

Flowers for Algernon

Daniel Keyes



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*For my mother
And in memory of my father*

Any one who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees any one whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter life, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light. And he will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other; or, if he have a mind to laugh at the soul which comes from below into the light, there will be more reason in this than in the laugh which greets him who returns from above out of the light into the den.

—Plato, *The Republic*

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Progris riport 1 martch 3

Dr Strauss says I shoud rite down what I think and re-membir and evrey thing that happins to me from now on. I dont no why but he says its importint so they will see if they can use me. I hope they use me becaus Miss Kinnian says mabye they can make me smart. I want to be smart. My name is Charlie Gordon I werk in Donners bakery where Mr Donner gives me 11 dollers a week and bred or cake if I want. I am 32 yeres old and next munth is my brithday. I tolld dr Strauss and perfesser Nemur I cant rite good but he says it dont matter he says I shud rite just like I talk and like I rite compushishens in Miss Kinnians class at the beekmin collidge center for retarded adults where I go to lern 3 times a week on my time off. Dr. Strauss says to rite a lot evrything I think and evrything that happins to me but I cant think anymor because I have nothing to rite so I will close for today ... yrs truly Charlie Gordon.

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Progris riport 2—martch 4

I had a test today. I think I faled it and I think mabye now they wont use me. What happind is I went to Prof Nemurs office on my lunch time like they said and his secertery took me to a place that said psych dept on the door with a long hall and alot of littel rooms with onley a desk and chares. And a nice man was in one of the rooms and he had some wite cards with ink spilld all over them. He sed sit down Charlie and make yourself cunfortible and rilax. He had a wite coat like a docter but I dont think he was no docter because he dint tell me to opin my mouth and say ah. All he had was those wite cards. His name is Burt. I fer-got his last name because I dont remembir so good.

I dint know what he was gonna do and I was holding on tite to the chair like sometimes when I go to a dentist onley Burt aint no dentist neither but he kept telling me to rilax and that gets me skared because it always means its gonna hert.

So Burt sed Charlie what do you see on this card. I saw the spilld ink and I was very skared even tho I got my rabbits foot in my pockit because when I was a kid I always faled tests in school and I spilld ink to.

I tolld Burt I saw ink spilld on a wite card. Burt said yes and he smild and that maid me feel good. He kept terning all the cards and I tolld him somebody spilld ink on all of them red and black. I thot that was a easy test but when I got up to go Burt stoppd me and said now sit down Charlie we are not thru yet. Theres more we got to do with these cards. I dint understand about it but I re-membir Dr Strauss said do anything the testor telld me even if it dont make no sense because thats testing.

I dont remembir so good what Burt said but I re-membir he wantid me to say what was in the ink. I dint see nothing in the ink but Burt sed there was picturs there. I couldnt see no picturs. I reely tryed to see. I holded the card up close and then far away. Then I said if I had my eye glassis I coud probaly see better I usully only ware my eye-glassis in the movies or to watch TV but I sed maybe they will help me see the picturs in the ink. I put them on and I said now let me see the card agan I bet I find it now.

I tryed hard but I still couldnt find the picturs I only saw the ink. I tolld Burt mabey I need new glassis. He rote somthing down on a paper and I got skared of faling the test. So I tolld him it was a very nice pictur of ink with

pritty points all around the eges but he shaked his head so that wasnt it neither. I asked him if other pepul saw things in the ink and he sed yes they imagen picturs in the inkblot. He tolld me the ink on the card was calld inkblot.

Burt is very nice and he talks slow like Miss Kinnian dose in her class where I go to lern reeding for slow adults. He explaned me it was a *raw shok test*. He sed pepul see things in the ink. I said show me where. He dint show me he just kept saying *think* imagen theres something on the card. I tolld him I imaggen a inkblot. He shaked his head so that wasnt rite eather. He said what does it remind you of pretend its something. I closd my eyes for a long time to pretend and then I said I pretend a bottel of ink spilld all over a wite card. And thats when the point on his pencil broke and then we got up and went out.

I dont think I passd the *raw shok test*.

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3d progres report

March 5—Dr Strauss and prof Nemur say it dont matter about the ink on the cards. I tolld them I dint spill the ink on them and I couldnt see anything in the ink. They said maybe they will still use me. I tolld Dr Strauss that Miss Kinnian never gave me tests like that only riting and reeding. He said Miss Kinnian tolld him I was her bestist pupil in the Beekman School for retarted adults and I tryed the hardist becaus I reely wantd to lern I wantid it more even then pepul who are smarter even then me.

Dr Strauss askd me how come you went to the Beek-man School all by yourself Charlie. How did you find out about it. I said I dont remembir.

Prof Nemur said but why did you want to lern to reed and spell in the frist place. I tolld him because all my life I wantid to be smart and not dumb and my mom always tolld me to try and lern just like Miss Kinnian tells me but its very hard to be smart and even when I lern something in Miss Kinnians class at the school I ferget alot.

Dr Strauss rote some things on a peice of paper and prof Nemur talkd to me very sereus. He said you know Charlie we are not shure how this experamint will werk on pepul because we onley tried it up to now on animils. I said thats what Miss Kinnian tolld me but I dont even care if it herts or anything because Im strong and I will werk hard.

I want to get smart if they will let me. They said they got to get permissen from my familie but my uncle Herman who use to take care of me is ded and I dont rimember about my familie. I dint see my mother or father or my littel sister Norma for a long long long time. Mabye their ded to. Dr. Strauss askd me where they use to live. I think in brooklin. He sed they will see if mabye they can find them.

I hope I dont have to rite to much of these progres ri-ports because it takes along time and I get to sleep very late and Im tired at werk in the morning. Gimpy hollered at me because I droppd a tray full of rolles I was carrying over to the oven. They got derty and he had to wipe them off before he put them in to bake. Gimpy hollers at me all the time when I do something rong, but he reely likes me because hes my frend. Boy if I get smart wont he be serprised.

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Progris riport 4

mar 6—I had more crazy tests today in case they use me. That same place but a differnt littel testing room. The nice lady who give it to me tolld me the name and I askd her how do you spell it so I can put it down rite in my progis riport. THEMATIC APPERCEPTON TEST. I dont know the frist 2 werds but I know what test means. You got to pass it or you get bad marks.

This test lookd easy because I coud see the picturs. Only this time she dint want me to tell what I saw in the picturs. That mixd me up. I tolld her yesterday Burt said I shoud tell what I saw in the ink. She said that dont make a difrence because this test is something else. Now you got to make up storys about the pepul in the picturs.

I said how can I tell storys about pepul I dont know. She said make beleeve but I tolld her thats lies. I never tell lies any more because when I was a kid I made lies and I always got hit. I got a pictur in my walet of me and Norma with Uncle Herman who got me the job to be janiter at Donners bakery before he dyed.

I said I coud make storys about them because I livd with Uncle Herman along time but the lady dint want to hear about them. She said this test and the other one the *raw shok* was for getting persinality. I laffd. I tolld her how can you get that thing from cards that sombody spilld ink on and fotos of pepul you dont even no. She lookd angrey and took the picturs away. I dont care.

I gess I faled that test too.

Then I drawed some picturs for her but I dont drawer so good. Later the other testor Burt in the wite coat came back his name is Burt Selden and he took me to a diferent place on the same 4th floor in the Beekman University that said PSYCHOLOGY LABORATORY on the door. Burt said psychology means minds and laboratory meens a place where they make spearamints. I thot he ment like where they made the chooing gum but now I think its puzzels and games because thats what we did.

I coudnt werk the puzzels so good because it was all broke and the peices coudnt fit in the holes. One game was a paper with lines in all derrections and lots of boxs. On one side it said START and on the other end it said FINISH. He tolld me that game was *amazed* and I shoud take the pencil

and go from where it said START to where it said finish without crossing over any of the lines.

I didn't understand the amazed and we used up a lot of papers. Then Burt said look I'll show you something let's go to the experimental lab maybe you'll get the idea. We went up to the 5th floor to another room with lots of cages and animals they had monkeys and some mice. It had a funny smell like old garbage. And there were other people in white coats playing with the animals so I thought it was like a pet store but there weren't any customers. Burt took a white mouse out of the cage and showed him to me. Burt said that's Algernon and he can do this amazed very good. I told him you show me how he does that.

Well do you know he put Algernon in a box like a big table with a lot of twists and turns like all kinds of walls and a START and a FINISH like the paper had. Only there was a screen over the big table. And Burt took out his clock and lifted up a sliding door and said let's go Algernon and the mouse sniffed 2 or 3 times and started to run. First he ran down one long row and then when he saw he couldn't go any more he came back where he started from and he just stood there a minute wiggling his whiskers. Then he went off in the other direction and started to run again.

It was just like he was doing the same thing Burt wanted me to do with the lines on the paper. I was laughing because I thought it was going to be a hard thing for a mouse to do. But then Algernon kept going all the way threw that thing all the right ways till he came out where it said FINISH and he made a squeak. Burt says that means he was happy because he did the thing right.

Boy I said that's a smart mouse. Burt said would you like to race against Algernon. I said sure and he said he had a different kind of maze made of wood with rows scratched in it and an electric stick like a pencil. And he could fix up Algernon's maze to be the same like that one so we could both be doing the same kind.

He moved all the boards around on Algernon's table because they come apart and he could put them together in different ways. And then he put the screen back on top so Algernon wouldn't jump over any rows to get to the finish. Then he gave me the electric stick and showed me how to put it in between the rows and I'm not supposed to lift it off the board just follow the little scratches until the pencil can't move any more or I get a little shock.

He took out his clock and he was trying to hide it. So I tried not to look at him and that made me very nervous.

When he said go I tried to go but I didnt know where to go. I didnt know the way to take. Then I herd Algernon squeeking from the box on the tabel and his feet skratching like he was runing alreedy. I startid to go but I went in the rong way and got stuck and a littel shock in my fingers so I went back to the START but evertime I went a differnt way I got stuck and a shock. It didnt hert or anything just made me jump a littel and Burt said it was to show me I did the wrong thing. I was haffway on the bord when I herd Algernon squeek like he was happy again and that means he won the race.

And the other ten times we did it over Algernon won evry time because I couldnt find the right rows to get to where it says FINISH. I dint feel bad because I watched Algernon and I lernd how to finish the amaze even if it takes me along time.

I dint know mice were so smart.

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Progris riport 5 mar 6

They found my sister Norma who lives with my mother in Brooklin and she gave permissen for the operashun. So their going to use me. Im so exited I can hardley rite it down. But then Prof Nemur and Dr Strauss had a argament about it frist. I was sitting in Prof Nemurs office when Dr Strauss and Burt Selden came in. Prof Nemur was worryed about using me but Dr Strauss tolld him I looked like the best one they testid so far. Burt tolld him Miss Kinnian rekemmeded me the best from all the people who she was teaching at the center for retarded adults. Where I go.

Dr Strauss said I had something that was very good. He said I had a good motor-vation. I never even knowed I had that. I felt good when he said not everbody with an eye-Q of 68 had that thing like I had it. I dont know what it is or where I got it but he said Algernon had it too. Algernons motor-vation is the chees they put in his box. But it cant be only that because I dint have no chees this week.

Prof Nemur was worryd about my eye-Q getting too high from mine that was too low and I woud get sick from it. And Dr Strauss tolld Prof Nemur somthing I dint understand so wile they was talking I rote down some of the words in my notebook for keeping my progris riports.

He said Harold thats Prof Nemurs frist name I know Charlie is not what you had in mind as the frist of your new breed of intelek** couldnt get the word *** superman. But most people of his low ment** are host** and uncoop** they are usally dull and apathet** and hard to reach. Charlie has a good natcher and hes intristed and eeger to pleese.

Then prof Nemur said remembir he will be the first human beeing ever to have his intelijence increesd by sergery. Dr Strauss said thats exakly what I ment. Where will we find another retarded adult with this tremendus motor-vation to lern. Look how well he has lerned to reed and rite for his low mentel age. A tremen** achev**

I dint get all the werds and they were talking to fast but it sounded like Dr Strauss and Burt was on my side and Prof Nemur wasnt.

Burt kept saying Alice Kinnian feels he has an overwhelm** desir to lern. He aktually beggd to be used. And thats true because I wantid to be smart. Dr Strauss got up and walkd around and said I say we use Charlie. And Burt noded. Prof Nemur skratcd his head and rubbd his nose with his

thum and said mabye your rite. We will use Charlie. But weve got to make him understand that a lot of things can go wrong with the experamint.

When he said that I got so happy and exited I jumpd up and shook his hand for being so good to me. I think he got skared when I did that.

He said Charlie we werked on this for a long time but only on animils like Algernon. We are sure thers no fisical danger for you but there are other things we cant tell until we try it. I want you to understand this mite fale and then nothing woud happen at all. Or it mite even succeed temperary and leeve you werse off then you are now. Do you understand what that meens. If that happins we will have to send you bak to the Warren state home to live.

I said I dint care because I aint afraid of nothing. Im very strong and I always do good and beside I got my luky rabbits foot and I never breakd a mirrir in my life. I droppd some dishis once but that dont count for bad luk.

Then Dr Strauss said Charlie even if this fales your making a grate contribyushun to sience. This experimint has been successful on lots of animils but its never bin tride on a humen beeing. You will be the first.

I told him thanks doc you wont be sorry for giving me my 2nd chanse like Miss Kinnian says. And I meen it like I tolld them. After the operashun Im gonna try to be smart. Im gonna try awful hard.

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Progris riport 6th Mar 8

Im skared. Lots of pepul who werk at the collidge and the pepul at the medicil school came to wish me luk. Burt the tester brot me some flowers he said they were from the pepul at the psych departmint. He wished me luk. I hope I have luk. I got my rabits foot and my luky penny and my horshoe. Dr Strauss said dont be so superstishus Charlie. This is sience. I dont no what sience is but they all keep saying it so mabye its something that helps you have good luk. Anyway Im keeping my rabits foot in one hand and my luky penny in the other hand with the hole in it. The penny I meen. I wish I coud take the horshoe with me to but its hevvy so Ill just leeve it in my jaket.

Joe Carp from the bakery brot me a chokilat cake from Mr Donner and the folks at the bakery and they hope I get better soon. At the bakery they think Im sick becaus thats what Prof Nemur said I shoud tell them and nothing about an operashun for getting smart. Thats a secrit until after in case it dont werk or something goes wrong.

Then Miss Kinnian came to see me and she brout me some magizenes to reed, and she lookd kind of nervus and skared. She fixd up the flowres on my tabel and put evry-thing nice and neet not messd up like I made it. And she fixd the pilow under my hed. She likes me alot becaus I try very hard to lern evrything not like some of the pepul at the adult center who dont reely care. She wants me to get smart. I know.

Then Prof Nemur said I cant have any more visiters becaus I got to rest. I askd Prof Nemur if I coud beet Algernon in the race after the operashun and he sayd mabye. If the operashun werks good Ill show that mouse I can be as smart as he is even smarter. Then Ill be abel to reed better and spell the werds good and know lots of things and be like other pepul. Boy that woud serprise everyone. If the operashun werks and I get smart mabye Ill be abel to find my mom and dad and sister and show them. Boy woud they be serprised to see me smart just like them and my sister.

Prof Nemur says if it werks good and its perminent they will make other pepul like me smart also. Mabye pepul all over the werld. And he said that meens Im doing somthing grate for sience and Ill be famus and my name will go down in the books. I dont care so much about bee-ing famus. I

just want to be smart like other pepul so I can have lots of frends who like me.

They dint give me anything to eat today. I dont know what eating got to do with geting smart and Im hungry. Prof Nemur took away my choklate cake. That Prof Nemur is a growch. Dr. Strauss says I can have it back after the operashun. You cant eat before a operashun. Not even cheese.

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PROGRESS REPORT 7 MARCH 11

The operashun dint hert. Dr. Strauss did it while I was sleeping. I dont know how because I dint see but there was bandiges on my eyes and my head for 3 days so I couldnt make no PROGRESS REPORT till today. The skinny nerse who wached me riting says I spelld progress rong and she tolld me how to spell it and REPORT to and MARCH. I got to remembir that. I have a very bad memary for speling. Anyway they took off the bandiges from my eyes today so I can make a PROGRESS REPORT now. But there is still some bandigis on my head.

I was skared when they came in and tolld me it was time to go for the operashun. They maid me get out of the bed and on another bed that has weels on it and they rolld me out of the room and down the hall to the door that says sergery. Boy was I serprised that it was a big room with green walls and lots of docters sitting around up high all around the room waching the operashun. I dint no it was going to be like a show.

A man came up to the tabel all in wite and with a wite cloth on his face like in TV shows and rubber glovs and he said rilax Charlie its me Dr Strauss. I said hi doc Im skared. He said theres nothing to be skared about Charlie he said youll just go to sleep. I said thats what Im skared about. He patted my head and then 2 other men waring wite masks too came and straped my arms and legs down so I couldnt move them and that maid me very skared and my stomack feeled tite like I was gone to make all over but I dint only wet a littel and I was gone to cry but they put a rubber thing on my face for me to breeth in and it smelld funny. All the time I herd Dr Strauss talking out loud about the operashun telling evrybody what he was gonna do. But I dint understand anything about it and I was thinking mabye after the operashun Ill be smart and Ill understand all the things hes talking about. So I breethed deep and then I gess I was very tired becuse I went to sleep.

When I waked up I was back in my bed and it was very dark. I couldnt see nothing but I herd some talking. It was the nerse and Burt and I said whats the matter why dont you put on the lites and when are they gonna operate. And they laffed and Burt said Charlie its all over. And its dark because you got bandijis over your eyes.

Its a funny thing. They did it while I was sleeping.

Burt comes in to see me evry day to rite down all the things like my tempertur and my blud preshur and the other things about me. He says its on acount of the sientific methid. They got to keep reckerds about what hap-pins so they can do it agen when they want to. Not to me but to the other pepul like me who aint smart.

Thats why I got to do these progis *progress reports*. Burt says its part of the esperimint and they will make fo-tastats of the rip *reports* to study them so they will know what is going on in my mind. I dont see how they will know what is going on in my mind by looking at these reports. I read them over and over a lot of times to see what I rote and I dont no whats going on in my mind so how are they going to.

But anyway thats sience and I got to try to be smart like other pepul. Then when I am smart they will talk to me and I can sit with them and listen like Joe Carp and Frank and Gimpy do when they talk and have a discushen about important things. While their werking they start talking about things like about god or about the truble with all the mony the presedint is spending or about the ripublicans and demicrats. And they get all excited like their gonna have a fite so Mr Donner got to come in and tell them to get back to baking or theyll all get canned union or no union. I want to talk about things like that.

If your smart you can have lots of frends to talk to and you never get lonley by yourself all the time.

Prof Nemur says its ok to tell about all the things that happin to me in the progress reports but he says I shoud rite more about what I feel and what I think and remembir about the past. I tolld him I dont know how to think or remembir and he said just try.

All the time the bandiges were on my eyes I tryed to think and remembir but nothing happined. I dont know what to think or remembir about. Maybe if I ask him he will tell me how I can think now that Im suppose to get smart. What do smart pepul think about or remembir. Fancy things I bet. I wish I new some fancy things alredy.

March 12—I dont have to rite PROGRESS REPORT on top evry day just when I start a new batch after Prof Nemur takes the old ones away. I just have to

put the date on top. That saves time. Its a good idea. I can sit up in bed and look out the window at the gras and trees outside. The skinney nerses name is Hilda and she is very good to me. She brings me things to eat and she fixes my bed and she says I was a very brave man to let them do things to my hed. She says she woud never let them do things to her branes for all the tea in china. I tolld her it wasnt for tea in china. It was to make me smart. And she said mabey they got no rite to make me smart because if god wantid me to be smart he would have made me born that way. And what about Adem and Eev and the sin with the tree of nowlege and eating the appel and the fall. And mabey Prof Nemur and Dr Strauss was tampiring with things they got no rite to tampir with.

She's very skinney and when she talks her face gets all red. She says mabey I better prey to god to ask him to for-giv what they done to me. I dint eat no appels or do nothing sinful. And now Im skared. Mabey I shoudnt of let them oparate on my branes like she said if its agenst god. I dont want to make god angrey.

March 13—They changed my nerse today. This one is pritty. Her name is Lucille she showd me how to spell it for my progress report and she got yellow hair and blew eyes. I askd her where was Hilda and she said Hilda wasnt werking in that part of the hospitil no more. Only in the matirinity ward by the babys where it dont matter if she talks too much.

When I askd her about what was matirinity she said its about having babys but when I askd her how they have them she got red in the face just the same like Hilda and she said she got to take sombodys temperchure. Nobody ever tells me about the babys. Mabye if this thing werks and I get smart Ill find out.

Miss Kinnian came to see me today and she said Charlie you look wonderful. I tolld her I feel fine but I dont feel smart yet. I thot that when the operashun was over and they took the bandijis off my eyes Id be smart and no a lot of things so I coud read and talk about important things like evryebody else.

She said thats not the way it werks Charlie. It comes slowley and you have to werk very hard to get smart.

I dint no that. If I got to werk hard anyway what did I have to have the operashun for. She said she wasnt sure but the operashun was to make it so that when I did werk hard to get smart it woud stick with me and not be like it was before when it dint stick so good.

Well I tolld her that made me kind of feel bad because I thot I was going to be smart rite away and I coud go back to show the guys at the bakery how smart I am and talk with them about things and mabye even get to be an assistint baker. Then I was gone to try and find my mom and dad. They woud be serprised to see how smart I got because my mom always wanted me too be smart to. Mabey they woudnt send me away no more if they see how smart I am. I tolld Miss Kinnian I would try hard to be smart as hard as I can. She pattid my hand and said I no you will. I have fayth in you Charlie.

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PROGRESS REPORT 8

March 15—Im out of the hospitil but not back at werk yet. Nothing is happining. I had lots of tests and differint kinds of races with Algernon. I hate that mouse. He always beets me. Prof Nemur says I got to play those games and I got to take those tests over and over agen.

Those amazes are stoopid. And those picturs are stoopid to. I like to drawer the picturs of a man and woman but I wont make up lies about pepul.

And I cant do the puzzels good.

I get headakes from trying to think and remembir so much. Dr Strauss promised he was going to help me but he dont. He dont tell me what to think or when Ill get smart. He just makes me lay down on a couch and talk.

Miss Kinnian comes to see me at the collidge too. I tolld her nothing was happining. When am I going to get smart. She said you got to be pashent Charlie these things take time. It will happin so slowley you wont know its happening. She said Burt tolld her I was comming along fine.

I still think those races and those tests are stoopid and I think riting these progress reports are stoopid to.

March 16—I ate lunch with Burt at the collidge resturant. They got all kinds of good food and I dont have to pay for it neither. I like to sit and wach the collidge boys and girls. They fool around somtimes but mostly they talk about all kinds of things just like the bakers do at Donners bakery. Burt says its about art and polatics and riligon. I dont know what those things are about but I know riligon is god. Mom use to tell me all about him and the things he done to make the werld. She said I shoud always love god and prey to him. I dont remembir how to prey to him but I think mom use to make me prey to him a lot when I was a kid that he shoud make me get better and not be sick. I dont rimember how I was sick. I think it was about me not being smart.

Anyway Burt says if the experimint werks Ill be able to understand all those things the studints are talking about and I said do you think Ill be

smart like them and he laffed and said those kids arent so smart youll pass them as if their standing still.

He interduced me to alot of the studints and some of them look at me funny like I dont belong in a collidge. I almost forgot and started to tell them I was going to be very smart soon like them but Burt intiruppted and he tolld them I was cleaning the psych department lab. Later he explained to me their mussent be any publisity. That meens its a seecrit.

I dont reely understand why I got to keep it a seecrit. Burt says its in case theirs a faleure Prof Nemur dont want everybody to laff espeshully the pepul from the Welberg foundashun who gave him the mony for the projekt. I said I dont care if pepul laff at me. Lots of pepul laff at me and their my frends and we have fun. Burt put his arm on my sholder and said its not you Nemurs worryd about. He dont want pepul to laff at him.

I dint think pepul would laff at Prof Nemur because hes a sientist in a collidge but Bert said no sientist is a grate man to his colleegs and his gradulate studints. Burt is a gradulate studint and he is a majer in *psychology* like the name on the door to the lab. I dint know they had majers in collidge. I thot it was onley in the army.

Anyway I hope I get smart soon because I want to lern everything there is in the werld like the collidge boys know. All about art and politiks and god.

March 17—When I waked up this morning rite away I thot I was gone to be smart but Im not. Evry morning I think Im gone to be smart but nothing happins. Mabye the experimint dint werk. Maby I wont get smart and Ill have to go live at the Warren home. I hate the tests and I hate the amazeds and I hate Algernon.

I never new before that I was dumber than a mouse. I dont feel like riting any more progress reports. I forget things and even when I rite them in my notbook sometimes I cant reed my own riting and its very hard. Miss Kinnian says have pashents but I feel sick and tired. And I get headakes all the time. I want to go back to werk in the bakery and not rite ~~progris~~ *progress* reports any more.

March 20—Im going back to werk at the bakery. Dr Strauss told Prof Nemur it was better I shoud go back to werk but I still cant tell anyone what the operashun was for and I have to come to the lab for 2 hrs evry nite after werk for my tests and keep riting these dumb reports. They are going to pay me evry week like for a part time job because that was part of the arraignment when they got the mony from the Welberg foundashun. I still dont know what that Welberg thing is. Miss Kinnian explaned me but I still dont get it. So if I dint get smart why are they paying me to rite these dumb things. If their gonna pay me Ill do it. But its very hard to rite.

Im glad Im going back to werk because I miss my job at the bakery and all my frends and all the fun we have.

Dr. Strauss says I shoud keep a notbook in my pockit for things I remembir. And I dont have to do the progress reports every day just when I think of somthing or somthing speshul happins. I told him nothing speshul ever happins to me and it dont look like this speshul experimint is going to happin neither. He says dont get discouriged Charlie because it takes a long time and it happins slow and you cant notise it rite away. He explaned how it took a long time with Algernon before he got 3 times smarter then he was before.

Thats why Algernon beats me all the time in that amaze race because he had that operashun too. Hes a speshul mouse the 1st animil to stay smart so long after the operashun. I dint know he was a speshul mouse. That makes it diffrint. I coud probaly do that amazed faster then a reglar mouse. Maybe some day Ill beat Algernon. Boy woud that be somthing. Dr Strauss says that so far Algernon looks like he mite be smart permanint and he says thats a good sine becaus we both had the same kind of operashun.

March 21—We had a lot of fun at the bakery today. Joe Carp said hey look where Charlie had his operashun what did they do Charlie put some brains in. I was going to tell him about me getting smart but I remembered Prof

Nemur said no. Then Frank Reilly said what did you do Charlie open a door the hard way. That made me laff. Their my frends and they really like me.

Their is a lot of werk to catch up. They dint have anyone to clean out the place because that was my job but they got a new boy Ernie to do the diliveries that I always done. Mr. Donner said he decided not to fire him for a while to give me a chanse to rest up and not werk so hard. I told him I was alright and I can make my diliveries and clean up like I always done but Mr. Donner says we will keep the boy.

I said so what am I gonna do. And Mr. Donner patted me on the shoulder and says Charlie how old are you. I told him 32 years going on 33 my next brithday. And how long you been here he said. I told him I dint know. He said you came here seventeen years ago. Your Uncle Herman god rest his sole was my best frend. He brout you in here and he askd me to let you werk here and look after you as best I coud. And when he died 2 years later and your mother had you comited to the Warren home I got them to releese you on outside werk placmint. Seventeen years its been Charlie and I want you to know that the bakery bisness is not so good but like I always said you got a job here for the rest of your life. So dont worry about me bringing in somebody to take your place. Youll never have to go back to that Warren home.

I aint worryd only what does he need Ernie for to diliver and werk around here when I was always deliviring the packiges good. He says the boy needs the mony Charlie so Im going to keep him on as an aprentise to lern him to be a baker. You can be his asistent and help him out on diliverys when he needs it.

I never was a asistent before. Ernie is very smart but the other pepul in the bakery dont like him so much. Their all my good frends and we have lots of jokes and laffs here.

Some times somebody will say hey lookit Frank, or Joe or even Gimpy. He really pulled a Charlie Gordon that time. I dont know why they say it but they always laff and I laff too. This morning Gimpy hes the head baker and he has a bad foot and he limps he used my name when he shouted at Ernie because Ernie losst a birthday cake. He said Ernie for godsake you trying to be a Charlie Gordon. I dont know why he said that. I never lost any packiges.

I askd Mr Donner if I coud lern to be an aprentise baker like Ernie. I told him I coud lern it if he gave me a chanse.

Mr Donner looked at me for a long time funny because I gess I dont talk so much most of the time. And Frank herd me and he laffed and laffed until Mr Donner told him to shut up and go tend to his oven. Then Mr Donner said to me theirs lots of time for that Charlie. A bakers werk is very importint and very komplikated and you shoudnt worry about things like that.

I wish I coud tell him and all the other people about my real operashun. I wish it woud reely work alredy so I coud get smart like evrybody else.

March 24—Prof Nemur and Dr Strauss came to my room tonight to see why I dont come in to the lab like I am suppose to. I told them I dont want to race with Algernon no more. Prof Nemur said I dont have to for a while but I shoud come in any way. He brout me a presint only it wasnt a presint but just for lend. He said its a teeching mashine that werks like TV. It talks and makes picturs and I got to tern it on just before I go to sleep. I said your kidding. Why shoud I tern on a TV before I go to sleep. But Prof Nemur said if I want to get smart I got to do what he says. So I told him I dint think I was goin to get smart anyway.

Then Dr. Strauss came over and put his hand on my sholder and said Charlie you dont know it yet but your getting smarter all the time. You wont notise it for a while like you dont notise how the hour hand on a clock moves. Thats the way it is with the changes in you. They are hap-pining so slow you cant tell. But we can follow it from the tests and the way you act and talk and your progress reports. He said Charlie youve got to have fayth in us and in yourself. We cant be sure it will be permanint but we are confidant that soon your going to be a very intellijent young man.

I said okay and Prof Nemur showed me how to werk the TV that reely wasnt a TV. I askd him what did it do. First he lookd sore again because I asked him to explane me and he said I shoud just do what he told me. But Dr Strauss said he shoud explane it to me because I was beginning to questien authorety. I dont no what that meens but Prof Nemur looked like he was going to bite his lip off. Then he explained me very slow that the mashine did lots of things to my mind. Somethings it did just before I fall

asleep like teach me things when Im very sleepy and a little while after I start to fall asleep I still hear the talk even if I dont see the picturs anymore. Other things is at nite its suppose to make me have dreams and remembir things that happened a long time ago when I was a very littel kid.

Its scary.

Oh yes I forgot. I asked Prof Nemur when I can go back to Miss Kinnians class at the adult center and he said soon Miss Kinnian will come to the collidge testing center to teach me speshul. I am glad about that. I dint see her so much since the operashun but she is nice.

March 25—That crazy TV kept me up all nite. How can I sleep with something yelling crazy things all night in my ears. And the nutty picturs. Wow. I dont know what it says when Im up so how am I going to know when Im sleeping. I asked Burt about it and he says its ok. He says my branes are lerning just before I got to sleep and that will help me when Miss Kinnian starts my lessons at the testing center. The testing center isnt a hospitol for animils like I thought before. Its a labortory for sience. I dont know what sience is exept Im helping it with this experimint.

Anyway I dont know about that TV I think its crazy. If you can get smart when your going to sleep why do pepul go to school. I dont think that thing will werk. I use to watch the late show and the late late show on TV all the time before I went to sleep and it never made me smart. Maybe only certin movies make you smart. Maybe like quizz shows.

March 26—How am I gonna work in the daytime if that thing keeps waking me up at nite. In the middel of the nite I woke up and I couldnt go back to sleep because it kept saying *remembir ... remembir ... remembir ...* So I think I remembird something. I dont remembir exackly but it was about Miss Kinnian and the school where I lerned about reading. And how I went their.

A long time ago once I asked Joe Carp how he lerned to read and if I coud lern to read to. He laffed like he always done when I say something funny and he says to me Charlie why waste your time they cant put any branes in where there aint none. But Fanny Birden herd me and she askd her cusin who is a collidge studint at Beekman and she told me about the adult center for retarded pepul at the Beekman collidge.

She rote the name down on a paper and Frank laffed and said dont go getting so eddicated that you wont talk to your old frends. I said dont worry I will always keep my old frends even if I can read and rite. He was laffing and Joe Carp was laffing but Gimpy came in and told them to get back to making rolls. They are all good frends to me.

After werk I walked over six blocks to the school and I was scared. I was so happy I was going to lern to read that I bougt a newspaper to take home with me and read after I lerned.

When I got their it was a big long hall with lots of pepul. I got scared of saying somthing wrong to sombody so I startid to go home. But I dont know why I terned around and went inside agen.

I wated until most everbody went away exept some pepul going over by a big timeclock like the one we have at the bakery and I asked the lady if I coud lern to read and rite because I wanted to read all the things in the newspaper and I showed it to her. She was Miss Kinnian but I dint know it then. She said if you come back tomorow and rejister I will start to teach you how to read. But you got to understand it will take a long time maybe years to lern to read. I told her I dint know it took so long but I wantid to lern anyway because I made believe a lot of times. I meen I pretend to pepul I know how to read but it aint true and I wantid to lern.

She shaked my hand and said glad to meet you Mistre Gordon. I will be your teacher. My name is Miss Kinnian. So thats wear I went to lern and thats how I met Miss Kinnian.

Thinking and remembiring is hard and now I dont sleep so good any more. That TV is too loud.

March 27—Now that Im starting to have those dreams and remembiring Prof Nemur says I got to go to theripy sesions with Dr Strauss. He says

therapy sessions is like when you feel bad you talk to make it better. I told him I don't feel bad and I do plenty of talking all day so why do I have to go to therapy but he got sore and says I got to go anyway.

What therapy is is that I got to lay down on a couch and Dr. Strauss sits in a chair near me and I talk about anything that comes into my head. For a long time I didn't say nothing because I couldn't think of nothing to say. Then I told him about the bakery and the things they do there. But it's silly for me to go to his office and lay down on the couch to talk because I write it down in the progress reports anyway and he could read it. So today I brought the progress report with me and I told him maybe he could just read it and I could take a nap on the couch. I was very tired because that TV kept me up all night but he said no it doesn't work that way. I got to talk. So I talked but then I fell asleep on the couch anyway—write in the middle.

March 28—I got a headache. It's not from that TV this time. Dr. Strauss showed me how to keep the TV turned low so now I can sleep. I don't hear a thing. And I still don't understand what it says. A few times I play it over in the morning to find out what I learned before I fell asleep and while I was sleeping and I don't even know the words. Maybe it's another language or something. But most times it sounds American. But it talks too fast.

I asked Dr. Strauss what good is it to get smart in my sleep if I want to be smart when I'm awake. He says it's the same thing and I have two minds. There's the SUBCONSCIOUS *and the* CONSCIOUS (that's how you spell it) and one doesn't tell the other what it's doing. They don't even talk to each other. That's why I dream. And boy have I been having crazy dreams. Wow. Ever since that night TV The late late late late late movie show.

I forgot to ask Dr. Strauss if it was only me or if everybody has two minds like that.

(I just looked up the word in the dictionary Dr. Strauss gave me. SUBCONSCIOUS. *adj. Of the nature of mental operations yet not present in consciousness; as, subconscious conflict of desires.*) There's more but I still don't know what it means. This isn't a very good dictionary for dumb people like me.

Anyway the headache is from the party. Joe Carp and Frank Reilly invited me to go with them after work to Hal-lorans Bar for some drinks. I dont like to drink wiskey but they said we will have lots of fun. I had a good time. We played games with me doing a dance on the top of the bar with a lampshade on my head and everyone laffing.

Then Joe Carp said I shoud show the girls how I mop out the toilet in the bakery and he got me a mop. I showed them and everyone laffed when I told them that Mr Donner said I was the best janiter and errand boy he ever had because I like my job and do it good and never come late or miss a day exept for my operashun.

I said Miss Kinnian always told me Charlie be proud of the work you do because you do your job good.

Everybody laffed and Frank said that Miss Kinnian must be some cracked up piece if she goes for Charlie and Joe said hey Charlie are you making out with her. I said I dint know what that meens. They gave me lots of drinks and Joe said Charlie is a card when hes potted. I think that means they like me. We have some good times but I cant wait to be smart like my best frends Joe Carp and Frank Reilly.

I dont remember how the party was over but they asked me to go around the corner to see if it was raining and when I came back there was no one their. Maybe they went to find me. I looked for them all over till it was late. But I got lost and I felt bad at myself for getting lost because I bet Algernon coud go up and down those streets a hundrid times and not get lost like I did.

Then I dont remember so good but Mrs Flynn says a nice poleecman brought me back home.

That same nite I dreamed about my mother and father only I couldnt see her face it was all wite and she was blurry. I was crying because we were in a big departmint store and I was losst and I couldnt find them and I ran up and down the rows around all the big cownters in the store. Then a man came and took me in a big room with benches and gave me a lolypop and tolld me a big boy like me shoudnt cry because my mother and father woud come to find me.

Anyway thats the dream and I got a headache and a big lump on my head and black and blue marks all over. Joe Carp says mabye I got rolled or the cop let me have it. I dont think poleecmen do things like that. But anyway I dont think Ill drink wiskey anymore.

March 29—I beet Algernon. I dint even know I beet him until Burt Selden told me. Then the second time I lost because I got so exited. But after that I beet him 8 more times. I must be getting smart to beat a smart mouse like Algernon. But I dont feel smarter.

I wanted to race some more but Burt said thats enough for one day. He let me hold Algernon for a minit. Algernon is a nice mouse. Soft like cotton. He blinks and when he opens his eyes their black and pink on the eges.

I asked can I feed him because I felt bad to beat him and I wanted to be nice and make frends. Burt said no Algernon is a very speshul mouse with an operashun like mine. He was the first of all the animals to stay smart so long and he said that Algernon is so smart he has to solve a problem with a lock that changes every time he goes in to eat so he has to lern something new to get his food. That made me sad because if he coundt lern he woudnt be able to eat and he would be hungry.

I dont think its right to make you pass a test to eat. How woud Burt like to have to pass a test every time he wants to eat. I think Ill be frends with Algernon.

That reminds me. Dr Strauss says I shoud write down all my dreams and the things I think so when I come to his office I can tell them. I tolld him I dont know how to think yet but he says he means more things like what I wrote about my mom and dad and about when I started school at Miss Kinnians or anything that happened before the operation is thinking and I wrote them in my progress report.

I didnt know I was thinking and remembering. Maybe that means something is happining to me. I dont feel different but Im so exited I cant sleep.

Dr Strauss gave me some pink pills to make me sleep good. He says I got to get lots of sleep because thats when most of the changes happin in my brane. It must be true because Uncle Herman use to sleep in our house all the time when he was out of werk on the old sofa in the parler. He was fat and it was hard for him to get a job because he use to paint pepuls houses and he got very slow going up and down the ladder.

When I once tolld my mom I wantid to be a painter like Uncle Herman my sister Norma said yeah Charlies going to be the artist of the family. And

dad slappd her face and tolld her not to be so goddam nasty to her brother. I dont no what a artist is but if Norma got slappd for saying it I gess its not a nice thing. I always feeled bad when Norma got slappd for being meen to me. When I get smart Ill go visit her.

March 30—Tonite after werk Miss Kinnian came to the teeching room near the labatory. She looked glad to see me but nervus. She looks yunger then I remembired her. I tolld her I was trying very hard to be smart. She said I have confidense in you Charlie the way you struggled so much to reed and rite better then all the others. I know you can do it. At werst you will have it all for a little wile and your doing somthing for other retarded pepul.

We startid to reed a very hard book. I never red such a hard book before. Its called Robinson Crusoe about a man who gets merooned on a dessert iland. Hes smart and figgers out all kinds of things so he can have a house and food and hes a good swimmer. Only I feel sorry for him because hes all alone and he has no frends. But I think their must be somebody else on the iland because theres a picture of him with his funny umbrela looking at footprints. I hope he gets a frend and not be so lonely.

March 31—Miss Kinnian teeches me how to spel better. She says look at a werd and close your eyes and say it over and over again until you remember. I have lots of truble with *through* that you say THREW and *enough* and *tough* that you dont say ENEW and TEW. You got to say ENUFF and TUFF. Thats how I use to rite it before I started to get smart. Im mixd up but Miss Kinnian says dont worry spelling is not suppose to make sence.

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PROGRESS REPORT 9

April 1—Everybody in the bakery came to see me today where I started my new job working by the dough-mixer. It happined like this. Oliver who works on the mixer quit yesterday. I used to help him out before bringing the bags of flour over for him to put in the mixer. Anyway I dint know that I knew how to work the mixer. Its very hard and Oliver went to bakers school for one year before he could learn how to be an assistint baker.

But Joe Carp hes my friend he said Charlie why dont you take over Oliver's job. Everybody on the floor came around and they were ~~la~~ laughing and Frank Reilly said yes Charlie you been here long ~~enuff~~ enough. Go ahead. Gimpy aint around and he wont know you tryed it. I was scared because Gimpy is the head baker and he told me never to go near the mixer because I would get hurt. Everyone said do it exept Fannie Birden who said stop it why dont you leave the poor man alone.

Frank Reilly said shut up Fanny its April fools day and if Charlie works on the mixer he might fix it good so we will all have the day off. I said I couldnt fix the mashine but I could work it because I been watching Oliver ever since I got back.

I worked the dough-mixer and everybody was surprised espeshully Frank Reilly. Fanny Birden got exited because she said it took Oliver 2 years to learn how to mix the dough right and he went to bakers school. Bernie Bate who helps on the mashine said I did it faster then Oliver did and better. Nobody laffed. When Gimpy came back and Fanny told him he got sore at me for working on the mixer.

But she said watch him and see how he does it. They were playing him for an April Fool joke and he foold them instead. Gimpy watched and I knew he was sore at me because he dont like when people dont do what he tells them just like Prof Nemur. But he saw how I worked the mixer and he skrated his head and said I see it but I dont believe it. Then he called Mr Donner and told me to work it again so Mr Donner could see it.

I was scared he was going to be angry and holler at me so after I was finished I said can I go back to my own job now. I got to sweep out the front of the bakery behind the counter. Mr Donner looked at me funny for a long time. Then he said this must be some kind of April fools joke you guys are playing on me. Whats the catch.

Gimpy said that's what I thought it was some kind of a gag. He limped all around the machine and he said to Mr Donner I don't understand it either but Charlie knows how to handle it and I got to admit it he does a better job than Oliver.

Everybody was crowded around and talking about it and I got scared because they all looked at me funny and they were excited. Frank said I told you there is something peculiar lately about Charlie. And Joe Carp says yeah I know what you mean. Mr Donner sent everybody back to work and he took me out to the front of the store with him.

He said Charlie I don't know how you done it but it looks like you finally learned something. I want you to be careful and do the best you can do. You got yourself a new job with a 5 dollar raise.

I said I don't want a new job because I like to clean up and sweep and deliver and do things for my friends but Mr Donner said never mind your friends I need you for this job. I don't think much of a man who don't want to advance.

I said what's advance mean. He scratched his head and looked at me over his glasses. Never mind that Charlie. From now on you work that mixer. That's advance.

So now instead of delivering packages and washing out the toilets and dumping the garbage. I'm the new mixer. That's advance. Tomorrow I will tell Miss Kinnian. I think she will be happy but I don't know why Frank and Joe are mad at me. I asked Fanny and she said never mind those fools. This is April Fools day and the joke backfired and made them the fools instead of you.

I asked Joe to tell me what was the joke that backfired and he said go jump in the lake. I guess they're mad at me because I worked the machine but they didn't get the day off like they thought. Does that mean I'm getting smarter.

April 3—Finished Robinson Crusoe. I want to find out more about what happens to him but Miss Kinnian says that's all there is. WHY.

April 4—Miss Kinnian says Im learning fast. She read some of my progress reports and she looked at me kind of funny. She says Im a fine person and Ill show them all. I asked her why. She said never mind but I shouldnt feel bad if I find out that everybody isnt nice like I think. She said for a person who God gave so little to you did more than a lot of people with brains they never even used. I said that all my friends are smart people and their good. They like me and they never did anything that wasnt nice. Then she got something in her eye and she had to run out to the ladys room.

While I was sitting in the teaching room waiting for her I was wondering about how Miss Kinnian was a nice lady like my mother use to be. I think I remember my mother told me to be good and always be friendly to people. She said but always be careful because some people dont understand and they might think you are trying to make trouble.

That makes me remember when mom had to go away and they put me to stay in Mrs Leroy's house who lived next door. Mom went to the hospital. Dad said she wasnt sick or nothing but she went to the hospital to bring me back a baby sister or a brother. (I still dont know how they do that) I told them I want a baby brother to play with and I dont know why they got me a sister instead but she was nice like a doll. Only she cryd all the time.

I never hurt her or nothing.

They put her in a crib in their room and once I heard Dad say dont worry Charlie wouldnt harm her.

She was like a bundle all pink and screaming sometimes that I couldnt sleep. And when I went to sleep she woke me up in the nighttime. One time when they were in the kitchen and I was in my bed she was crying. I got up to pick her up and hold her to get quiet the way mom does. But then Mom came in yelling and took her away. And she slapped me so hard I fell on the bed.

Then she startid screaming. Dont you ever touch her again. Youll hurt her. Shes a baby. You got no business touching her. I dint know it then but I guess I know it now that she thought I was going to hurt the baby because I was too dumb to know what I was doing. Now that makes me feel bad because I would never of hurt the baby.

When I go to Dr Straus office I got to tell him about that.

April 6—Today, I learned, the *comma*, this is, a, comma (,) a period, with, a tail, Miss Kinnian, says its, important, because, it makes writing, better, she said, somebody, could lose, a lot, of money, if a comma, isnt in, the right, place, I got, some money, that I, saved from, my job, and what, the foundation, pays me, but not, much and, I dont, see how, a comma, keeps, you from, losing it,

But, she says, everybody, uses commas, so Ill, use them, too,,,,

April 7—I used the comma wrong. Its *punctuation*. Miss Kinnian told me to look up long words in the dictionary to learn to spell them. I said whats the difference if you can read it anyway. She said its part of your education so from now on look up all the words Im not sure how to spell. It takes a long time to write that way but I think Im remembering more and more.

Anyway thats how come I got the word *punctuation* right. Its that way in the dictionary. Miss Kinnian says a period is punctuation too, and there are lots of other marks to learn. I told her I thought she meant all the periods had to have tails and be called commas. But she said no.

She said; You, got. to-mix?them!up: She showd? me" how, to mix! them; up, and now! I can. mix (up all? kinds of punctuation—in, my. writing! There" are lots, of rules; to learn? but. Im' get'ting them in my head:

One thing? I, like: about, Dear Miss Kinnian: (thats, the way? it goes; in a business, letter (if I ever go! into business?) is that, she: always; gives me' a reason" when—I ask. She"s a gen'ius! I wish? I cou'd be smart-like-her;

Punctuation, is? fun!

April 8—What a dope I am! I didn't even understand what she was talking about. I read the grammar book last night and it explains the whole thing. Then I saw it was the same way as Miss Kinnian was trying to tell me, but I didn't get it. I got up in the middle of the night and the whole thing straightened out in my mind.

Miss Kinnian said that the TV working, just before I fell asleep and during the night, helped out. She said I reached a *plateau*. That's like the flat top of a hill.

After I figured out how punctuation worked, I read over all my old progress reports from the beginning. Boy, did I have crazy spelling and punctuation! I told Miss Kinnian I ought to go over the pages and fix all the mistakes, but she said, "No, Charlie, Professor Nemur wants them just as they are. That's why he lets you keep them after they're photostated—to see your own progress. You're coming along fast, Charlie."

That made me feel good. After the lesson I went down and played with Algernon. We don't race any more.

April 10—I feel sick. Not like for a doctor, but inside my chest it feels empty, like getting punched and a heartburn at the same time.

I wasn't going to write about it, but I guess I got to, because it's important. Today was the first day I ever stayed home from work on purpose.

Last night Joe Carp and Frank Reilly invited me to a party. There were lots of girls and Gimpy was there and Ernie too. I remembered how sick I got last time I drank too much, so I told Joe I didn't want to drink anything. He gave me a plain coke instead. It tasted funny, but I thought it was just a bad taste in my mouth.

We had a lot of fun for a while.

"Dance with Ellen," Joe said. "She'll teach you the steps." Then he winked at her like he had something in his eye.

She said, "Why don't you leave him alone?"

He slapped me on the back. "This is Charlie Gordon, my buddy, my pal. He's no ordinary guy—he's been promoted to working on the dough-

mixing machine. All I did was ask you to dance with him and give him a good time. What's wrong with that?"

He pushed me up close against her. So she danced with me. I fell three times and I couldn't understand why because no one else was dancing besides Ellen and me. And all the time I was tripping because somebody's foot was always sticking out.

They were all around in a circle watching and laughing at the way we were doing the steps. They laughed harder every time I fell, and I was laughing too because it was so funny. But the last time it happened I didn't laugh. I picked myself up and Joe pushed me down again.

Then I saw the look on Joe's face and it gave me a funny feeling in my stomach.

"He's a scream," one of the girls said. Everybody was laughing.

"Oh, you were right, Frank," choked Ellen. "He's a one man side show." Then she said, "Here, Charlie, have a fruit." She gave me an apple, but when I bit into it, it was fake.

Then Frank started laughing and he said, "I told ya he'd eat it. C'n you imagine anyone dumb enough to eat wax fruit?"

Joe said, "I ain't laughed so much since we sent him around the corner to see if it was raining that night we ditched him at Halloran's."

Then I saw a picture that I remembered in my mind when I was a kid and the children in the block let me play with them, hide-and-go-seek and I was IT. After I counted up to ten over and over on my fingers I went to look for the others. I kept looking until it got cold and dark and I had to go home.

But I never found them and I never knew why.

What Frank said reminded me. That was the same thing that happened at Halloran's. And that was what Joe and the rest of them were doing. Laughing at me. And the kids playing hide-and-go-seek were playing tricks on me and they were laughing at me too.

The people at the party were a bunch of blurred faces all looking down and laughing at me.

"Look at him. His face is red."

"He's blushing. Charlie's blushing."

"Hey, Ellen, what'd you do to Charlie? I never saw him act like this before."

"Boy, Ellen sure got him worked up."

I didn't know what to do or where to turn. Her rubbing up against me made me feel funny. Everyone was laughing at me and all of a sudden I felt naked. I wanted to hide myself so they wouldn't see. I ran out of the apartment. It was a large apartment house with lots of halls and I couldn't find my way to the staircase. I forgot all about the elevator. Then, after, I found the stairs and ran out into the street and walked for a long time before I went to my room. I never knew before that Joe and Frank and the others liked to have me around just to make fun of me.

Now I know what they mean when they say "to pull a Charlie Gordon."

I'm ashamed.

And another thing. I dreamed about that girl Ellen dancing and rubbing up against me and when I woke up the sheets were wet and messy.

April 13—Still didn't go back to work at the bakery. I told Mrs. Flynn, my landlady, to call and tell Mr. Donner I'm sick. Mrs. Flynn looks at me lately like she's scared of me.

I think it's a good thing about finding out how everybody laughs at me. I thought about it a lot. It's because I'm so dumb and I don't even know when I'm doing something dumb. People think it's funny when a dumb person can't do things the same way they can.

Anyway, now I know I'm getting a little smarter every day. I know punctuation, and I can spell good. I like to look up all the hard words in the dictionary and I remember them. And I try to write these progress reports very careful but that's hard to do. I am reading a lot now, and Miss Kinnian says I read very fast. And I even understand a lot of the things I'm reading about, and they stay in my mind. There are times when I can close my eyes and think of a page and it all comes back like a picture.

But other things come into my head too. Sometimes I close my eyes and I see a clear picture. Like this morning just after I woke up, I was laying in bed with my eyes open. It was like a big hole opened up in the walls of my mind and I can just walk through. I think its far back ... a long time ago when I first started working at Donner's Bakery. I see the street where the bakery is. Fuzzy at first and then it gets patchy with some things

so real they are right here now in front of me, and other things stay blurred, and I'm not sure....

A little old man with a baby carriage made into a pushcart with a charcoal burner, and the smell of roasting chestnuts, and snow on the ground. A young fellow, skinny with wide eyes and a scared look on his face looking up at the store sign. What does it say? Blurred letters in a way that don't make sense. I know *now* that the sign says DONNER'S BAKERY, but looking back in my memory at the sign I can't read the words through his eyes. None of the signs make sense. I think that fellow with the scared look on his face is me.

Bright neon lights. Christmas trees and sidewalk peddlers. People bundled in coats with collars up and scarves around their necks. But he has no gloves. His hands are cold and he puts down a heavy bundle of brown paper bags. He's stopping to watch the little mechanical toys that the peddler winds up—the tumbling bear, the dog jumping, the seal spinning a ball on its nose. Tumbling, jumping, spinning. If he had all those toys for himself he would be the happiest person in the world.

He wants to ask the red-faced peddler, with his fingers sticking through the brown cotton gloves, if he can hold the tumbling bear for a minute, but he is afraid. He picks up the bundle of paper bags and puts it on his shoulder. He is skinny but he is strong from many years of hard work.

"Charlie! Charlie!...fat head barley!"

Children circle around him laughing and teasing him like little dogs snapping at his feet. Charlie smiles at them. He would like to put down his bundle and play games with them, but when he thinks about it the skin on his back twitches and he feels the way the older boys throw things at him.

Coming back to the bakery he sees some boys standing in the door of a dark hallway.

"Hey look, there's Charlie!"

"Hey, Charlie. What you got there? Want to shoot some craps?"

"C'mere. We won't hurtya."

But there is something about the doorway—the dark hall, the laughing, that makes his skin twitch again. He tries to know what it is but all he can

remember is their dirt and piss all over his clothes, and Uncle Herman shouting when he came home all covered with filth, and how Uncle Herman ran out with a hammer in his hand to find the boys who did that to him. Charlie backs away from the boys laughing in the hallway, drops the bundle. Picks it up again and runs the rest of the way to the bakery.

"What took you so long, Charlie?" shouts Gimpy from the doorway to the back of the bakery.

Charlie pushes through the swinging doors to the back of the bakery and sets down the bundle on one of the skids. He leans against the wall shoving his hands into his pockets. He wishes he had his spinner.

He likes it back here in the bakery where the floors are white with flour—whiter than the sooty walls and ceiling.

The thick soles of his own high shoes are crusted with white and there is white in the stitching and lace-eyes, and under his nails and in the cracked chapped skin of his hands.

He relaxes here—squatting against the wall—leaning back in a way that tilts his baseball cap with the *D* forward over his eyes. He likes the smell of flour, sweet dough, bread and cakes and rolls baking. The oven is crackling and makes him sleepy.

Sweet ... warm ... sleep Suddenly, falling, twisting, head hitting against the wall. Someone has kicked his legs out from under him.

That's all I can remember. I can see it all clearly, but I don't know why it happened. It's like when I used to go to the movies. The first time I never understood because they went too fast but after I saw the picture three or four times I used to understand what they were saying. I've got to ask Dr. Strauss about it.

April 14—Dr. Strauss says the important thing is to keep recalling memories like the one I had yesterday and to write them down. Then when I come into his office we can talk about them.

Dr. Strauss is a psychiatrist and a neurosurgeon. I didn't know that. I thought he was just a plain doctor. But when I went to his office this morning, he told me about how important it is for me to learn about myself so that I can understand my problems. I said I didn't have any problems.

He laughed and then he got up from his chair and went to the window. "The more intelligent you become the more problems you'll have, Charlie. Your intellectual growth is going to outstrip your emotional growth. And I think you'll find that as you progress, there will be many things you'll want to talk to me about. I just want you to remember that this is the place for you to come when you need help."

I still don't know what it's all about, but he said even if I don't understand my dreams or memories or why I have them, some time in the future they're all going to connect up, and I'll learn more about myself. He said the important thing is to find out what those people in my memories are saying. It's all about me when I was a boy and I've got to remember what happened.

I never knew about these things before. It's like if I get intelligent enough I'll understand all the words in my mind, and I'll know about those boys standing in the hallway, and about my Uncle Herman and my parents. But what he means is then I'm going to feel bad about it all and I might get sick in my mind.

So I've got to come into his office twice a week now to talk about the things that bother me. We just sit there, and I talk, and Dr. Strauss listens. It's called therapy, and that means talking about things will make me feel better. I told him one of the things that bothers me is about women.

Like dancing with that girl Ellen got me all excited. So we talked about it and I got a funny feeling while I was talking, cold and sweaty, and a buzzing inside my head and I thought I was going to throw up. Maybe because I always thought it was dirty and bad to talk about that. But Dr. Strauss said what happened to me after the party was a wet dream, and it's a natural thing that happens to boys.

So even if I'm getting intelligent and learning a lot of new things, he thinks I'm still a boy about women. It's confusing, but I'm going to find out all about my life.

April 15—I'm reading a lot these days and almost everything is staying in my mind. Besides history and geography and arithmetic, Miss Kinnian says I should start learning foreign languages. Prof. Nemur gave me some more tapes to play while I sleep. I still don't know how the conscious and unconscious mind works, but Dr. Strauss says not to worry yet. He made me promise that when I start learning college subjects in a couple of weeks I won't read any books on psychology—that is, until he gives me permission. He says it will confuse me and make me think about psychological theories instead of about my own ideas and feelings. But it's okay to read novels. This week I read *The Great Gatsby*, *An American Tragedy*, and *Look Homeward, Angel*. I never knew about men and women doing things like that.

April 16—I feel a lot better today, but I'm still angry that all the time people were laughing and making fun of me.

When I become intelligent the way Prof. Nemur says, with much more than twice my I.Q. of 70, then maybe people will like me and be my friends.

I'm not sure what I.Q. is anyway. Prof. Nemur said it was something that measured how intelligent you were—like a scale in the drugstore weighs pounds. But Dr. Strauss had a big argument with him and said an I.Q. didn't *weigh* intelligence at all. He said an I.Q. showed how much intelligence you could get, like the numbers on the outside of a measuring cup. You still had to fill the cup up with stuff.

When I asked Burt Seldon, who gives me my intelligence tests and works with Algernon, he said that some people would say both of them were wrong and according to the things he's been reading up on, the I.Q. measures a lot of different things including some of the things you learned already and it really isn't a good measure of intelligence at all.

So I still don't know what I.Q. is, and everybody says it's something different. Mine is about a hundred now, and it's going to be over a hundred and fifty soon, but they'll still have to fill me up with the stuff. I didn't want to say anything, but I don't see how if they don't know *what* it is, or *where* it is—how they know *how much* of it you've got.

Prof Nemur says I have to take a *Rorschach Test* the day after tomorrow. I wonder what that is.

April 17—I had a nightmare last night, and this morning, after I woke up, I free-associated the way Dr. Strauss told me to do when I remember my dreams. Think about the dream and just let my mind wander until other thoughts come up in my mind. I keep on doing that until my mind goes blank. Dr. Strauss says that it means I've reached a point where my subconscious is trying to block my conscious from remembering. It's a wall between the present and the past. Sometimes the wall stays up and sometimes it breaks down and I can remember what's behind it.

Like this morning.

The dream was about Miss Kinnian reading my progress reports. In the dream I sit down to write but I can't write or read any more. It's all gone. I get frightened so I ask Gimpy at the bakery to write for me. But when Miss Kinnian reads the report she gets angry and tears the pages up because they've got dirty words in them.

When I get home Prof. Nemur and Dr. Strauss are waiting for me and they give me a beating for writing dirty things in the progress report. When they leave me I pick up the torn pages but they turn into lace valentines with blood all over them.

It was a horrible dream but I got out of bed and wrote it all down and then I started to free associate.

Bakery ... baking ... the urn ... someone kicking me ... fall down ... bloody all over ... writing ... big pencil on a red valentine ... a little gold heart ... a locket ... a chain ... all covered with blood ... and he's laughing at me...

The chain is from a locket ... spinning around ... flashing the sunlight into my eyes. And I like to watch it spin ... watch the chain ... all bunched up and twisting and spinning ... and a little girl is watching me.

Her name is Miss Kin—I mean Harriet. "

Harriet ... Harriet ... we all love Harriet."

And then there's nothing. It's blank again.

Miss Kinnian reading my progress reports over my shoulder.

Then we're at the Adult Center for the Retarded, and she's reading over my shoulder as I write my composishuns *compositions*.

School changes into P.S. 13 and I'm eleven years old and Miss Kinnian is eleven years old too, but now she's not Miss Kinnian. She's a little girl with dimples and long curls and her name is Harriet. We all love Harriet. It's Valentines Day.

I remember...

I remember what happened at P.S. 13 and why they had to change my school and send me to P.S. 222. It was because of Harriet.

I see Charlie—eleven years old. He has a little gold-color locket he once found in the street. There's no chain, but he has it on a string, and he likes to twirl the locket so that it bunches up the string, and then watch it unwind, spinning around with the sun flicking into his eyes.

Sometimes when the kids play catch they let him play in the middle and he tries to get the ball before one of them catches it. He likes to be in the middle—even if he never catches the ball—and once when Hymie Roth dropped the ball by mistake and he picked it up they wouldn't let him throw it but he had to go in the middle again.

When Harriet passes by, the boys stop playing and look at her. All the boys love Harriet. When she shakes her head her curls bounce up and down, and she has dimples. Charlie doesn't know why they make such a fuss about a girl and why they always want to talk to her (he'd rather play ball or kick-the-can, or ringo-levio than talk to a girl) but all the boys are in love with Harriet so he is in love with her too.

She never teases him like the other kids, and he does tricks for her. He walks on the desks when the teacher isn't there. He throws erasers out the window, scribbles all over the blackboard and walls. And Harriet always screeches and giggles, "Oh, lookit Charlie. Ain't he funny? Oh, ain't he silly?"

It's Valentine's Day, and the boys are talking about valentines they're going to give Harriet, so Charlie says, "I'm gonna give Harriet a valentime too."

They laugh and Barry says, "Where you gonna get a valentime?"

"I'm gonna get her a pretty one. You'll see."

But he doesn't have any money for a valentine, so he decides to give Harriet his locket that is heart-shaped like the valentines in the store

windows. That night he takes tissue paper from his mother's drawer, and it takes a long time to wrap and tie it with a piece of red ribbon. Then he takes it to Hymie Roth the next day during lunch period in school and asks Hymie to write on the paper for him.

He tells Hymie to write: "*Dear Harriet, I think you are the most prettiest girl in the whole world. I like you very much and I love you. I want you to be my valentine. Your friend, Charlie Gordon.*"

Hymie prints very carefully in large letters on the paper, laughing all the time, and he tells Charlie, "Boy, this will knock her eyes out. Wait'll she sees this."

Charlie is scared, but he wants to give Harriet that locket, so he follows her home from school and waits until she goes into her house. Then he sneaks into the hall and hangs the package on the inside of the doorknob. He rings the bell twice and runs across the street to hide behind the tree.

When Harriet comes down she looks around to see who rang the bell. Then she sees the package. She takes it and goes upstairs. Charlie goes home from school and he gets a spanking because he took the tissue paper and ribbon out of his mother's drawer without telling her. But he doesn't care. Tomorrow Harriet will wear the locket and tell all the boys he gave it to her. Then they'll see.

The next day he runs all the way to school, but it's too early. Harriet isn't there yet, and he's excited.

But when Harriet comes in she doesn't even look at him. She isn't wearing the locket. And she looks sore.

He does all kinds of things when Mrs. Janson isn't watching: He makes funny faces. He laughs out loud. He stands up on his seat and wiggles his fanny. He even throws a piece of chalk at Harold. But Harriet doesn't look at him even once. Maybe she forgot. Maybe she'll wear it tomorrow. She passes by in the hallway, but when he comes over to ask her she pushes past him without saying a word.

Down in the schoolyard her two big brothers are waiting for him.

Gus pushes him. "You little bastard, did you write this dirty note to my sister?"

Charlie says he didn't write any dirty notes. "I just gave her a valentine."

Oscar who was on the football team before he graduated from high school grabs Charlie's shirt and tears off two buttons. "You keep away from my kid sister, you degenerate. You don't belong in this school anyway."

He pushes Charlie over to Gus who catches him by the throat. Charlie is scared and starts to cry.

Then they start to hurt him. Oscar punches him in the nose, and Gus knocks him on the ground and kicks him in the side and then both of them kick him, one and then the other, and some of the other kids in the yard—Charlie's friends—come running screaming and clapping hands: "Fight! Fight! They're beating up Charlie!"

His clothes are torn and his nose is bleeding and one of his teeth is broken, and after Gus and Oscar go away he sits on the sidewalk and cries. The blood tastes sour. The other kids just laugh and shout: "Charlie got a licking! Charlie got a licking!" And then Mr. Wagner, one of the caretakers from the school, comes and chases them away. He takes Charlie into the boys' room and tells him to wash off the blood and dirt from his face and hands before he goes back home....

I guess I was pretty dumb because I believed what people told me. I shouldn't have trusted Hymie or anyone.

I never remembered any of this before today, but it came back to me after I thought about the dream. It has something to do with the feeling about Miss Kinnian reading my progress reports. Anyway, I'm glad now I don't have to ask anyone to write things for me. Now I can do it for myself.

But I just realized something. Harriet never gave me back my locket.

April 18—I found out what a Rorschach is. It's the test with the inkblots, the one I took before the operation. As soon as I saw what it was, I got frightened. I knew Burt was going to ask me to find the pictures, and I knew I wouldn't be able to. I was thinking, if only there was some way of knowing what kind of pictures were hidden there. Maybe there weren't any

pictures at all. Maybe it was just a trick to see if I was dumb enough to look for something that wasn't there. Just thinking about it made me sore at him.

"All right, Charlie," he said, "you've seen these cards before, remember?"

"Of course, I remember."

The way I said it, he knew I was angry, and he looked up at me surprised.

"Anything wrong, Charlie?"

"No, nothing's wrong. Those inkblots upset me."

He smiled and shook his head. "Nothing to be upset about. This is just one of the standard personality tests. Now I want you to look at this card. What might this be? What do you see on this card? People see all sorts of things in these inkblots. Tell me what it might be for you—what it makes you think of."

I was shocked. I stared at the card and then at him. That wasn't what I had expected him to say at all. "You mean there are no pictures hidden in those inkblots?"

Burt frowned and took off his glasses. "What?"

"Pictures! Hidden in the inkblots! Last time you told me that everyone could see them and you wanted me to find them too."

"No, Charlie. I couldn't have said that."

"What do you mean?" I shouted at him. Being so afraid of the inkblots had made me angry at myself and at Burt too. "That's what you said to me. Just because you're smart enough to go to college doesn't mean you have to make fun of me. I'm sick and tired of everybody laughing at me."

I don't recall ever being so angry before. I don't think it was at Burt himself, but suddenly everything exploded. I tossed the Rorschach cards on the table and walked out. Professor Nemur was passing by in the hall, and when I rushed past him without saying hello he knew something was wrong. He and Burt caught up with me as I was about to go down in the elevator.

"Charlie," said Nemur, grabbing my arm. "Wait a minute. What is this all about?"

I shook free and nodded at Burt. "I'm sick and tired of people making fun of me. That's all. Maybe before I didn't know any better, but now I do, and I don't like it."

"Nobody's making fun of you here, Charlie," said Nemur.

"What about the inkblots? Last time Burt told me there were pictures in the ink—that everyone could see, and I—"

"Look, Charlie, would you like to hear the exact words Burt said to you, and your answers as well? We have a tape-recording of that testing session. We can replay it and let you hear exactly what was said."

I went back with them to the psych office with mixed feelings. I was sure they had made fun of me and tricked me when I was too ignorant to know better. My anger was an exciting feeling, and I didn't give it up easily. I was ready to fight.

As Nemur went to the files to get the tape, Burt explained: "Last time, I used almost the exact words I used today. It's a requirement of these tests that the procedure be the same each time it's administered."

"I'll believe that when I hear it."

A look passed between them. I felt the blood rush to my face again. They were laughing at me. But then I realized what I had just said, and hearing myself I understood the reason for the look. They weren't laughing. They knew what was happening to me. I had reached a new level, and anger and suspicion were my first reactions to the world around me.

Burt's voice boomed over the tape recorder:

"Now I want you to look at this card, Charlie. What might this be? What do you see on this card? People see all kinds of things in these inkblots. Tell me what it makes you think of..."

The same words, almost the same tone of voice he had used minutes ago in the lab. And then I heard my answers—childish, impossible things. And I dropped limply into the chair beside Professor Nemur's desk. "Was that really me?"

I went back to the lab with Burt, and we went on with the Rorschach. We went through the cards slowly. This time my responses were different. I

"saw" things in the inkblots. A pair of bats tugging at each other. Two men fencing with swords. I imagined all sorts of things. But even so, I found myself not trusting Burt completely any more. I kept turning the cards around, checking the backs to see if there was anything there I was supposed to catch.

I peeked, while he was making his notes. But it was all in code that looked like this:

WF + A DdF-Ad orig. WF—A SF + obj

The test still doesn't make sense. It seems to me that anyone could make up lies about things he didn't really see. How could they know I wasn't making fools of them by saying things I didn't really imagine?

Maybe I'll understand it when Dr. Strauss lets me read up on psychology. It's getting harder for me to write down all my thoughts and feelings because I know that people are reading them. Maybe it would be better if I could keep some of these reports private for a while. I'm going to ask Dr. Strauss. Why should it suddenly start to bother me?

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PROGRESS REPORT 10

April 21—I figured out a new way to set up the mixing machines in the bakery to speed up production. Mr. Donner says he will save labor costs and increase profits. He gave me a fifty-dollar bonus and a ten-dollar-a-week raise.

I wanted to take Joe Carp and Frank Reilly out to lunch to celebrate, but Joe had to buy some things for his wife, and Frank was meeting his cousin for lunch. I guess it will take time for them to get used to the changes in me.

Everyone seems frightened of me. When I went over to Gimpy and tapped him on the shoulder to ask him something, he jumped up and dropped his cup of coffee all over himself. He stares at me when he thinks I'm not looking. Nobody at the place talks to me any more, or kids around the way they used to. It makes the job kind of lonely.

Thinking about it makes me remember the time I fell asleep standing up and Frank kicked my legs out from under me. The warm sweet smell, the white walls, the roar of the oven when Frank opens the door to shift the loaves.

Suddenly falling ... twisting ... everything out from under me and my head cracking against the wall.

It's me, and yet it's like someone else lying there—another Charlie. He's confused ... rubbing his head ... staring up at Frank, tall and thin, and then at Gimpy nearby, massive, hairy, gray-faced Gimpy with bushy eyebrows that almost hide his blue eyes.

"Leave the kid alone," says Gimp. "Jesus, Frank, why do you always gotta pick on him?"

"It don't mean nothing," laughs Frank. "It don't hurt him. He don't know any better. Do you, Charlie?"

Charlie rubs his head and cringes. He doesn't know what he's done to deserve this punishment, but there is always the chance that there will be more.

"But you know better," says Gimpy, clumping over on his orthopedic boot, "so what the hell you always picking on him for?" The two men sit down at the long table, the tall Frank and the heavy Gimp shaping the dough for the rolls that have to be baked for the evening orders.

They work in silence for a while, and then Frank stops and tips his white cap back. "Hey, Gimp, think Charlie could learn to bake rolls?"

Gimp leans an elbow on the worktable. "Why don't we just leave him alone?"

"No, I mean it, Gimp—seriously. I bet he could learn something simple like making rolls."

The idea seems to appeal to Gimpy who turns to stare at Charlie. "Maybe you got something there. Hey, Charlie, come here a minute."

As he usually does when people are talking about him, Charlie has been keeping his head down, staring at his shoelaces. He knows how to lace and tie them. He could make rolls. He could learn to pound, roll, twist and shape the dough into the small round forms.

Frank looks at him uncertainly. "Maybe we shouldn't, Gimp. Maybe it's wrong. If a moron can't learn maybe we shouldn't start anything with him."

"You leave this to me," says Gimpy who has now taken over Frank's idea. "I think maybe he can learn. Now listen, Charlie. You want to learn something? You want me to teach you how to make rolls like me and Frank are doing?"

Charlie stares at him, the smile melting from his face. He understands what Gimpy wants, and he feels cornered. He wants to please Gimpy, but there is something about the words *learn* and *teach*, something to remember about being punished severely, but he doesn't recall what it is—only a thin white hand upraised, hitting him to make him learn something he couldn't understand.

Charlie backs away but Gimpy grabs his arm. "Hey, kid, take it easy. We ain't gonna hurt you. Look at him shaking like he's gonna fall apart. Look, Charlie. I got a nice new shiny good-luck piece for you to play with." He holds out his hand and reveals a brass chain with a shiny brass disc that says STA-BRITE METAL POLISH. He holds the chain by one end and the gleaming gold disc rotates slowly, catching the light of the fluorescent bulbs. The pendant is a brightness that Charlie remembers but he doesn't know why or what.

He doesn't reach for it. He knows you get punished if you reach out for other people's things. If someone puts it into your hand that is all right. But otherwise it's wrong. When he sees that Gimpy is offering it to him, he nods and smiles again.

"That he knows," laughs Frank. "Give him something bright and shiny." Frank, who has let Gimpy take over the experiment, leans forward excitedly. "Maybe if he wants that piece of junk bad enough and you tell him he'll get it if he learns to shape the dough into rolls—maybe it'll work."

As the bakers set to the task of teaching Charlie, others from the shop gather around. Frank clears an area between them on the table, and Gimpy pulls off a medium sized piece of dough for Charlie to work with. There is talk of betting on whether or not Charlie can learn to make rolls.

"Watch us carefully," says Gimpy, putting the pendant beside him on the table where Charlie can see it. "Watch and do everything we do. If you learn how to make rolls, you'll get this shiny good-luck piece."

Charlie hunches over on his stool, intently watching Gimpy pick up the knife and cut off a slab of dough. He studies each movement as Gimpy rolls out the dough into a long roll, breaks it off and twists it into a circle, pausing now and then to sprinkle it with flour.

"Now watch me," says Frank, and he repeats Gimpy's performance. Charlie is confused. There are differences. Gimpy holds his elbows out as he rolls the dough, like a bird's wings, but Frank keeps his arms close to his sides. Gimpy keeps his thumbs together with the rest of his fingers as he kneads the dough, but Frank works with the flat of his palms, keeping thumbs apart from his other fingers and up in the air.

Worrying about these things makes it impossible for Charlie to move when Gimpy says, "Go ahead, try it."

Charlie shakes his head.

"Look, Charlie, I'm gonna do it again slow. Now you watch everything I do, and do each part along with me. Okay? But try to remember everything so then you'll be able to do the whole thing alone. Now come on—like this."

Charlie frowns as he watches Gimpy pull off a section of dough and roll it into a ball. He hesitates, but then he picks up the knife and slices off a piece of dough and sets it down in the center of the table. Slowly, keeping his elbows out exactly as Gimpy does, he rolls it into a ball.

He looks from his own hands to Gimpy's, and he is careful to keep his fingers exactly the same way, thumbs together with the rest of his fingers—slightly cupped. He has to do it right, the way Gimpy wants him to do it. There are echoes inside him that say, do it right and they will like you. And he wants Gimpy and Frank to like him.

When Gimpy has finished working his dough into a ball, he stands back, and so does Charlie. "Hey, that's great. Look, Frank, he made it into a ball." Frank nods and smiles. Charlie sighs and his whole frame trembles as the tension builds. He is unaccustomed to this rare moment of success.

"All right now," says Gimpy. "Now we make a roll." Awkwardly, but carefully, Charlie follows Gimpy's every move. Occasionally, a twitch of his hand or arm mars what he is doing, but in a little while he is able to twist off a section of the dough and fashion it into a roll. Working beside Gimpy he makes six rolls, and sprinkling them with flour he sets them carefully alongside Gimpy's in the large flour-covered tray.

"All right, Charlie." Gimpy's face is serious. "Now, let's see you do it by yourself. Remember all the things you did from the beginning. Now, go ahead."

Charlie stares at the huge slab of dough and at the knife that Gimpy has pushed into his hand. And once again panic comes over him. What did he do first? How did he hold his hand? His fingers? Which way did he roll the ball?...A thousand confusing ideas burst into his mind at the same time and he stands there smiling. He wants to do it, to make Frank and Gimpy happy and have them like him, and to get the bright good-luck piece that Gimpy has promised him. He turns the smooth, heavy piece of dough around and around on the table, but he cannot bring himself to start. He cannot cut into it because he knows he will fail and he is afraid.

"He forgot already," said Frank. "It don't stick."

He wants it to stick. He frowns and tries to remember: first you start to cut off a piece. Then you roll it out into a ball. But how does it get to be a roll like the ones in the tray? That's something else. Give him time and he'll remember. As soon as the fuzziness passes away he'll remember. Just another few seconds and he'll have it. He wants to hold on to what he's learned—for a little while. He wants it so much.

"Okay, Charlie," sighs Gimpy, taking the cutter out of his hand. "That's all right. Don't worry about it. It's not your work anyway."

Another minute and he'll remember. If only they wouldn't rush him. Why does everything have to be in such a hurry?

"Go ahead, Charlie. Go sit down and look at your comic book. We got to get back to work."

Charlie nods and smiles, and pulls the comic book out of his back pocket. He smooths it out, and puts it on his head as a make-believe hat. Frank laughs and Gimpy finally smiles.

"Go on, you big baby," snorts Gimpy. "Go sit down there until Mr. Donner wants you."

Charlie smiles at him and goes back to the flour sacks in the corner near the mixing machines. He likes to lean back against them while he sits on the floor cross-legged and looks at the pictures in his comic book. As he starts to turn the pages, he feels like crying, but he doesn't know why. What is there to feel sad about? The fuzzy cloud comes and goes, and now he looks forward to the pleasure of the brightly colored pictures in the comic book that he has gone through thirty, forty times. He knows all of the figures in the comic—he has asked their names over and over again (of almost everyone he meets)—and he understands that the strange forms of letters and words in the white balloons above the figures means that they are saying something. Would he ever learn to read what was in the balloons? If they gave him enough time—if they didn't rush him or push him too fast—he would get it. But nobody has time.

Charlie pulls his legs up and opens the comic book to the first page where the Batman and Robin are swinging up a long rope to the side of a building. Someday, he decides, he is going to read. And then he will be able to read the story. He feels a hand on his shoulder and he looks up. It is Gimpy holding out the brass disc and chain, letting it swing and twirl around so that it catches the light.

"Here," he says gruffly, tossing it into Charlie's lap, and then he limps away....

I never thought about it before, but that was a nice thing for him to do. Why did he? Anyway, that is my memory of the time, clearer and more complete than anything I have ever experienced before. Like looking out of

the kitchen window early when the morning light is still gray. I've come a long way since then, and I owe it all to Dr. Strauss and Professor Nemur, and the other people here at Beekman. But what must Frank and Gimpy think and feel now, seeing how I've changed?

April 22—People at the bakery are changing. Not only ignoring me. I can feel the hostility. Donner is arranging for me to join the baker's union, and I've gotten another raise. The rotten thing is that all of the pleasure is gone because the others resent me. In a way, I can't blame them. They don't understand what has happened to me, and I can't tell them. People are not proud of me the way I expected—not at all.

Still, I've got to have someone to talk to. I'm going to ask Miss Kinnian to go to a movie tomorrow night to celebrate my raise. If I can get up the nerve.

April 24—Professor Nemur finally agreed with Dr. Strauss and me that it will be impossible for me to write down everything if I know it's immediately read by people at the lab. I've tried to be completely honest about everything, no matter who I was talking about, but there are things I can't put down unless I can keep them private—at least for a while.

Now, I'm allowed to keep back some of these more personal reports, but before the final report to the Welberg Foundation, Professor Nemur will read through everything to decide what part of it should be published.

What happened today at the lab was very upsetting.

I dropped by the office earlier this evening to ask Dr. Strauss or Professor Nemur if they thought it would be all right for me to ask Alice Kinnian out to a movie, but before I could knock I heard them arguing with each other. I shouldn't have stayed, but it's hard to break the habit of listening because people have always spoken and acted as if I weren't there, as if they never cared what I overheard.

I heard someone bang on the desk, and then Professor Nemur shouted: "I've already informed the convention committee that we will present the paper at Chicago."

Then I heard Dr. Strauss' voice: "But you're wrong, Harold. Six weeks from now is still too soon. He's still changing."

And then Nemur: "We've predicted the pattern correctly so far. We're justified in making an interim report. I tell you, Jay, there's nothing to be afraid of. We've succeeded. It's all positive. Nothing can go wrong now."

Strauss: "This is too important to all of us to bring it out into the open prematurely. You're taking the authority on yourself—"

Nemur: "You forget that I'm the senior member of this project."

Strauss: "And you forget that you're not the only one with a reputation to consider. If we claim too much now, our whole hypothesis will come under fire."

Nemur: "I'm not afraid of regression any more. I've checked and rechecked everything. An interim report will do no harm. I feel sure nothing can go wrong now."

The argument went on that way with Strauss saying that Nemur had his eye on the Chair of Psychology at Hallston, and Nemur saying that Strauss was riding on the coattails of his psychological research. Then Strauss said that the project had as much to do with his techniques in psychosurgery and enzyme-injection patterns, as with Nemur's theories, and that someday thousands of neurosurgeons all over the world would be using *his* methods, but at this point Nemur reminded him that those new techniques would never have come about if not for *his* original theory.

They called each other names—*opportunist, cynic, pessimist*—and I found myself frightened. Suddenly, I realized I no longer had the right to stand there outside the office and listen to them without their knowing it. They might not have cared when I was too feeble-minded to know what was going on, but now that I could understand they wouldn't want me to hear it. I left without waiting for the outcome.

It was dark, and I walked for a long time trying to figure out why I was so frightened. I was seeing them clearly for the first time—not gods or even heroes, but just two men worried about getting something out of their work. Yet, if Nemur is right and the experiment is a success, what does it matter? There's so much to do, so many plans to make.

I'll wait until tomorrow to ask them about taking Miss Kinnian to a movie to celebrate my raise.

April 26—I know I shouldn't hang around the college when I'm through at the lab, but seeing the young men and women going back and forth carrying books and hearing them talk about all the things they're learning in their classes excites me. I wish I could sit and talk with them over coffee in the Campus Bowl Luncheonette when they get together to argue about books and politics and ideas. It's exciting to hear them talking about poetry and science and philosophy—about Shakespeare and Milton; Newton and Einstein and Freud; about Plato and Hegel and Kant, and all the other names that echo like great church bells in my mind.

Sometimes I listen in on the conversations at the tables around me, and pretend I'm a college student, even though I'm a lot older than they are. I carry books around, and I've started to smoke a pipe. It's silly, but since I belong at the lab I feel as if I'm a part of the university. I hate to go home to that lonely room.

April 27—I've made friends with some of the boys at the Campus Bowl. They were arguing about whether or not Shakespeare really wrote Shakespeare's plays. One of the boys—the fat one with the sweaty face—said that Marlowe wrote all of Shakespeare's plays. But Lenny, the short kid with the dark glasses, didn't believe that business about Marlowe, and he said that everyone knew that Sir Francis Bacon wrote the plays because Shakespeare had never been to college and never had the education that shows up in those plays. That's when the one with the freshman beanie said he had heard a couple of guys in the men's room talking about how Shakespeare's plays were really written by a lady.

And they talked about politics and art and God. I never before heard anyone say that there might not be a God. That frightened me, because for the first time I began to think about what God means.

Now I understand one of the important reasons for going to college and getting an education is to learn that the things you've believed in all your life aren't true, and that nothing is what it appears to be.

All the time they talked and argued, I felt the excitement bubble up inside me. This was what I wanted to do—go to college and hear people talk about important things.

I spend most of my free time at the library now, reading and soaking up what I can from books. I'm not concentrating on anything in particular, just reading a lot of fiction now—Dostoevski, Flaubert, Dickens, Hemingway, Faulkner—everything I can get my hands on—feeding a hunger that can't be satisfied.

April 28—In a dream last night I heard Mom screaming at Dad and the teacher at the elementary school P.S. 13 (my first school before they transferred me to P.S. 222)....

"He's normal! He's normal! He'll grow up like other people. Better than others." She was trying to scratch the teacher, but Dad was holding her back. "He'll go to college someday. He'll be *somebody*." She kept screaming it, clawing at Dad so he'd let go of her. "He'll go to college someday and he'll be somebody."

We were in the principal's office and there were a lot of people looking embarrassed, but the assistant principal was smiling and turning his head so no one would see it.

The principal in my dream had a long beard, and was floating around the room and pointing at me. "He'll have to go to a special school. Put him into the Warren State Home and Training School. We can't have him here."

Dad was pulling Mom out of the principal's office, and she was shouting and crying too. I didn't see her face, but her big red teardrops kept splashing down on me....

This morning I could recall the dream, but now there's more than that—I can remember through the blur, back to when I was six years old and it all happened. Just before Norma was born. I see Mom, a thin, dark-haired woman who talks too fast and uses her hands too much. As always her face is blurred. Her hair is up in a bun, and her hand goes to touch it, pat it smooth, as if she has to make sure it's still there. I remember that she was always fluttering like a big, white bird—around my father, and he too heavy and tired to escape her pecking.

I see Charlie, standing in the center of the kitchen, playing with his spinner, bright colored beads and rings threaded on a string. He holds the string up in one hand turns the rings so they wind and unwind in bright spinning flashes. He spends long hours watching his spinner. I don't know who made it for him, or what became of it, but I see him standing there fascinated as the string untwists and sets the rings spinning....

She is screaming at him—no, she's screaming at his father. "I'm not going to take him. There's nothing wrong with him!"

"Rose, it won't do any good pretending any longer that nothing is wrong. Just look at him, Rose. Six years old, and—"

"He's not a dummy. He's normal. He'll be just like everyone else."

He looks sadly at his son with the spinner and Charlie smiles and holds it up to show him how pretty it is when it goes around and around.

"Put that thing away!" Mom shrieks and suddenly she knocks the spinner from Charlie's hand, and it crashes across the kitchen floor. "Go play with your alphabet blocks."

He stands there, frightened by the sudden outburst. He cowers, not knowing what she will do. His body begins to shake. They're arguing, and the voices back and forth make a squeezing pressure inside him and a sense of panic.

"Charlie, go to the bathroom. Don't you dare do it in your pants."

He wants to obey her, but his legs are too soft to move. His arms go up automatically to ward off blows.

"For God's sake, Rose. Leave him alone. You've got him terrified. You always do this, and the poor kid—"

"Then why don't you help me? I have to do it all by myself. Every day I try to teach him—to help him catch up to the others. He's just slow, that's all. But he can learn like everyone else."

"You're fooling yourself, Rose. It's not fair to us or to him. Pretending he's normal. Driving him as if he were an animal that could learn to do tricks. Why don't you leave him alone?"

"Because I want him to be like everyone else."

As they argue, the feeling that grips Charlie's insides becomes greater. His bowels feel as if they will burst and he knows he should go to the bathroom as she has told him so often. But he can't walk. He feels like sitting down right there in the kitchen, but it is wrong and she will slap him.

He wants his spinner. If he has his spinner and he watches it going round and round, he will be able to control himself and not make in his pants. But the spinner is all apart with some of the rings under the table and some under the sink, and the cord is near the stove.

It is very strange that although I can recall the voices clearly their faces are still blurred, and I can see only general outlines. Dad massive and slumped. Mom thin and quick. Hearing them now, arguing with each other across the years, I have the impulse to shout at them: "Look at him. There, down there! Look at Charlie. He has to go to the toilet!"

Charlie stands clutching and pulling at his red checkered shirt as they argue over him. The words are angry sparks between them—an anger and a guilt he can't identify.

"Next September he's going to go back to P.S. 13 and do the term's work over again."

"Why can't you let yourself see the truth? The teacher says he's not capable of doing the work in a regular class."

"That bitch a teacher? Oh, I've got better names for her. Let her start with me again and I'll do more than just write to the board of education. I'll scratch that dirty slut's eyes out. Charlie, why are you twisting like that? Go to the bathroom. Go by yourself. You know how to go."

"Can't you see he wants you to take him? He's frightened."

"Keep out of this. He's perfectly capable of going to the bathroom himself. The book says it gives him confidence and a feeling of achievement."

The terror that waits in that cold tile room overwhelms him. He is afraid to go there alone. He reaches up for her hand and sobs out: "Toi—toi..." and she slaps his hand away.

"No more," she says sternly. "You're a big boy now. You can go by yourself. Now march right into that bathroom and pull your pants down the way I taught you. I warn you if you make in your pants you'll get spanked."

I can almost feel it now, the stretching and knotting in his intestines as the two of them stand over him waiting to see what he will do. His whimper becomes a soft crying as suddenly he can control no longer, and he sobs and covers his face with his hands as he dirties himself.

It is soft and warm and he feels the confusion of relief and fear. It is his, but she will take it away from him as she always does. She will take it away and keep it for herself. And she will spank him. She comes toward him, screaming that he is a bad boy, and Charlie runs to his father for help.

Suddenly, I remember that her name is Rose and his name is Matt. It's odd to have forgotten your parents' names. And what about Norma? Strange I haven't thought about them all for a long time. I wish I could see Matt's face now, to know what he was thinking at that moment. All I remember is that as she began to spank me, Matt Gordon turned and walked out of the apartment.

I wish I could see their faces more clearly.

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PROGRESS REPORT 11

May 1—Why haven't I ever noticed how beautiful Alice Kinnian is? She has pigeon-soft brown eyes and feathery brown hair down to the hollow of her neck. When she smiles, her full lips look as if she's pouting.

We went to a movie and then to dinner. I didn't see much of the first picture because I was too conscious of her sitting next to me. Twice her bare arm touched mine on the armrest, and both times the fear that she would become annoyed made me pull back. All I could think about was her soft skin just inches away. Then I saw, two rows ahead of us, a young man with his arm around his girl, and I wanted to put my arm around Miss Kinnian. Terrifying. But if I did it slowly ... first resting my arm on the back of her seat ... moving up ... inch by inch ... to rest near her shoulders and the back of her neck ... casually...

I didn't dare.

The best I could do was rest my elbow on the back of her seat, but by the time I got there I had to shift position to wipe the perspiration off my face and neck.

Once, her leg accidentally brushed against mine.

It became such an ordeal—so painful—that I forced myself to take my mind off her. The first picture had been a war film, and all I caught was the ending where the G.I. goes back to Europe to marry the woman who saved his life. The second picture interested me. A psychological film about a man and woman apparently in love but actually destroying each other. Everything suggests that the man is going to kill his wife but at the last moment, something she screams out in a nightmare makes him recall something that happened to him during his childhood. The sudden memory shows him that his hatred is really directed at a depraved governess who had terrified him with frightening stories and left a flaw in his personality. Excited at discovering this, he cries out with joy so that his wife awakens. He takes her in his arms and the implication is that all his problems have been solved. It was pat and cheap, and I must have shown my anger because Alice wanted to know what was wrong. "It's a lie," I explained, as we walked out into the lobby. "Things just don't happen that way."

"Of course not." She laughed. "It's a world of make-believe."

"Oh, no! That's no answer." I insisted. "Even in the world of make-believe there have to be rules. The parts have to be consistent and belong together. This kind of picture is a lie. Things are forced to fit because the writer or the director or somebody wanted something in that didn't belong. And it doesn't feel right."

She looked at me thoughtfully as we walked out into the bright dazzling night-lights of Times Square. "You're coming along fast."

"I'm confused. I don't know what I know any more."

"Never mind that," she insisted. "You're beginning to see and understand things." She waved her hand to take in all of the neon and glitter around us as we crossed over to Seventh Avenue. "You're beginning to see what's behind the surface of things. What you say about the parts having to belong together—that was a pretty good insight."

"Oh, come on now. I don't feel as if I'm accomplishing anything. I don't understand about myself or my past. I don't even know where my parents are, or what they look like. Do you know that when I see them in a flash of memory or in a dream the faces are a blur? I want to see their expressions. I can't understand what's going on unless I can see their faces —"

"Charlie, calm down." People were turning to stare. She slipped her arm through mine and pulled me close to restrain me. "Be patient. Don't forget you're accomplishing in weeks what takes others a lifetime. You're a giant sponge soaking in knowledge. Soon you'll begin to connect things up, and you'll see how all the different worlds of learning are related. All the levels, Charlie, like steps on a giant ladder. And you'll climb higher and higher to see more and more of the world around you."

As we entered the cafeteria on Forty-fifth Street and picked up our trays, she spoke animatedly. "Ordinary people," she said, "can see only a little bit. They can't change much or go any higher than they are, but you're a genius. You'll keep going up and up, and see more and more. And each step will reveal worlds you never even knew existed."

People on the line who heard her turned to stare at me, and only when I nudged her to stop did she lower her voice. "I just hope to God," she whispered, "that you don't get hurt."

For a little while after that I didn't know what to say. We ordered our food at the counter and carried it to our table and ate without talking. The

silence made me nervous. I knew what she meant about her fear, so I joked about it.

"Why should I get hurt? I couldn't be any worse off than I was before. Even Algernon is still smart, isn't he? As long as he's up there I'm in good shape." She toyed with her knife making circular depressions in a pat of butter and the movement hypnotized me. "And besides," I told her, "I overheard something—Professor Nemur and Dr. Strauss were arguing, and Nemur said he's positive that nothing can go wrong."

"I hope so," she said. "You have no idea how afraid I've been that something might go wrong. I feel partly responsible." She saw me staring at the knife and she put it down carefully beside her plate.

"I never would have done it but for you," I said.

She laughed and it made me tremble. That's when I saw that her eyes were soft brown. She looked down at the tablecloth quickly and blushed.

"Thank you, Charlie," she said, and took my hand.

It was the first time anyone had ever done that, and it made me bolder. I leaned forward, holding on to her hand, and the words came out. "I like you very much." After I said it, I was afraid she'd laugh, but she nodded and smiled.

"I like you too, Charlie."

"But it's more than liking. What I mean is ... oh hell! I don't know what I mean." I knew I was blushing and I didn't know where to look or what to do with my hands. I dropped a fork, and when I tried to retrieve it, I knocked over a glass of water and it spilled on her dress. Suddenly, I had become clumsy and awkward again, and when I tried to apologize I found my tongue had become too large for my mouth.

"That's all right, Charlie," she tried to reassure me. "It's only water. Don't let it upset you this way."

In the taxi on the way home, we were silent for a long time, and then she put down her purse and straightened my tie and puffed up my breast pocket handkerchief. "You were very upset tonight, Charlie."

"I feel ridiculous."

"I upset you by talking about it. I made you self-conscious."

"It's not that. What bothers me is that I can't put into words the way I feel."

"These feelings are new to you. Not everything has to ... be put into words."

I moved closer to her and tried to take her hand again, but she pulled away. "No, Charlie. I don't think this is good for you. I've upset you, and it might have a negative effect."

When she put me off, I felt awkward and ridiculous at the same time. It made me angry with myself and I pulled back to my side of the seat and stared out the window. I hated her as I had never hated anyone before—with her easy answers and maternal fussing. I wanted to slap her face, to make her crawl, and then to hold her in my arms and kiss her.

"Charlie, I'm sorry if I've upset you."

"Forget it."

"But you've got to understand what's happening."

"I understand," I said, "and I'd rather not talk about it."

By the time the cab reached her apartment on Seventy-seventh Street, I was thoroughly miserable.

"Look," she said, "this is my fault. I shouldn't have gone out with you tonight."

"Yes, I see that now."

"What I mean is, we have no right to put this on a personal ... emotional level. You have so much to do. I have no right to come into your life at this time."

"That's my worry, isn't it?"

"Is it? This isn't your private affair any more, Charlie. You've got obligations now—not only to Professor Nemur and Dr. Strauss, but to the millions who may follow in your footsteps."

The more she talked that way, the worse I felt. She highlighted my awkwardness, my lack of knowledge about the right things to say and do. I was a blundering adolescent in her eyes, and she was trying to let me down easy.

As we stood at the door to her apartment, she turned and smiled at me and for a moment I thought she was going to invite me in, but she just whispered: "Good night, Charlie. Thank you for a wonderful evening."

I wanted to kiss her good night. I had worried about it earlier. Didn't a woman expect you to kiss her? In the novels I'd read and the movies I'd

seen, the man makes the advances. I had decided last night that I would kiss her. But I kept thinking: what if she turns me down?

I moved closer and reached for her shoulders, but she was too quick for me. She stopped me and took my hand in hers. "We'd better just say good night this way, Charlie. We can't let this get personal. Not yet."

And before I could protest, or ask what she meant by *not yet*, she started inside. "Good night, Charlie, and thank you again for a lovely ... lovely time." And closed the door.

I was furious at her, myself, and the world, but by the time I got home, I realized she was right. Now, I don't know whether she cares for me or if she was just being kind. What could she possibly see in me? What makes it so awkward is that I've never experienced anything like this before. How does a person go about learning how to act toward another person? How does a man learn how to behave toward a woman?

The books don't help much.

But next time, I'm going to kiss her good night.

May 3—One of the things that confuses me is never really knowing when something comes up from my past, whether it really happened that way, or if that was the way it seemed to be at the time, or if I'm inventing it. I'm like a man who's been half-asleep all his life, trying to find out what he was like before he woke up. Everything is strangely slow-motion and blurred.

I had a nightmare last night, and when I woke up I remembered something.

First the nightmare: I'm running down a long corridor, half blinded by the swirls of dust. At times I run forward and then I float around and run backwards, but I'm afraid because I'm hiding something in my pocket. I don't know what it is or where I got it, but I know they want to take it away from me and that frightens me.

The wall breaks down and suddenly there is a red-haired girl with her arms outstretched to me—her face is a blank mask. She takes me into her arms, kisses and caresses me, and I want to hold her tightly but I'm afraid. The more she touches me, the more frightened I become because I know I must never touch a girl. Then, as her body rubs up against mine, I feel a

strange bubbling and throbbing inside me that makes me warm. But when I look up I see a bloody knife in her hands.

I try to scream as I run, but no sound comes out of my throat, and my pockets are empty. I search in my pockets but I don't know what it is I've lost or why I was hiding it. I know only that it's gone, and there is blood on my hands too.

When I woke up, I thought of Alice, and I had the same feeling of panic as in the dream. What am I afraid of? Something about the knife.

I made myself a cup of coffee and smoked a cigarette. I'd never had a dream like it before, and I knew it was connected with my evening with Alice. I have begun to think of her in a different way.

Free association is still difficult, because it's hard not to control the direction of your thoughts ... just to leave your mind open and let anything flow into it ... ideas bubbling to the surface like a bubble bath ... a woman bathing ... a girl ... Norma taking a bath ... I am watching through the keyhole ... and when she gets out of the tub to dry herself I see that her body is different from mine. Something is missing.

Running down the hallway ... somebody chasing me ... not a person ... just a big flashing kitchen knife ... and I'm scared and crying but no voice comes out because my neck is cut and I'm bleeding...

"Mama, Charlie is peeking at me through the keyhole..."

Why is she different? What happened to her?...blood ... bleeding ... a dark cubbyhole...

*Three blind mice ... three blind mice,
See how they run! See how they run!
They all run after the farmer's wife,
She cut off their tails with a carving knife,
Did you ever see such a sight in your life,
As three ... blind ... mice?*

Charlie, alone in the kitchen early in the morning. Everyone else asleep, and he amuses himself playing with his spinner. One of the buttons pops off his shirt as he bends over, and it rolls across the intricate line-pattern of the kitchen linoleum. It rolls towards the bathroom and he

follows, but then he loses it. Where is the button? He goes into the bathroom to find it. There is a closet in the bathroom where the clothes hamper is, and he likes to take out all the clothes and look at them. His father's things and his mother's ... and Norma's dresses. He would like to try them on and make believe he is Norma, but once when he did that his mother spanked him for it. There in the clothes hamper he finds Norma's underwear with dried blood. What had she done wrong? He was terrified. Whoever had done it might come looking for him....

Why does a memory like that from childhood remain with me so strongly, and why does it frighten me now? Is it because of my feelings for Alice?

Thinking about it now, I can understand why I was taught to keep away from women. It was wrong for me to express my feelings to Alice. I have no right to think of a woman that way—not yet.

But even as I write these words, something inside shouts that there is more. I'm a person. I was somebody before I went under the surgeon's knife. And I have to love someone.

May 8—Even now that I have learned what has been going on behind Mr. Donner's back, I find it hard to believe. I first noticed something was wrong during the rush hour two days ago. Gimpy was behind the counter wrapping a birthday cake for one of our regular customers—a cake that sells for \$3.95. But when Gimpy rang up the sale the register showed only \$2.95. I started to tell him he had made a mistake, but in the mirror behind the counter I saw a wink and smile that passed from the customer to Gimpy and the answering smile on Gimpy's face. And when the man took his change, I saw the flash of a large silver coin left behind in Gimpy's hand, before his fingers closed on it, and the quick movement with which he slipped the half-dollar into his pocket.

"Charlie," said a woman behind me, "are there any more of those cream-filled éclairs?"

"I'll go back and find out."

I was glad of the interruption because it gave me time to think about what I had seen. Certainly, Gimpy had not made a mistake. He had deliberately undercharged the customer, and there had been an understanding between them.

I leaned limply against the wall not knowing what to do. Gimpy had worked for Mr. Donner for over fifteen years. Donner—who always treated his workers like close friends, like relatives—had invited Gimpy's family to his house for dinner more than once. He often put Gimpy in charge of the shop when he had to go out, and I had heard stories of the times Donner gave Gimpy money to pay his wife's hospital bills.

It was incredible that anyone would steal from such a man. There had to be some other explanation. Gimpy had really made a mistake in ringing up the sale, and the half-dollar was a tip. Or perhaps Mr. Donner had made some special arrangement for this one customer who regularly bought cream cakes. Anything rather than believe that Gimpy was stealing. Gimpy had always been so nice to me.

I no longer wanted to know. I kept my eyes averted from the register as I brought out the tray of éclairs and sorted out the cookies, buns, and cakes.

But when the little red-haired woman came in—the one who always pinched my cheek and joked about finding a girl friend for me—I recalled that she came in most often when Donner was out to lunch and Gimpy was behind the counter. Gimpy had often sent me out to deliver orders to her house.

Involuntarily, my mind totaled her purchases to \$4.53. But I turned away so that I would not see what Gimpy rang up on the cash register. I wanted to know the truth, and yet I was afraid of what I might learn.

"Two forty-five, Mrs. Wheeler," he said.

The ring of the sale. The counting of change. The slam of the drawer. "Thank you, Mrs. Wheeler." I turned just in time to see him putting his hand into his pocket, and I heard the faint clink of coins.

How many times had he *used me* as a go-between to deliver packages to her, undercharging her so that later they could split the difference? Had he used me all these years to help him steal?

I couldn't take my eyes off Gimpy as he clomped around behind the counter, perspiration streaming down from under his paper cap. He seemed animated and good-natured, but looking up he caught my eye, frowned and turned away.

I wanted to hit him. I wanted to go behind the counter and smash his face in. I don't remember ever hating anyone before—but this morning I hated Gimpy with all my heart.

Pouring this all out on paper in the quiet of my room has not helped. Every time I think of Gimpy stealing from Mr. Donner I want to smash something. Fortunately, I don't think I'm capable of violence. I don't think I ever hit anyone in my life.

But I still have to decide what to do. Tell Donner that his trusted employee has been stealing from him all these years? Gimpy would deny it, and I could never prove it was true. And what would it do to Mr. Donner? I don't know what to do.

May 9—I can't sleep. This has gotten to me. I owe Mr. Donner too much to stand by and see him robbed this way. I'd be as guilty as Gimpy by my silence. And yet, is it my place to inform on him? The thing that bothers me most is that when he sent me on deliveries he used *me* to help him steal from Donner. Not knowing about it, I was outside it—not to blame. But now that I know, by my silence I am as guilty as he is.

Yet, Gimpy is a co-worker. Three children. What will he do if Donner fires him? He might not be able to get another job—especially with his club foot.

Is that my worry?

What's right? Ironic that all my intelligence doesn't help me solve a problem like this.

May 10—I asked Professor Nemur about it, and he insists that I'm an innocent bystander and there's no reason for me to become involved in what

would be an unpleasant situation. The fact that I've been used as a go-between doesn't seem to bother him at all. If I didn't understand what was happening at the time, he says, then it doesn't matter. I'm no more to blame than the knife is to blame in a stabbing, or the car in a collision.

"But I'm not an inanimate object," I argued. "I'm a *person*."

He looked confused for a moment and then laughed. "Of course, Charlie. But I wasn't referring to now. I meant before the operation."

Smug, pompous—I felt like hitting him too. "I was a person before the operation. In case you forgot—"

"Yes, of course, Charlie. Don't misunderstand. But it was different..." And then he remembered that he had to check some charts in the lab.

Dr. Strauss doesn't talk much during our psychotherapy sessions, but today when I brought it up, he said that I was morally obligated to tell Mr. Donner. But the more I thought about it the less simple it became. I had to have someone else to break the tie, and the only one I could think of was Alice. Finally, at ten thirty I couldn't hold out any longer. I dialed three times, broke off in the middle each time, but on the fourth try, I managed to hold on until her voice.

At first she didn't think she should see me, but I begged her to meet me at the cafeteria where we had dinner together. "I respect you—you've always given me good advice." And when she still wavered, I insisted. "You *have* to help me. You're partly responsible. You said so yourself. If not for you I would never have gone into this in the first place. You just can't shrug me off now."

She must have sensed the urgency because she agreed to meet me. I hung up and stared at the phone. Why was it so important for me to know what *she* thought, how *she* felt? For more than a year at the Adult Center the only thing that mattered was pleasing her. Was that why I had agreed to the operation in the first place?

I paced up and back in front of the cafeteria until the policeman began to eye me suspiciously. Then I went in and bought coffee. Fortunately, the table we had used last time was empty. She would think of looking for me back there.

She saw me and waved to me, but stopped at the counter for coffee before she came over to the table. She smiled and I knew it was because I had chosen the same table. A foolish, romantic gesture.

"I know it's late," I apologized, "but I swear I was going out of my mind. I had to talk to you."

She sipped her coffee and listened quietly as I explained how I had found out about Gimpy's cheating, my own reaction, and the conflicting advice I'd gotten at the lab. When I finished, she sat back and shook her head.

"Charlie, you amaze me. In some ways you're so advanced, and yet when it comes to making a decision, you're still a child. I can't decide for you, Charlie. The answer can't be found in books—or be solved by bringing it to other people. Not unless you want to remain a child all your life. You've got to find the answer inside you—*feel* the right thing to do. Charlie, you've got to learn to trust yourself."

At first, I was annoyed at her lecture, but then suddenly—it began to make sense. "You mean, *I've* got to decide?"

She nodded.

"In fact," I said, "now that I think of it, I believe I've already decided some of it! I think Nemur and Strauss are both wrong!"

She was watching me closely, excitedly. "Something is happening to you, Charlie. If you could only see your face."

"You're damned right, something is happening! A cloud of smoke was hanging in front of my eyes, and with one breath you blew it away. A simple idea. Trust *myself*. And it never occurred to me before."

"Charlie, you're wonderful."

I caught her hand and held it. "No, it's you. You touch my eyes and make me see."

She blushed and pulled her hand back.

"The last time we were here," I said, "I told you I liked you. I should have trusted myself to say I love you."

"Don't, Charlie. Not yet."

"*Not yet?*" I shouted. "That's what you said last time. Why not yet?"

"Shhhh ... Wait a while, Charlie. Finish your studies. See where they lead you. You're changing too fast."

"What does that have to do with it? My feeling for you won't change because I'm becoming intelligent. I'll only love you more."

"But you're changing emotionally too. In a peculiar sense I'm the first woman you've ever been really aware of—in this way. Up to now I've been

your teacher—someone you turn to for help and advice. You're bound to think you're in love with me. See other women. Give yourself more time."

"What you're saying is that young boys are always falling in love with their teachers, and that emotionally I'm still just a boy."

"You're twisting my words around. No, I don't think of you as a boy."

"Emotionally retarded then."

"No."

"Then, why?"

"Charlie, don't push me. I don't know. Already, you've gone beyond my intellectual reach. In a few months or even weeks, you'll be a different person. When you mature intellectually, we may not be able to communicate. When you mature emotionally, you may not even want me. I've got to think of myself too, Charlie. Let's wait and see. Be patient."

She was making sense, but I wasn't letting myself listen. "The other night—" I choked out, "You don't know how much I looked forward to that date. I was out of my mind wondering how to behave, what to say, wanting to make the best impression, and terrified I might say something to make you angry."

"You didn't make me angry. I was flattered."

"Then, when can I see you again?"

"I have no right to let you get involved."

"But I *am* involved!" I shouted, and then seeing people turn to look, I lowered my voice until it trembled with anger. "I'm a person—a man—and I can't live with just books and tapes and electronic mazes. You say, 'see other women.' How can I when I don't know any other women? Something inside is burning me up, and all I know is it makes me think of you. I'm in the middle of a page and I see your face on it—not blurred like those in my past, but clear and alive. I touch the page and your face is gone and I want to tear the book apart and throw it away."

"Please, Charlie..."

"Let me see you again."

"Tomorrow at the lab."

"You know that's not what I mean. Away from the lab. Away from the university. Alone."

I could tell she wanted to say yes. She was surprised by my insistence. I was surprised at myself. I only knew that I couldn't stop pressing her. And

yet there was a terror in my throat as I begged her. My palms were damp. Was I afraid she'd say *no*, or afraid she'd say *yes*? If she hadn't broken the tension by answering me, I think I would have fainted.

"All right, Charlie. Away from the lab and the university, but not alone. I don't think we should be alone together."

"Anywhere you say," I gasped. "Just so I can be with you and not think of tests ... statistics ... questions ... answers..."

She frowned for a moment. "All right. They have free spring concerts in Central Park. Next week you can take me to one of the concerts."

When we got to her doorway, she turned quickly and kissed my cheek. "Good night, Charlie. I'm glad you called me. I'll see you at the lab." She closed the door and I stood outside the building and looked at the light in her apartment window until it went out.

There is no question about it now. I'm in love.

May 11—After all this thinking and worrying, I realized Alice was right. I had to trust my intuition. At the bakery, I watched Gimpy more closely. Three times today, I saw him undercharging customers and pocketing his portion of the difference as the customers passed money back to him. It was only with certain regular customers that he did it, and it occurred to me that these people were as guilty as he. Without their agreement this could never take place. Why should Gimpy be the scapegoat?

That's when I decided on the compromise. It might not be the perfect decision, but it was my decision, and it seemed to be the best answer under the circumstances. I would tell Gimpy what I knew and warn him to stop.

I got him alone back by the washroom, and when I came up to him he started away. "I've got something important to talk to you about," I said. "I want your advice for a friend who has a problem. He's discovered that one of his fellow employees is cheating his boss, and he doesn't know what to do about it. He doesn't like the idea of informing and getting the guy into trouble, but he won't stand by and let his boss—who has been good to both of them—be cheated."

Gimpy looked at me hard. "What does this friend of yours plan to do about it?"

"That's the trouble. He doesn't want to do anything. He feels if the stealing stops there would be nothing gained by doing anything at all. He would forget about it."

"Your friend ought to keep his nose in his own business," said Gimpy, shifting off his club foot. "He ought to keep his eyes closed to things like that and know who *his* friends are. A boss is a boss, and working people got to stick together."

"My friend doesn't feel that way."

"It's none of his business."

"He feels that if he knows about it he's partly responsible. So he's decided that if the thing stops, he's got nothing more to say. Otherwise, he'll tell the whole story. I wanted to ask your opinion. Do you think that under the circumstances the stealing will stop?"

It was a strain for him to conceal his anger. I could see that he wanted to hit me, but he just kept squeezing his fist.

"Tell your friend the guy doesn't seem to have any choice."

"That's fine," I said. "That will make my friend very happy."

Gimpy started away, and then he paused and looked back. "Your friend—could it be maybe he's interested in a cut? Is that his reason?"

"No, he just wants the whole thing to stop."

He glared at me. "I can tell you, you'll be sorry you stuck your nose in. I always stood up for you. I should of had my head examined." And then he limped off.

Perhaps I ought to have told Donner the whole story and had Gimpy fired—I don't know. Doing it this way has something to be said for it. It's over and done with. But how many people are there like Gimpy who use other people that way?

May 15—My studies are going well. The university library is my second home now. They've had to get me a private room because it takes me only a second to absorb the printed page, and curious students invariably gather around me as I flip through my books.

My most absorbing interests at the present time are etymologies of ancient languages, the newer works on the calculus of variations, and Hindu

history. It's amazing the way things, apparently disconnected, hang together. I've moved up to another plateau, and now the streams of the various disciplines seem to be closer to each other as if they flow from a single source.

Strange how when I'm in the college cafeteria and hear the students arguing about history or politics or religion, it all seems so childish.

I find no pleasure in discussing ideas any more on such an elementary level. People resent being shown that they don't approach the complexities of the problem—they don't know what exists beyond the surface ripples. It's just as bad on a higher level, and I've given up any attempt to discuss these things with the professors at Beekman.

Burt introduced me to an economics professor at the faculty cafeteria, one well known for his work on the economic factors affecting interest rates. I had long wanted to talk to an economist about some of the ideas I had come across in my reading. The moral aspects of the military blockade as a weapon in times of peace had been bothering me. I asked him what he thought of the suggestion by some senators that we begin using such tactics as "blacklisting" and reinforcement of the navicert controls that had been used in World Wars I and II, against some of the smaller nations which now oppose us.

He listened quietly, staring off into space, and I assumed he was collecting his thoughts for an answer, but a few minutes later he cleared his throat and shook his head. That, he explained apologetically, was outside his area of specialization. His interest was in interest rates, and he hadn't given military economics much thought. He suggested I see Dr. Wessey, who once did a paper on War Trade Agreements during World War II. He might be able to help me.

Before I could say anything else, he grabbed my hand and shook it. He had been glad to meet me, but there were some notes he had to assemble for a lecture. And then he was gone.

The same thing happened when I tried to discuss Chaucer with an American literature specialist, questioned an Orientalist about the Trobriand Islanders, and tried to focus on the problems of automation-caused unemployment with a social psychologist who specialized in public opinion polls on adolescent behavior. They would always find excuses to slip away, afraid to reveal the narrowness of their knowledge.

How different they seem to be now. And how foolish I was ever to have thought that professors were intellectual giants. They're people—and afraid the rest of the world will find out. And Alice is a person too—a woman, not a goddess—and I'm taking her to the concert tomorrow night.

May 17—Almost morning and I can't fall asleep. I've got to understand what happened to me last night at the concert.

The evening started out well enough. The Mall at Central Park had filled up early, and Alice and I had to pick our way among the couples stretched out on the grass. Finally, far back from the path, we found an unused tree where—out of the range of lamplight—the only evidence of other couples was the protesting female laughter and the glow of lit cigarettes.

"This will be fine," she said. "No reason to be right on top of the orchestra."

"What's that they're playing now?" I asked.

"Debussy's *La Mer*. Do you like it?"

I settled down beside her. "I don't know much about this kind of music. I have to think about it."

"Don't think about it," she whispered. "Feel it. Let it sweep over you like the sea without trying to understand." She lay back on the grass and turned her face in the direction of the music.

I had no way of knowing what she expected of me. This was far from the clear lines of problem-solving and the systematic acquisition of knowledge. I kept telling myself that the sweating palms, the tightness in my chest, the desire to put my arms around her were merely biochemical reactions. I even traced the pattern of stimulus-and-reaction that caused my nervousness and excitement. Yet everything was fuzzy and uncertain. Should I put my arm around her or not? Was she waiting for me to do it? Would she get angry? I could tell I was still behaving like an adolescent and it angered me.

"Here," I choked, "why don't you make yourself more comfortable? Rest on my shoulder." She let me put my arm around her, but she didn't look at me. She seemed to be too absorbed in the music to realize what I

was doing. Did she want me to hold her that way, or was she merely tolerating it? As I slipped my arm down to her waist, I felt her tremble, but still she kept staring in the direction of the orchestra. She was pretending to be concentrating on the music so that she wouldn't have to respond to me. She didn't want to know what was happening. As long as she looked away, and listened, she could pretend that my closeness, my arms around her, were without her knowledge or consent. She wanted me to make love to her body while she kept her mind on higher things. I reached over roughly and turned her chin. "Why don't you look at me? Are you pretending I don't exist?"

"No, Charlie," she whispered. "I'm pretending I don't exist."

When I touched her shoulder she stiffened and trembled, but I pulled her toward me. Then it happened. It started as a hollow buzzing in my ears ... an electric saw ... far away. Then the cold: arms and legs prickly, and finger numbing. Suddenly, I had the feeling I was being watched.

A sharp switch in perception. I saw, from some point in the darkness behind a tree, the two of us lying in each other's arms.

I looked up to see a boy of fifteen or sixteen, crouching nearby. "Hey!" I shouted. As he stood up, I saw his trousers were open and he was exposed.

"What's the matter?" she gasped.

I jumped up, and he vanished into the darkness. "Did you see him?"

"No," she said, smoothing her skirt nervously. "I didn't see anyone."

"Standing right here. Watching us. Close enough to touch you."

"Charlie, where are you going?"

"He couldn't have gotten very far."

"Leave him alone, Charlie. It doesn't matter."

But it mattered to me. I ran into the darkness, stumbling over startled couples, but there was no way to tell where he had gone.

The more I thought about him, the worse became the queasy feeling that comes before fainting. Lost and alone in a great wilderness. And then I caught hold of myself and found my way back to where Alice was sitting.

"Did you find him?"

"No, but he was there. I saw him."

She looked at me strangely. "Are you all right?"

"I will be ... in a minute ... Just that damned buzzing in my ears."

"Maybe we'd better go."

All the way back to her apartment, it was on my mind that the boy had been crouching there in the darkness, and for one second I had caught a glimpse of what he was seeing—the two of us lying in each other's arms.

"Would you like to come in? I could make some coffee."

I wanted to, but something warned me against it. "Better not. I've got a lot of work to do tonight."

"Charlie, is it anything I said or did?"

"Of course not. Just that kid watching us upset me."

She was standing close to me, waiting for me to kiss her. I put my arm around her, but it happened again. If I didn't get away quickly, I would pass out.

"Charlie, you look sick."

"Did you see him, Alice? The truth..."

She shook her head. "No. It was too dark. But I'm sure—"

"I've got to go. I'll call you." And before she could stop me, I pulled away. I had to get out of that building before everything caved in.

Thinking about it now, I'm certain it was a hallucination. Dr. Strauss feels that emotionally I'm still in that adolescent state where being close to a woman, or thinking of sex, sets off anxiety, panic, even hallucinations. He feels that my rapid intellectual development has deceived me into thinking I could live a normal emotional life. But I've got to accept the fact that the fears and blocks triggered in these sexual situations reveal that emotionally I'm still an adolescent—sexually retarded. I guess he means I'm not ready for a relationship with a woman like Alice Kinnian. Not yet.

May 20—I've been fired from my job at the bakery. I know it was foolish of me to hang on to the past, but there was something about the place with its white brick walls browned by oven heat ... It was home to me.

What did I do to make them hate me so?

I can't blame Donner. He's got to think of his business, and the other employees. And yet, he's been closer to me than a father.

He called me into his office, cleared the statements and bills off the solitary chair beside his roll-top desk, and without looking up at me, he said, "I've been meaning to talk to you. Now is as good a time as any."

It seems foolish now, but as I sat there staring at him—short, chubby, with the ragged light-brown moustache comically drooping over his upper lip—it was as if both of me, the old Charlie and the new, were sitting on that chair, frightened at what Old Mr. Donner was going to say.

"Charlie, your Uncle Herman was a good friend of mine. I kept my promise to him to keep you on the job, good times and bad, so that you didn't ever want for a dollar in your pocket and a place to lay your head without being put away in that home."

"The bakery is my home—"

"And I treated you like my own son who gave up his life for his country. And when Herman died—how old were you? seventeen? more like a six-year-old boy—I swore to myself ... I said, Arthur Donner, as long as you got a bakery and a business over your head, you're going to look after Charlie. He is going to have a place to work, a bed to sleep in, and bread in his mouth. When they committed you to that Warren place, I told them how you would work for me, and I would take care of you. You didn't spend even one night in that place. I got you a room and I looked after you. Now, have I kept that solemn promise?"

I nodded, but I could see by the way he was folding and unfolding his bills that he was having trouble. And as much as I didn't want to know—I knew. "I've tried my best to do a good job. I've worked hard...."

"I know, Charlie. Nothing's wrong with your work. But something happened to you, and I don't understand what it means. Not only me. Everyone has been talking about it. I've had them in here a dozen times in the last few weeks. They're all upset. Charlie, I got to let you go."

I tried to stop him but he shook his head.

"There was a delegation in to see me last night. Charlie, I got my business to hold together."

He was staring at his hands, turning the paper over and over as if he hoped to find something on it that was not there before. "I'm sorry, Charlie."

"But where will I go?"

He peered up at me for the first time since we'd walked into his cubbyhole office. "You know as well as I do that you don't *need* to work here any more."

"Mr. Donner, I've never worked anywhere else."

"Let's face it. You're not the Charlie who came in here seventeen years ago—not even the same Charlie of four months ago. You haven't talked about it. It's your own affair. Maybe a miracle of some kind—who knows? But you've changed into a very smart young man. And operating the dough mixer and delivering packages is no work for a smart young man."

He was right, of course, but something inside me wanted to make him change his mind.

"You've got to let me stay, Mr. Donner. Give me another chance. You said yourself that you promised Uncle Herman I would have a job here for as long as I needed it. Well, I still need it, Mr. Donner."

"You don't, Charlie. If you did then I'd tell them I don't care about their delegations and their petitions, and I'd stick up for you against all of them. But as it is now, they're all scared to death of you. I got to think of my own family too."

"What if they change their minds? Let me try to convince them." I was making it harder for him than he expected. I knew I should stop, but I couldn't control myself. "I'll make them understand," I pleaded.

"All right," he sighed finally. "Go ahead, try. But you're only going to hurt yourself."

As I came out of his office, Frank Reilly and Joe Carp walked by me, and I knew what he had said was true. Having me around to look at was too much for them. I made them all uncomfortable.

Frank had just picked up a tray of rolls and both he and Joe turned when I called. "Look, Charlie, I'm busy. Maybe later—"

"No," I insisted. "Now—right now. Both of you have been avoiding me. Why?"

Frank, the fast talker, the ladies' man, the arranger, studied me for a moment and then set the tray down on the table. "Why? I'll tell you why. Because all of a sudden you're a big shot, a know-it-all, a brain! Now you're a regular whiz kid, an egghead. Always with a book—always with all the answers. Well, I'll tell you something. You think you're better than the rest of us here? Okay, go someplace else."

"But what did I do to you?"

"What did he do? Hear that, Joe? I'll tell you what you did, *Mister* Gordon. You come pushing in here with your ideas and suggestions and make the rest of us all look like a bunch of dopes. But I'll tell you

something. To me you're still a moron. Maybe I don't understand some of them big words or the names of the books, but I'm as good as you are—better even."

"Yeah." Joe nodded, turning to emphasize the point to Gimpy who had just come up behind him.

"I'm not asking you to be my friends," I said, "or have anything to do with me. Just let me keep my job. Mr. Donner says it's up to you."

Gimpy glared at me and then shook his head in disgust. "You got a nerve," he shouted. "You can go to hell!" Then he turned and limped off heavily.

And so it went. Most of them felt the way Joe and Frank and Gimpy did. It had been all right as long they could laugh at me and appear clever at my expense, but now they were feeling inferior to the moron. I began to see that by my astonishing growth I had made them shrink and emphasized their inadequacies. I had betrayed them, and they hated me for it.

Fanny Birden was the only one who didn't think I should be forced to leave, and despite their pressure and threats, she had been the only one not to sign the petition.

"Which don't mean to say," she remarked, "that I don't think there's something mighty strange about you, Charlie. The way you've changed! I don't know. You used to be a good, dependable man—ordinary, not too bright maybe, but honest—and who knows what you done to yourself to get so smart all of a sudden. Like everybody's been saying—it ain't right."

"But what's wrong with a person wanting to be more intelligent, to acquire knowledge, and understand himself and the world?"

"If you'd read your Bible, Charlie, you'd know that it's not meant for man to know more than was given to him to know by the Lord in the first place. The fruit of that tree was forbidden to man. Charlie, if you done anything you wasn't supposed to—you know, like with the devil or something—maybe it ain't too late to get out of it. Maybe you could go back to being the good simple man you was before."

"There's no going back, Fanny. I haven't done anything wrong. I'm like a man born blind who has been given a chance to see light. That can't be sinful. Soon there'll be millions like me all over the world. Science can do it, Fanny."

She stared down at the bride and groom on the wedding cake she was decorating and I could see her lips barely move as she whispered: "It was evil when Adam and Eve ate from the *tree of knowledge*. It was evil when they saw they was naked, and learned about lust and shame. And they was driven out of Paradise and the gates was closed to them. If not for that none of us would have to grow old and be sick and die."

There was nothing more to say, to her or to the rest of them. None of them would look into my eyes. I can still feel the hostility. Before, they had laughed at me, despising me for my ignorance and dullness; now, they hated me for my knowledge and understanding. Why? What in God's name did they want of me?

This intelligence has driven a wedge between me and all the people I knew and loved, driven me out of the bakery. Now, I'm more alone than ever before. I wonder what would happen if they put Algernon back in the big cage with some of the other mice. Would *they* turn against him?

May 25—So this is how a person can come to despise himself—knowing he's doing the wrong thing and not being able to stop. Against my will I found myself drawn to Alice's apartment. She was surprised but she let me in.

"You're soaked. The water is streaming down your face."

"It's raining. Good for the flowers."

"Come on in. Let me get you a towel. You'll catch pneumonia."

"You're the only one I can talk to," I said. "Let me stay."

"I've got a pot of fresh coffee on the stove. Go ahead and dry yourself and then we can talk."

I looked around while she went to get the coffee. It was the first time I had ever been inside her apartment. I felt a sense of pleasure, but there was something disturbing about the room.

Everything was neat. The porcelain figurines were in a straight line on the window-ledge, all facing the same way. And the throw-pillows on the sofa hadn't been thrown at all, but were regularly spaced on the clear plastic covers that protected the upholstery. Two of the end tables had magazines, neatly stacked so that the titles were clearly visible. On one table: *The*

Reporter, The Saturday Review, The New Yorker; on the other: Mademoiselle, House Beautiful, and Reader's Digest.

On the far wall, across from the sofa, hung an ornately framed reproduction of Picasso's "Mother and Child," and directly opposite, above the sofa, was a painting of a dashing Renaissance courtier, masked, sword in hand, protecting a frightened, pink-cheeked maiden. Taken all together, it was wrong. As if Alice couldn't make up her mind who she was and which world she wanted to live in.

"You haven't been to the lab for a few days," she called from the kitchen. "Professor Nemur is worried about you."

"I couldn't face them," I said. "I know there's no reason for me to be ashamed, but it's an empty feeling not going in to work every day—not seeing the shop, the ovens, the people. It's too much. Last night and the night before, I had nightmares of drowning."

She set the tray in the center of the coffee table—the napkins folded into triangles, and the cookies laid out in a circular display pattern. "You mustn't take it so hard, Charlie. It has nothing to do with you."

"It doesn't help to tell myself that. Those people—for all these years—were my family. It was like being thrown out of my own home."

"That's just it," she said. "This has become a symbolic repetition of experiences you had as a child. Being rejected by your parents ... being sent away..."

"Oh, Christ! Never mind giving it a nice neat label. What matters is that before I got involved in this experiment I had friends, people who cared for me. Now I'm afraid—"

"You've still got friends."

"It's not the same."

"Fear is a normal reaction."

"It's more than that. I've been afraid before. Afraid of being strapped for not giving in to Norma, afraid of passing Howells Street where the gang used to tease me and push me around. And I was afraid of the schoolteacher, Mrs. Libby, who tied my hands so I wouldn't fidget with things on my desk. But those things were real—something I was justified in being afraid of. This terror at being kicked out of the bakery is vague, a fear I don't understand."

"Get hold of yourself."

"You don't feel the panic."

"But, Charlie, it's to be expected. You're a new swimmer forced off a diving raft and terrified of losing the solid wood under your feet. Mr. Donner *was* good to you, and you *were* sheltered all these years. Being driven out of the bakery this way is an even greater shock than you expected."

"Knowing it intellectually doesn't help. I can't sit alone in my room any more. I wander into the streets at all hours of the day or night, not knowing what I'm looking for ... walking until I'm lost ... finding myself outside the bakery. Last night I walked all the way from Washington Square to Central Park, and I slept in the park. What the hell am I searching for?"

The more I talked, the more upset she became. "What can I do to help you, Charlie?"

"I don't know. I'm like an animal who's been locked out of his nice, safe cage."

She sat beside me on the couch. "They're pushing you too fast. You're confused. You want to be an adult, but there's still a little boy inside you. Alone and frightened." She put my head on her shoulder, trying to comfort me, and as she stroked my hair I knew that she needed me the way I needed her.

"Charlie," she whispered after a while, "whatever you want ... don't be afraid of me.... "

I wanted to tell her I was waiting for the panic.

Once—during a bakery delivery—Charlie had nearly fainted when a middle-aged woman, just out of the bath, amused herself by opening her bathrobe and exposing herself. Had he ever seen a woman without clothes on? Did he know how to make love? His terror—his whining—must have frightened her because she clutched her robe together and gave him a quarter to forget what had happened. She was only testing him, she warned, to see if he was a good boy.

He tried to be good, he told her, and not look at women, because his mother used to beat him whenever that happened in his pants....

Now he had the clear picture of Charlie's mother, screaming at him, holding a leather belt in her hand, and his father trying to hold her back. "Enough, Rose! You'll kill him! Leave him alone!" His mother straining forward to lash at him, just out of reach now so that the belt swishes past his shoulder as he writhes and twists away from it on the floor.

"Look at him!" Rose screams. "He can't learn to read and write, but he knows enough to look at a girl that way. I'll beat that filth out of his mind."

"He can't help it if he gets an erection. It's normal. He didn't do anything."

"He's got no business to think that way about girls. A friend of his sister's comes to the house and he starts thinking like that! I'll teach him so he never forgets. Do you hear? If you ever touch a girl, I'll put you away in a cage, like an animal, for the rest of your life. Do you hear me?..."

I still hear her. But perhaps I had been released. Maybe the fear and nausea was no longer a sea to drown in, but only a pool of water reflecting the past alongside the now. Was I free?

If I could reach Alice in time—without thinking about it, before it overwhelmed me—maybe the panic wouldn't happen. If only I could make my mind a blank. I managed to choke out: "You ... you do it! Hold me!" And before I knew what she was doing, she was kissing me, holding me closer than anyone had ever held me before. But at the moment I should have come closest of all, it started: the buzzing, the chill, and the nausea. I turned away from her.

She tried to soothe me, to tell me it didn't matter, that there was no reason to blame myself. But ashamed, and no longer able to control my anguish, I began to sob. There in her arms I cried myself to sleep, and I dreamed of the courtier and the pink-cheeked maiden. But in my dream it was the maiden who held the sword.

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PROGRESS REPORT 12

June 5—Nemur is upset because I haven't turned in any progress reports in almost two weeks (and he's justified because the Welberg Foundation has begun paying me a salary out of the grant so that I won't have to look for a job). The International Psychological Convention at Chicago is only a week away. He wants his preliminary report to be as full as possible, since Algernon and I are the prime exhibits for his presentation.

Our relationship is becoming increasingly strained. I resent Nemur's constant references to me as a laboratory specimen. He makes me feel that before the experiment I was not really a human being.

I told Strauss that I was too involved in thinking, reading, and digging into myself, trying to understand who and what I am, and that writing was such a slow process it made me impatient to get my ideas down. I followed his suggestion that I learn to type, and now that I can type nearly seventy-five words a minute, it's easier to get it all down on paper.

Strauss again brought up my need to speak and write simply and directly so that people will understand me. He reminds me that language is sometimes a barrier instead of a pathway. Ironic to find myself on the other side of the intellectual fence.

I see Alice occasionally, but we don't discuss what happened. Our relationship remains platonic. But for three nights after I left the bakery there were the nightmares. Hard to believe it was two weeks ago.

I am pursued down the empty streets at night by ghostly figures. Though I always run to the bakery, the door is locked, and the people inside never turn to look at me. Through the window, the bride and groom on the wedding cake point at me and laugh—the air becomes charged with laughter until I can't stand it—and the two cupids wave their flaming arrows. I scream. I pound on the door, but there is no sound. I see Charlie staring back at me from inside. Is it only a reflection? Things clutch at my legs and drag me away from the bakery down into the shadows of the alleyway, and just as they begin to ooze all over me I wake up.

Other times the window of the bakery opens into the past and looking through it I see other things and other people.

It's astonishing how my power of recall is developing. I cannot control it completely yet, but sometimes when I'm busy reading or working on a

problem, I get a feeling of intense clarity.

I know it's some kind of subconscious warning signal, and now instead of waiting for the memory to come to me, I close my eyes and reach out for it. Eventually, I'll be able to bring this recall completely under control, to explore not only the sum of my past experiences, but also all of the untapped faculties of the mind.

Even now, as I think about it, I feel the sharp stillness. I see the bakery window ... reach out and touch it ... cold and vibrating, and then the glass becomes warm ... hotter ... fingers burning. The window reflecting my image becomes bright, and as the glass turns into a mirror, I see little Charlie Gordon—fourteen or fifteen—looking out at me through the window of his house, and it's doubly strange to realize how different he was....

He has been waiting for his sister to come from school, and when he sees her turn the corner onto Marks Street, he waves and calls her name and runs out onto the porch to meet her.

Norma waves a paper. "I got an A in my history test. I knew all the answers. Mrs. Baffin said it was the best paper in the whole class."

She is a pretty girl with light brown hair carefully braided and coiled about her head in a crown, and as she looks up at her big brother the smile turns to a frown and she skips away, leaving him behind as she darts up the steps into the house.

Smiling, he follows her.

His mother and father are in the kitchen, and Charlie, bursting with the excitement of Norma's good news, blurts it out before she has a chance.

"She got an A! She got an A!"

"No!" shrieks Norma. "Not you. You don't tell. It's my mark, and I'm going to tell."

"Now wait a minute, young lady." Matt puts his newspaper down and addresses her sternly. "That's no way to talk to your brother."

"He had no right to tell!"

"Never mind." Matt glares at her over his warning finger. "He meant no harm by it, and you musn't shout at him that way."

She turns to her mother for support. "I got an A—the best mark in class. Now I can have a dog? You promised. You said if I got a good mark in my test. And I got an A. A brown dog with white spots. And I'm going to call him Napoleon because that was the question I answered best on the test. Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo."

Rose nods. "Go out on the porch and play with Charlie. He's been waiting over an hour for you to come home from school."

"I don't want to play with him."

"Go out on the porch," says Matt.

Norma looks at her father and then at Charlie. "I don't have to. Mother said I don't have to play with him if I don't want to."

"Now, young lady"—Matt rises out of his chair and comes toward her—"you just apologize to your brother."

"I don't have to," she screeches, rushing behind her mother's chair. "He's like a baby. He can't play Monopoly or checkers or anything ... he gets everything all mixed up. I won't play with him any more."

"Then go to your room!"

"Can I have a dog now, Mama?"

Matt hits the table with his fist. "There'll be no dog in this house as long as you take this attitude, young lady."

"I promised her a dog if she did well in school—"

"A brown one with white spots!" adds Norma.

Matt points to Charlie standing near the wall. "Did you forget you told your son he couldn't have one because we didn't have the room, and no one to take care of it. Remember? When he asked for a dog? Are you going back on what you said to him?"

"But I can take care of my own dog," insists Norma. "I'll feed him, and wash him, and take him out..."

Charlie, who has been standing near the table, playing with his large red button at the end of a string, suddenly speaks out.

"I'll help her take care of the dog! I'll help her feed it and brush it and I won't let the other dogs bite it!"

But before either Matt or Rose can answer, Norma shrieks: "No! It's going to be my dog. Only my dog!"

Matt nods. "You see?"

Rose sits beside her and strokes her braids to calm her. "But we have to share things, dear. Charlie can help you take care of it."

"No! Only mine!...I'm the one who got the A in history—not him! He never gets good marks like me. Why should he help with the dog? And then the dog will like him more than me, and it'll be his dog instead of mine. No! If I can't have it for myself I don't want it."

"That settles it," says Matt picking up his newspaper and settling down in his chair again. "No dog."

Suddenly, Norma jumps off the couch and grabs the history test she had brought home so eagerly just a few minutes earlier. She tears it and throws the pieces into Charlie's startled face. "I hate you! I hate you!"

"Norma, stop that at once!" Rose grabs her but she twists away.

"And I hate school! I hate it! I'll stop studying, and I'll be a dummy like him. I'll forget everything I learned and then I'll be just like him." She runs out of the room, shrieking: "It's happening to me already. I'm forgetting everything ... I'm forgetting ... I don't remember anything I learned any more!"

Rose, terrified, runs after her. Matt sits there staring at the newspaper in his lap. Charlie, frightened by the hysteria and the screaming, shrinks into a chair whimpering softly. What has he done wrong? And feeling the wetness in his trousers and the trickling down his leg, he sits there waiting for the slap he knows will come when his mother returns.

The scene fades, but from that time Norma spent all her free moments with her friends, or playing alone in her room. She kept the door to her room closed, and I was forbidden to enter without her permission.

I recall once overhearing Norma and one of her girl friends playing in her room, and Norma shouting: "He is not my real brother! He's just a boy we took in because we felt sorry for him. My mamma told me, and she said I can tell everyone now that he's not really my brother at all."

I wish this memory were a photograph so that I could tear it up and throw it back into her face. I want to call back across the years and tell her I never meant to stop her from getting her dog. She could have had it all to herself, and I wouldn't have fed it, or brushed it, or played with it—and I

would never have made it like me more than it liked her. I only wanted her to play games with me the way we used to. I never meant to do anything that would hurt her at all.

June 6—My first real quarrel with Alice today. My fault. I wanted to see her. Often, after a disturbing memory or dream, talking to her—just being with her—makes me feel better. But it was a mistake to go down to the Center to pick her up.

I had not been back to the Center for Retarded Adults since the operation, and the thought of seeing the place was exciting. It's on Twenty-third Street, east of Fifth Avenue, in an old schoolhouse that has been used by the Beekman University Clinic for the last five years as a center for experimental education—special classes for the handicapped. The sign outside on the doorway, framed by the old spiked gateway, is just a gleaming brass plate that says *C. R. A. Beekman Extension*.

Her class ended at eight, but I wanted to see the room where—not so long ago—I had struggled over simple reading and writing and learned to count change of a dollar.

I went inside, slipped up to the door, and, keeping out of sight, I looked through the window. Alice was at her desk, and in a chair beside her was a thin-faced woman I didn't recognize. She was frowning that open frown of unconcealed puzzlement, and I wondered what Alice was trying to explain.

Near the blackboard was Mike Dorni in his wheelchair, and there in his usual first-row first-seat was Lester Braun, who, Alice said, was the smartest in the group. Lester had learned easily what I had struggled over, but he came when he felt like it, or he stayed away to earn money waxing floors. I guess if he had cared at all—if it had been important to him as it was to me—they would have used him for this experiment. There were new faces, too, people I didn't know.

Finally, I got up the nerve to go in.

"It's Charlie!" said Mike, whirling his wheelchair around.

I waved to him.

Bernice, the pretty blonde with empty eyes, looked up and smiled dully. "Where ya been, Charlie? That's a nice suit."

The others who remembered me waved to me and I waved back. Suddenly, I could see by Alice's expression that she was annoyed.

"It's almost eight o'clock," she announced. "Time to put things away."

Each person had an assigned task, the putting away of chalk, erasers, papers, books, pencils, note paper, paints, and demonstration material. Each one knew his job and took pride in doing it well. They all started on their tasks except Bernice. She was staring at me.

"Why ain't Charlie been coming to school?" asked Bernice. "What's the matter, Charlie? Are you coming back?"

The others looked up at me. I looked to Alice, waiting for her to answer for me, and there was a long silence. What could I tell them that would not hurt them?

"This is just a visit," I said.

One of the girls started to giggle—Francine, whom Alice was always worried about. She had given birth to three children by the time she was eighteen, before her parents arranged for a hysterectomy. She wasn't pretty—not nearly as attractive as Bernice—but she had been an easy mark for dozens of men who bought her something pretty, or paid her way to the movies. She lived at a boarding house approved for outside work trainees by the Warren State Home, and was permitted out in the evenings to come to the Center. Twice she hadn't shown up—picked up by men on the way to school—and now she was allowed out only with an escort.

"He talks like a big shot now," she giggled.

"All right," said Alice, breaking in sharply. "Class dismissed. I'll see you all tomorrow night at six."

When they were gone, I could see by the way she was slamming her own things into her closet, that she was angry.

"I'm sorry," I said. "I was going to wait for you downstairs, and then I got curious about the old classroom. My *alma mater*. I just wanted to look through the window. And before I knew what I was doing I came in. What's bothering you?"

"Nothing—nothing's bothering me."

"Come on. Your anger is all out of proportion to what's happened. Something's on your mind."

She slammed down a book she was holding. "All right. You want to know? You're different. You've changed. And I'm not talking about your I.Q. It's your attitude toward people—you're not the same kind of human being—"

"Oh, come on now! Don't—"

"Don't interrupt me!" The real anger in her voice pushed me back. "I mean it. There was something in you before. I don't know ... a warmth, an openness, a kindness that made everyone like you and like to have you around. Now, with all your intelligence and knowledge, there are differences that—"

I couldn't let myself listen. "What did you expect? Did you think I'd remain a docile pup, wagging my tail and licking the foot that kicks me? Sure, all this has changed me and the way I think about myself. I no longer have to take the kind of crap that people have been handing me all my life."

"People have not been bad to you."

"What do you know about it? Listen, the best of them have been smug and patronizing—using me to make themselves superior and secure in their own limitations. Anyone can feel intelligent beside a moron."

After I said it, I knew she was going to take it the wrong way.

"You put me in that category too, I suppose."

"Don't be absurd. You know damned well I—"

"Of course, in a sense, I guess you're right. Next to you I am rather dull-witted. Nowadays every time we see each other, after I leave you I go home with the miserable feeling that I'm slow and dense about everything. I review things I've said, and come up with all the bright and witty things I should have said, and I feel like kicking myself because I didn't mention them when we were together."

"That's a common experience."

"I find myself wanting to impress you in a way I never thought about doing before, but being with you has undermined my self-confidence. I question my motives now, about everything I do."

I tried to get her off the subject, but she kept coming back to it. "Look, I didn't come here to argue with you," I finally said. "Will you let me take you home? I need someone to talk to."

"So do I. But these days I can't talk to you. All I can do is listen and nod my head and pretend I understand all about cultural variants, and neo-

Boulean mathematics, and post-symbolic logic, and I feel more and more stupid, and when you leave the apartment, I have to stare in the mirror and scream at myself: 'No, you're not growing duller every day! You're not losing your intelligence! You're not getting senile and dull-witted. It's Charlie exploding forward so quickly that it makes it appear as if you're slipping backwards.' I say that to myself, Charlie, but whenever we meet and you tell me something and look at me in that impatient way, I know you're laughing.

"And when you explain things to me, and I can't remember them, you think it's because I'm not interested and don't want to take the trouble. But you don't know how I torture myself when you're gone. You don't know the books I've struggled over, the lectures I've sat in on at Beekman, and yet whenever I talk about something, I see how impatient you are, as if it were all childish. I wanted you to be intelligent. I wanted to help you and share with you—and now you've shut me out of your life."

As I listened to what she was saying, the enormity of it dawned on me. I had been so absorbed in myself and what was happening to me that I never thought about what was happening to her.

She was crying silently as we left the school, and I found myself without words. All during the ride on the bus I thought to myself how upside-down the situation had become. She was terrified of me. The ice had broken between us and the gap was widening as the current of my mind carried me swiftly into the open sea.

She was right in refusing to torture herself by being with me. We no longer had anything in common. Simple conversation had become strained. And all there was between us now was the embarrassed silence and unsatisfied longing in a darkened room.

"You're very serious," she said, breaking out of her own mood and looking up at me.

"About us."

"It shouldn't make you so serious. I don't want to upset you. You're going through a great trial." She was trying to smile.

"But you did. Only I don't know what to do about it."

On the way from the bus stop to her apartment, she said, "I'm not going to the convention with you. I called Professor Nemur this morning and told him. There will be a lot for you to do there. Interesting people—the excitement of the spotlight for a while. I don't want to be in the way—"

"Alice—"

"—and no matter what you say about it now, I know that's how I'm going to *feel*, so if you don't mind, I'll hang on to my splintering ego—thank you."

"But you're making more of this than it is. I'm sure if you'll just—"

"You *know*? You're *sure*?" She turned and glared at me on the front steps of her apartment building. "Oh, how insufferable you've become. How do *you* know what I feel? You take liberties with other people's minds. You can't tell *how* I feel or *what* I feel or *why* I feel."

She started inside and then she looked back at me, her voice shaky: "I'll be here when you get back. I'm just upset, that's all, and I want both of us to have a chance to think this out while we're a good distance apart."

For the first time in many weeks she didn't ask me inside. I stared at the closed door with the anger mounting inside me. I wanted to create a scene, to bang on the door, to break it down. I wanted my anger to consume the building.

But as I walked away I felt a kind of simmering, then cooling, and finally a relief. I walked so fast I was drifting along the streets, and the feeling that hit my cheek was a cool breeze out of the summer night. Suddenly free.

I realize now that my feeling for Alice had been moving backward against the current of my learning, from worship, to love, to fondness, to a feeling of gratitude and responsibility. My confused feeling for her had been holding me back, and I had clung to her out of my fear of being forced out on my own, and cut adrift.

But with the freedom came a sadness. I wanted to be in love with her. I wanted to overcome my emotional and sexual fears, to marry, have children, settle down.

Now it's impossible. I am just as far away from Alice with an I.Q. of 185 as I was when I had an I.Q. of 70. And this time we both know it.

June 8—What drives me out of the apartment to prowl through the city? I wander through the streets alone—not the relaxing stroll of a summer night, but the tense hurry to get—where? Down alleyways, looking into

doorways, peering into half-shuttered windows, wanting someone to talk to and yet afraid to meet anyone. Up one street, and down another, through the endless labyrinth, hurling myself against the neon cage of the city.

Searching ... for what?

I met a woman in Central Park. She was sitting on a bench near the lake, with a coat clutched around her despite the heat. She smiled and motioned for me to sit beside her. We looked at the bright skyline on Central Park South, the honeycomb of lighted cells against the blackness, and I wished I could absorb them all.

Yes, I told her, I was from New York. No, I had never been to Newport News, Virginia. That's where she was from, and where she had married this sailor who was at sea now, and she hadn't seen him in two and a half years.

She twisted and knotted a handkerchief, using it from time to time to wipe the beaded sweat from her forehead. Even in the dim light reflected from the lake, I could see that she wore a great deal of make-up, but she looked attractive with her straight dark hair loose to her shoulders—except that her face was puffy and swollen as if she had just gotten up from sleep. She wanted to talk about herself, and I wanted to listen.

Her father had given her a good home, an education, everything a wealthy shipbuilder could give his only daughter—but not forgiveness. He would never forgive her elopement with the sailor.

She took my hand as she spoke, and rested her head on my shoulder. "The night Gary and I were married," she whispered, "I was a terrified virgin. And he just went crazy. First, he had to slap me and beat me. And then he took me with no love-making. That was the last time we were ever together. I never let him touch me again."

She could probably tell by the trembling of my hand that I was startled. It was too violent and intimate for me. Feeling my hand stir, she gripped it tighter as if she had to finish her story before she could let me go. It was important to her, and I sat quietly as one sits before a bird that feeds from your palm.

"Not that I don't like men," she assured me with wide-eyed openness. "I've been with other men. Not him, but lots of others. Most men are gentle and tender with a woman. They make love slowly, with caresses and kisses first." She looked at me meaningfully, and let her open palm brush back and forth against mine.

It was what I had heard about, read about, dreamed about. I didn't know her name, and she didn't ask mine. She just wanted me to take her someplace where we could be alone. I wondered what Alice would think.

I caressed her awkwardly and kissed her still more hesitantly so that she looked up at me. "What's the matter?" she whispered. "What are you thinking?"

"About you."

"Do you have a place we can go?"

Each step forward was caution. At what point would the ground give way and plunge me into anxiety? Something kept me moving ahead to test my footing.

"If you don't have a place, the Mansion Hotel on Fifty-third doesn't cost too much. And they don't bother you about luggage if you pay in advance."

"I have a room—"

She looked at me with new respect. "Well, that's fine."

Still nothing. And that in itself was curious. How far could I go without being overwhelmed by symptoms of panic? When we were alone in the room? When she undressed? When I saw her body? When we were lying together?

Suddenly, it was important to know if I could be like other men, if I could ever ask a woman to share a life with me. Having intelligence and knowledge wasn't enough. I wanted this, too. The sense of release and looseness was strong now with the feeling that it *was* possible. The excitement that came over me when I kissed her again communicated itself, and I was sure I could be normal with her. She was different from Alice. She was the kind of woman who had been around.

Then her voice changed, uncertain. "Before we go ... Just one thing..." She stood up and took a step toward me in the spray of lamplight, opening her coat, and I could see the shape of her body as I had not imagined it all the time we were sitting next to each other in the shadows. "Only the fifth month," she said. "It doesn't make any difference. You don't mind, do you?"

Standing there with her coat open, she was superimposed as a double exposure on the picture of the middle-aged woman just out of the bathtub, holding open her bathrobe for Charlie to see. And I waited, as a blasphemer waits for lightning. I looked away. It was the last thing I had expected, but

the coat wrapped tightly around her on such a hot night should have warned me that something was wrong.

"It's not my husband's," she assured me. "I wasn't lying to you about what I said before. I haven't seen him for years. It was a salesman I met about eight months ago. I was living with him. I'm not going to see him any more, but I'm going to keep the baby. We've just got to be careful—not rough or anything like that. But otherwise you don't have to worry."

Her voice ran down when she saw my anger. "That's filthy!" I shouted. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

She drew away, wrapping her coat quickly around her to protect what lay within.

As she made that protective gesture, I saw the second double image: my mother, heavy with my sister, in the days when she was holding me less, warming me less with her voice and touch, protecting me less against anyone who dared to say I was subnormal.

I think I grabbed her shoulder—I'm not sure, but then she was screaming, and I was sharply back to reality with the sense of danger. I wanted to tell her I had meant no harm—I would never hurt her or anyone. "Please, don't scream!"

But she was screaming, and I heard the running footsteps on the darkened path. This was something no one would understand. I ran into the darkness, to find an exit from the park, zig-zagging across one path and down another. I didn't know the park, and suddenly I crashed into something that threw me backwards. A wire-mesh fence—a dead end. Then I saw the swings and slides and realized it was a children's playground locked up for the night. I followed the fence, and kept going, half-running, stumbling over twisted roots. At the lake that curved around near the playground, I doubled back, found another path, went over the small footbridge and then around and under it. No exit.

"What is it? What happened, lady?"

"A maniac?"

"You all right?"

"Which way did he go?"

I had circled back to where I had started from. I slipped behind the huge outcropping of a rock and a screen of bramble and dropped flat on my stomach.

"Get a cop. There's never a cop when you need one."

"What happened?"

"A degenerate tried to rape her."

"Hey, some guy down there is chasing him. There he goes!"

"Come on! Get the bastard before he gets outta the park!"

"Careful. He's got a knife and a gun.... "

It was obvious that the shouting had flushed out the night crawlers because the cry of "there he goes!" was echoed from behind me, and looking out from behind the rock I could see a lone runner being chased down the lamplit path into the darkness. Seconds later, another one passed in front of the rock and disappeared into the shadows. I pictured myself being caught by this eager mob and beaten and torn by them. I deserved it. I almost wanted it.

I stood up, brushed the leaves and dirt from my clothing and walked slowly down the path in the direction from which I had come. I expected every second to be grabbed from behind and pulled down into the dirt and darkness, but soon I saw the bright lights of Fifty-ninth Street and Fifth Avenue, and I came out of the park.

Thinking about it now, in the security of my room, I am shaken with the rawness that touched me. Remembering how my mother looked before she gave birth to my sister is frightening. But even more frightening is the feeling that I wanted them to catch me and beat me. Why did I want to be punished? Shadows out of the past clutch at my legs and drag me down. I open my mouth to scream, but I am voiceless. My hands are trembling, I feel cold, and there is a distant humming in my ears.

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PROGRESS REPORT 13

June 10—We're on a Strato-jet about to take off for Chicago. I owe this progress report to Burt who had the bright idea that I could dictate this on a transistor tape recorder and have a public stenographer in Chicago type it up. Nemur likes the idea. In fact, he wants me to use the recorder up to the last minute. He feels it will add to the report if they play the most recent tape at the end of the session.

So here I am, sitting off by myself in our private section of a jet on the way to Chicago, trying to get used to thinking aloud, and to the sound of my own voice. I suppose the typist can get rid of all the *uhm's*, *er's* and *ah's*, and make it all seem natural on paper (I can't help the paralysis that comes over me when I think hundreds of people are going to listen to the words I'm saying now).

My mind is a blank. At this point my feelings are more important than anything else.

The idea of going up in the air terrifies me.

As far as I can tell, in the days before the operation, I never really understood what planes were. I never connected the movies and TV close-ups of planes with the things that I saw zooming overhead. Now that we're about to take off I can think only of what might happen if we crash. A cold feeling, and the thought that I don't want to die. Brings to mind those discussions about God.

I've thought about death often in recent weeks, but not really about God. My mother took me to church occasion-ally—but I don't recall ever connecting that up with the thought of God. She mentioned Him quite often, and I had to pray to Him at night, but I never thought much about it. I remember Him as a distant uncle with a long beard on a throne (like Santa Claus in the department store on his big chair, who picks you up on his knee and asks you if you've been good, and what would you like him to give you?). She was afraid of Him, but asked favors anyway. My father never mentioned Him—it was as if God was one of Rose's relatives he'd rather not get involved with.

"We're ready to take off, sir. May I help you fasten your seat belt?"

"Do I have to? I don't like to be strapped down."

"Until we're airborne."

"I'd rather not, unless it's necessary. I've got this fear of being strapped in. It'll probably make me sick."

"It's regulations, sir. Here, let me help you."

"No! I'll do it myself."

"No ... that one goes through here."

"Wait, uh...Okay."

Ridiculous. There's nothing to be afraid of. Seat belt isn't too tight—doesn't hurt. Why should putting on the damned seat belt be so terrifying? That, and the vibrations of the plane taking off. Anxiety all out of proportion to the situation ... so it must be something ... what?...flying up into and through dark clouds ... fasten your seat belts ... strapped down ... straining forward ... odor of sweaty leather ... vibrations and a roaring sound in my ears.

Through the window—in the clouds—I see Charlie. Age is difficult to tell, about five years old. Before Norma...

"Are you two ready yet?" His father comes to the doorway, heavy, especially in the sagging fleshiness of his face and neck. He has a tired look. "I said, are you ready?" "Just a minute," answers Rose. "I'm getting my hat on. See if his shirt is buttoned, and tie his shoelaces."

"Come on, let's get this thing over with."

"Where?" asks Charlie. "Where ... Charlie ... go?"

His father looks at him and frowns. Matt Gordon never knows how to react to his son's questions.

Rose appears in the doorway of her bedroom, adjusting the half-veil of her hat. She is a birdlike woman, and her arms—up to her head, elbows out—look like wings. "We're going to the doctor who is going to help you get smart."

The veil makes it look as if she were peering down at him through a wire screen. He is always frightened when they dress up to go out this way, because he knows he will have to meet other people and his mother will become upset and angry.

He wants to run, but there is no place for him to go.

"Why do you have to tell him that?" said Matt.

"Because it's the truth. Dr. Guarino can help him."

Matt paces the floor like a man who has given up hope but will make one last attempt to reason. "How do you know? What do you know about this man? If there was anything that could be done, the doctors would have told us long ago."

"Don't say that," she screeches. "Don't tell me there's nothing they can do." She grabs Charlie and presses his head against her bosom. "He's going to be normal, whatever we have to do, whatever it costs."

"It's not something money can buy."

"It's Charlie I'm talking about. Your son ... your only child." She rocks him from side to side, near hysteria now. "I won't listen to that talk. They don't know, so they say nothing can be done. Dr. Guarino explained it all to me. They won't sponsor his invention, he says, because it will prove they're wrong. Like it was with those other scientists, Pasteur and Jennings, and the rest of them. He told me all about your fine medical doctors afraid of progress."

Talking back to Matt this way, she becomes relaxed and sure of herself again. When she lets go of Charlie, he goes to the corner and stands against the wall frightened and shivering.

"Look," she says, "you got him upset again."

"Me?"

"You always start these things in front of him."

"Oh, Christ! Come on, let's get this damned thing over with."

All the way to Dr. Guarino's office they avoid speaking to each other. Silence on the bus, and silence walking three blocks from the bus to the downtown office building. After about fifteen minutes, Dr. Guarino comes out to the waiting room to greet them. He is fat and balding, and he looks as if he would pop through his white lab jacket. Charlie is fascinated by the thick white eyebrows and white moustache that twitch from time to time. Sometimes the moustache twitches first, followed by the raising of both eyebrows, but sometimes the brows go up first and the moustache twitch follows.

The large white room into which Guarino ushers them smells recently painted, and it is almost bare—two desks on one side of the room, and on

the other, a huge machine with rows of dials and four long arms like dentist's drills. Nearby is a black leather examination table with thick, webbed, restraining straps.

"Well, well, well," says Guarino, raising his eyebrows, "so this is Charlie." He grips the boy's shoulders firmly. "We're going to be friends."

"Can you really do anything for him, Dr. Guarino?" says Matt. "Have you ever treated this kind of thing before? We don't have much money."

The eyebrows come down like shutters as Guarino frowns. "Mr. Gordon, have I said anything yet about what I could do? Don't I have to examine him first? Maybe something can be done, maybe not. First there will have to be physical and mental tests to determine the causes of the pathology. There will be enough time later to talk of prognosis. Actually, I'm very busy these days. I only agreed to look into this case because I'm doing a special study of this type of neural retardation. Of course, if you have qualms, then perhaps..."

His voice trails off sadly, and he turns away, but Rose Gordon jabs at Matt with her elbow. "My husband doesn't mean that at all, Dr. Guarino. He talks too much." She glares at Matt again to warn him to apologize.

Matt sighs. "If there is any way you can help Charlie, we'll do anything you ask. Things are slow these days. I sell barbershop supplies, but whatever I have I'll be glad to—" "Just one thing I must insist on," says Guarino, pursing his lips as if making a decision. "Once we start, the treatment must continue all the way. In cases of this type, the results often come suddenly after long months without any sign of improvement. Not that I am promising you success, mind you. Nothing is guaranteed. But you must give the treatment a chance, otherwise you're better off not starting at all."

He frowns at them to let his warning sink in, and his brows are white shades from under which his bright blue eyes stare. "Now, if you'll just step outside and let me examine the boy."

Matt hesitates to leave Charlie alone with him, but Guarino nods. "This is the best way," he says, ushering them both outside to the waiting room. "The results are always more significant if the patient and I are alone when the psychosubstantiation tests are performed. External distractions have a deleterious effect on the ramified scores."

Rose smiles at her husband triumphantly, and Matt follows her meekly outside.

Alone with Charlie, Dr. Guarino pats him on the head. He has a kindly smile.

"Okay, kid. On the table."

When Charlie doesn't respond, he lifts him gently onto the leather-padded table and straps him down securely with heavy webbed straps. The table smells of deeply ingrained sweat, and leather.

"Maaaa!"

"She's outside. Don't worry, Charlie. This won't hurt a bit."

"Want Ma!" Charlie is confused at being restrained this way. He has no sense of what is being done to him, but there have been other doctors who were not so gentle after his parents left the room.

Guarino tries to calm him. "Take it easy, kid. Nothing to be scared of. You see this big machine here? Know what I'm going to do with it?"

Charlie cringes, and then he recalls his mother's words. "Make me smart."

"That's right. At least you know what you're here for. Now, just close your eyes and relax while I turn on these switches. It'll make a loud noise, like an airplane, but it won't hurt you. And we'll see if we can make you a little bit smarter than you are now."

Guarino snaps on the switch that sets the huge machine humming, red and blue lights blinking on and off. Charlie is terrified. He cringes and shivers, straining against the straps that hold him fast to the table.

He starts to scream, but Guarino quickly pushes a wad of cloth into his mouth. "Now, now, Charlie. None of that. You be a good little boy. I told you it won't hurt."

He tries to scream again, but all that comes out is a muffled choking that makes him want to throw up. He feels the wetness and the stickiness around his legs, and the odor tells him that his mother will punish him with the spanking and the corner for making in his pants. He could not control it. Whenever he feels trapped and panic sets in, he loses control and dirties himself. Choking ... sick ... nausea ... and everything goes black...

There is no way of knowing how much time passes, but when Charlie opens his eyes, the cloth is out of his mouth, and the straps have been removed. Dr. Guarino pretends he does not smell the odor. "Now that didn't hurt you a bit, did it?"

"N-no..."

"Well, then what are you trembling like that for? All I did was use that machine to make you smarter. How does it feel to be smarter now than you were before?"

Forgetting his terror, Charlie stares wide-eyed at the machine. "Did I get smart?"

"Of course you did. Uh, stand back over there. How does it feel?"

"Feels wet. I made."

"Yes, well—uh—you won't do that next time, will you? You won't be scared any more, now that you know it doesn't hurt. Now I want you to tell your mom how smart you feel, and she'll bring you here twice a week for shortwave encephalo-reconditioning, and you'll get smarter, and smarter, and smarter."

Charlie smiles. "I can walk backwards."

"You can? Let's see," says Guarino closing his folder in mock excitement. "Let me see."

Slowly, and with great effort, Charlie takes several steps backward, stumbling against the examination table as he goes. Guarino smiles and nods. "Now that's what I call something. Oh, you wait. You're going to be the smartest boy on your block before we're through with you."

Charlie flushes with pleasure at this praise and attention. It is not often that people smile at him and tell him he has done something well. Even the terror of the machine, and of being strapped down to the table, begins to fade.

"On the whole block?" The thought fills him as if he cannot take enough air into his lungs no matter how he tries. "Even smarter than Hymie?"

Guarino smiles again and nods. "Smarter than Hymie."

Charlie looks at the machine with new wonder and respect. The machine will make him smarter than Hymie who lives two doors away and knows how to read and write and is in the Boy Scouts. "Is that your machine?"

"Not yet. It belongs to the bank. But soon it'll be mine, and then I'll be able to make lots of boys like you smart." He pats Charlie's head and says, "You're a lot nicer than some of the normal kids whose mothers bring them here hoping I can make geniuses out of them by raising their I.Q.'s."

"Do they be jean-asses if you raise their eyes?" He put his hands to his face to see if the machine had done anything to raise his eyes. "You gonna make me a jean-ass?"

Guarino's laugh is friendly as he squeezes Charlie's shoulder. "No, Charlie. Nothing for you to worry about. Only nasty little donkeys become jean-asses. You'll stay just the way you are—a nice kid." And then, thinking better of it he adds: "Of course, a little smarter than you are now."

He unlocks the door and leads Charlie out to his parents. "Here he is, folks. None the worse for the experience. A good boy. I think we're going to be good friends, eh, Charlie?"

Charlie nods. He wants Dr. Guarino to like him, but he is terrified when he sees the expression on his mother's face. "Charlie! What did you do?"

"Just an accident, Mrs. Gordon. He was frightened the first time. But don't blame him or punish him. I wouldn't want him to connect punishment with coming here."

But Rose Gordon is sick with embarrassment. "It's disgusting. I don't know what to do, Dr. Guarino. Even at home he forgets—and sometimes when we have people in the house. I'm so ashamed when he does that."

The look of disgust on his mother's face sets him trembling. For a short while he had forgotten how bad he is, how he makes his parents suffer. He doesn't know how, but it frightens him when she says he makes her suffer, and when she cries and screams at him, he turns his face to the wall and moans softly to himself.

"Now don't upset him, Mrs. Gordon, and don't worry. Bring him to me on Tuesday and Thursday each week at the same time."

"But will this really do any good?" asks Matt. "Ten dollars is a lot of ___"

"Matt!" she clutches at his sleeve. "Is that anything to talk about at a time like this? Your own flesh and blood, and maybe Dr. Guarino can make him like other children, with the Lord's help, and you talk about money!"

Matt Gordon starts to defend himself, but then, thinking better of it, he pulls out his wallet.

"Please..." sighs Guarino, as if embarrassed at the sight of money. "My assistant at the front desk will take care of all the financial arrangements. Thank you." He half bows to Rose, shakes Matt's hand and pats Charlie on

the back. "Nice boy. Very nice." Then, smiling again, he disappears behind the door to the inner office.

They argue all the way home, Matt complaining that barber supply sales have fallen off, and that their savings are dwindling, Rose screeching back that making Charlie normal is more important than anything else.

Frightened by their quarreling, Charlie whimpers. The sound of anger in their voices is painful to him. As soon as they enter the apartment, he pulls away and runs to the corner of the kitchen, behind the door and stands with his forehead pressed against the tile wall, trembling and moaning.

They pay no attention to him. They have forgotten that he has to be cleaned and changed.

"I'm not hysterical. I'm just sick of you complaining every time I try to do something for your son. You don't care. You just don't care."

"That's not true! But I realize there's nothing we can do. When you've got a child like him it's a cross, and you bear it, and love it. Well, I can bear him, but I can't stand your foolish ways. You've spent almost all our savings on quacks and phonies—money I could have used to set me up in a nice business of my own. Yes. Don't look at me that way. For all the money you've thrown down the sewer to do something that can't be done, I could have had a barbershop of my own instead of eating my heart out selling for ten hours a day. My own place with people working for *me!*"

"Stop shouting. Look at him, he's frightened."

"The hell with you. Now I know who's the dope around here. Me! For putting up with you." He storms out, slamming the door behind him.

"Sorry to interrupt you, sir, but we're going to be landing in a few minutes. You'll have to fasten your seat belt again ... Oh, you have it on, sir. You've had it on all the way from New York. Close to two hours..."

"I forgot all about it. I'll just leave it on until we land. It doesn't seem to bother me any more."

Now I can see where I got the unusual motivation for becoming *smart* that so amazed everyone at first. It was something Rose Gordon lived with day and night. Her fear, her guilt, her shame that Charlie was a moron. Her dream that something could be done. The urgent question always: whose fault was it, hers or Matt's? Only after Norma proved to her that she was

capable of having normal children, and that I was a freak, did she stop trying to make me over. But I guess I never stopped wanting to be the smart boy she wanted me to be, so that she would love me.

A funny thing about Guarino. I should resent him for what he did to me, and for taking advantage of Rose and Matt, but somehow I can't. After that first day, he was always pleasant to me. There was always the pat on the shoulder, the smile, the encouraging word that came my way so rarely.

He treated me—even then—as a human being.

It may sound like ingratitude, but that is one of the things that I resent here—the attitude that I am a guinea pig. Nemur's constant references to having *made me what I am*, or that someday there will be others like me who *will become real human beings*.

How can I make him understand that he did not create me?

He makes the same mistake as the others when they look at a feeble-minded person and laugh because they don't understand there are human feelings involved. He doesn't realize that I was a person before I came here.

I am learning to control my resentment, not to be so impatient, to wait for things. I guess I'm growing up. Each day I learn more and more about myself, and the memories that began as ripples now wash over me in high-breaking waves....

June 11—The confusion began from the moment we arrived at the Chalmers Hotel in Chicago and discovered that by error our rooms would not be vacant until the next night and until then we would have to stay at the nearby Independence Hotel. Nemur was furious. He took it as a personal affront and quarrelled with everyone in the line of hotel command from the bellhop to the manager. We waited in the lobby as each hotel official went off in search of his superior to see what could be done.

In the midst of all the confusion—luggage drifting in and piling up all around the lobby, bellboys hustling back and forth with their little baggage carts, members who hadn't seen each other in a year, recognizing and greeting each other—we stood there feeling increasingly embarrassed as Nemur tried to collar officials connected with the International Psychological Association.