasn't exactly sure what was going on.

"It looks like he's finally coming to," one of the creatures said.

"Oh boy, oh boy, I can't wait."

"Yeah, yeah, this is going to be fun."

"Well, well, Phillip," one of the taller creatures addressed him, "here you are in the midst of our presence. We finally have you where we want you. And don't think we don't know what you've been up to." The rest of them giggled at this remark.

"Yeah, Phillip, we're going to turn the tables on you. Isn't that right, everybody?" spoke another, prodding a stick at him. Another round of giggling and tittering followed.

"And there's no way for you to escape either, Phillip."

"Yeah, yeah, we got you where we want you."

"Oh boy, oh boy, I can't wait."

"Oh my God," Phillip muttered to himself. He wasn't exactly comfortable about the situation he was in.

One of the creatures leaned forward on its stick. "I think you know perfectly well what is happening, Phillip. After all, this is your karma."

"Yeah, yeah, that's right."

Phillip sat up, scratching his head. "Well, uh, um," he began, "couldn't I, you know, negotiate, uh, some kind of deal so maybe, uh, you all would, uh, leave me alone, you know? I'm really, uh, open, you know, to all possible arrangements."

"No way!" one of the creatures screamed. "No way!"

"You see, Phillip, it just isn't quite that easy," the tall creature said. It appeared to be the leader. "You see, Phillip, justice has to be done. After all, look what you did to all those poor cockroaches."

"Yeah, you cockroach killer. It isn't nice to kill cockroaches."

"That's right, and you're not going to get away with it."

"Think you're going to worm out of it, huh, Phillip? Think you

can just say a few words in your defense and walk out? Well, let me tell you one thing, Phillip, we don't think much of cockroach killers." ers."

"Death to all cockroach killers!" one of the smaller creatures screamed, pounding its stick on the ground.

"Oh boy, oh boy, this is going to be so much fun."

"As you can see, Phillip," the leader said, "the cards are turned against you. Cockroach killing is a serious crime." It raised its stick in the air and addressed the others: "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the accused is charged with blatant genocide of cockroaches. He subjected them to a horribly, slow death by the application of extremely dangerous insecticides. He did this maliciously and wantonly, and he was fully aware of what he was doing. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, what is your verdict?"

"Guilty!" they all screamed, jumping up and down, prodding their sticks at him. "The defendant is guilty of cruel and willful mass slaughter of poor, defenseless cockroaches."

"Guilty! No mercy for cockroach killers!" the smallest creature yelled.

"The defendant has been found guilty by the jury," the leader spoke. "Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, what is the most just and fitting punishment, the only punishment possible, for this vicious cockroach killer."

"The cupboard! Sentence him to the cupboard!" they all screamed shrilly.

"Very well, then," replied the leader, "he will be sentenced to the cupboard." With this, he snapped his fingers... or were they claws?

Phillip was aware of being extremely tiny. He was in some sort of auditorium-sized room. There were huge cylinders that had labels

on them. They reached up to the ceiling. The walls were made out of wood. It looked familiar somehow. Then he realized that the cylinders were his own cans of food and jars of coffee. He tried to speak, but his voice came out in some kind of squeaking whisper. He was in his own cupboard. The door was slightly open and the kitchen lights were on.

There was a raucous noise outside. He crept to the open door to see what it was. "Oh my God," he whispered to himself when he saw what was out there.

Seated at the kitchen table were gigantic cockroaches, all laughing and twittering their mandibles at each other. They were gorging themselves on a feast they had laid out on the table. The refrigerator door was wide open and Phillip could see that they did not hesitate to raid all its contents; the refrigerator was empty. "Goddamn," Phillip whispered, "there must be dozens of them."

"Boy, this is pretty good food," one of the cockroaches said, reaching for a plate with one of its six legs.

"Yeth, yeth," replied another, between bites, "I'm sure glad we got rid of that human being that was here. Now we have the whole place to ourselves."

"Yeth, yeth, those human beings are such a nuisance," replied another, stuffing peanut butter sandwiches down its throat.

"They're such loathsome pests," one of them said in disgust. "This is pretty good baloney. Want some?"

"Anybody for another can of chili?" said one, getting up.

"Yeth, yeth, chili's quite good, quite good."

"Oh shit, it's coming this way!" Phillip whispered to himself. He ran to a far corner and hid behind some cans. He held his breath and hoped it wouldn't notice him back there.

The cockroach rummaged through the cupboard, removing can after



can, working its way towards Phillip. "Now where's that chili?" it muttered to itself. It removed another can. "I could swear there was a can of chili somewhere in here." It moved the last can aside, and lo, there Phillip was, exposed in the light. The cockroach shrieked.

"Oooo gross! There's another human being in here!"

"How repulsive!" said the cockroach eating baloney. "Well, don't just stand there. Kill it!"

"Don't worry, I will, I will." With one of its six legs, it grabbed a can of Raid. Phillip rolled himself up into a ball, kissing his ass goodbye. He hoped it would all be over quickly enough. He was instantly covered with alien-smelling chemicals that burned mercilessly into his skin. As soon as it touched him, he became blind and had trouble breathing. Then he went into violent spasms and every muscle in his body twitched. He felt like he was having a series of horrible epileptic fits. He threw up and staggered around. If he could only see, he could crawl to someplace out of the way, someplace where he could die in peace. The cockroach sprayed him again. He threw up again and a series of shudders went through his body. He felt so nauseated. If he could only see, but it was no use. He lay on his back and wiggled his arms and legs around in agony. Finally he froze and died.

"That's funny," one of the cockroaches said, eating ravenously, "I thought we got rid of all the human beings."

Phillip was seized on both sides by strong arms. The arms were bare and the skin was tinted a dark red. Golden bands encircled them. He was lifted to his feet by what appeared to be two Aztec warriors. He still felt groggy, but at least he was in a normal-sized body. He was in some kind of long tunnel. It was a square tunnel. The Aztec warriors didn't say a word; they forcefully led him down the tunnel.

"What is the meaning of this?" Phillip wanted to know. The Aztec warriors didn't respond and they didn't relax their grip on his arms. Phillip decided to just go along with it. All things would be revealed eventually.

The tunnel appeared to be sloping downwards. It was straight and went on for miles and miles. Phillip could not see the end of the tunnel; it kept going further and further down into the bowels of the earth. The further down they went, the more apprehensive Phillip began to get. What did they have in store for him? Why were they so silent? Were they leading him down to hell? Were they planning to sacrifice him to some demon god in some horrible way? Meanwhile, on they went through the infinite tunnel and their footsteps echoed for miles.

Finally, they arrived at what appeared to be their destination. The tunnel ended at a large rectangular room. The walls were covered with weird, archaic hieroglyphics which seemed strangely familiar to Phillip. Had he perhaps been here in a past lifetime?

Upon a carved stone platform, stood a priest in robes covered with the same kind of hieroglyphics that were on the walls. He stood between two elongated torches of greenish-blue flame. There was a gigantic golden image of the Sun God behind him.

"Blykg, spetzinca bzyka," said one of the warriors.

"Zyleka, cetizita zyrorom," replied the priest. The warriors finally let Phillip go and stood at attention by his side.

"Well, I suppose you're wondering why we brought you here," the priest addressed Phillip. "You're also probably wondering why I am able to speak English, your language. Don't worry. All areas of knowledge are easily accessible to my mind. I have seen far into the future of your world."

Phillip decided that it would be better not to say anything for

the meantime.

"We found it necessary to call you back here, for reasons of our own. The language on the walls looks familiar, doesn't it? That's because you were here once long ago and then you got lost in that other world. Dreadful place, isn't it?"

"Yes, it is," Phillip had to concede.

"It has come to our attention that you feel a bit out of place in the particular age you were born in. All your life, you've always felt like something was missing, that there must be a better world than the one you were in. Everything in that world always seemed somewhat out of your grasp and you were never able to rest content with it the way many others seemed to be."

"That's right. I can't say that I was ever particularly happy there."

"Well, we just wanted to assure you that it's not going to be like that indefinitely. A world like that simply cannot be sustained forever. It is like two-dimensional scenery that is placed up on props and once the props are gone, it no longer exists. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I think so." Phillip stared at the greenish-blue flames. They were peculiarly mesmerizing.

"I would like you to come along with me for a moment. I would like to show you something. Remember, you are not being forced to do anything against your will."

"Certainly," Phillip said. He felt that he was in his own territory now.

"Byzatatuzan," the priest said to the warriors standing at attention. They turned and left the room, going out through the tunnel.

The priest then led him through a small door to the left of the giant Sun God mask. The priest carried a light and kept on talking.

They were in a narrow passage and the ceiling was low. They had to stoop a bit to get through.

"In order to return back to this world, it will be necessary for you to work out all your problems in the world where you come from. That is why you are there. Once you are in tune with that world, then you can come back. Do you understand?"

"I guess so."

They arrived at light, light of the outdoors. Phillip could see mountains in the distance out of the end of the passage. They reached the end of the passage and stood at the edge of a cliff.

All around was a panoramic view of gigantic mountains covered with lush jungles of fern trees. There were huge swamps in the valleys and Phillip saw large beasts splashing in the water. The mountains extended out to the horizon. Phillip thought he could see a glimpse of the ocean in the distance. He had the funniest feeling he had been here before. A cool breeze blew and huge, reptilian birds flew around over the jungles below. And right below them was a great valley with pyramids and temples in it, all arranged in immaculate geometric order. It was a fantastic civilization there below. Was this hidden from the rest of the world?

"This is the way it used to be," the priest said. "So you see, there is another world, just as you always secretly hoped. Someday..." he said, indicating the entire view with a sweep of his hand, "this will be all yours."

Phillip woke up with a jolt. Wow, that was a pretty weird dream, he thought. He sometimes had weird dreams like that when he was hung-over from a night of drinking, but he never had a dream like that. It was so lucid. He halfway wondered if it was true and wondered if he had indeed gone into a past dimension.

"Wow, that was really a heavy dream," he remarked aloud to him-

self. Maybe he ought to see a shrink or something. But shrinks could never help him with things like that; shrinks had no control over his dreams. Besides, Phillip was swearing off psychology. Psychology never did him much good. That was quite a dream, though. Dreams like that don't come but once or twice in a lifetime.

He sat up and lit a cigarette. He had to take stock of his surroundings. It was very late in the afternoon and the sun was about to set. The birds were still singing, this time about the sun setting. Those birds were always singing about something. The construction crew across the creek had gone home, leaving a half-finished building in their wake. Phillip sat there for awhile and watched the waters of the creek turn red. That nap had done him good; he didn't feel hungover anymore. He got up to go.

It getting to be about time to think about dinner. He didn't particularly want to go back to his gloomy apartment. He had some money with him; he would go to the bar, have a pizza and a few beers, and see if there was anyone he knew there.

The golfer was no longer there, so he no longer had to worry about being hit in the mouth by a golfball. It would take him about a half-hour to walk to the bar. He was beginning to lose some weight by walking around. Maybe that would make him more attractive. He hoped so. Maybe he'd find a girl tonight. He had to keep trying. He was going to go crazy if he didn't find someone soon.

And so, with the sun setting behind him, off Phillip goes in his eternal search for fulfillment in this frustrating world.

And now we see Phillip stumbling into the old local tavern he usually frequented. It was here that he constantly went in his quest for someone to love. It was a very dark bar that had been converted out of an old house. The downstairs portion was where the bar was and

there were stairs leading up to the upper portion. The upper portion was a mystery to Phillip; it was sealed off and he never knew what was going on up there. Maybe someone lived there, perhaps the ghost of the former owner of the house before it became a bar. He sometimes noticed a light up there; it was very strange.

Instinctively, he looked around to see if there was anyone he knew there. He didn't really notice anyone except some middle-aged guy named Ralph. Ralph sometimes went there to drink beer and talk about old times. He used to hop trains all the time and lived in boxcars. Ralph was one of the last original hoboes; he was a sort of minor legend around there. He flirted with the younger girls and smoked filterless cigarettes.

Phillip went to the counter and ordered a pizza with everything on it. He also ordered a beer to drink while he was waiting for it. He went to a booth and sat down. He lit up a cigarette and drank his beer while surveying the scene.

Not much was happening yet. It was still early in the evening and it was a weekday night. Some light jazz music was playing and Phillip sort of got into it while staring at a yellow light in a globe. The lights were dim in that bar.

There were only two or three girls he saw; he knew them by name, but otherwise he wasn't very familiar with them. Some dudes in cowboy hats were standing around and talking to them, acting suave and obviously trying to put the make on them. Phillip remotely wondered why cowboy hats were getting so popular. He also wondered why so many people were getting into country-western music lately. The country-western music that was going around had a rock beat and it expressed hippie sentiments, but Phillip couldn't get into it. He thought it was obnoxious. Phillip rarely got into whatever happened to be popular at the time. Phillip just wasn't with it. He never liked the

Beatles that much, for example.

His pizza was finally ready. It had a bit too much cheese on it, but it was good. He ate ravenously; he hadn't noticed how hungry he was until he started eating. He always made a point to get something to eat before drinking anything; otherwise, he'd get drunk on an empty stomach and ignore his appetite, not eating anything at all that day.

Arriadnine came in. She was carrying schoolbooks; she went to a community college across the street from the bar. She waved at him, gave him a brief smile, and walked past him, apparently looking for someone else she might know. She then proceeded to talk to one of the dudes wearing cowboy hats. Phillip munched on his pizza and observed her. She was very animated, he noticed, and moved her body around in suggestive postures. Maybe girls did that without being completely aware of it. He didn't know why he felt so jealous; she never committed herself to him or anything like that.

He finished his pizza and went to the counter to get another beer. He always drank Budweiser, not because it was an All-American beer, but because if you looked at the label very closely there was a mandala-pattern on it. While he was waiting for his beer, he tried to listen in on what Arriadnine was talking about. She was talking about her schoolwork and some boyfriend of hers. Oh well, Phillip shrugged his shoulders and went back to his seat, listening to more music.

What a fruitless day he'd had. What kind of night would he have? He found that one night was getting to be pretty much like another. The days were the same. Perhaps he'd spend his evenings more productively just staying at home and reading a book. But that got to be boring too. His time was beginning to become something to kill. He was beginning to feel that there was a vague pointlessness to his life. He had nothing to do and no one to love. Maybe he'd just get a job again, but he couldn't decide which was more boring, working at

a job or doing nothing. In reality, the two were about equivalent, as far as Phillip was concerned.

Arriadnine stopped talking to the dude in the cowboy hat and approached Phillip's booth. She sat down across from him and lay her schoolbooks on the table. She was taking basic math and typing.

"How are you doing, Phillip?"

Phillip took a sip of his beer. "All right, I guess," he replied. "How are you doing?"

"Oh, okay. I had a test today and I'm not too sure if I did too good on it. There's not too many people around here tonight."

"Yeah," Phillip said, drinking his beer, "I think I'm going to get drunk tonight. I'm so bored. I'm seriously considering becoming a professional alcoholic, only I don't think I can afford it anymore."

"Yeah, beer is kind of expensive, and it's fattening, too. What did you do with your day, Phillip?"

"Oh, not much constructive. Today has been a long day of feeling hungover for me. I sat around in my apartment and hallucinated on the walls, while thinking about how lonely and bored I've been lately. Then I cleaned out my apartment, the one constructive thing I did all day, went for a walk and somehow wound up here. I also have an incredible case of blue balls."

"I guess I can't help you too much with that, Phillip. Besides, I think my period's due."

"That time of the month, huh? Oh well, I'll vent my sexual frustrations out somehow."

"Yeah, you'll survive, Phillip."

"Yeah, I guess I will. I've lasted so far. They offered me a job the other day at the Employment Security place. It's a job as a proofreader for \$3.25 an hour. I don't know if I'm going to take it."

"I don't know, Phillip. It sounds like pretty good pay to me."



"Yeah, but I don't know if I want to be a proofreader for the rest of my life. It all depends on what kind of job it is. They made me send the guy a letter of application and I wrote him to say I had experience and I could spell pretty well, but I made sure that I had a few blatantly misspelled words in the letter. I don't think he'll hire me. When he checks up with the newspaper, he's going to find out that I had the lousiest performance of anyone that worked there and that I was also classified as 'antisocial'. I don't really know why I'd be classified that way. It was probably because I didn't read the stuff very carefully and I didn't really give a fuck anyway. But that just shows you how the system works; they get a file on you and they've got you branded for the rest of your life."

Arriadnine just frowned and thought about what he said. Then she said, "Yeah, I guess I know what you mean, Phillip. I've been job-hunting myself lately and I haven't found anything yet because I don't have any experience. I might be able to get an office job because I can type, but usually they want experience before they'll hire you. I might get a job at the Weiner King, not an especially great job, but it might be all I can get."

"Well, Arriadnine, I guess you'll have to go through the tedious process of climbing the ladder, although any dumb fuck who graduated from high school could work in an office. They could put me in about any basic position and I could learn to do the job in a day. They just try to use the fact that you never had any experience as an excuse not to hire you and eliminate you from the list of applicants."

"Yeah, I know. It's not very fair, is it? What about all us young people who really need a job? They just don't care. I've really got to get a job so I can make some money to move out of my father's house. My father is such an asshole. He's always giving me shit about coming home late and I'm just about 21, too. I'm too old

to be treated like a child anymore."

"You can always move in with me, Ariadnine."

"I just might wind up doing that. I can always sleep on your broken-down couch. Don't be surprised if I show up one of these days."

"You wouldn't even have to pay any rent. I'd just like you to fuck with me every now and then."

She kind of half-smiled, then shrugged her shoulders. "I called up Maurice today. He said he was going to leave town to go on a band tour. He was kind of cold about it and hung up. I guess he doesn't want anything more to do with me. What do you think?"

"It would be hard for me to say, Ariadnine. It sounds like it. It wasn't really going that well between you and him, anyway, was it?"

She said in a monotone: "No, I guess not. He never calls me anymore, anyway. Whenever he used to call me, it was because he was horny and wanted me to come over. I guess there wasn't that much between us."

"I'd be your lover if you want me to, Ariadnine." Phillip meant it; he really did.

She shrugged off the suggestion, but she smiled in appreciation. Ambiguous reaction. "I sometimes get worried that I'm going to become an old maid and I'll never find the right guy to marry. Do you ever worry about that?" She always spoke obliquely to him, as though he didn't really qualify as a regular human being with human needs, but was in reality some uncle of hers she could tell all her problems to.

"I sometimes worry about something like that," Phillip replied. As a matter of fact, Phillip was worried that by the time he finally got laid, he would be impotent or his dick would have atrophied from lack of use.

"I just hope I find the right guy someday," Ariadnine went on to

say. "I really had alot of hopes about Maurice, but I don't suppose it's going to work out. I had alot of hopes about another guy before him, but he became a Hare Krishna monk. I wish he didn't become a Hare Krishna monk; we were going to get married. He became a complete stranger to me after that."

"I can't get into people who become involved in ascetic religions. I can't see much point in feeling guilty about sex or eating a hamburger. I'm more inclined to get into mysticism, but I don't see any point in ascetism. Why feel guilty about what is natural?"

"Mmmm. I know what you mean. I just wish he didn't become a Hare Krishna monk, that's all. I can't stand Hindus."

"Ariadnine, sometimes I wish you wouldn't talk about your ex-loves to me all the time. You're looking at someone right in front of you who is perfectly willing to love you and even support you, but you act as if I'm not here. You know how I feel about you."

"I'm sorry, Phillip. But I don't think I can give you what you want. You're good-looking and intelligent, but you don't turn me on. Maybe you're like me; you're attracted to people you can't get. That's one thing we have in common, I guess. But I still like you."

"Thank you," Phillip said, drinking his beer.

"Listen, Phillip, I hope you find a girl who's right for you. I hope she'll be really pretty and I hope she'll be a good person for you. Have faith, Phillip. I'll even help you meet some girls I know, even though I don't know that many girlfriends."

"I appreciate your concern, Ariadnine. I don't know. Maybe I'll save up enough money to buy a whore. I think I'd prefer masturbation to that, though. I'm looking for a meaningful relationship."

"Yeah, well we can be friends at least. Will you play backgammon with me, Phillip? I'd really like to play backgammon."

"Well, I don't really get into games that much..."

"Aw, c'mon, Phillip, just one game. You can stand that much, couldn't you?"

"Well... all right."

They got a board and began to play. Phillip didn't like to play backgammon very much. He wasn't like other people; he didn't enjoy playing games. The only games Phillip liked to play were mind-games and he could never find many partners willing to participate in such games. Phillip was very fond of playing mind-games, especially with himself.

He had a friend who liked to play pinball all the time. This friend would just stand at a pinball machine all afternoon and all evening. He never took a break; he just kept feeding it quarters. He played one game after another, usually winning games. All afternoon and all evening, he mindlessly watched the colorful lights light up and watched the silver ball ping-ponging around, his fingers poised on the flipper buttons, ready to strike the next ball. It got so he was so mesmerized by the game, that he was the pinball machine. What a way to go.

He supposed that the reason Ariadnine liked to play backgammon was it helped her to count, which was useful to her in doing her math. Ariadnine wasn't very good at math. He could never figure out calculus himself; that was a branch of mathematics that dealt with things so abstract, they weren't even there. As they played backgammon, Phillip wondered what Ariadnine was going to do with her life. So far, the only possible ways that he could think of that she could make a living at would either be to type in an office or to sell her body, legitimately through marriage, or illegitimately through prostitution. Ariadnine was, by no means, a feminist.

Phillip won the first game; he had alot of doubles. They decided to play for another game.

"I had the most far-out dream today," Phillip began. "There were these Aztecs, you see, and they led me down this long tunnel which went down so far, I thought I was going to the middle of the earth or something like that. Then somewhere down there, I ran into this priest, you see? Anyway, this priest says something to me and he takes me somewhere where there was this fantastic view of an ancient civilization. Then he told me that the place was still there. He said they put me in some sort of time machine to get me back there and then when I finish this lifetime, I'd go back to that place. It was really fantastic; it looked like some sort of primeval paradise. It must have been in the dinosaur age. It was really something."

"Wow, that sounds like a pretty good dream, Phillip. I don't dream like that very much. I had a dream last night that I was a Babylonian whore. They had me in chains and they were trying to sell me as a sex slave. I must be masochistic or something to have dreams like that."

"Well, maybe you do. It's interesting, because I sometimes have fantasies of you being that way. I suppose all girls have masochistic fantasies about being a whore at one time or another. Maybe it turns them on to fantasize about being forced to do something that society tells them they can't do, but it's something they really want to do."

"Yeah, maybe you're right about that, Phillip. By the way, it's your turn."

"That was still a pretty weird dream. Jung said something about dreams being very important; he attached a mystical, metaphysical significance to them. I sometimes wonder if dreams are another form of reality." Phillip got a faraway look in his eyes.

"I don't know, Phillip. I used to be into witchcraft and there was something there about using dreams to manipulate reality, but I don't dream that much anymore. When I was into witchcraft, I used to

stare at a scarlet candle and wish for a lover."

"Maybe it worked; maybe your wish came true. He might be playing backgammon with you right now."

"Humm. Your turn, Phillip."

They played in silence for awhile. Phillip watched her while she was playing. She was very good-looking and Phillip wouldn't mind having her for a mate. She had auburn hair and lovely brown eyes that seemed to melt into you. She looked like an Egyptian belly-dancer; her features were dark. She would look good dressed up as a Babylonian whore. Had he known her in a past lifetime? Her breasts weren't very big, but she had an extremely nice ass and she knew how to display it. Sometimes that's all you need. Phillip was familiar with the contours of her body from exploring her body with his hands, the night she passed out on his bed. If he had her for a mate, someone to live with him, he probably wouldn't ask for much more.

"Your turn again, Phillip." She had to keep reminding him; he had a very short attention span for games.

"Oh yeah, I almost forgot." He rolled his dice and said, "You know, I wish you didn't throw up on my bed. I had a difficult time trying to clean it up."

"Well, I'm sorry, Phillip. It's just one of those things that happen to me when I'm drunk. I think I'm going to have to give up drinking. I ran my car into something the other night and I don't even know what it was. I didn't see the dent until the next day."

"Yeah, that can happen to you when you're drunk. I think I might give up drinking myself. I don't think I can afford it; I'm no longer working at that job that made me filthy rich. Yeah, I'll quit drinking. Yeah..." Phillip stared into the air "...I'll quit, after tonight."

"Your turn again, Phillip."

"You know, I hate this city," Phillip said.

"Yeah, so do I."

"Maybe I'll find a way to get out of it one of these days."

"That's a good idea. I'll miss you if you do, Phillip."

"I'll miss you too, Ariadnine. You're about the only one I'll miss. I don't like this city. I'd like to live in the country. I'm stagnating in this city."

They played the game in silence.

"You know, Ariadnine, that night you were passed out on my bed, I sat beside you while you were sleeping and thought, 'You know, I'd really like to have this girl for a mate.'"

"That's a really nice thing to say, Phillip."

"Maybe you could come with me when I leave town, Ariadnine."

"I might like to do that."

Well, at least they were getting on better terms. Phillip won the second game. They decided to play again.

While they were playing, a couple of guys wearing cowboy hats (after all, what else?) stood around, watching them play. They were obviously assuming that they could move in somehow. They acted very confident about it. One of them asked if he could play the winner. Ariadnine enthusiastically said yes, appearing attracted to the dude. Phillip felt the hair at the back of his neck prickle; Ariadnine didn't act that enthusiastic with him. He hated the competition in bars. You could never be sure you had a girl, because some other guy might move in. There was a certain insecurity in bars, yet Phillip couldn't think of any other place where he could meet girls.

On a flippant whim, Phillip decided to deliberately lose. He decided to just leave Ariadnine at the mercy of this cowboy hat-wearing chauvinistic bastard, if she was so eager to play with him. He finally lost and said, "Good game, Ariadnine. I think I'm going to

go off by myself and think about the meaning of life some more."

"O.K. Take it easy, Phillip," Ariadnine replied. She became immediately engrossed in the game and began to strike up a conversation with the guy wearing the cowboy hat. Oh well, that's the way it goes.

Phillip returned to the booth where he ate his pizza and sat down. The pizza tray was still there; they were not very meticulous about cleanliness in that bar. Phillip lit up a cigarette and sighed. He was getting so tired of the bar game. Ariadnine and most of the girls in that bar were so fickle. He wished he could get laid and find a girl to share his life with. He was even getting to a point where he didn't feel particularly jealous of Ariadnine and that dude. He was coming to the conclusion that he would never get what he wanted out of life.

He drank his beer and observed Ariadnine as she walked with the dude to the game room. He thought something like, "Well, she was with me yesterday, she's with him today, and most likely she'll be with someone else tomorrow." All women are fickle. Life is fickle. Fate is fickle. Phillip was becoming quite a philosopher.

It was highly probable that he got into Ariadnine because of the fantasy value she held for him. Maybe it was the very fact that he would never have her in reality that turned him on so much. He had a lot of very interesting sexual fantasies about Ariadnine, particularly when he was masturbating. He liked to think about doing all kinds of dirty things to her and making her do dirty things. Some of his fantasies were pretty downright perverted. He sometimes worried about this, but he figured that as long as it remained merely a fantasy and was not allowed to manifest itself into reality, there was nothing wrong with it. He suspected that most fantasies that people considered abnormal were really pretty normal after all. He used to have



similar fantasies about Susan, his ex-girlfriend.

He went through a phase that past winter when he went to topless bars and attended pornographic movies just to see what that side of life was like. He found the situation in topless bars interesting. Generally, the girls didn't have very big breasts; maybe the girls that did have big breasts were into something that brought in more money. The girls would get up on a stage and do titillating dances as if they were in a trance. He wasn't sure if they were turned on by it or not. The bars were usually filled with horny businessmen and Marines on furlough; Phillip usually felt a bit out of place there. They charged a dollar a beer just for the privilege of being in that place. The topless waitresses generally snuggled up to whoever seemed to be holding the most money. They didn't usually approach Phillip; maybe he didn't look like the sort that would make a lot of money. He half-way wondered if they sold their bodies when they were off work. Maybe they took you to the back for a quick blow job or something. Phillip was afraid to ask, for fear that they'd call the hefty bouncers to throw him out if he dared. ("Patrons of this establishment are free to look at the merchandise, but you must keep your hands off the merchandise or face the dire consequences if you don't." — The Management) Phillip always left those places feeling lonelier than ever. One time, he took Ariadne to one of those places and she actually got turned on by it. He hoped she wouldn't turn to that for a living; maybe she would get married before that.

Out of sheer boredom, Phillip checked out the booths where you could watch people fucking on the screen for a quarter. They went at it with no preliminaries, to say the least. They had threesomes, foursomes, bisexual pairings, between girls, and interracial copulation. It wasn't too bad, but it got to be boring after awhile. Phil-

lip couldn't seriously get into it; things just don't happen that way in real life. One time, he saw two people getting it on and the pizza man comes in. He watches them for awhile, then takes off his clothes and makes it with them. The couple is not even surprised. That did it; Phillip took his quarters and left. Ah, dark City of Sodom that he lived in.

Ariadnine and the guy she was with left the game room. They were holding hands. Ariadnine waved at him and shouted: "See you later, Phillip. We're going off to another place."

Phillip waved bye-bye in silence and watched her leave. Phillip was beginning to feel terribly dejected. Ariadnine would go off with someone else; but she wouldn't go off with him, even though he was willing to offer more. Was he being sentenced to an eternity of sexual and emotional frustration? Were all women fickle and materialistic? Maybe he'd make it someday and she'd be sorry she overlooked him. Yes, he hoped she'd feel real sorry. But he might not ever make it, and then what would he do? He didn't have a job. He didn't have a girlfriend. What was becoming of him anyway? This chain of melancholy thought called for another beer. He went to get one.

Perhaps he would get very drunk that night. He would drink and drink until he ran out of money. He would stay drunk as long as he could. If he was going to go down, he may as well go all the way down. And that would be the end of this story.

There is another way this story could end. It would be much later in the night and Phillip would be staggering out of the bar. He would be blind drunk and would not have the foggiest conception of where he is. It would be near closing time and the ground beneath Phillip would be spinning round and round. He would be too drunk to make it back to his apartment. There would be no one he could turn

to. Laughing couples would be leaving the bar, walking past Phillip, poor Phillip, who is semi-conscious and about to pass out any minute.

Then he sees a really beautiful girl walking out. She is wearing a leather vest and carries a leather pocketbook. She has long blond hair and has an ample bosom. She is very attractive and, in his drunkenness, Phillip is convinced that she is the girl of his dreams, the one he has been waiting for all his life. Phillip does not let her pass.

"Where have you been all my life?" he addresses her, believing that this trite phrase will penetrate to the depths of her heart. "Take me home with you and I will offer everything I have to you. I will offer you my life. Let us make it together and we will have a beautiful, meaningful relationship. And what more could we ask for?"

"Pervert!" she yells and wallops him over the head with her pocketbook. Phillip falls to the ground, biting the foul dust, weeping, as she walks away outraged.

And Phillip would say, sobbing into the dirt, "Why wouldn't she stay? It would have worked out. I would have even offered her money for it." Then he would pass out, a forlorn, unconscious figure, lying all alone in the parking lot. And that would be the end of this story. Phillip didn't make it that time.

(And in the vortex of the center of the universe, who knows what the fates are plotting to conceive? What dreams might they be planning to weave? Will it be paradise or will it be a nightmare?)

"Ladies and gentlemen, step right up! Meet Wildman Phillip! Be careful now, ladies. Don't get too close. After all, this is the most sexually frustrated human being on earth!"

Phillip clenched his teeth and roared, shaking the bars in sheer fury. They had him in a cage and he was naked.

"Oh my goodness, sir. Is he dangerous?" one of the ladies inquired.

"Well, madam, we couldn't very well allow him to roam the streets."

The spectators nudged each other and laughed at this.

"Aaaauughhh!" Phillip roared, trembling all over. "Aaaauughhh!" He began shaking the bars and beating his head against them.

The spectators stopped laughing and whispered in apprehension. Would he somehow manage to escape?

"Yessirree, ladies and gentlemen, you are looking at Wildman Phillip, the most sexually frustrated human being alive on this planet: This is the most unique addition we've had to our freak show in years! Step right up! Only one dollar apiece to see this rarity of rarities!"

"Aaaauuuugghhhh!" Phillip articulated. He was beginning to get a partial erection which was quite visible through the bars.

"Oh my goodness!" one of the ladies exclaimed.

"Shocking! Simply shocking!" remarked a bald-headed gentleman.

"Now, now, don't stand too close. Wildman Phillip is well-known for his sudden ejaculations. Be careful, ladies. We must be careful not to get him too excited. We found this creature in a dark alley trying to rape an eighty year old lady. Yessirree, ladies and gentlemen, an eighty year old lady! How do you like that for desperation? Yessirree, Wildman Phillip is unscrupulous indeed!"

Phillip grinned, baring his teeth. He would give them a show they would never forget. He stuck his fully erect penis through the bars and began flapping it around. He laughed out loud.

"Outrageous!"

"This is the most shocking thing I have witnessed in my life!"

One of the ladies who had a somewhat weaker stomach fainted.

"And now, ladies and gentlemen, we will witness one of the most amazing demonstrations ever shown in this freak show. All right, girls, you can come out now."

And from out of a circus booth came Ariadnine and Susan, wearing absolutely no clothes at all. Ariadnine bent backwards and exposed her cunt to him. Susan fondled her breasts and showed him her ass.

"Aaaaauuughhhh!" Phillip roared, shaking the bars in rage. The cage rocked from side to side.

"Too bad you can't get me, Phillip," Ariadnine said to him. "Now you're in a cage where you belong."

"Aaauuughhh! Aaauuughhh!"

"Yeah, Phillip," said Susan. "Personally, I never thought much of your sexual proportions anyway."

"Aaauuughhh! Aaauuughhh! Let me out of here!"

"I thought I might let you know I'm making it with the circus manager now," said Ariadnine. "So now I don't have time for you, Phillip. Besides, you're not aggressive enough to be a manager."

"Aaauuughhh! Let me out of here! Aaauuughhh!"

"Yeah, Phillip," said Susan. "By the way, you might like to know that I just married someone who makes a lot more money than you ever would. You just don't make it, Phillip."

"I can't stand it! I can't stand it! Let me out of this fucking cage, you cocksuckers, you goddamn greedy capitalistic motherfuckers who think you can just step on anyone you goddamn please! Let me out of here!"

"Shocking! Simply shocking!"

"Such filthy language!"

"Yessirree, ladies and gentlemen, you are looking at the most frustrated, the most down and out human being in the world! This is the freak show of a lifetime! Step right up and pay only one dollar

to see Wildman Phillip in sensational throes of frustration!"

"Goddamn you, you fucking freak show peddler! You better thank your stars I'm behind these bars! If I ever get out of here, I'm going to squeeze your throat until your eyeballs pop out!"

"Oh, déan!"

"Absolutely shocking!"

"Yessirree, ladies and gentlemen, see him grovel and slobber on the bars! See him in the throes of agonizing frustration! See his toes curl up in sheer rage! See him bang his head on the bars until he bleeds!"

"Too bad you can't get a piece of this, Phillip," said Ariadnine, caressing her hand lovingly over her ass.

"Aaaaauuuggghhhh! Goddammit! Let me out of here!"

And far beyond this sad, sad world of human beings and all the miserable hassles they must go through, the angels sing in pastures of paradise, oblivious of all this suffering below. Gods and goddesses frolic among one another, occasionally attaining ethereal intercourse, experiencing everlasting orgasms. High in the lofty mountains, mystics sit in eternal contemplation of the source of it all, the Great Mother we are all trying to become one with again. Lonely Siddharthas gaze into rivers, contemplating suicide after twenty years of living in Maya, and wondering what it is all for, then realize the OM-point once more.

So cheer up, Phillip. Maybe you'll get there someday.

Meanwhile, a certain mysterious stranger entered the tavern where Phillip was sitting and brooding. He wore a wide-brimmed leather hat and was cloaked in a long black cape. It was very difficult to discern the exact features of his face. He ordered a beer and sat down.

It had been a long and trying day for him; he had many errands to run, many tasks to attend. He took out a pill and washed it down with his beer; it would give him strength for what yet he had to do. He glanced around the bar, then spotted the target he was looking for.

Phillip began to feel uncomfortably self-conscious. He looked up from his beer to see this stranger looking at him, sitting at one of the tables in the middle of the bar. The stranger was gazing steadily at him, appearing somewhat amused. That was funny, Phillip thought, he hadn't noticed him before. He took note of the somewhat peculiar way the stranger was dressed. "Must be some sort of magician," Phillip thought. He nervously turned his thoughts to other things.

Phillip looked up again. The stranger was still there, drinking a beer, staring penetratingly at him as if he were looking right into his mind. Phillip looked away; he didn't like being stared at in that manner. He felt a bit weird, as if he were being studied. He took a big slug of his beer and started thinking about how he'd like to have Arriadnine back again. He wished he could get his life together.

He looked up again and was startled. The stranger was standing right by his booth.

"May I sit down, brother?" the stranger addressed him. "I'd like to talk to you."

"Oh, uh, sure, sure. Be my guest," Phillip said, gesturing vaguely at the seat across from him. Phillip felt a bit irritated; he was more in the mood for pitying himself than anything else.

"You look like a lost soul, brother."

"Yeah, you might say that. A girlfriend of mine just abandoned me and I think I'm going to get plastered tonight." Phillip did not like being addressed as "brother". Maybe the guy was a Jesus freak and was going to try to convert him. Phillip was in no mood for that.

"Don't worry about that," the stranger said, as if reading his

mind, "I have no ulterior intentions."

"Yeah, thanks for telling me that. I get very defensive these days."

"I wouldn't advise you to get drunk tonight."

"Huh? What?"

"You heard me. Don't get drunk tonight. You've been doing it too much and it is not good for you. It is not conducive to clear thinking. You need to think more clearly."

"Yeah, I have to admit you're right about that. I'm sort of tired of having the d.t.'s all the time. But there's not much else to do."

"Hmmm, you need something to mellow you out a bit." He reached into his cape and took out a pill box. He opened it and handed Phillip a white pill. "Here, take this. This will make you cease to desire alcohol. Alcohol is very bad for thinking clearly. This will have the opposite effect. It is not good to habitually resort to chemicals to stabilize the nervous system, but sometimes they help."

Phillip popped it into his mouth. "What is it? I have a right to know what I just took."

"It is a combination of something that will stimulate you so you will be able to think more clearly and something that will calm you down. It also has mind-expanding properties. There is no compound on Earth quite like it. I find it amusing that the legal system in your society forbids the use of such compounds. After all, the entire physical universe consists of chemicals and their actions and reactions upon each other. These, in turn, have their spiritual counterparts."

Phillip's mind was clearing up pretty fast. He didn't even feel drunk anymore. Interesting. Whatever it was, it was good stuff. He wasn't sure whether the stranger was trying to put him on or not.



His words made a lot of sense, though. He decided to put forth a question:

"Uh, I hope you will excuse me, but who are you?"

"Under the circumstances, I am not able to reveal my true identity. There are some who have seen me from afar, and to them, I am known as: 'the lone trucker'. However, let us say that I am an agent in time and space. I think that answer will suffice. One of my tasks is to attend to lost souls, to help boost them along the path of spiritual evolution. I am quite real, I will assure you of that."

"Ummm... my name's Phillip. Would you be, uh, I hesitate to ask, an extraterrestrial being?"

"In a matter of speaking, you might say that I am. I am not unfamiliar to the ways of your world, however. I have spent many, many lifetimes on your planet, before reaching the level where I am right now. And this is the reason why I am so concerned about you, brother. I used to be very much like you several incarnations ago."

"You are a Bodhisattva, perhaps." Phillip had once been into Zen Buddhism, but eventually gave up all religion.

"Something like that. It is not like a merit badge, though. It is more like a state of existence."

"Far out," Phillip remarked to himself, "Far out."

"You have a problem of being far too entangled into yourself and your own personal problems. You need to change, to see things in a more positive light. You're a very negative person, and your very negativity is precisely what makes things external to you work against you."

"Yeah, I have to admit you're right about that. It is very difficult for me to change the structure of my own mind. I've been pretty bummed out lately; I have the most exasperating time getting laid and I got laid off from my job. I somehow don't feel like I

fit into this world. By the way, that pill you gave me is making me feel pretty good. Now those problems don't bother me as much."

"Yes, it is a very good chemical for you, Phillip. You have had a very difficult time relating to society. That is quite all right. This society is not particularly worth relating to anyway. You have to make a minimal adjustment to it in order to make a living, of course, but that's really all you have to do. You have been doing the right thing in resisting the games that the majority of human beings play. By the way, that's a habit you should give up; it isn't doing you any good." Phillip had been in the process of lighting up a cigarette.

He put it out instead. "Yeah, you're right about that. I've been wanting to quit for a long time."

"We have to work on all your habits, both mental and physical. Tobacco is very bad for you. It is better to smoke grass than it is to smoke tobacco." The stranger sighed to himself. "Ah, so many are the entanglements in this world."

"Yeah, I have to agree with you on that."

"You need to be aware that there is something more than this. There is something beyond this society and all its expectations that you function within a particular, limited role. Brother, did you know that there are other levels of existence?"

"Yeah, I used to know that better a few years ago, but the various traumatic experiences I've gone through to make a living and to satisfy certain basic needs have made me forget all about it."

"That is exactly right. There are levels of existence where you are able to live on pure energy and are not dependent on that peculiar physical substance called 'food'. There are levels of existence where spirits make love with a far greater intensity than that which results in mere physical orgasm. But I do not think you are quite ready for

that right now. You need to make your adjustments to this world in order to eventually comprehend its unimportance. You must play the game in order to transcend the game."

"Maybe you're right about that there. But I'll cross that bridge when I get to it. Meanwhile, I'm in this world, and because I'm in a physical body, I have desires which must be gratified. All I want to do is get laid."

"It is not asking too much, but there is a problem involved. You are looking for a meaningful relationship and that involves a certain amount of dependence on another person. It is not good to be dependent on another person in order to give yourself an illusion of feeling complete. You have to be complete in yourself."

"Yeah, but I want to be dependent on someone else. I can't help it; I'm still a human being. I am what I am. I don't think I can make it by myself. But I do understand what you're talking about."

"Very well, then," the stranger sighed. "Perhaps it will be necessary for you to engage in a long relationship in order to eventually transcend it to finally attain the level of self-completeness. I may be able to help you with that. To some extent, I am able to control forces in the physical universe."

"I would appreciate that very much," Phillip said. He took a deep breath. He was feeling extremely alive and well; it was like being high on cocaine, only better.

"You're a very different person," the stranger went on, "and that is why it has been so difficult for you. It is true: many women seek materialistic benefits and an illusion of security in exchange for giving their sex. But there are exceptions. There are a few women who feel just as lost as you do and want what you want. What you need to do is faith that you will find her and visualize her in your mind. When your visualization is strong enough, she will appear."

"You mean, imagine her and she will materialize."

"Exactly. It is as simple as that. You probably don't realize it, but you have more control over the world around you than you think you do. That's exactly why things haven't been going very well for you lately, Phillip, because you anticipated them to be that way. As a matter of fact, you take it for granted that you won't ever get laid and that's why it hasn't happened to you yet. You can change that now. The time is ripe for it. The universe becomes exactly what you preconceive it to be."

"That's pretty interesting. You mean that it's like the universe is made out of plastic and it can easily be molded into one form or another."

"Something like that. Actually, it is like the props that hold up a two-dimensional fabric, and when the props are gone, it is seen for the illusion that it was all along."

"It seems I've heard that somewhere before. If I could only remember where..."

"The dream you had today. It is true... there is a paradise you came from and a paradise to which you will return. You are not yet ready to comprehend its nature. Dreams are a very good thing. You should pay more attention to your dreams."

"Yeah, but how can I get laid? I've got to know how I can get laid."

The stranger sighed. "It really isn't all that difficult. All you need is confidence in yourself and faith that things are going to work out okay. Just look her in the eye and show her that you are interested. Or she will find you somehow. Just think positively about it and then you will automatically be directing vibrations into the right directions that will attract the right person to you. You do not need money. You do not need power. You do have your female

counterpart and you are her counterpart. The two of you will meet each other possibly at a time when you are least expecting it and have abandoned all hope that you will ever find the person you are looking for. Hopelessness is the vortex which attracts all love."

"Well, I hope that it will be soon. I'll try to think about her and maybe she will come to me. You have a point."

"There. That's much better. With that change in your attitude, you will begin to see results. It will be soon, though. If I am not mistaken, there are some dramatic changes in your life coming to you just around the corner. You will find a compatible sexual companion and you will probably depart from this entire environment which is stifling your growth. There are some good changes you will be going through shortly. That's all I can really say for now."

"Thank you. I'm glad someone believes in me. But I have one more thing I'd like to ask you and it's something that has been bothering me a lot lately. Tell me, what do you consider the meaning of life to be?"

"It is an experience. It does not readily lend itself to verbal thought. If it could be translated on the level of verbal thought, it would not be the meaning of life; it would merely be an empty formula. Well, Phillip, I must be going. I have an errand to run in another reality construct. I hope you get laid."

"Thank you. I really enjoyed talking to you and I appreciate that pill you gave me. It really makes me feel better."

"Perhaps..." the stranger said, gazing distantly in a direction he must go, "we will meet again in another point in time and space... someday when you are more fully prepared. Take care, Phillip."

"Yeah, you too."

Phillip watched the stranger go, his cape flapping behind him. He was sorry to see him leave so soon. He wasn't sure if it was the

effects of the drug or not, but he could swear he saw the stranger gradually disappear as he left the bar. Weird character, Phillip thought. All the time he was talking with him, he could never see clearly what his face looked like, enshrouded as it was in the shadows of his wide-brimmed hat. He didn't know if the dude really was whatever he said he was, but that sure was a good pill he turned him on to. Phillip went up to the counter to get a beer. He didn't really want a beer, but he was in a bar and decided to keep up appearances.

He went back to his booth and lit up a cigarette before he knew he was doing it. Then he felt oddly guilty about it, took a few drags, and put it out. Somehow the pill made him lose his appetite for smoking anyway. He thought about things in general, what his life had been and what he wanted it to be in the future.

Yeah, that stranger had a point. He'd stop feeling sorry for himself and start thinking more positively. There was more to life than money and satisfying physical needs. Phillip would stop drinking and start being more clearheaded about things. He would quit smoking and start getting more exercise. He would find a job that would be more compatible to his needs. Everything would get better and he'd find himself a girlfriend. If he got himself together, maybe he would be ready for someone else.

He noticed a hand resting on the table. A female hand. He looked up. There was a girl standing by his booth. She was good-looking. Well, he didn't know quite how to react; he really didn't expect things to happen this quickly.

"May I sit down?" the girl asked. She acted a bit hesitant, as though she were afraid Phillip would reject her on the spot. She had huge, spaced-out brown eyes that seemed to absorb Phillip right into them. She was beautiful.

"Sure, sure, have a seat. I'd like to have your company," Phil-

lip replied, nodding nervously at the space across from him. He had never been approached like this.

The girl made herself comfortable and smiled. "I'm from out of town and my name is Lisa."

"Is that so?" Phillip said, testing her.

"I don't know why, but there was something about you that drew me to you. You were sitting all alone and looked kind of lonely, so I thought I'd join you. I'm a bit lonely, too," she said, looking at him shyly, hoping he wouldn't reject her.

"You'll have to forgive me; I can be a very withdrawn person. You'll have to overcome that. I have a shell around me that is made out of negative energy. It is difficult to get through to me. Society made me that way."

"You've been rejected a lot, haven't you?" she said in a concerned voice.

"Yeah, I have."

"Don't worry about me," she said, smiling reassuringly. "I'm not going to reject you. I'm not society; I'm a human being, a person, a woman. You don't need to be defensive."

Phillip noticed her appearance in the dim light of the bar. She had long, straight, light-brown hair that reached halfway down her back. Her large brown eyes were nymph-like and she appeared to be in a deep trance, gazing straight at him. She wore a long, slim, earth-brown dress and had fairly large breasts that were nicely shaped.

"I have reason to be defensive," Phillip finally replied. "I have suffered many disappointments and I've been hurt a lot."

"So have I," she said softly. "But I have learned that it is better to be open in spite of it. What is your name?"

"My name is Phillip," he said. He always felt awkward when telling someone his name. For some reason, he felt convinced that

"Phillip" was a sissy name.

"That's not a bad name. I'm from out of town and I'm new here. I don't know anybody very well and I'd like to get to know you. You see, you attract me."

"What?" Phillip exclaimed, nearly choking on his beer.

"You heard me," she said, gazing straight at him. She gave him a weird grin, that had a certain aggressiveness to it. He felt himself getting horny.

"Where all have you been?" Phillip asked, trying to start a conversation.

"Oh, I've been here and I've been there. I was up in the North before this, traveling around. I spent some time in Boston and I managed to save up some money. Then I got a hankering to see what the South looks like. So I thumbed my down and wound up in this city."

"Hmmm. You could have picked a better place than this. This particular city is not exactly one of the world's most high-energy centers. You would have been better off in a small college town. Chapel Hill would have been a nice place for you, for example."

"Yeah, but I wound up here and here I am. It's not too bad, really." She grinned like a lioness. "Where have you been?"

"To sum it up: In a rut. Laid off from my job. Turned down in love. Basically lonely and in a kind of quiet despair."

"Yeah, I can get into that; I know what you mean. This past winter, I used to feel that way all alone in this dismal little apartment in Boston. Big cities can get to you that way. Do you ever have suicidal tendencies?"

"Not the way I used to. I once made a decision some time ago, that I would never kill myself."

"That's good. I'm glad to hear that. I wouldn't want you to.



You know, I bet there's a lot of girls who would like to have your body and it would really be a shame <sup>for you</sup> to deprive them of it." She smiled warmly. "So don't kill yourself. You have a lot to give to the world."

"I get defensive when I hear things like that," Phillip said. "I'm sorry," he added.

"Don't be sorry," she laughed. "Man, you act like you're apologizing for your existence or something. Someone must have really hurt you bad for you to be this way."

"Yeah," Phillip had to admit, "that's about it."

"I mean, get out of the bag you're in. Get turned on by me. I turn you on, don't I? What good is it for you to hide behind that wall? You don't fool me." She smiled benevolently at him.

"Wow, you're pretty weird," Phillip had to admit. "You're direct. That's unique, you know." He felt his loins swell at her invitation to go ahead and get horny about her.

"A lot of people have told me that," she said. "I think it's dumb to beat around the bush when it's obvious what's really going on. Two people get horny for each other, they want to fuck, and they fuck. Why not?; that's nature. I don't play your 'my fair lady' games, you know, acting all chaste and sweet and pretty and acting like I don't know what's really going on."

"I can see that. You talk as if you've been on the road a lot. I used to wander around like that, but for some reason, I got into a rut of staying in one place all the time. I've been in that rut for a couple of years."

"Hmmm. It sounds like you need to get out of it. Yeah, I've lived a lot of my life out in the streets. There isn't anything I haven't done; I mean, I've been wild in my lifetime. But now, I want to try to stabilize myself. I'm also getting a bit inclined to be

more monogamous than I've been. Sometimes you have to be in one place and be with one person to get your head together. You know what I mean?"

"Yeah, I do."

"Then why do you keep resisting me and trying to change the subject? You keep averting your eyes when I look at you. You can't believe I want to get it on with you. Man, those other women must have really fucked you over."

"You're very perceptive. I've become very distrustful."

"But why? I don't want your money or anything. I don't have any weird, underhanded motives. Uh uh." She smiled at him. "I just do it for love and pleasure."

Phillip was amazed. "I didn't know there were still people like you."

She grinned. "Well, you're looking at one of them. And you better get used to it, because I'd like to show you that there's a different way to live, besides in this money-oriented society."

"I don't believe it; you're actually different from the others."

"Well, you better start believing it. Listen, I don't like these places like this a whole lot. People play all their little ego-games here and I don't get into that. I'm going to be myself and I don't give a fuck about what society thinks about it. Can you dig what I'm talking about?"

"Yeah, yeah, those are my sentiments exactly." Phillip took a look at her. He was falling in love with her already. She was smiling and she was beautiful.

"Would you like to get out of here?" she asked softly.

"Sure, sure, let's go. But where would you like to go?"

"Oh, we could go to where I'm staying right now. There's not going to be anyone there tonight."

"Lisa, I'd like to make it with you."

She took his hand. Her hand felt warm and healthy and life-giving. "That's good. I'm really glad you said that. Let's go to my place and do something about it."

"Is it far?"

"No, we can walk."

So out they went, walking hand in hand. The people in the bar looked up in surprise. They'd never seen Phillip make it with a girl there. They couldn't believe it. It was to be a subject of gossip.

She was living in a two bedroom apartment, sharing it with a roommate. Her roommate had gone somewhere for the night. It was a tidy place with nice furniture and they had it all to themselves. Lisa picked up a pipe and smoked a couple of tokes of grass. She offered him some, but he refused; the pill the stranger had given him gave him a sufficient high. It did not impair him sexually; in fact, it made him hornier than he had been in a long time.

"Well, so much for aphrodisiacs," she said. "Let's get on with it and get it on." She slipped off her dress, revealing nice breasts and a good body. She was a little chunky in places, but that made her all the earthier.

Phillip took off his clothes. He had a hard-on. They embraced each other. Their pubic hair felt good against each other. With their hands, they explored each other's body, standing up all the while. Lisa's fingers wandered down his back to the crack of his ass, then put her hand over his sex organ.

"Ummm, you have a nice, warm dick there," Lisa murmured.

"Thank you," Phillip said. His hand trailed up and down her spine, resting on the base of her spine, trying to arouse her "kundalini" (psycho-sexual energy), and held her ass against him.

"You're warm and sensuous and life-giving," Phillip said.

"That's far out. Let's get in the bed and fuck," she whispered against his chest.

So they went to her bed which was a mattress on the floor, and after a little preliminary foreplay, they fucked. And they fucked. And they fucked. (Amen, brother.) They put their fingers in all sorts of orifices and they found that it was good. And they ate each other and they tasted each other. And it was good. Their sexual smells filled the room and mingled with each other. And it was good. And they came, simultaneously and separately, and it was good. And thus, at long last, Phillip was relieved of his three-year-long sexual frustration. And it was good.

"You're a good lay," Phillip said.

Lisa was lying on her back, resting her hands behind her head, looking up at the ceiling. She was quite satisfied. "You aren't too bad yourself," she said. "You have a lot of persistence and sometimes that counts a lot. You also do things that other guys don't do as much. I liked the way you ate me, for example." She closed her eyes and sighed at the memory.

"You know, that was the first time I had a good fuck in over three years?"

"No kidding!" She sat up abruptly. "You mean to tell me you went that long without it? You poor, deprived human being! I'm glad I rescued you now. You shouldn't have had to suffer that. Now do you see why you shouldn't have been so defensive? You could have this all the time if you wanted. And you're pretty good, too."

"Maybe we can work out a relationship. This is a pretty good beginning."

"Yeah, maybe we can. We seem to be a good match. I tell you what, why don't I get a job and why don't you get a job, and we'll

pool our money and resources together, and then go traveling this summer. What do you say? Where would you like to go?"

"It sounds like the best idea I've heard in a long time. I'd like to go North; I haven't been there in a long time. I'd like to get out of this city and live in the country somewhere. That sounds good. Let's do it."

"Okay, but let's not get too heavy right now. Let's have some fun with each other first." She hugged him and bit into his shoulder. "What do you say? Don't you think sex is fun?"

"Yeah, I have to admit that."

"Let's do it once more, before we crash out. I haven't had it in a pretty long time either."

"You're insatiable."

"I know. Dig it."

And Phillip did. They tried a unique position that enabled Phillip to get into her more easily and for her to enjoy it more. And they fucked again. She moaned and cooed and shuddered orgasmically. Then it was Phillip's turn to come and he did. And it was good. Lisa said so, too, and lay on her stomach and fell asleep. Phillip watched her breathing body for awhile and thought what a good thing he had found.

It was not everything, but it was what he wanted. Maybe they would form a relationship and leave the city. They would enjoy each other's company and make each other feel good for a long time. Maybe they had enough between them to last a whole lifetime, but it was too early to tell. Phillip knew enough about life to know that everything in it is transitory. Yet, there was something compatible about them. Phillip lay beside Lisa and hoped it would work. He was beginning to get sleepy.

Dawn's early light was rising. Lisa's body was getting more

visible. The crescent moon was hovering above the point where the sun would rise. The birds were waking up and beginning to tweet on that early spring morning. It had been a long, long day for Phillip and much had happened. Now things were getting better at last. But tomorrow would tell for sure and tomorrow was already here. And it was good.

However, only one question remained in Phillip's mind as he lay there, sexually satisfied, about to fall asleep. The question that lingered was:

"Now what?"

(THE END?)

LAST PAGE

When you stop thinking,  
there it is.