

The Awakening:
A Novel Approach to Knowing Who You Are

By Richard Eyre

Part I

The goal of this life: *To discover who you are ... before you remember.*

Acknowledgment

I acknowledge light.

Not the physical light that our eyes see, but some higher relative of that light that makes our minds see.

At one time or another all have felt the light of which I speak. It reveals truth, makes sure and certain the realities our minds discover.

I struggled for it as I wrote this book, and when it was there the meaning of the lead character's search was clear on three levels:

1. The story level
2. The philosophy level
3. The symbolism level (symbolic of a spiritual search)

I hope the book will be read on all three levels.

Prologue

His brown eyes fixed, unblinking, on the blinking red light on the instrument panel.
Engine on fire!

A deep breath, an unspoken prayer, and his fingers touched the yellow ejection button. No response. He touched it again, harder. Nothing.

The eyes were wider now, not in panic but in honest fear. The right hand found the manual ejection lever under the seat. The thumb released the safety catch. A hard jerk. The whole seat recoiled violently, up and back and out into the frigid air... a split second before the explosion.

If there had been an observer below on the flat desert of Mexico's Baja California, he would have first have seen the explosion, then felt it, then heard it. The flash was like a July the Fourth crowd-pleaser, fragments bursting symmetrically outward. At the top edge of the burst, one fragment was a man, hurled higher by the explosion's force, intact but spinning, skipping on the broken air, the parachute not yet open.

Saturday, May 3

(I do know what date it is)

Revera, Mexico

(Somewhere south of Ensenada)

I woke up in the air, only a few hundred feet above the desert, floating down. My head hurt. I knew I saw a desert (with a dirt road going through it), I knew I hung from a parachute, I knew how to bend my knees at impact. I knew how to unclip the chute. *But I didn't know who I was.*

I walked to the road and waited. I could read my watch – 2:30, May 1. I searched myself. No wallet, no papers of any kind, just a plain red flight suit with no markings, and a tiny medallion on a gold chain around my neck. A gold medallion inscribed with the words, "To experience is to live." A car came at 3:40 and stopped. I got in and asked to go to the nearest town. (I knew about cars and towns. I even knew how to understand the Spanish the man spoke, yet at the same time I knew my thoughts were coming in English. Apparently I can remember everything except anything that's personal – about me, about who I am.)

The driver told me his name was Sanchez. He didn't seem interested in who I was. (I've since decided he thought I was a motorcyclist, broken down.) I was hungry when we got to town. There was one cantina, and Sanchez owned it. We went in and he brought me a plate of food. When I told him I had no money, he let me wash dishes. I asked him if he had any work for me. He said no, but there was board and room for two weeks if I would teach his daughter some basic English (she was going to California to see her older sister). That was the day before yesterday. Since then I've stayed here, taught English, and read newspapers looking for a story about a plane crash or a missing person.

Today I got Sanchez to let me use the phone. I called the Coast Guard in San Diego. Then I called the Air Force. Both said they'd never heard of a plain red flight suit like the one I described, and that there was no report of any plane crash, any missing plane, any missing person.

After the calls I came up to my little room, wondering what page to turn next. There is a little desk in the corner, the only thing in the room other than the bed. In the drawer I found an old leather portfolio that says “Paul Woodcock Insurance” on the cover. In it was this piece of paper and two others, and a pencil. I started writing. It has helped – I feel better now. When the headache goes away, the memory will return. I’ll wait. For now I’ll just stay calm and wait.

Sunday, May 4 (1st Month)
Revera, Mexico

I feel compelled to write. Somehow, when the pen in my hand makes contact with the paper, I’m closer to knowing; like the tingle of a tiny electrical current that flows when the connection is made. If I write enough, or fast enough, perhaps I can generate enough current to turn the lights back on, to wake up the rest of my mind.

But right now I’m writing from the center of a dark tunnel. I can’t see a flicker at either end. I have nothing to relate my thoughts to.

Half-thoughts jump in and out of my mind. My best chance of catching them is to write them. I’ll try to capture every thought. I’ll write on napkins, envelopes, anything that is handy when one comes. I’ll date them. I’ll keep them in order in my leather envelope. I’ll fit them together like a puzzle, in every possible combination. I’ll find out who I am!

Monday, May 5 (1st Month)
Revera, Mexico

My thoughts remain fragmented. I have a hard time keeping my mind on one thing. Partly it’s the headache, partly it’s that I feel so many things I can’t quite put into words. I feel like writing things down but it’s hard to decide how to express them, how to sort out what I feel. I’m sitting on the little balcony now, at nightfall on my fifth day, trying to think, trying to decide, trying to remember. Across the dusty valley the sunset is sinking, as though the higher blue, as it gets darker, gets heavier and slowly pushes the gold lower and lower into the western mountains.

I’ve come inside and turned the light on now. I suppose I should try to write all that I do recall (from my five-day life). I remember that after I dropped out of the sky and before Sanchez picked me up, I saw an incredibly beautiful storm on the desert, a storm that swept in and over me with great swiftness and blew beyond just as fast. (The sky was clear when I landed, nearly clear again by the time Sanchez came.) As the wind started showing the clouds over, the desert changed color and texture...changed from pastels to oils...became deeper, darker, warmer...more mellow...yet paradoxically, the colors got brighter, the contrasts stronger. When the rain started, horizontal with the whipping wind, the small streams in the air reflected the desert’s deeper tones.

I am a creature of the present. I have no past and no future plans. Thus I see things with a certain clarity and separation.

The present is illuminated by consciousness and darkened by self-consciousness. I have no memory to compete for my consciousness and know of no self to create self-consciousness, so I am fully present in the present.

When I watched the storm on the desert I wasn’t thinking of other similar storms or of whom I could tell about it or of whether it would affect my plans for the next day. I was simply

and completely *observing* the storm – and using my eyes, my ears, my nose, my body, and my whole mind to do so.

Perhaps writing is more than a way of looking for who I am. Perhaps writing is *part* of who I am. The need to write makes me wonder if I am a writer. The words come all the time, sometimes in poetry, sometimes in prose, sometimes like a novel in which I am seeing myself as the main character; and trying to write on to the conclusion...where I can find out what his identity is.

Tuesday, May 6 (1st Month)
Revera, Mexico

As I was walking out of the cantina today, three children were walking in. the tiny school had just let out and they were stopping in as they usually do on the way home to see if Sanchez was in the mood to give them a peppermint stick. I stopped to tousle their hair and play with them. I showed them how to make a peso disappear by saying “abracadabra.” My eyes focused on the black snappiness in each of their wick eyes. Then, for a moment, I focused behind them, on the reflection of my face in Sanchez’s mirror. I saw on my face that particular half-smile of anticipation...the look people have as they wait in an airport for someone they love to come off a plane.

Do I have children? Or little brothers and sisters? The question was a non-question. I knew I did, children I loved. Mine? Or my siblings? And suddenly, there was an urgency to find them.

Friday, May 9 (1st Month)
Revera, Mexico

My mind is a kaleidoscope
Constantly forming new thoughts, seldom retaining or repeating.
If I can photograph the patterns by writing
I can store them, let them age,
And return to stack them and fit them together later
When I’ve found
A puzzle board of one or two connections,
One or two facts.

Saturday, May 17 (1st Month)
On the yacht Sealestial

“Click!”

A metallic click of some kind. It woke me. I opened my eyes and looked straight down the barrel of a .44 Magnum.

Behind the gun was a bearded, grizzled-looking sort of fellow in a leather jacket. Behind him were two more leather jackets.

The bearded face behind the gun grunted in a New York accent. “He send you?”

“Did who send me?”

“Don’t get smart, fella – you’ll loose your face. What’s your name?”

The only thing that would come to me was the name I'd seen on my leather portfolio.
"Paul Woodcock."

"What are you doing here?"

"I sell insurance."

"Prove it."

I pointed at the portfolio on the desk. The man with the gun tossed his head toward the desk and one of the other leather jackets handed him the portfolio. He looked down at it, then squinted up at me. "You can do better than that. Where's your luggage?"

"Lost at the airport."

"Which airport?"

I was realizing quickly that I didn't even know enough to fabricate a decent story. "San Diego," I said. It was the only airport I knew of that was even remotely close.

"That's six hours away. How did you get here?"

"Hitchhiked." The story was getting weaker. He wasn't buying it.

"You hitchhiked? An insurance guy? In that motorcycle suit?" He glanced at the chair where the flight suit was.

The gun barrel was closer to my face now. I panicked and resorted to the truth, what little I knew of it. "All right. Listen! I don't know who I am. I think I might be a pilot. I've had some kind of accident, and I can't remember anything."

"Sure you can't, buddy. C'mon, grab him, Fox, he's either with the feds or else the Renegades sent him to spy on our operation. We'll think of some way to help him remember."

My mind was racing, trying to fit something together. A motorcycle gang...hold up in this tiny Mexican town...suspicious of anyone new...worried about feds and rival gangs...an "operation"? Narcotics? The fear I felt was clawing deeper inside me. It related partly to guns and physical violence and partly to my growing realization that it was dangerous not to have a past.

Fox, a wiry little man with a face that gave away his nickname, pulled me out of bed with surprising strength and tied my hands behind me with the quick, sure motions of someone who had done it many times before.

"Can I get dressed?" I asked meekly.

"Not a chance," said the gunman. I noticed that he grabbed the leather envelope as Fox pushed me out of the door.

It wasn't until we stumbled down the stairs and out of the door that I realized it was still dark. Where was Sanchez? No noise, no response to the noise we made.

Fox nudged me in the direction of what turned out to be his bike and said, "On the back." As I got on he pulled my bound arms up behind me and slipped them down over the tubular "sissy bar" backrest that arched up from the rear of his seat. Then he blindfolded me.

You don't really know what excitement is until you've ridden behind a "Hell's Angel," in the middle of the night, blindfolded, wearing only jockey shorts and white T-shirt, unable to hold on to anything by the backrest behind you. It's interesting, I thought, how afraid I am to die, how much I want to live, even though I have no idea who I am or what I have to live for.

The ride was fast and noisy, thundering engines and screeching tires. When we stopped, Fox jerked me off and pushed me ahead of him up three steps and onto a squeaky board floor. There he pushed me (Fox was a pusher) down into what felt like a rocking chair, again pulling my arms out and down over the chair back. I felt him wrapping a rope around my thighs and under the chair so that I couldn't stand up. My next sensation was that of a dirty, grimy rag being

stuffed into my mouth. Silence for a moment and then the gunman's voice again. "You watch him, Rita; we've got to meet that van."

I sat silently for what seemed like an hour, then I realized I had nothing to lose by moving. I rocked the chair one or twice and made the most urgent sound I could.

"Mmmmmmaaaaaah." Almost instantly, to my total surprise, someone pulled the cloth out of my mouth. I shook my head, paused a moment, and said tentatively, "Rita?"

The voice that answered surprised me. It sounded more Southern than New York (why did I feel comforted that it was a Southern voice?) and it didn't sound hostile.

"Yes."

"Where are we?"

"I think the blindfold means you're not supposed to know." Not sarcastic, just a statement.

"They've got the wrong guy, you know." Somehow "they" seemed more appropriate than "you." She wasn't one of them – not in the full sense anyway. "Who are you?" I asked.

Silence. I repeated myself. "They've got the wrong person."

"I don't know why they've got you or who you are."

"I don't know who I am either." I wasn't planning anything, just saying what came to mind.

"You what?"

"I don't know who I am either." She obviously wasn't answering questions. A made-up identity hadn't worked either, so I'd try the truth. "Look, I don't know anything about myself. I have amnesia. I've lost my memory totally. My plane must have crashed. I woke up floating to earth in a parachute. That was only thirteen days ago."

She was silent but I sensed she wasn't uninterested, so I went on telling her everything that had happened, everything I'd felt. I finished, sat for a moment, heard nothing, and wondered if she was still there.

Suddenly I heard her get up off a chair. "Nobody will believe that story, buddy," she drawled, "except a disillusioned old lady like me who is looking for an excuse to let you go anyway." She didn't sound old, she did sound disillusioned. I felt her tugging at the knot behind my back.

"I'm not sure I'm going to stay much longer myself. Don't pull your blindfold off; I don't think you want to see me."

I could have, since my arms were free, but I didn't. She pulled the rope off my legs and shoved something at me. "Put these on and get out of here."

There were jeans. I pulled them on by feel, and she led me to the door. "Walk down this lane and you'll come to a road. Don't look back."

"Is there a brown leather envelope here?" I asked.

"Yes." I felt the familiar portfolio being handed to me. "Now get going," she said.

I stumbled along what felt like gravel until I tripped over something. I pulled off the blindfold, glanced back firefly at an old tarpaper shack (Rita was nowhere in sight), then turned and ran down the lane. It ended at what seemed to be a fairly major road, and a car was coming. I waved it down, standing directly in its path (this wasn't a time for patient thumbing).

The driver and only occupant of the car was a woman. She tried to swerve around me, realized that I wouldn't get out of the way, and stopped. I tried, in Spanish, to say "Take me to the next town." She didn't seem to understand. Then I noticed she looked American. I said, in English, "Look, I'll explain as we ride, but I've got to get to the next town." It wasn't a request,

it was a demand. She looked as if she was trying to decide whether to scream. She glanced around as if for help and then nodded. I had her turn the key off and open the passenger door before I moved from in front of the car. Then I jumped in.

My mind raced. Do I tell her the truth (what little I know of it) or do I fabricate a story? I had already learned that both could be hard to believe – and dangerous. I was only sure of one thing – get across the border, get to the United States. Then what? I didn't know. I had thought until that morning that I would get to Immigration and tell them my problem...that they would help. Now my inclination was to sneak across the border somehow, establish some new identity with a degree of safely connected to it, *then* look for who I really was. But the key right now was to get far away from where I was.

I turned to the woman, and her eyes were wide with fright. "Drive." I said.

We rode in silence on the deserted road for ten or fifteen minutes. By then I thought she looked somewhat less frightened.

"I'm sorry to put you through this," I said, "but I needed help pretty badly back there, and I'm still not sure that we are out of danger." At the words "*we're* not out of danger" her hands tightened on the wheel, tightening her knuckles. She glanced over, her eyes confirming the knuckles, but said nothing. I went on. "I was kidnapped by a motorcycle gang. It was a mistake – they thought I was someone else. I had just escaped when I saw you. They don't know I'm gone, but I don't know where they are. Where are you going?"

"I...I..." She looked as if she was desperately trying to think of a good lie, a story that would work. We had that much in common. She started saying something about meeting her husband, thinking I guess that her mention of a man would protect her somehow, or make her less vulnerable. She paused, stumbled on her words, and then looked straight at me. "Oh, what's the use? I'm going to San Diego. That's where I live. I'm in real estate, and I've been looking for some beach-front properties." Somehow her candor relaxed us both a little, and I decided to reciprocate.

"Look, I'm sorry, I really mean that. I've had an accident of some kind and I'm not too sure who I am or exactly what's happened to me. I'm sure I'm not dangerous, though. I won't harm you. I've got to get into the States and find some place where I can rest and try to sort things out. I'm going to have to ask you to help me get across the border."

She seemed bolder now, less scared. "If you've really had an accident and lost your memory, why don't you just turn yourself in at Immigration, ask for help, have them put out a bulletin? You're obviously American. You're about six foot two or three. You're somewhere in your late twenties. There can't be too many tall, young Americans lost in this part of Mexico. You sound like you're from the Northeast somewhere, New England probably."

"I'd intended to do that," I said. "but these last few hours have sacred me. Somehow I think I'd better try to find out on my own who I am. It's just my instinct...it's just what I think I have to do."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Just drive me across. I'll pose as your husband. Nothing abnormal, we're just a couple driving home to San Diego after a weekend in Mexico."

"It's Wednesday."

"Well, after a *week* in Mexico, then."

"They may want to see identification."

"I doubt it. If they don, we'll show them yours."

"They'll wonder where your luggage is."

“No they won’t. even if they open yours they’re not likely to notice that some of it’s not mine.”

As I talked, I knew we could get across. I knew Tijuana rarely did more than ask if you had plants or fruit. How did I know that? Maybe I did live nearby. Maybe I was closer to home than I realized.

It was about four hours to the border. Once we got on a major road, I worried less about the motorcycle gang and thought more about what I would do once I was across. My driver turned out to be Marian White (at least, that is the name she gave, and it was good enough for me).

About an hour into the journey, safely on the freeway, Marian apparently decided the time would pass faster if we were talking.

“Where did they kidnap you from?”

“The hotel in Revera. They thought I was someone sent to spy on them.”

“How long since your accident?”

“Thirteen days.”

“What happened to you?”

“I don’t know ... an aircraft accident of some kind. I came to floating down in a parachute. Can’t remember anything about the plane, the crash, why I was ejected – nothing.”

I welcomed her questions...hoped she would think of some I hadn’t...hoped she would think of *the* question that would spark some memory. I told her that. She went on.

“Was there someone else in the plane?”

“I don’t know.”

“Are you sure it was a plane?”

“What do you mean?”

“Could it have been a balloon...a blimp...? Could it have been a rocket? Maybe you’re an astronaut.” She was almost enjoying herself now, more convinced that I really knew nothing, that what little I could tell her was the truth.

“I don’t know. Could have been anything I guess. Maybe it was shot out of a cannon.”

“What was the ejection system like?”

“Red lever, under the seat, on the right.” I answered without thinking.

“So, it was a plan. What was the rest of the plane like?”

“I don’t know, but I remember the ejection lever. I must have been flying it.”

“Can you remember how to fly?”

“...Yes, I can. I can feel the instruments...Yes...I am a pilot.”

“Where did you learn to fly?”

“Don’t know.”

“Were you in the service?”

“Don’t know.”

As we went on, I sensed a pattern. I remembered the subconscious things. I knew how to fly, I knew how to read, I knew towns and places. But on personal things there was a dark tunnel, no clue, nothing familiar. Nothing, not even a glimmer.

She was actually helping me now. She knew I was telling the truth. She knew she was not in danger. I felt better in some ways than I could remember feeling. I was an American and would soon be in America. And this person, this Marian, thought the way I did. She was logical, she asked good questions, our thought patterns had something in common.

By the time we got to the border, though our collective questions I knew at least three things about myself. One, I was a pilot. Two, I was a sailor, or at least knew a fair amount about sailing. Three, I knew some fairly detailed things about San Francisco, Boston, and Yellowstone Park. (I remembered a little about Boston, but not much, despite the fact that Marian said I spoke like a New Englander.) Each was a starting point. Maybe I *could* find out who I was. Maybe I could even enjoy the search!

The border crossing was even simpler than I had hoped. I guess a T-shirted American, sipping a can of Fresca, sitting next to his wife, driving back to San Diego, was too ordinary to arouse suspicion. All the mustached customs officer wanted to know as whether we had any fresh fruits or plans. As we pulled away and onto American soil, Marian, who by now was very nearly enjoying the association, if not the intrigue of a search for identity, said, "What now?"

I'd been trying to think about that question – between other questions – for the last four hours, and my ready answer caught her off guard.

"Well, this is a request and not a demand...it's your choice...but what I need is a loan. This gold chain and medallion has to be worth a few million dollars. I'll give it to you for collateral if you'll give me some cash." (I reflected how lucky I was that the motorcycle boys hadn't seen the gold chain under my t-shirt.)

She looked hard at me, making sure in her own mind that I wasn't robbing her. Then it was her turn to surprise me.

"You keep the necklace. It may be a key at some point in finding out who you are. I think you should go to the authorities, but if you're not ready, come home with me, meet John, and we'll give you some clothes and make you a loan."

I'm sure she was sincere. I'm sure her intent was exactly what she said it was, but my instincts still spelled fear, still told me to get alone long enough to work out an identity, to avoid the repeating situation of starting from zero with each new person and hoping they would believe. Meeting "John" had no appeal. Somehow, help was not what I felt the need for. The need was for time, for peace, for a place to think and try to make connections.

"Thanks, Marian, but no. I've got to do this my way. Will you make me a loan or not?" Marian looked at me, surprised again, shrugged, and said, "I've got about \$80 in my purse. You take it, but keep your necklace." She paused. "I wasn't to give you a phone number, Paul, and I want you to call if you can't make any connections. I really do want to help."

I took the \$80, Marian's address and phone number and a ridiculous red shirt she found in her bag that was too tight for me and that said, across the front, "I'd rather be sailing." She even tried to give me a pair of sandals but gave up with I demonstrated that my toe wouldn't fit through the toe strap. I got out of the car on the coast road just outside San Diego and waved as she drove off. She slowed down as if she were going to turn around once, then drove out of sight. I stood still for another moment, then almost automatically put out my thumb and waited for the next car.

The next 12 hours passed almost in a shadow. I was exhausted, and it was as though my mind turned off. There were three or four more hitched rides; San Francisco was my objective. I slept most of two rides, talked about surfing techniques with two teenagers in a van, and finally, early the next morning, rode into San Francisco with a middle-aged vacuum cleaner salesman. I had dozed off again, and I opened my eyes just as we crossed the Golden Gate Bridge and just in time to see the exit sign that says Sausalito. The word was familiar and pleasant. "Can you drop me here?" I said. The driver took the exit without a word, wound around the hillside, and stopped directly in front of the boat basin.

It was dawn. I wandered along the boulevard, bought a bagel at ten o'clock, then window-gazed until noon, looking for something familiar.

There were several parallel marina docks going out into the shallow harbor. I wandered aimlessly out to the end of each and back, noticing the boats, feeling somehow comforted by them, but with my conscious mind somewhere else...trying to know where. It was almost evening, and the second time I walked out on the first dock, when I noticed the sign taped onto the mooring rail of one of the largest boats in the harbor: Crew needed, 998-3210.

Serendipity. The word came from somewhere in my mind – and I knew what it meant – “a happy accident.” I could sail, I thought. Marian had asked me some things that led to it. I looked at the boat, the mast, the boom, the bow, the stern, the sheets...port and starboard. I rigged the sail in my mind. Yes, I could definitely sail. If only the owner or captain didn't require references! What better way to think? Something familiar, and maybe a way to earn money.

I found a pay phone (it occurred to me that without Marina's help I wouldn't even have had a dime to make the call) and dialed the number.

“Yes?” The voice was crisp, maybe even British.

“I'm interested in crewing on your yacht. Name's Paul Woodcock.”

“Experienced?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What kind of craft?”

“All kinds, and I love the lines of *Sealestial*.” (I'd noticed her name.) “How long is she?” (I wanted to talk about the boat, not about my experience.)

“Seventy-one. Largest production-class fiberglass made anywhere in the world. Comes out of Southampton, England.” (He liked her too.)

“You the owner or the skipper?”

“Skipper...owned by a group of people. One couple and their boy scheduled for a week starting Saturday. You available that soon?”

“I've available now.”

“Well, you sound all right, mate, where are you?”

“At the marina.”

“Yes, well...can't meet you tonight, see you there tomorrow morning at six. We'll get her ready.”

“Any other crew?”

“Just a cook. If you look all right tomorrow, you'll go. My name's Parsons.”

“Right, see you tomorrow then.”

“Okay. Wait, mate, don't you want to know the pay?”

“Oh...yes, sir.”

“It's not much, \$150 a week, and only when the boat's out, but some of the owners give tips.”

“Sounds okay.”

I hung up, wandered back to the *Sealestial*, found two stuffed sail bags chained to the mast, and curled up on them and went to sleep.

Skipper woke me the next morning...by pulling on my big toe. “Woodcock?”

“What?...yes...oh, yes, Parsons? Sorry, must have dozed off.”

“When did you get here?”

“Oh...ah...well, actually I've been here all night. It just didn't make sense to go and come back.”

“Where’s your stuff?”

“Ah...I’ll have to go get it; I was just down here last night and saw your sign.

Parsons raised an eyebrow at me, but that was the last personal thing he asked me. I guess I satisfied him during the day that I worked hard, knew ships, and was reasonably pleasant to be around. Parsons, I suppose, had met other men without pasts and didn’t much mind as long as the job got done. We worked all morning, scrubbing down the deck, polishing the brass fittings.

I skipped away for an hour in the afternoon, bought a pair of cheap deck shoes, a razor, a toothbrush, and a more reasonable shirt. I slept in the crew bunk last night and we sailed this morning and went south down the coast with Dr. and Mrs. Lael Brinton and their son, Parry. The main thing I’ve discovered about the Brintons thus far, which suits me just fine, is that they love to talk about themselves and have absolutely no interest in me. We’re anchored now for the night and I’m doing what I want to do – thinking and writing.

Saturday, May 24 (1st Month)
Sausalito, California

Back for a day,
Leaving tomorrow for another week.
Sitting again on Sausalito dock,
Masts straight vertical in the air,
Rippled crooked in the water.
Sun-shimmered water rocking red, orange, yellow bright boats,
White hulls, wax-wood accents. Blue water, made bluer by blue sky and
Blue boat covers.
Spider-wed rigging lines everywhere.
Silent seagulls, white and gray, shallow inverted Ws in the air.
Even, symmetrical bird shapes, as though designed
To contrast and complement helter-skelter masts and riggings.
Sound:
 Creaking ropes
 Seagull chirps
 Lapping water
 Footsteps on the boardwalk and someone hammering in the distance.
Smells:
 Salt
 Fish.
Feel of light, fresh breeze.
Sausalito’s green hill behind, as backdrop.
Sun-white clapboard and stucco houses
Poking up through the green.
Movement is all flowing, shimmering –
The floating gulls, the weaving reflections.
The only real movement is a little gray dog, ambling
Down the pier toward me.
The sun’s angle is perfect, so that reflections are
Exactly life-size.

The names on the boats give clues to the kind of people
Who own each one.
Everything is familiar here,
Sailing terminology – mast, prow, sheet, tiller – the words
Are crisp-clear as a ship's bell,
And they are in my mind, they are good,
And I know them from somewhere before.

Tuesday, May 27 (1st Month)
On the yacht Sealestial

It's a calmer trip this week. Dr. and Mrs. Collomore, part owners, are a retired couple who don't want to sail too fast or too rough. We're going south again, staying close to shore, and they spend most of their time reading.

I've had time to write but not really very much to say. As restful and familiar as the boat is, it's not giving me any real clues, and I've decided to move on once we get back to dock on Saturday.

I did find an old medical encyclopedia among the miscellaneous books that Parsons keeps in the main cabin. It has half a page on loss of memory, one sentence of which is descriptive of my situation: "Amnesia (loss of memory) is rarely total. In its severe forms, however, it can block the conscious memory entirely. Even then, the subconscious, the intuitive, the impersonal things in the memory usually remain."

I suppose that partially explains the "déjà vu" experiences I so often have...something seems familiar, the memory seems close, barely out of reach. And *feelings* often *are* remembered, so that I feel caught in the crossfire of situations that arouse all forms of deep and familiar *emotions*. But I lack the names, the faces, the places that should go with them.

Tuesday, June 3 (2nd month)
Northeast of Reno, Nevada

I received two important benefits from my two-week stay on *Sealestial*:

1. Enough time to think through a sort of identity-search plan (among other things, I decided that my best chance of finding something specifically familiar is to go to the *smallest* place that seems generally familiar...so I'm en route to Jackson Hole and Yellowstone Park.)

2. Enough money to make the trip -- \$300 for my two weeks work, plus a totally unexpected \$500 from the Brintons. A "tip" they said, for taking such an interest in Parry and teaching him so much about sailing. I mailed \$80 to Marian White this morning.

At any rate, I'm on the road now. My belongings have expanded to include a secondhand sleeping bag, a jacket, a second pair of Levi's, and a nylon backpack to keep them in.

My main reason for writing tonight (other than the fact that there's nothing else to do by a campfire in Nevada and that I feel the need to keep a record of what's happened) is a new feeling I have, a feeling that I may be a very long way from my identity and that perhaps my search should be not only for who I am (my name, my past) but for WHO I AM (the question of values, ethical standards, beliefs – perhaps even religious ones – my purpose for living).

What I mean is this: I've been "aware" now for over a month, and other than a few instances of déjà vu and "familiar feelings," I don't know any more about who I was than I did

30 days ago. I *do* feel that I know more about WHO I AM, however. I'm discovering what I like, what I can do...and maybe most importantly, what makes me happy. I have the feeling that if I'm obsessed only with finding out who I am – my name, my address, my social security number – I may be frustrated, I may not get any clues, I may somehow force things and drive myself even further into the tunnel. But if I broaden the search – if I look for meaning, for happiness, for the things that fulfill me and give me joy – I think I can find them. And maybe that will tell me WHO I AM; and maybe finding out WHO I AM will lead me to who I am.

Somehow *beliefs* and *values* are easier to find than names and places, because they are not altogether gone. I know *how* I feel about many things. I have opinions, I have values. Perhaps they are the very things that can lead me to my identity.

Friday, June 6 (2nd month)
Near Brigham City, Utah

Morning...still cool, first ride of the day. Near Brigham City, Utah.
Clouds gliding and surging in,
Gray on gray, gray on white,
Parting and wafting and lifting
As they hit the spring green and jut-rock mountain tops.
One great soft green slope, steep and textured by the sage,
With cloud shadows gliding, sliding
Effortlessly straight up its face.
Right now I just see mountains and clouds.
The great Rocky Mountains,
They shelter us, they strengthen us,
They change with the seasons –
Drastically and yet without ever
Giving up one inch or ounce or degree
Of their beauty, their inspiration, their peace.
Only man can destroy them, and contrary to what some seem to say,
He hasn't yet.
The clouds...the cool, soft, heavy mists
That bring rain to the grass and depth to our moods.
They awaken the pensiveness inside...the minor chords,
The feeling emotions.
They awaken everything inside me...except me.

Tuesday, June 10 (2nd month)
Near Green River, Wyoming

This afternoon I was walking,
In between hitchhike rides, along the flat, hot
Tableland west of Green River, Wyoming.
(I'm going the long way to Jackson...I know...
perhaps I'm more afraid than anxious to get there.)
the sun's rays, sliding across the angled sandstone surfaces,

magnified the crags and the cracks.
All the distant rocks had similar angles,
Forty-five-degree slopes up to straight, ninety-degree vertical cliffs.
Running across all the forty-five-degree and ninety-degree slopes
Were wind-cut horizontal lines.
Every line in my vision was either straight vertical,
Straight horizontal, or straight forty-five-degree diagonal
...until I turned my head up—
blue background, white, round, changing clouds.
Red and orange ground, blue and white sky.
Straight angles below, rounded forms above.
Nothing changing here, everything changing there.

I'm feeling better now,
No physical headache anymore,
Just the mental one of asking, every minute,
What do the shapes and lines of my mind
Mean?

A half-hour later, still walking.
I see the Green River now, below me.
The road is on a high ridge here.
The river is as flat as the desert,
Flowing so even and slow that it looks like
Part of the desert – same color,
Just on a moving, ball-bearing track,
A gliding, snaking section of the earth's surface
Turning along on a geared channel.
I stop here to watch the river,
And the birds soaring below me in
The space,
So different from watching them when they
Are above and
I see their dark side – the
Aerodynamic angles are better from above,
I can better see their dips and reels and glides.
Nearer to town, the abandoned drive-in movie,
Only the posts left,
Like skinny tombstones in
An overgrown field.
The once-white screen now tan like the desert,
And deep brown at the seams.

Thursday, June 12 (2nd month)
Green River, Wyoming

Well, I long for quiet places so I can think and write, but this isn't exactly what I had in mind. I'm in the third (last) cell of the Green River, Wyoming, jail. I've been here 32 hours, and I've realized that I might as well sit back, since my efforts yesterday to get out only go me "in" deeper. Fortunately they let me keep my leather envelope and a pencil.

My ride let me off just after midnight, night before last, at the main intersection in Green River, and I walked across the street toward the motel. An officer got out of the squad car parked across from where I got out and asked me my least favorite question, "Can I see some identification?"

I pleaded ignorance and innocence (both accurate). "I'm just going to check in at the motel."

"We've got an 11:30 curfew here this week because of some trouble last Monday. Let's see your ID."

No ID in Green River, Wyoming, an hour after curfew means you go to jail. He was nice enough to ask me if I wanted to make one phone call – and even more suspicious after I told him no, I didn't.

I tried most of yesterday to tell the "desk sergeant," as the old duffer who sits out front calls himself, that I was just a free-lance writer heading from San Diego to Jackson Hole and had lost my wallet. He kept saying that they'd have to check me out, probably with fingerprints, before I could go, and he kept referring to the "trouble" last Monday night but not telling me what the trouble was. It turns out the officer who brought me in was the sheriff... and that he's out of town now, until Saturday, and that he's the only one that can let me loose. So I'll wait, and write. It's quiet here and fairly cool, and I had a thought last night that may be a first step in my efforts to sort out what the components of happiness are and how to search for them.

My thought is this: Sitting in a jail cell, locked up, one finds new appreciation for freedom, for self-determination, for choices. It became clear to me that freedom was an integral element of happiness. Then, both to pass the time and to further my thought, I tried to *define* freedom. I found two answers somewhere in my divided mind. On the one hand, freedom is *agency* (the thing I lacked because I was lock up in a cell). On the other hand, freedom is *knowledge* (the thing I lacked because I had forgotten who I was).

Agency is essentially a freedom from compulsion, from the force or dictates of others. But agency is only the first step of freedom. Agency makes us free from compulsion but not free from other things that can bind us equally tight. When I get out of jail in two days (I hope), I'll have agency again, but I won't have freedom from ignorance or from fear or from the wrong decisions I might make as a result of not knowing who I am.

As I thought about that for a while longer, it occurred to me that real freedom lies not so much in knowing who I am but in knowing WHO I AM. All of the other people I've met know who they are...and in some ways that knowledge makes them *less* free. Sanchez knew he was the small-town owner of a Mexican hotel and cantina, and the knowledge kept him from being anything else. Rita knew she was the "old lady" of a gang leader, and knowing it kept her from changing it (though maybe not anymore).

In one sense, then, I was more free than people who knew who they were. Theoretically I could be who I wanted to be, because I knew nothing to the contrary. Maybe I was rationalizing, trying to make amnesia a good thing, an advantage. But it was a thought.

And the other thought – I want to keep it: that real freedom is in knowing WHO I AM. Am I eternal? Is there a supreme being with whom I have some connection? Is there absolute truth? I think there is. How do I know there is?

The word *truth* triggered a memory chord somewhere...a scripture...the Bible...truth... “know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” That was it. Did I know the Bible? Was I religious man? Where did that scripture come from? What was I feeling? I tried to put my thoughts together. As I did, it felt more as if I was remembering something old than discovering something new:

- A key part of happiness is freedom
- Freedom is more than agency, it is knowledge, truth.
- Truth makes us free from ignorance, error, fear, lack of purpose
- Who am I? is a good question,

But

- WHO AM I? is a better one.

I took a blank sheet of paper out of the back of my leather portfolio, a red one (who knows why it was there?) and wrote across the top “My Search for What Matters.” Under the heading I wrote one word: “Freedom.”

I replaced the red sheet in the back of the portfolio.

Sunday, June 15 (2nd month)
The road outside Green River

They let me go. Tired of feeding me, I guess. Actually it was Marian who did it. Marian from San Diego. The sheriff came back, ran a fingerprint check on me (I half hoped I *would* have a record somewhere...with an identity). Then he said he had nothing on me, but he’d be darned if he’d let me go without some identification – by something or someone. That’s when I thought of Marian. They made me pay for the call to San Diego, but it was worth it. All I said to her before the sheriff grabbed the phone was that I was in jail in Green River and needed someone to vouch for me. Marian has a great memory. She told the sheriff I was an insurance agent from San Diego and a personal friend of hers. She also apparently said something about knowing the attorney general of Wyoming and hoping the sheriff had a good charge of arrest to justify holding me for three days. Whatever she said worked. I was outside on the street in five minutes.

Sunday, June 22 (2nd month)
Cheyenne, Wyoming

It was a ridiculous thing to do – I see that in retrospect – but I volunteered without thinking. I guess it shows how easily feelings and instinct can override logic.

I had come into Cheyenne about 10:00 AM, and my ride dropped me in approximately the center of town. It’s become almost a tradition with me to take a look around right where I get let off. Some of the most interesting things I’ve found have been right under my nose, just as someone lets me off – like the marina in Sausalito (or the sheriff in Green River!). Anyway, I didn’t have to look very hard this time...I *heard* something interesting and hauntingly familiar. It was the *ponk, ponk* of tightly strung tennis racquets hitting tennis balls. I was across the fence from what turned out to be Cheyenne’s new tennis club. I felt one of those instant but incomplete mental connections. I had played tennis – a lot, it seemed. I sensed the confidence of motions and reactions that were well inside me...but the *why*, the *where*, the *when*, were as vacant as ever.

I walked in and learned that it was the grand opening of the new club. Several hundred people were sitting on a grass incline watching some sort of exhibition match. With a little quiet asking, I learned that a touring pro names Bethers was play an exhibition with a local Cheyenne boy named Cobb who played first singles at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. They had finished their warm-ups and were ready to play. I sat down. The pro, Bethers, served first and delivered a hard slicing shot for his first serve of the match. Cobb, maybe not fully warmed up, or perhaps tense as the match opened, lunged for it and somehow turned his right ankle as he landed. He went down in a heap, holding his foot, and it was quickly apparent that they big match was over on the first point.

There were some groans from the fans, and I was getting up to leave when an official-looking fellow walked out on the court and asked, somewhat sheepishly, whether there was anyone in the crowd of the caliber to take Cobb's place for a set or two. He said he was sorry he didn't know too many local players but that the club was brand new and in any case he really didn't know who was present. Bethers, he explained, had made a special trip as a personal favor to him, and he hated to have the crowd miss the chance to see him play.

My hand went up. As I say, it was ridiculous, because I honestly knew nothing about how good I was. I came to my senses, and pulled my hand down, but the man had seen me and he acknowledged me. Maybe I was just a fan, maybe the sounds and moves felt familiar because I watched a lot. I felt ridiculous. "Great! There's a brave fellow. Get suited up and let's give you a try. Keep your seats, folks. Let's see how the mystery player does."

He met me at the edge of the court and seemed completely unbothered by the fact that I had no gear with me. "A chance to advertise my pro shop," he said. "You'd just better know how to hit the ball. Where did you play?"

It surprised me how apt I am becoming at satisfying but nonspecific answers. "New England, mostly; don't worry, I can give him a decent match. Don't introduce me as being from anywhere...it's more interesting they way you first said it. I'm the mystery player."

The next thing I knew I was on court, dressed in the best his pro shop had to offer, and holding a Dunlop racquet I'd chosen from his rack.

I shook off a lot of the fear as we started warming up. The strokes were natural to me. They required no particular thought or effort. I noticed that my "host" had relaxed in his sideline seat, and I took it was a sign that I was hitting the ball with enough class that he would not be embarrassed and would feel that his exhibition match was at least partially saved. I uncoiled a hard, straight crosscourt backhand, and the crowd responded with interesting applause. It felt good to hit the ball. Not knowing just how good I was almost seemed an advantage. There was nothing I knew I couldn't do. I began to enjoy myself.

After ten minutes or so of warm-up, we spun a racquet and started the match. Bethers was a good player, not exactly a household name but a touring pro with early-round Wimbledon and U.S. Open experience. His disadvantage was that I was surprising him. He had no more idea who I was than I did, and every time I hit back a shot he didn't think I'd get, he looked a little more frustrated. I began to realize there was no pressure on me and a considerable amount on him. I got looser. He seemed to get tighter.

He held his serve, but not before I had brought it to deuce twice with solid passing shots. My serve was a happy surprise. I hit the first one hard and flat, the second with good slice and hop, and one my service game without going to deuce.

We both held service until it was five-all. Then he opened his sixth serving game with a double fault, and I sensed it was time to break. He missed his next first serve and hit his second

one shallow to my forehand. I got on top of it and hit a top-spin crosscourt winner. His next two first serves came in, and with the luck of someone hitting out hard with nothing to lose, I hit both down the line for untouched winners to break him at love. I held my serve and won the set 7-5.

Bethers really came undone then, and I couldn't miss. I won the next set 6-1 and got a standing ovation from the crowd of strangers.

Afterward, my host (and about half the crowd) was insistent about knowing who I was and where I'd played, but I managed to sound fairly firm in insisting that the fun was in the mystery. He offered to pay me a small honorarium for the match, and on instinct I asked for something else instead. "Just let me keep this equipment, a couple of extra racquets, and write me a short letter of reference." I said. "I may want to do some teaching somewhere along the line."

I think he agreed to the letter largely so he could find out my name. We went to his office and he wrote:

To Whom it May Concern:

I have just watched Paul Woodcock defeat Grant Bethers (the touring pro) in straight sets. Woodcock's form and shot-making ability are impeccable and I recommend him highly.

Yours,

Peter Mitchell

President, Wyoming Tennis Assn., and

Board Member, U.S. Open Tournament

I left as quickly as I could get away, signing a couple of autographs as "P.W. the Mystery Player." I walked to a downtown diner, had a thick steak to celebrate, and started thinking about a new line of work.

That was yesterday. Today I feel better, more secure, somehow, because it happened. When someone says, "Who are you?" I still can't give him an accurate *name* answer, but I know some other answers. I'm a pilot. I'm a writer. I'm a sailor. I'm a tennis player. I'm a seeker for truth and beauty. It's a little corny, I know, but it helps me to live with myself, it helps me to hope that I'm getting closer.

It also helps me to plan. It's one thing to be going to Jackson and Yellowstone, but it's another thing to have some idea of what I'll do when I get there. I think one reason I've been in no hurry is that subconsciously I've worried what I'd do when I got there...look around, maybe find some clues, then what? My money supply wouldn't allow much time, and what would I do next?

Now I have a partial plan. I'll use tennis somehow. I'll teach – there are clubs there – or I'll work in a pro shop...or I'll tour a little. If I can beat Bethers, I could play some tournaments. A tennis bum may not be a great image, but at least it's a *known* one. A place-to-place tennis jock may not be society's most respected image, but it arouses a lot less suspicions than a nameless writer wandering here and there asking a lot of questions.

So...tomorrow it's on to Jackson Hole...to any clues I can find in that place that seemed so familiar when Marian and I talked about it – and to some sort of a mini-career in the field of tennis.

Tuesday, June 24 (2nd month)

Jackson, Wyoming

It's hard to describe the feeling I had when I first saw the Tetons. I was stunned not only by their majesty but by their familiarity. I had hitchhiked up through Star Valley, Wyoming, and along the Snake River through the Hoback Canyon. The man who picked me up seemed preoccupied, uninterested in conversation, so I was free to watch, to appreciate. It was late afternoon, and the slanting sunshine backlit the new-green, dollar-round leaves of the white-bark quaking aspens. Then down out of the Hoback, into the cottonwood flats, Tetons still hidden from view. The sun-splash and shadow of the verdant little valley. I'd been here before. I knew the Tetons were about to appear. My heart raced like someone going home. I knew where to look...and the ridge on the right fell away and there they were, still 40 miles away but already huge and humbling, their jutting rocky crags still white with the winter's snow, and backed by a single white cloud that seemed caught by the highest peak.

Friday, June 27 (2nd month)
Jackson Hole Tennis Club

Not much time to write...another tennis pupil coming.

Things have fallen into place (not *memory* things). I got a tennis teaching job here at the club (they even call me the "club pro"). I used most of the rest of the *Sealestial* money to buy a secondhand bike to get around on. And I live in a room above the pro shop.

The club is north of Jackson, on the way into the Teton park via Moose Junction; near the airport, right below the Tetons themselves.

Physical things, as I say, have fallen into place. Now I'm waiting for mental things to follow suit.

Saturday, July 5 (3rd month)
Below the Grand Teton

Clear-headed, above-earth feeling.
White peaks against deep sky blue,
Looking up at the final ascent of the Grand Teton.
The flurry-swept peak,
And the mind floats with idea-inspiration
(clear air or thin air cause?).
Philosophy comes out of the mountain –
"Put a strong will against a steep slope"
(old Scottish proverb?).
I know so many things...
Beauty of heart and mind...
My armor
As I climb the slope to find
What I don't know –
Me.

Monday, July 7 (3rd month)
Jackson, Wyoming

Talk about a funny sensation!

I was biking along yesterday, lazy Sunday afternoon, thinking about nothing, when I saw the sign. It was just a small sign, hooked onto a street sign, and it said, simply, Jackson Hole Polo Club, one mile.

The words nearly knocked me off my bike. At first I thought the sensation was just related to the incongruity of a polo club in Jackson, Wyoming. I mean, here we are on the frontier, in the land of rodeos and gunfights, and I see a sign that says Polo Club.

But it was more than that. It was something about the sign itself, the words; there was something intricately familiar there...but familiar in a different way, somehow.

Did I play polo, of all things? Polo? I had to find out. I was excited for a moment. Polo is a very limited game...few people played the game. People who did knew each other. Wasn't polo an English game? If I was a polo player, it was the best clue so far. I could visit polo clubs, someone would recognize me.

I rode the one mile and parked in front of the club. It seemed totally unfamiliar. There was a match (Sunday afternoon...every week...as I found out later). No one recognized me, no one looked familiar. The game was anything but familiar. I remembered nothing about the scoring, the strategy.

I could ride horses, I knew that from a rented horseback ride last week, but nothing else was familiar...nothing. The motion of the mallet, the sounds and crowd noises – none rang a bell.

So the moment came and went, with no clue as to why. I met some interesting people. Several of them explained to me that polo was the world's most sophisticated game, and that its presence in Jackson Hole made *Jackson* sophisticated and worth living in. so it was interesting but not rewarding.

Another dead end, another blind alley, another feeling, a strong one, that I couldn't explain.

Tuesday, July 8 (3rd month)
Jackson, Wyoming

I said earlier that I've broadened my search. I may not find out right away who I am, but I feel I'm making some progress on a very important part of the question, namely, What do I want? What matters? What has true value and what brings happiness?

I've been in Jackson for two weeks. Not long, but longer than I remember ever being anywhere. It's breathtakingly beautiful. The summer has bloomed with a sweetness and richness that is indescribable. I'm playing and teaching tennis everyday, enjoying the sun, enjoying the tone and tune of my body. The stretching, the running, the thin fresh air filling my lungs. I'm earning enough to not have to worry about my next bed or my next meal, and I feel a real sense of happiness. I think (and this may not sound very profound) that happiness is a pretty simple thing. It involves the three basic things that almost all human beings are given as a free gift: (1) physical bodies; (2) this magnificent earth; (3) agency or self-choice.

For what it's worth, that's where my quest is right now. Perhaps I'll find deeper or more complex forms of happiness, but for now this seems to be enough. I'll call it the first level of joy... "Joy-one"...the joy of body, early, agency.

Right now, on July 8, sitting on the clubhouse porch, watching the sun set behind the Tetons, "Joy-one" is considerable.

Thursday, July 10 (3rd month)
Jackson, Wyoming

Bob Peterson is a remarkable guy. I wonder if I've had other friends like him before. He's the golf pro at the Jackson Hole Country Club (adjoining our tennis courts). We met the second day I was here. He was having lunch with his wife, Kate, and they came over and introduced themselves. We got talking about fishing and the Snake River. (I was doing what I'm almost used to now – saying things I know, but not knowing how I know them.)

He's an open guy, easy to like. Big smile. We are like brothers from the beginning. Everything in common. I guess that is a funny thing for a guy to say who doesn't know who he is or what he has, let alone how much of it is similar to someone else. Nevertheless, I said it. I do have a lot in common with Peterson ... not only our interests, but they way we think. A couple of times I've come close to telling him my full dilemma.

We floated the Snake last Wednesday, from Moose to Wilson bridge. The river's gone down and cleared up, and the fishing is fantastic. We had thought we'd be sorry not to have brought some minnows, but the daredevils and spinners worked fine. We both had our limits by the time we were halfway down and were wishing we'd put the smaller ones (under two pounds) back, native cutthroats, the most beautiful trout (and best fighting) I've seen. Catching them is as familiar as playing tennis...and it's equally unsure why.

Peterson is a loyal guy. My bike broke down clear up by Coulter Bay last Saturday, and he not only came all the way up after me but tied the bike onto his bumper (scratched his paint) and got it to the shop for me. Kate Peterson is just as nice. The two of them have made me think even more (and wonder more) about marriage (am I married?) than ever before.

In a way, I'd really like to tell Bob more (or less, depending on how you look at it). All I've said so far is the "I'm just a guy from New England who wanted more of the out-of-doors to ski and play tennis in" routine, and he hasn't pushed it.

But what a good friend! I've realized that certain kinds of thinking don't happen very well unless two minds work on them together. I've realized also that there is another kind of happiness that goes beyond the internal, inward joys of earth, body, and agency. There is another level of joy. It has to do with relationships and sharing and caring. I want to think a lot more about that.

Saturday, July 12 (3rd month)
Jackson, Wyoming

My life is fairly solitary. I teach tennis, I play in an intermountain tournament once in a while (made it to the semis in Denver and won \$1,700 plus expenses), I hike a lot, fish a lot, read in the evenings.

I have some semi-friends around the club. I think I'm thought of as a quiet, nice-enough guy.

Bob Peterson is my only close friend, and Kate. Kate lined me up with a couple of her friends. One of them made me wonder if Kate *was* my friend. The other one, Sue, was fine; I took her out three times before she went back to Michigan. She's written; I haven't answered.

I'm less worried financially than I was. I don't make much, but I hardly spend anything. I sleep in the upstairs of the pro shop. (By the way, the small window, if I get my face close

enough to it, has about the biggest view in the world, the whole Teton range, visible over the row of cottonwoods by the ditch that runs past the courts.) I eat nearly all my meals, gratis, in the club lounge.

So I save my money. Occasionally, when someone is particularly pleased with the result of their backhand after a lesson, I get a tip – once in a while a big one. A fairly junior member of the Rockefeller family (which I understand gave this whole country to the Parks Department and still owns a bit themselves) gave me \$100 last week because she said it was the first time she'd ever hit five overheads in the court in a row. I'm getting quite a few repeat customers now and some of them are consistent tippers.

Tennis exists as one of the few links I have with my past. I sometimes get so far into a game, and it feels so natural, that momentarily I forget about all the unknowns. Sometimes I think that if I could just forget that I don't know who I am ... I would know.

I guess I've come to think of tennis as symbolic of life in several ways. Quite often I'll be playing a match and think something about my game...and realize that it also applies to life. I guess they're both games in a way, tennis and life, and the principles that apply to one often apply to the other. For example:

1. My motto, the medallion I still wear around my neck, the only material link I have with my past; its words; "To experience is to live." In tennis you only make great shots when you take risks, when you really go for a ball, when you try something new. I believe experience is the ultimate teacher. The safe route, the routine, the unchanged pattern, the avoidance of risk – all these detract from experience, detract from life.

2. In tennis, you play well only when you love the game. If you want the point to be over, if you want the ball not to come back, it means you want to win the point more than you want to play the game. But when you want the ball, love the ball, hope your opponent hits it back so you can hit it again, then you win. In life, when we love the *present*, take it as it comes, appreciate the unexpected (rather than being upset by it and wanting only the status quo), life becomes exciting, and we turn whatever come into success.

3. Overconfidence can kill you in tennis. You hit some good shots, feel confident (which is good); but let concentration slip away, become too loose...and you start to miss. In life, confidence is good as long as it doesn't bring with it a decline in discipline, a halting of humility; because as we lose these, we lose.

4. I like to hit my serve hard. It's the opening shot, and when I hit it well, more good strokes seem to follow. In life, it's the *startings* that count. If I get up early, start the day strong, it ends strong. If I meet someone, I work hard on the first impression. If I get into a new activity, I *start* it well.

5. The surest way to lose in tennis is to start talking to yourself, criticizing yourself. Better to say, "I'm good, that bad shot was an exception to the rule." Criticize the individual shot, but praise *yourself*. In life, we have to learn to separate our displeasure with certain things we do from our general love for ourselves. Then there is the confidence to improve, to change, to work on the individual things we are not satisfied with.

6. Concentration on each point is important in tennis. When you think too far ahead and keep thinking far ahead too long, you lose points. If you break serve early in a set and start thinking about the next set, your opponent will break right back. It's best to keep your mind on each point as it is being played. In life, living too much in the past or in the future can rob us of the beauty of the present. As the Sanskrit poet said (according to a quotation I jotted down from

a magazine the other day), “Yesterday is but a dream, and tomorrow a vision, but today, well lived, can make every yesterday a dream of joy and every tomorrow a vision of hope.”

Well, there’s my feeble effort at the little-known art of “tennis philosophy.” Is it just the game that’s familiar to me, or is it the feelings and the thoughts it produces? Is it tennis that’s familiar? Or is it life?

*Tuesday, July 15 (3rd month)
Jackson, Wyoming*

“Paul Woodcock.” The name may be fictitious, but today he became a little more official. He got a driver’s license.

I was worried about it actually. I wondered if a birth certificate or some other form of identification, a social security number or something, might be required. But I just passed a written test, went on the road test right afterward (in Bob Peterson’s Buick), and then rode my Honda through the bike course. The whole thing (three tests) took less than an hour, and all they asked for was a name and address. I gave them my card from the club, and I guess that seemed official enough – “Paul Woodcock, teaching pro, Jackson Hole Racquet Club.” There was one question about whether I’d had a license before, and what state. I put, “yes, California,” but no one asked to see the former license or wanted to know where it was.

So I have a checking account, and a driver’s license as identification in cashing checks. More and more I have a present; just the past is missing.

About the Honda. I needed a way to get around. Bought a secondhand bike. It’s a combination street and trail bike that gets me into town when necessary and that gets me off the road and up to the hills. I’m somehow more comfortable there (in the mountains) than anywhere else. I doubt that I’m much of an outdoorsman really (no evidence of that), but I’m drawn to the wilds. Maybe it’s just the assurance that there no one will ask me any questions I can’t answer; or maybe there’s some clue there, just out of reach... I don’t know.

I continue to try to do things naturally, even impulsively, hoping that subconscious things will open a door somewhere in my mind. So far there are no real clues, but some interesting insights about what I like, about my natural “style” of doing certain things. I thought a list of natural “likes” or preferences I have discovered might add up to something. Some seem trivial, unimportant by themselves, but maybe they’ll combine into some picture that makes some sense.

- Formal dress doesn’t have much appeal. Suits and ties seem at least uncomfortable, maybe foreign. I like jeans and soft jackets, suede, soft comfortable shoes.
- I read new magazines from the back. Am I more drawn to the arts, the sports, the science sections than the latest national or international news? When I get to the news, I understand it. I can read behind the lines. I know the background. I seem to understand political things.
- I think best on paper. If I have a pen in my hand and can draw diagrams, arrows, etc., I can conceptualize better, make more sense of things. My inclination is to try to diagram ideas, to fit thoughts into some sort of framework.
- I can relax quickly. I can take “cat naps”...anywhere, any time.
- I like to watch things, to observe, to listen, to take notes. It’s as though I were trying to see the things that are not obvious...as though the less obvious things were the more important.

- I have no inclination to drink or smoke, no craving for either.
I'm not sure what any of it means, but I'll keep observing...and maybe in time...

Saturday, August 2 (4th month)
Jackson, Wyoming

The Old Faithful Inn is the Taj Mahal of log cabins. Before it was built in 1918, someone (or *someones*) must have spent years in a forest looking for pine logs and branches and tree crotches of just the right shape and dimension. Every banister, every railing, every supporting beam looks as if it grew there, as if its shape were designed for the purpose it fits. Its dark brown exterior blends with and somehow enhances the pine-covered hills it occupies. Its huge steep roof sweeps up through 30 or 40 dormer windows to the squared-off battlement on top where people used to go to watch the geysers.

Inside, the main lobby rises like a brown rustic cathedral. A thousand horizontal logs, laid across vertical-sloping bigger logs, a roof soaring six stories above the lobby; a cavernous frontier version of Grand Central Station. The second and third floors are balcony mezzanines, looking out on the lobby below. Above them, three more stories of staircases, catwalks, a network of landings and overlooks, all made of logs. Rising though the center, a massive rock fireplace, hanging on it a huge clock – brass Roman numerals, a pendulum three stories high.

I knew the lodge – knew I had walked in it before, been impressed before. What I didn't know what how close I would come to losing my life there.

I'm trying to write in as detached a manner as I can...hoping the objectivity of the writing will calm me and help me to think. I'd better start eight days ago. I had finished my last tennis lesson and rode into Jackson with Bob Peterson. We were having a drink at the Cowboy Bar (mine was plain ginger ale) when I saw him across the room...a face I couldn't remember...but somehow couldn't forget. He was staring straight back at me, a look of shock and of uncontrolled fury in his dark eyes.

It's hard to describe the fear you feel when a frightening sight is accompanied by no memory. I was afraid because of the look in his eye, *more* afraid because I had no idea why it was there. He made no movement. I looked away, talked to Bob, sipped my ginger ale, looked back. Same expression; the fury was still there, but the shock was gone now, replaced by a look of calculation. He was planning something, he was about to *do* something. *I* had to do something. The only thing I could think of to do was to ask Bob who the man was. I did, as subtly as I could, describing him rather than pointing, getting Bob to look around generally rather than specifically. Bob looked. He'd never seen the man before, but he knew the two men he was sitting with.

I looked back. The eyes still staring, still thinking. Why did I fear him so? Why wasn't I glad he seemed to know me? Hadn't I been longing to see a look of recognition in someone's eyes? No! Not *that* look. This was an enemy, that much was clear, and whatever he knew about me, it wasn't worth it to me. I knew that much instinctively.

He was getting up, moving toward me. There was nothing I could do but wait...hope that the violence in his eye would be contained by lots of people in the crowded place.

He stopped a foot away. His eyes were crazed, almost glazed with anger and hate. His hands were trembling, his voice harsh and try, quivering like his hands. "You're crazy to come back here, Mogul – crazy. You'll get yours now, you'll pay for what you did." He turned and was gone.

Bob had pushed his chair back, ready for a fight. “Who the devil was that?” he said. “You must know. He sure knows you.”

My mind was reeling. I did know him, and I feared him...but why? From where? My head hurt, my eyes were blurred. “I wish I knew,” I mumbled. “For more reasons than one, I wish I knew.”

Somehow the response made Bob mad. He’d been ready for a fight; he still was. “Look, old buddy, if I’ve ever seen a dangerous face, that was it. You may need some help around here, and I’d better damn-well know what’s going on.”

Now I was mad – not at Bob Peterson but at the situation. “Look, Bob, don’t push me. I can’t tell you something I don’t know. I asked *you* who he was. Let’s get out of here.”

We both cooled off on the way home. Bob got back into character, trying to help, trying to be a friend. “He called you Mogul. Paul...do you ski?”

The question flooded my mind with images, voices, thoughts – none of them connected. I knew I skied. I had the same familiar feelings as when I remembered tennis. I knew a mogul was a bump in a ski run. I knew I’d been called that before. I knew so many things – and they added up to so little.

I didn’t sleep much that night, and the sleep I did get was mostly dreams of the hate in those dark eyes. Fear of the unknown. If only I knew *why* I feared him.

I got some clues the next morning. In my cubbyhole by the front desk in the club was an envelope. No stamp. It had been hand delivered. On the front it read, “Mogul.”

I went back to my room, my mind fogging again, my ears ringing, hands shaking. I set the envelope on the dresser and looked at it, willing my hands to stop shaking. Then I opened it.

Mogul:

You’re a fool to come back here. You must have known I’d recognize you. You’ve changed a little in ten years. You have a different look in your eye. But I’d know you anywhere. But it doesn’t matter. I was about to go to England to find you. I’d have found you sometime, no matter where you were. You just made it quicker, and easier. I sat in a cell for eight years thinking about what I’d do to you when I found you. You double-crossed me, Mogul. You wouldn’t go along. I was like a big brother to you, and you sent me to prison. I’ll kill you Mogul, sooner or later, probably sooner.

Forge

It was the name that stuck – Forge. He was like a big brother to me, the note said...and it rang true, somehow. Forge! The feeling inside was a mixture – love *and* hate, respect *and* abhorrence...and fear, always fear. Who was he? For a moment I thought I knew what to do. Find him, *tell* him. Tell him I remember nothing. Ask him who I was. Trust him, follow him. Familiar...some of those thoughts were *familiar*. No! Don’t follow him! Reject him! He’s wrong! I had debated the same thing before...somewhere...sometime...and I had rejected him, I had exposed him, done something to convict him. Where? When? Ten years ago? What about England? When was I there? Did he mean New England?

And now what? This was a threat, a threat to my life. The police? What would I say? Same dilemma. Same doubts.

One part of me wanted to run; another part, to stay, to find and follow up on the only person who had recognized me since the accident. I compromised. I walked out, got on my bike,

headed for Yellowstone. I'd get away, just far enough to think, to try to remember, and to be safe. Then I'd decide whether to come back. It was Saturday. I didn't have any lessons until Monday. I got on my Honda and left.

I hadn't been to Yellowstone since coming to Jackson. I'd thought about it... I suspected clues were there, but I hadn't been. The bike ride was a wild flood of overlapping emotions. I knew the road, knew the turns, even knew I'd go to the Old Faithful Inn. The questions kept coming. How did Forge find my room? Why didn't he try something there? How well did he know me? Did he know I was on my way to Yellowstone? Did he know where I'd go once I got there?

I arrived in the afternoon, took a room – lucky to get one, the clerk said. I walked around the geyser trail, calming myself, trying to relax, to think straight. Twice I had that eerie feeling of being watched. No evidence – I saw no one but tourists, park rangers.

By twilight I was feeling better. My head had cleared a little. Forge, whoever he was, didn't know I was here. If he did find me, we would talk. I would find out who I was. The whole thing was a blessing disguised... disguised as fear.

I wandered back toward the inn. With the clearing of my mind came a clearing of my appetite. I remembered the smell and taste of fresh native cutthroat trout and the restaurant just off the huge lobby of the hotel. I headed for it.

As I pushed the wide door and moved into the crowded lobby the feeling came again. Watched! By whom? From where?

A family with several children was coming out of the restaurant. A little boy was running, laughing, looking over his shoulder, talking to his brother. He crashed into the side of my leg just as I heard a quiet but distinct sound somewhere above me, high above me.

“Spit!” how did I know that sound? A silencer? A gun with a silencer! There was a “thud” on the bare pine floorboards a foot away from me, right where I had stood when the boy ran into me. Look up! I saw him high in the catwalks under the log roof, five stories above me. I saw the gun in his hand, barrel thickened and lengthened by the silencer. He was aiming again. I lunged to the side heard two more “spits,” and a lady, the mother of the boy, screamed, held her upper arm, blood showing through her fingers.

The lobby mass-panicked. People were pointing up at Forge, screaming, pushing, trying to get under the protection of the second-floor balcony that surrounded the lobby.

Forge was moving, trying to escape the eyes below, running along the catwalk toward the narrow staircase that angles up along the log roof. His foot caught something and he tripped. The heavy revolver thudded against the logs of the catwalk, fell – in slow motion it seemed – and crashed against the lobby floor. Forge was hanging by one arm from the catwalk, trying to pull himself back up. His hand was slipping. He was screaming. The scream was coming down, its pitch deepening. He was falling. I turned my head but heard the sickening thud as his body smashed onto the board floor. He was moaning. He was still alive. A park ranger was bending over him. People were screaming.

I went out of the front door into the cool clear night. My mind was swimming. The threat was gone. Was it gone? Was the only human link to my identity gone? Was I relieved or disappointed?

No one would have been able to tell that I was the target, but there would be questions. They would hold everyone, question everyone. I had to get away. My room would be far enough, just away from the lobby.

In the quiet of the room I tried to think. Forge was still alive...or might be. He had tried to kill me...no questions, no further dialogue, just a shot from above. A silenced gun. I was sure most people hadn't heard the "spit" and wouldn't have recognized the sound for what it was. Why had I? Was it a clue? His plan must have been to shoot me in the top of the head. I would drop without a sound. The confusion below would center around me. He would slip down and away unseen.

I waited a while, slipped out of the side door, walked across the geyser basin to the smaller lodge, and had dinner there. Everyone was talking about the shots, about the gunman. Apparently an ambulance had come. Apparently he was still alive; or was the ambulance for the woman?

I went back, went to bed, and unaccountably slept soundly all night. When I awoke it was fully light outside. I went to the main dining room for breakfast, walked through the same lobby. People were still talking about the incident. It was easy, without asking a single question, to overhear enough to know what I needed to. The woman was all right, a flesh wound in her shoulder. Forge was in a coma – massive head injuries, several broken bones, internal bleeding, slim chance of recovering consciousness. No one knew who he was. The police were trying to find out. They didn't know who the target was, or whether there *was* a target, or whether Forge was a madman, a potential mass killer.

I knew better. I knew I was the target. I knew there were people in Jackson who knew Forge. The police would locate them. They would look for motives. Would there be clues? Would they find things that would tell me who I was? Should I go to the police, or was I wanted for something, guilty or something, as Forge's letter might imply?

I had to wait and see. They would find out who he was without my help. I went back to Jackson. It was Sunday. I was supposed to be back at the tennis courts Monday. I called Bob Peterson and told him what had happened. He phoned a man named Jack Spur, one of the two that Forge was with at the Cowboy Bar two nights before. Spur hadn't heard about the accident...didn't seem to care very much. Said he hoped the police didn't find him, that he didn't want to get involved, that he didn't know Forge very well other than he'd been in prison and used to be a ski instructor. Said he had no idea why Forge had come over to our table on Friday night. Bob called the other guy too. Same story.

So I waited.

On Monday the full story broke in the papers. The *Denver Post* identified Leonard Forge as a former resident of Teton Village, where he had headed the ski patrol, and as a recently released convict who had served eight years in the Wyoming state prison on embezzlement and extortion charges and for armed robbery of Jackson Hole, Inc., the ski resort. He was still in critical condition but had partially regained consciousness on one occasion.

I couldn't wait now. I knew where Forge had worked; I knew I was a skier, perhaps had been on the ski patrol with him. When I finished my last lesson I got on my bike and rode to Teton Village. The police had already been there, doing what I was doing – asking questions. But my questions were different. "Do you know me? Have you seen me before? I think I used to work here. Do you have records of the ski patrol or of ski instructors? Who works here that was here ten years ago?"

No, no, no...no answers. "There is a lot of turnover here, sir. People work for a few months, a year, and then they move on, or quit and ski full-time for a winter. No, there are no records of the ski patrol ten years ago. No, there's no one here now who was here then. Wait!...except for Mr. Gray, the manager, he's been here forever..."

I found Mr. Gray. No, sorry, he didn't recognize me. "Why?" he asked. Was it about the shooting? The police had already been there. No, he didn't recognize or remember Forge either. Were we connected? Should he call the police?

I left faster than I had come in, more frustrated at every step. Someone *must* remember me!

I went back into town, back to the Cowboy Bar where it had started, sat down to think. Had another ginger ale and it happened again. Another knowing glance – this one not hostile. A woman, middle-aged, walked toward me.

"Hey, didn't you used to teach at the village?"

"Yes." (What else could I say?)

"I remember you; you were the one that finally got me into a parallel. You were young, weren't you? You still *are* young, an it's ten years ago now. Are you going to teach again?"

"No, I don't think so. Listen, I'll bet you can't even remember the name of the guy who first got you to parallel." (It was corny, but it was the first thing that came to mind.)

"You forget, you never told me your name. I just called you Mogul...but I think your real name was Perry...something like that, started with a P...Preston maybe. Now let's test *you*. I bet you don't remember *my* name, and I probably gave you more ten-dollar tips than anyone you ever taught."

I needed information. Maybe she could help. I told her impulsively, "Look, this will sound strange, but I not only don't remember you, I don't remember *me*. I've lost my memory. Will you tell me everything you remember about me?"

Her look grew defensive, suspicious. "Come off it, Mogul! You remembered me just fine a minute ago. What is this, a new approach? You were pretty direct before. If you've got amnesia, maybe you'd better go see my husband. Or have you forgotten that I have one, and that he's a doctor?"

I tried again, but I knew it was futile. "Hey, it's really true, I swear it is. I need your help."

She was already on her way out of the door.

On Thursday, Forge woke up. I had found that I could call the hospital desk and ask his condition and get an official report without saying who I was or why I wanted to know. On Thursday, at lunch, I called. "Mr. Forge is much better today. He has regained consciousness and is off the critical list."

"When are visiting hours?" (I asked it instinctively.)

"Four to six."

"That you."

Did I want to see him? Was there anything to gain? I didn't know the answers...and that was precisely *why* I had to see him. I had no other starting point, no where else to go.

I decided to use *his* procedure, to write him a letter first. The letter was blunt and to the point. I had lost my memory in an accident; I knew neither who he was or why he was after me. I was coming to see him. I knew he had the keys to my identity. I'd pay him whatever I had to tell me. I dropped the note off Thursday night and the nurse took it up to him.

On Friday at 4:15 I was standing outside his door. I took a deep breath and walked in. Forge was sitting up, his bed cranked up to accommodate his position. One arm and one leg were in casts, as were most of the trunk of his body. His head was heavily bandaged. The look in his eyes was more cunning than angry.

“An interesting letter, Mogul. it explains the different look in your eye. I think I believe it.” (He seemed lucid, coherent.)

“Some people do, some don’t.”

“You’ve told a lot of people, then?”

“No, a few.”

“I’m honored you’d include me in your confidence.” His voice was sarcastic, filled again with hate.

“You’re the only chance I’ve got, Forge. I don’t know why you tried to kill me. Will you tell me who I am?”

Forge’s eyes were burning now. It was as though he’d just had an invitation to do something he’d planned to do anyway, something he’d thought about carefully.

“Yes, I’ll tell you. For a snake like yourself, knowing who you are is more painful than death, and I want you to suffer to the maximum. Don’t ask me any questions, though, because when I’m done I’m done. I’ll tell you what I’ll tell you, no more. And Mogul, keep looking over your shoulder. If the truth doesn’t hurt you enough, I’m going to be behind you somewhere, and I’ll hurt you more.”

It’s hard to write what he told me, not because I don’t remember it but because of the pain it carries. Somehow, though, I know I have to write it, to think it, to look for some flaw in it, some reason not to believe it.

There was relish in Forge’s voice as he told it. The more it hurt, the more he liked it. It was as though the telling gave him new strength, new energy. The face was not that of a man with a broken and hurt body, it was the face of vengeance, of bitterness and spite.

“You’re a traitor, Mogul. Don’t ask me your real name. I’ve decided to never tell. You’re a traitor and a fool.

“Your father was a great man. I knew him once. A great man. You’re a traitor to him. You said you loved him, and he was your ideal, but you turned on him. You robbed him, you ran from him, and the only reason he didn’t go after you was some sad, altruistic idea he had that you would straighten yourself out and come back to him.

“You came out here to ski, and fella, you *can* ski. You were the only person on the mountain who could do what I could. Sometimes I thought you could do more. You left your home and your school. You were a traitor to your family, they didn’t even know where you were.

“Like a fool, I took you in. I got you a job on the patrol, I got you teaching. You moved in with me. I was like a big brother to you. Then you turned traitor on me too. I had a plan to make some money. It was a sure bet. I let you in on it. But you wanted to take it for yourself. You framed me. You got away with the money. You got most of it quietly, using my plan, and then you nearly killed a little night cashier at the lodge when you took the last of it. There are some people who know you did it. You’ll still get yours! You turned on the two people you respected most, Mogul, your father and me. You know what I’m telling you is true – I can tell by your eyes. You go think about it, wallow in it. Now get out. I’ll never tell you another thing.”

I went home and wrote down all I could remember, looking then as I’m looking now for a flaw, for proof that it isn’t true. The trouble is, I keep finding parts I know *are* true. The part about my father pierces me each time I think it. I know him, somehow...he was good, he was wise. I know I respected and loved him more than anyone else – and Forge knew it! And even the part about Forge, even though I still see the hate in his eyes, even though I think I hate him, when he said I used to think of him as a big brother I knew it was true. I hated the knowledge, but I knew it.

I don't know what to do now. At first I thought I'd go to the authorities, ask about Forge's crimes, see what the official version is. But his words came back: "There are some who know you did it. You'll still get yours." I might walk into a trap. I might be arrested. The fear of being asked questions I can't answer...by the authorities, by the police...it paralyzes me. I can't take that route, not now, at least.

Forge is going to be in the hospital for a long time, that much is clear – and in jail after that. I won't want to be around when he gets out...fear, I guess, but that fear is less significant than the fear I have of *what I might be*. Suddenly I'm not at all sure I want the answers for the question, Who am I? *or* for the question WHO AM I?

Saturday, August 9 (4th month)

Above Jenny Lake, Teton Park

I can't shake what Forge said. Bob Peterson knows something is bothering me. He knows I'm not telling him much. He's the only person who knows I was the target. I wonder sometimes if it would help to talk to him about it, about the whole thing. I keep rejecting the thought, though. I guess it's a sense of guilt or shame. I suppose I believe what Forge said is true.

It's hard to think straight. I long for the days when I had no theory about my past. It's hard to look in the mirror. Words like *traitor* and *criminal* come to me in my sleep.

I cling to the hope that Forge concocted the whole thing. He is vicious. He wanted so much to hurt me. And on his back in the hospital, maybe all he could do to hurt was to attack my lack of memory with a destructive lie. That would explain the cunning look in his eye, the relish he took as he observed the effect it had on me.

Then why *did* it hit me with such force? Why did it ring familiar? No...it's true. At least, parts of it are true. Which parts? I doubt myself too much to even want to find out.

The one thing that is countering those doubts is my own observations of myself...the feelings I've had since Mexico; the feelings for children, the lump I get in my throat when I see beauty or hear it, the compassion I feel for people. I'm in the hills now, a thick pine forest above Jenny Lake. The first touch of fall is already in the thin air. I'm surrounded by beauty. Today, right now, at least, the thought of myself as a traitor, as a cruel or self-serving man, seems absurd, hollow, unrelated to the real me that I feel – the me that thinks, that writes these words right now and puts the paper into the old leather portfolio that I still carry almost everywhere I go.

Monday, August 11 (4th month)

Jackson, Wyoming

I went back to the hospital today. Forge is still in bad shape. He looked worse in a way than the first time. He wouldn't say a single word; just smiled...*glowered* would describe it better. His face was saying, "It's getting to you, isn't it?...You know it's true...suffer."

I need someone to share it with, but there really isn't anyone. Bob Peterson is a "live and let live" sort of guy who seems to have forgotten the whole thing. I'm trying to do the same...succeeding to a degree. The valley is more spectacular every day. I'm living a day at a time, and life really is beautiful, despite the shock and fear of Forge.

Friday, August 15 (4th month)

Jackson, Wyoming

One key is that I'm trying to worry more about who I am and less about who I was. Frustrating as the search sometimes seems, it is also exciting. I'm an explorer. I'm discovering things about myself that are happy surprises. The sailing, the tennis, the skiing (I'm anxious for snow, to see just how good I am). I was beginning to think that all I knew was sports, and then, just yesterday, a chamber music quartet was performing in the club lounge (a welcome change from the electric guitars that have held forth there all summer). Another surprise – I knew the music. It was a canon by Pachelbel. They played another piece. It was a Mozart concerto. I could see notes in my mind, bass clef, cello notes. When they took their break I asked the cello player if I could look at his instrument. I fingered the neck. My hand knew it, moved up and down it. "It looks like you play," he said. "Want to sit in for me?"

"No, thanks, it's been a long time." I wasn't going to press my luck and try for another Cheyenne tennis experience. "Just wanted to look. Nice instrument."

Today I went to Jackson's only music store. They had one cello. I tried it in the back room. It took me back so fast that there was a moment when I thought I'd remember everything. The mind-opening closed, but the cello remained. I played for over an hour, by memory – classics, light melodies. It was a poor instrument but the feeling was so good, so familiar. The beauty of the music helped me, somehow...had the same effect as the beauty of the Tetons...gave me more faith in myself.

When I got in tonight I took out the red sheet at the back of the portfolio, the one that says "Things That Matter." It looks like this now:

THINGS THAT MATTER:

1. Freedom
2. Relationships
3. Beauty (not just because it gives pleasure...I feel it is part of the reason I am here, part of who I really am)

Freedom, relationships, beauty. It may sound simple and melodramatic, but that red sheet is helping me...more than anything else is helping me right now.

*September 1 (5th month)
Jackson, Wyoming*

So many things seem familiar. The love I feel for nature, the attraction I feel to children, so many things. The memories are so close...just out of reach, it seems.

It is as though a curtain or veil had been drawn across my mind. Not a black drape, not opaque...a translucent veil...one that lets through light but not shape, one that stretches thin at times but never quite tears.

The veil is similar to the semi permeable "selective membranes" we learn about in chemistry; it lets some things penetrate and pass through, but no others. Feelings go through, and light, and subconscious knowledge and intuition of all kinds, but nothing about me, nothing about who I am or where I came from.

When I think about it too long, I begin to feel tugs on my heart that are a mixture of hope and pain. I feel longings for home. Longings for a home I can't know or even imagine.

Somehow anything *beautiful* tugs at the veil. Children, nature, peace, things that are good and pure...they choke me up, awaken in me these longings that I can't understand.

It's Indian summer in Jackson. Perfect days with warm sun; perfect nights with a touch of frost.

Saturday, September 13 (5th month)
Teton Park, Wyoming

We floated the Snake River again today. Bob and Kate Peterson and Kate's sister, visiting from Southern California. Fall is really here. The river is low and crystal clear. The aspens are already bright yellow. I've never seen the valley so beautiful (within memory).

Kate's sister is interesting. The typical Southern California coed, tall and tan and blond. She'll be here for another week.

Anyway, the point of the story is this: Floating on the river today symbolized something to me. Even though the water is low, the current is still strong. In a rubber boat you can't fight the current much, and as it turns out it's best *not* to fight it. It takes the best course and takes you with it.

I think I've been fighting the current too much. The more I fight it, the less progress I make. I'm going to try to go with the current more, react more instinctively, do what comes naturally to me. I think that will lead me closer to who I am.

Saturday, September 20 (5th month)
Teton Park, Wyoming

Ferris Wheel Autumn

Today I'm
Analyzing autumn,
Trying to decide what makes it tingle.
You can feel autumn in the air before you see it.
You can feel the air.
In summer you feel heat, in winter, cold,
But in early autumn you feel the actual *air*.
It tingles the skin, passes though and
Quickens the heart.
Next, still before a leaf turns,
Your eyes sense autumn.
It's hard to tell why;
Something about the shadows – longer, deeper,
More vivid relief, higher contrast between
Deeper shadow and more golden sunlight...
And a new faint, blue-gray hue
Where the mountains meet the sky.
Two weeks ago, the leaves did start to turn,
And this week, high in the Tetons,
Autumn reaches its peak.
It is like a revival...nature exploding around me.
The stimulus of bursting color and tart air
Is nearly more than my receptors can receive.
My senses reel...drunk from

The kaleidoscope of reds and oranges and golds.
The late afternoon slanting sunshine
Flits almost *up* through the trees,
Burnishing the deep gold of the cottonwoods,
Putting lights in the sun-yellow quaking aspens,
Setting them aflame
Among the deep-green contrast of unaffected pines.
The mountains seem to grow higher.
Under the new brightness and color.
They tower to all sides and above
As I ride my bike through a tunnel of flame,
With cool strips of blue sky and gray road
Above and below.

I slip off the mountain into the
Long-shadowed, flat green checkerboard valley.
Hay bales geometrically square
Shoot out black, angular shadows
Across straw-colored fields bordered
With deep, uncut green.
The fresh breeze so full
Of crispness and tart smells
That I breathe deep instinctively,
Wanting more of that air to be *in* me,
To be part of me.

Autumn has the stomach-lifting thrill of the
Downward arc of a Ferris wheel.
Summer is the top, warm and high.
Winter is the bottom, lower, slower, more inside.
The way up is spring,
Growing, lifting, bursting toward the top.
But my insides jump at autumn,
The thrill-tingle in air and eye.

Friday, October 3 (6th month)
Cambridge, Mass.

“Help!”

It was a thin, floating word, forlorn and almost rhetorical instead of urgent, the tone so out of context with the word that I wasn't sure I'd heard it until it came again.

I was climbing alone in Teton Park. I had taken a day off to get away from tennis. It was nearly twilight on a Friday evening exactly a week ago, and I was heading down. I hadn't seen anyone all day because I was in a remote portion at the north end of the Teton range, above a small lodge that hadn't yet become a tourist trap.

I froze now, stone-still, listening hard, trying to get a direction from the voice. Finally it came again, clearly a female voice, clearly in pain. "Hurry, Kathy! Oh please, hurry!"

Somewhere above me. How had I missed her coming down? Over to the right, beneath the cliff.

I started across a vein of loose shale, wondering what I would find, what I would do, how much daylight was left. I had no climbing equipment, no first-aid kit, nothing but some matches and beef jerky in one pocket and a half-full, one-quart canteen on my hip. It had been just a half-day climb...more of a walk, no rock work, no chances, back to the lodge before dark.

I came around a rock shelf and suddenly the voice was much clearer. She wasn't yelling now; it was almost a whisper, in fact, and she was talking to herself. "Come on, now, Chris. Hang in there, keep calm."

I saw her before she saw me – she was below me, but her voice echoed off the cliff above. She was half lying, half sitting on a granite outcropping, propped up on her right elbow. Her left arm was limp, her right leg under her at a wrong angle, blood showing through the khaki slacks just below the knee. Her long dark hair was matted with blood on one side. Two impressions were instant: One, she was beautiful; two, she was rather badly hurt.

I started my descent. She heard me, looked up, blue eyes wide, first startled, then relieved. "Kathy found you?" she said.

"No, I was on my way down and heard you. How bad is it?"

The voice that had sounded so forlorn was now controlled, almost confident. "I feel all the way," she said, tossing her head toward the cliff. I think my arm and leg are both broken. I must have hit my head, because I was unconscious for a while. Kathy, my friend, started down for help nearly an hour ago."

"We're at least an hour and a half from the lodge," I said. "I just hope they can find us in the dark. Does Kathy know the country?"

"It's our first time here," she said. "We're from Boston." The fear had come back into her voice, but it was under control. She was strong.

"I don't want to touch your leg or arm if there's a chance you can get medical help tonight...but let's look at that head."

I couldn't tell much from looking; there was a lot of blood, but it was high, above the temple, and it looked more like a cut than a blow.

"Does your head hurt much?"

"No...well, my leg hurts worse, anyway."

I gently took the leg and straightened it a little, rolling her weight off of it. She winced, her cheeks flushed, but she said it felt better.

By now the sun had slipped behind the peak of the south Teton and it was noticeably colder. I gathered some brush and sticks and started a fire, partly for warmth and partly to guide the search party I hoped would be coming soon.

When the fire was blazing, it seemed that the next most useful thing I could do was to get her to talk, to take her mind off the pain I knew she felt but which showed only in the wide light-blue eyes.

"What do you do in Boston, Chris?" (Something was familiar...her name? Boston? Something in her face? Her eyes?)

"How did you know my name?" Those wide eyes again – pain, gratitude, feelings of all kinds, and so light blue even in the gathering darkness and golden firelight.

"You said it when you were giving yourself that pep talk about hanging in there."

“I always talk to myself.”

Did she blush? She was the kind of girl whose beauty you are never unaware of, even when your mind is on the danger of the situation, the darkness, the cold, the extent of her injury. I could tell she was tall, slender, athletic I would guess...but in a sleek, graceful, feminine sort of way. I wondered how she had fallen, so I left the Boston question for a moment and asked.

“Kathy and I had roped ourselves together,” she said. “She was nearly down the steep part. She slipped, and it pulled me off.”

“Let’s not talk about it – how’s the pain?”

“I think it’s getting better in my arm, but my leg is worse.”

“Let me have a better look at it,” I said, trying hard to sound reassuring and as though I would have some idea how to interpret what I saw.

“Please do,” she said. There was something enormously appealing about her. She was vulnerable, somehow, wanting to be cared for...but strong, not crying, not bitter that it had happened.

I cut the hem of her pant leg with my knife and tore the material to above the knee. Then I wished I had looked sooner. It was easy to see that the leg was broken, easy to see where and how it was broken. Midway between the slender ankle and the knee the break had dislocated and the lower bone jutted out, overlapping the upper bone and nearly coming through the skin. Back to mind came visions of pulling a leg straight, snapping the bone back on line with itself, then splinting it to hold it here. Had I *done* that before? Did I remember how? Or was it just some vague recollection from a movie or a first-aid course? The leg was badly discolored and the bone looked as if it could push through the skin at any moment. I summoned my confident voice again and said, “I’d better set that and splint it.”

She was looking at her bent leg – no panic, just concern and pain in the eyes. She repeated her last statement. “Please do.”

She was lying on her back on the granite outcropping, her head propped against a tiny quaking aspen.

“I think this will hurt,” I said. “Grab that aspen with your good hand and hang on. I’ve got to try to pull down on your foot and stretch the leg out straight.”

She said nothing, just grabbed the base of the little two-inch aspen trunk and shut her eyes.

Something (instinct? Experience?) told me I had to pull hard, and steady, and straight. I did, and felt the bones slide and set. Chris screamed – not a scream of terror or lack of control, but a natural, release kind of scream. The first scream I’d ever liked. Her eyes opened instantly. “You did it. It’s better, it looks better...I think it feels better.”

“They may have to do it again,” I said, “but it’s better than it was. I don’t think it will break the skin now.”

In a few moments Chris’s features softened noticeably, and she seemed almost to relax.

“You asked about Boston,” she said. “I go to graduate school there. Kathy and I are roommates, and this is the end of summer break. Excuse the pun.”

I liked her – she had guts, she had wits, she had brains, she was beautiful...but what a strange first meeting! My impulse was to pick her up and carry her to the lodge.

“What university?” I said.

“A well-known eastern business school,” she said, seemingly sure I’d know what she meant.

“You go to Harvard? To Harvard Business school?”

“Yes.”

She was matter-of-fact about it, unaffected about being one of a handful of women in America’s most prestigious graduate school. (How did I know that – did I have some tie there?) I could picture ivy-covered walls, Baker Library, Aldrich Hall. I knew the names.

“You sound like you know a little about Harvard,” she said.

“Well, just a little.”

“No, I mean you *sound* like you are from New England.”

Now that uncomfortable feeling...of simple personal questions I can’t answer...I tried a quick shift.

“Yes, sort of. You’re not from there are you?”

“No, Michigan...near Detroit. But I love Cambridge and Boston, and I love Cape Cod. I’m wishing I’d stayed there sailing and forgotten about Kathy’s Jackson Hole idea...”

Then a quick glance up, slightly embarrassed...spontaneous. “But I’m glad I met you.” There was nothing patronizing about it; she meant it, and she smiled for the first time, showing a row of perfect white teeth.

“I would have guess you were a model,” I said, anxious to keep the conversation from turning back to questions about me.

“No,” she murmured, with that slightly embarrassed, genuinely modest tone again. “I’m not cut out for that...not even sure I agree with the concept.”

It was dark now, the deep and lovely dark that you get on a moonless night in the mountains. Above the glow of the fire the spangled stars grew brighter by the minute, the Milky Way arching across the center of the sky.

Despite her condition, she was aware of the sky’s beauty. Her eyes glanced, then gazed up. “The stars are unbelievably beautiful,” she said. “It’s like we’re closer to them here than anywhere I’ve ever been.”

She continued to look up at them, not embarrassed by the long silence, not embarrassed that I was looking at her. She was tanned and had coffee brown hair; maybe that was why her light blue eyes were so striking. Her face was classic – high cheekbones, angular nose, wide expressive mouth.

“Is the fire warm enough?” I asked.

“It’s fine...Do you know I haven’t even asked your name? I’m sorry...I’m not usually this preoccupied.”

“Paul, Paul Woodcock.” Questions coming...I recovered quickly. “How is that arm?”

“I can move it around. Maybe it’s just a sprain or a greenstick fracture.”

“A what?”

“Where the bone is cracked, bent a little, not broken clear though.”

“Oh!”

Silence for a minute, and our eyes caught each others’, held. Did she hear me catch my breath? Did she feel the same little start I felt?

“Where are you from, Paul?”

“Oh, here and there...How fast a climber is Kathy?”

“Hey, don’t change the subject. I’m usually pretty good at getting people to talk, and I’ve barely got you to tell me your name.”

“Sorry.”

It was spontaneous, my deciding to tell her everything I knew...or everything I didn’t know. I’d told no one else except Rita and Marian four months ago. To others I’d offered a

fabricated history, or general evasive action...but somehow it seemed right to tell Chris. Maybe it would take her mind off her pain...pass the time until a rescue team came.

“Chris, I don’t know where I’m from, I don’t even know who I am. Are you ready for a story you won’t believe?”

“Yes.”

I heard more genuine interest in that one word that I’d felt in everyone else combined. I talked nonstop for the next hour. She said nothing...except with her eyes, which said they understood and cared about everything I said. As I talked, those eyes got wider and wider, not in disbelief but in interest...and, I thought, concern. Her look showed that she wished she could help, and that the mystery of it all intrigued and excited her.

When I finally paused, she asked clear, quick questions (I had certainly taken her mind off the pain).

“You’ve had no clues? Have you tried to get publicity? Does anything seem familiar?”

I answered her questions honestly, candidly, without the feelings of threat and uneasiness that type of question usually brings me. Then on one answer my feelings flowed more freely than I intended.

“I get a kind of déjà vu all the time...but I’m never sure it it’s flashes into my actual memory or just normal déjà vu like everyone gets. For instance, right now – I feel like I’ve know you before, like I care for you much more that I should after just these couple of hours.”

There was that look again...the blush that showed in her eyes rather than on her face. But no embarrassment, no inhibition.

“I feel the same way, Paul.”

I think I might have kissed her then. We’d forgotten our pain somehow – hers from her leg and me from my memory. Our faces came close in the firelight and there was that dizzy, magnetic feeling. But just then, as in stories and movies, just at the moment when the kiss should have happened, something external intervened. It was a sound first, a loose rock dislodging somewhere below us, then a beam of light from a flashlight, then a shout. The search party had arrived.

The descent to the lodge wasn’t as bad or as long as I had feared. Kathy (a girl as unlike Chris as it would be possible to find – short, spectacled, boisterous) had managed to create considerable anxiety over her “friend who had nearly killed herself falling off a cliff,” and a search group of four had followed her back up the trail. Two were climbing guides, and they brought Chris out in relative comfort on a stretcher. I walked behind, as close as I could, and twice Chris reached back to take my hand when she noticed my nearness. Just a simple quick squeeze that seemed to say “thanks,” and “we know something they don’t, don’t we?”

When we got down to the road, they put Chris in the back seat of a sedan and two of the guides said they would rive her to the Jackson hospital. Kathy had to go along, of course, and there was really no more room. I gave Chris’s hand a squeeze and said I’d come and see her the next day. She started to say something, then stopped, smiled, and nodded her head. As the car started, I said, “What are your favorite flowers?” “Daisies” was the last word I heard.

I walked back to the lodge with the other two from the search party. It was fairly late and I was more tired than I had realized. I went to my room and slept soundly until sunrise.

I awoke with that special feeling of well-being and anticipation that comes from a good memory about to be revived – perhaps a Saturday in summer, a pair of new shoes you’ve yet to wear – only stronger.

I wondered what time visiting hours were at the Jackson hospital. It was now eight o'clock. I didn't want to be in too much of a hurry. I was enjoying the anticipation too much. There was something rare and special between Chris and me. I knew it, and I knew that she knew it. I was anxious to know the extent of her injury, but I sensed that it was not serious; a simple fracture, a badly sprained arm...probably a leg case for four or five weeks. I took my time, had breakfast, drove the 18 miles to Jackson, found a tiny floral shop that had only roses and carnations, drove back outside of town, picked some wild daises, drove back into town, and finally pulled up at the little Jackson hospital at about eleven o'clock.

It wasn't until I approached the front desk that I realized I didn't know her last name. it was a momentary hesitation, over as quick as it came – they would only have had one girl with a broken leg come in last night.

"I'm here to see Chris, the girl brought in last night with the broken leg."

"Sorry, sir, she didn't stay."

"She what?"

"She didn't stay."

"But she had a broken leg!"

"I know that, sir. The doctor put a cast on her leg and a sling on her arm last night and she checked herself out early this morning."

"Oh!" ... At least the injuries weren't bad. I turned, walked away, turned back. "By the way, what is her last name?"

The girl gave me a quizzical look. "Just a minute, I'll check." She pulled out a folder. "Bowles," she said, "Kathy Bowles."

"No, not Kathy, that's her friend. What is Chris's last name?"

"I don't know, it says Kathy Bowles here. Oh...I see, yes, Chris is the name of the patient, but Kathy Bowles paid the bill...I don't show a last name for Chris. It was so late when they brought her in, we didn't do a formal check-in on her."

That seemed ridiculous to me – no last name for a patient. I thought of pursuing it further, but no, I had to get back to that lodge.

I was hurrying now...none of that restful, blissful feeling of the morning remained. Something seemed wrong...she should have been here...I wanted to find her quickly.

The clerk at the front desk must have thought I was collecting a debt. "Kathy Bowles," I said. "What room?"

"She checked out, sir, she and her friend...about two hours ago."

I couldn't believe it. I felt numb.

"Checked out? She had a broken leg! How *could* she check out?"

"The leg was in a cast; she had crutches."

It sounded like a replay of the receptionist at the hospital.

"To where?"

"Beg your pardon, sir."

"To where? Where did they go?"

"Well, I don't know *where* they went, sire, we don't usually ask that."

"Well, I need to find them...I need an address, a forwarding address."

"I'll look, sir."

The clerk came back with a piece of paper. "Sorry, sir, no address...but you're Mr. Woodcock, aren't you?"

“Yes,” I said, almost grabbing the note she held.

I didn’t look at it until I was back in my room. Somehow I felt that it required privacy. I sat on the bed and unfolded the single sheet of paper.

Paul,

You’ll think I’m terrible to just leave, but I thought about it all night and it seems the *only* sensible thing to do. I felt more for you than I wanted to on the mountain last night. Maybe it was just gratitude to you and concern about your memory. I don’t know. But it scared me a little.

Paul, you may not have a past, but I do. I’m engaged. Somehow I just felt I had better go. Anyway, school starts in a week.

Thanks, Chris

In retrospect I’m surprised that I didn’t have to think about what to do next. Within an hour I was at the Jackson airport buying a ticket to Boston. The best connection was into Chicago that night, out to Boston the next morning. I knew, somehow, instinctively, that it was not a time to think, or to be logical or deliberate. I was going purely on feelings, but I knew the feelings were right.

I also knew it wouldn’t be hard to find her. Two girl graduate students at Harvard Business School, one named Kathy Bowles. Christ hadn’t been hiding, just running. She didn’t even tell me not to follow, she just put the ball in my court by leaving and by telling me the truth. It was my move, and the move had to be to find her.

Everything about Boston was like a dream remembered. I knew the names of places automatically – Logan Airport, Haymarket Square, the Wharf, the Common, Harvard Square. I could find places, things were familiar to me...but for no apparent reason...noting triggered a single *personal* thought. When was I here? Why do I know this? Where is the connection? Blank!

I took exactly half a day to look around, to try to discover the source of familiarity...then I went to find Chris.

School would start in a week, and the offices at Harvard Business School were bustling. The secretary only took two minutes to give me an address and phone number for Kathy Bowles. I said I was an old friend wanting to look her up (half true, at least). I thought for a moment of phoning, quickly realized that seeing was a better move (one “escape” was enough...a phone was too easy to hang up).

They lived in the upstairs of a big old Victorian house in Watertown. I saw a the name on the mailbox – Christine Jacobs. I knocked for what seemed like five minuets before a small, hard-of-hearing man came to the downstairs door.

“They’re not here, they’re in Wyoming.”

“No, they came back.”

“They’re in Jackson, Wyoming.”

“No. I just came from Jackson Hole, Wyoming. They left there yesterday.”

“You what?”

“I just came from Jackson. They left there yesterday morning.”

“Yes, I know, and early *this* morning they left here again and went back there.”

I shook my head trying to clear it. “You’re sure?” I yelled.

“Yes, I’m sure...crazy girls, they were only here for one night...I don’t even know why they came back. I told them I’d hold the place for them.”

My mind was swimming – first, anger that she had escaped again; then pleasure, almost joy. She’d gone back, it could only mean one thing – she’d changed her mind, she wanted to see me again...she needed to see me again just as I needed to see her.

But it’s getting expensive, I thought, as the cab drove me back to the airport. About halfway there I decided now was the time to use the phone. Either keep her there...or stay here when she comes back...or meet in some central place like Iowa or Kansas...I asked the cabbie to stop, got out, walked into the nearest building (which turned out to be an insurance agency), and asked to use the phone.

The lodge rang her room and Chris answered (a little breathlessly, I thought). Her voice came through soft, yet clear and strong. I said “Hello, Chris.” She said, “Paul, where *are* you?” I said, “I’m in Boston.” We both laughed...and cried a little too, I guess, because there were tears in my eyes.

“Now listen, Chris, are you going to stay there for eight hours till I can get there, or do you want to meet me in Kansas?”

I felt no inclination to ask what she was thinking, what about her engagement...no questions – I just wanted to see her.

“I have a better idea than either. You stay there and I’ll come back. If you stay there, then both of the things I need to do right away will be in the same place.”

“What do you mean, Chris?”

“Trust me, Paul. You’ve made me realize something, and when I got back here and you were gone I finally admitted it to myself. I can connect to flight 807 out of Denver tomorrow morning. Meet me?”

“Yes.”

“Kathy is going to kill me.”

“We’ll make it up to her somehow. Chris...”

“Yes?”

“There’s some daisies for you...in my room. I forgot to check out, so they’re probably still there.”

Flight 807 came into Boston at 4:25. I got to the airport at noon, with some daisies...from Haymarket Square. The afternoon dragged on. I felt I’d waited here, in this airport, for someone else...who? When? Blank as ever!

Finally the plane. I watched through the concourse window. She was the third person off. Graceful on her crutches, even with the bandages on her forearm, as though she’d practiced...and no Kathy (I felt gratitude). Apparently Kathy had decided that two cross-country flights in three days were enough. Chris had on a light blue dress that matched her eyes. Her long dark hair, tousled and blood-stained the last time I’d seen it, bounced in loose curls and caught the sun as she moved down the plane’s stairs toward the concourse door. Was I expecting too much? Was I basing too much on a short evening under strange circumstances?

She had the same worries, and when we were finally face-to-face the inclination to fly into each other’s arms was subdued by the caution we both felt. It wasn’t an anticlimax or a disappointment; it was more of a prolonged anticipation...a comfortable sense of “now that we’re together again we can take our time and slow things down.”

I had rented a car. We got in, her crutches in the back seat, luggage in the truck (I called it a “boot” subconsciously and wondered for the hundredth time what my connections to England

might be). We drove, slowly, through the tunnel and into the dock area of Boston. It was a cool, cloudy day, and with both of us wanting to ask so much, say so much, neither seemed anxious to start.

We crossed the river and turned up Memorial Drive in Cambridge.

“You said you had two things to take care of here, Chris...What...or who...is the other one?”

“I think you know, Paul, but I want to be careful how I say this. I’ve been rehearsing it since Denver. Something really happened to me on that mountain. Something more painful in a way than the broken leg. I...I don’t want you to feel any obligation or anything from it, but I realized I wasn’t really in love with Jim. Jim is the other person I have to see here. Whether or not I ever see you again I’ll always be grateful to you. When I went back to Jackson it was just to apologize for leaving...and to satisfy my curiosity and how I felt. But when you were gone, and when it bothered me so much that you were gone and that I had no idea where, then I realized I really wasn’t in love with Jim. I decided I had to tell him that, whether I ever saw you again or not.”

I sat still, driving slowly, letting it sink in. there was a turnoff by the river and I pulled over into it. I switched the engine and turned to look at Chris. Her eyes were moist, and the cool breeze ruffled the dark tresses of her hair. Our eyes held each other and the dizzy feeling came back. I leaned forward slowly and kissed her, softly, lightly. I opened my eyes, dizzier than ever, and said, “Chris, we found something special on that mountain. We didn’t make it, we didn’t imagine it; we found it. I can’t wait to get to know you.”

I didn’t realize it at that moment, but the irony in what I said was that she had a past to get to know, whereas I did not.

Somehow my lack of a past didn’t stop Chris from getting to know me. Within three days I felt that she knew me better than I knew myself. She draws from me things that make me feel more real and more important than I ever remember feeling before.

Tuesday, October 7 (6th month)
Cambridge, Mass.

Chris has started her second-year classes. I’ve found a little room not far away. Whenever she’s not in class we’re together. While she studies, I try to write; while she’s in class, I try to write. (Selling a poem or story to some publication is the only way I can think of to earn some money; and writing is the only way I can get my mind off Chris, even momentarily.)

I called Bob Peterson yesterday and asked him to give my regrets to the Jackson Tennis Club. I had told them I would probably leave after the summer anyway. He is going to pick up my last check and send it, along with the few odds and ends I left back there. He’ll also try to sell my bike for me.

He told me he thought I was crazy.

I thanked him for his opinion, told him he was probably right and that if he’d met Chris he’d know why.

Saturday, October 11 (6th month)
Nantucket Island, Mass.

Cloudy morning.

The rectangle of balcony window
Is filled by three horizontal strata –
Sky, sea, sand.
Today, all three are gray.
The sky's gray is faintly blue.
The sea's gray is faintly green.
The sand's gray is faintly brown.
The only punctuation in the pastel
Is the white-capped waves
And soaring seagulls.
And now it's time
To see if Chris is awake in the next room.

Monday, October 13 (6th month)
Cambridge, back from Nantucket Island

Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. The names sounded like childhood friends when Chris mentioned them. I had said I felt like we needed to really get away and talk. Away from her Harvard, away from the half-memories that had pushed into my mind ever since I'd been here...we needed to concentrate on each other, to try to sort out what each of us was feeling.

Chris suggested the islands. Their names sounded so familiar that my first impulse was to stay away...more dead-end memories, more frustration of half remembering. Somehow, though, the thoughts that came with the words *Nantucket* and *Martha's Vineyard* were compelling, attracting, as if I'd dreamed about them but never really been there.

We left Friday afternoon, on the ferry from Hyannis on the Cape. The chill of mid-fall was in the cool air. Seagulls followed the boat, dipping and reeling. The sky was deep blue, white fluffs of clouds and the smell of salt air. All of it served as a backdrop for Chris's sparkle. The minute we were on the boat, all thoughts of case studies and essay exams washed out of her face and were replaced by her particular glow, her outdoor ruddy-cheeked, eye-flashing vitality. She was wearing a pair of baggy khaki trousers and a red t-shirt. The bandage was already off her arm, and she had a lighter walking cast on her leg. The afternoon sun caught the reds in her deep brown hair. Her eyes caught the blue-green of the rolling sea. As aware as I was of her beauty, it was something else that I was really noticing about Chris. It was her remarkable ability to be totally *with* me. Somehow we *felt* (to me) like two parts of one person rather than two separate beings. She hid nothing, shared everything. Any observation she had – about the sky, the gulls, the ship – was incomplete until she'd shared it, until I saw it as she did. And when I said something, it was as much hers as mine the instant I had said it. The boat trip took two hours, and I felt we'd come closer, felt more, in that short span than I had expected for the whole weekend.

Chris had only been to Nantucket once, but she had definite ideas; the first of which was to rent bicycles and to avoid looking twice at a taxi or any of the other few motorized vehicles that to her mind shouldn't be allowed on the island anyway. The nerve-jarring cobblestones of the little town gave way to narrow sand- and grass-lined country roads, and the salt air persisted even when we couldn't see the ocean. Chris's second conviction was a place called the White Elephant Hotel. It was a beautiful, stark white, almost Georgian-looking mansion caved up into rooms and added on with two motel-like wings.

I don't think the thought of sharing a room occurred to either of us. We had had no discussion yet of morals, of each other's views on standards of any kind (I obviously couldn't *consciously* remember any of mine anyway), but an unstated respect had materialized between us, and my inclination was to protect Chris, to pamper her...almost a "worship from afar" response. As I think back on that, it is paradoxical in a way. Chris is as real-world, as contemporary, as robust and independent as anyone I ever remember knowing. She is not ethereal, dreamlike, fragile...not at all. Yet the feeling I've had from the very first (possibly because she was hurt and needed help when I first met her) has been to protect her, to put her on a pedestal.

Anyway, as attracted as I am to her physically (and now, sitting lone, missing her, I feel that attraction strongly), the reasons for the trip were not physical. We went to Nantucket to know each other's heart and soul. Melodramatic as that may sound, it is exactly what happened.

We got our rooms at the hotel, rode the bikes along the deserted coast roads (slowly, Chris learning to keep the rubber "walker" on her foot case steady on the pedal), ate lobster at a small wooden café on the beach, and walked our bikes back to the hotel under an enormous full moon. All day and all evening we talked about what we saw, what we felt. There were long silent times...but comfortable ones...a silence that communicated as much as words.

The longest silence, I guess, was on the walk back. We had walked slowly for several minutes, seeing a lot, feeling a lot, saying nothing. My heart was pounding. I felt a little embarrassed but didn't want it to stop. We weren't touching, not even holding hands (hands were needed to push the bikes). We walked close together on the deserted road, in between the bikes, mind on the right, hers on the left. Suddenly, as if some secret signal had been given, we both stopped, turned slowly toward each other until our eyes met. I thought I heard her catch her breath, and wondered if she felt the same dizzy sensation I did. The second signal must have come...because we both let go of the bikes. Somehow they fell with a sort of soft, muffled clatter instead of a crash, and our arms were around each other, our faces close. The kiss was long and very soft. When I looked at her again her eyes were moist and had a dept of feeling and concern in them that I can't describe. "I love you," she whispered, "whoever you are."

My eyes must have had the same look . I know I saw what I felt, mirrored in hers. What I said seems clumsy now, almost ambiguous, but it was right and honest.

"I love you too, Chris, not matter what."

We must have stood there for a half-hour, holding each other tightly, feeling each other's heart pound, kissing softly again and again and harder just once. The only other words were when she said, "I'm so happy, Paul, I can't describe how happy I feel."

I couldn't either, but I tried. "I don't remember ever feeling this happy, Chris." We laughed together as we realized that, for me, that wasn't saying much.

We walked for a while, we rode some more – slow, moonlit coasting. Only by the progress of the moon across the sky did we know the night was passing. We kicked off our three shoes and walked by the cold, moonlit surf, I in it, Chris higher on the sand, keeping the cast dry. Chris told me stories about her childhood, her pets, her high school. I made up a story about me to top everyone she told me about her, and told her that we people without memories had the prerogative of having any sort of background we could imagine.

The sky was just starting to get pink on the eastern horizon when we got back to the hotel. I left her at her room with a warning. "Don't be gone when I wake up, like you were in Jackson!"

"Wouldn't do me any good...you'd find me again."

Then I said it again. "I love you, Chris, no matter what."

Thinking back, there were all sorts of subconscious feelings in that statement... feelings and fears. It has occurred to me now that "no matter what" means that I just don't know what. Maybe I'm already married. Maybe there is someone else... beyond my memory, whom I also love. I wonder if the same things occurred to Chris. The thought should worry me, make me doubt my feelings, or something. But nothing can dent my happiness. *I love her, no matter what!*

I woke up early on Saturday; looked out of the window, wrote a poem; decided to let Chris sleep; went back to sleep myself. Neither of us woke up again until nearly noon. The morning fog had burned off and it was a clear, bright day, almost hot. We had brunch, took our bikes back, traded them in on a bicycle-built-for-two, and spent the afternoon and evening riding to the parts of the island we didn't get to on Friday. We stopped in town long enough to shop a little and talk to shopkeepers. One salty old lady made our whole day when she said she'd seen a lot of young lovers but never two who looked more in love than we did.

On Sunday we went to the little New England, Cape Cod-style church that was down the street from the White Elephant. The pastor was unpretentious and gave an interesting sermon on charity. It led to a long talk between Chris and me that afternoon. I was again at the disadvantage of remembering nothing about my own religious views or lack of them, so I'm not sure whether Chris and I think exactly alike or whether I was simply agreeing with her views because they sounded logical and I had none of my own. We both have a belief in a supreme being and in his interest in mankind... and his specific interest in us as individuals. Organized religion, on the other hand, holds little appeal for either of us, and we seem to agree that honest questions are preferable to a hypocritical church membership or blind acceptance of illogical explanations. We also share (and this is one I deeply feel even if I can't specially remember) a real feeling for Jesus Christ and for his teachings.

Chris's parents, it turns out, are strong Lutherans, but Chris has never been an active member of any one church.

We came home Sunday night almost in a dream. We never made it to Martha's Vineyard. Somehow anything would have seemed anticlimactic after Nantucket. We stood on the boat dock, held hands, tried not to talk about the future, just tried to hold to the present.

It's Monday right now. I haven't seen Chris for 24 hours. She's been at school, and I've been trying to write a short story to submit for publication. I'm going to put this up now and call her. Before I do, though, I'm going to be philosophical again (nothing but emotion in this journal for the past few days).

What I had started to realize about happiness several weeks ago (when I first became friends with Bob Peterson) is now very clear to me. There is a second level of joy, a "Joy-two." It is a greater, deeper joy than the unilateral "Joy-one" of earth, body, agency. "Joy-two" is, of course, the joy of relationships... more specifically, the joy of love. Obviously I'm not the first to discover it, or write about it. Millions have done so before (though somehow, deep inside, I'm sure no one ever felt it quite as I do).

I'm also adding another side to the coin of "Joy-two," because I have been feeling a related kind of joy lately. It is the joy of accomplishment. Two of my writings, a short story and an essay that I wrote in Jackson, were accepted for publication last week (Bob Peterson forwarded the letters), one just in a small, Rocky Mountain writer's journal, but the other in *Atlantic Monthly*. What a feeling... of worth, of value, of perhaps contributing something to others... of making a small gift to someone who may read it!

What I've realized is this: "Joy-one" is a free gift. All we have to do is acknowledge it and appreciate it...the beauties of the earth, the pleasures and capacities of the physical body, and the agency of freedom of choice. But there is a greater joy, and it is essentially what we *do* with our agency and our capacities. When we use them to form *relationships* and *achievements*, then when we share our achievements with our relationships, we begin to receive "Joy-two," which both transcends and intensifies "Joy-one."

My search continues, then – both for who I am and for WHO I AM. The second search, I feel, is being answered as I learn of joy, as I feel gratitude for the two levels of happiness I have found...and gained.

*Monday, October 20 (6th month)
Cambridge, Mass.*

I know it's not wise, it's certainly not prudent, it makes no sense at all, but I guess love is an adequate excuse for anything. Chris has virtually forgotten where the Harvard Business School is. I have virtually forgotten my search for identity. We've pretty much dismissed everything but each other during this last week...and even now, sitting here, along, trying to be objective, I wouldn't change one moment of it.

We've roamed Boston, floating a foot off the ground. I know I've seen previously the places we've been to, but I haven't *really* seen them – not the way I see them now. Being with Chris deepens the colors, sharpens the focus, puts an extra measure of interest and intrigue in everything.

We've had hardly any sleep. We've hardly needed it. It seems that we regenerate each other. There hasn't been time. We need every moment to talk, to share, to discuss, to discover...things about each other, things about ourselves, things about the magic that happens when we're together. There is a synergism (a big word, but descriptive) that makes *us*, together, greater than the sum of our parts.

We love Haymarket Square. We love Durgin Park and Anthony's Pier Four, we love a little restaurant on Beacon Street called the English Tea Room where we can get Shrimp Newburg for \$2.87. every day that the sun shines, we drive out into the splendor of October to Lexington and Concord, to Walden Pond, to the antique auctions and the flea markets, to the "sugaring-off" sections of the maple forests.

Chris is indescribable. I've never met (I'm sure, even with no memory) a girl so independent, so spirited, so full of life. She glows like the autumn. I see her now in my mind (she's always there) and Walden Pond, the day we rolled in the leaves, yesterday – no, the day before – yellow leaves in her hair and clinging to her sweater. The sun behind her, her smile sparkling, her eyes reflecting, magnifying the light. I see her the day we spontaneously took the street hobo to lunch – the compassion and concern in her face, the interest in her voice as she asked about his past; he hand on his arm as we left, wishing him well, thanking him for the perspective he had given us. I see the worry in her eyes, in the moonlight, the night I almost told her about Forge. She knew there was something, knew I wasn't totally open with her. But she didn't push me, she could see I wasn't quite ready for whatever it was...but she knew it was there. I can never lie to her, never hide anything from her. I know that now. She sees too much, feels too much. I'll tell her soon. I want to tell her I've never felt (have I?) so alive, so anxious

for the next day. I've never felt so vulnerable either, so full of caring. I've found "Joy-two." It is love.

*Wednesday, October 22 (6th month)
Cambridge, Mass.*

Our first fight. Funny thing is, I'm glad it happened. It was so much fun making up. It started with a little thing...I have to think hard to remember what it was...I was late, that was it. I was supposed to meet her on the Weeks Bridge at 4:00 and it was 4:30 when I arrived. I guess my apology didn't sound very sincere. Chris is no doormat...if I didn't know that before (I did), I learned it today. The argument about the justification for being late was just the fuse...leading up to the dynamite of what was really bothering both of us.

"You're hiding something from me, Paul."

"No, I'm not, Chris, I'm hiding nothing. I'm trying to work something out, that's all."

"Let's work it out together."

"We will, Chris, just as soon as I understand it well enough to explain it."

"That doesn't make sense and you know it."

"Listen, there is a time for everything. Right now is not the time."

"When is?"

"I'm not sure."

"I need to know."

"Well, I need to know too, Chris. There's a lot of things I need to know – like who I am."

Then a silence. A good silence, watching the Charles River...two eight-man skulls going under the bridge, the "pull, pull" of the coxswains competing for attention like the two sides of our argument.

We looked up, both started an apology at the same instant, laughed, moved closer, and she said, "I love you, whoever you are." I replied, "I love you, no matter what."

Chris hadn't quite finished, and the two phrases gave her an opening. She was quieter now, her words more measured. "That's really the point, isn't it, Paul? I love you no matter what you tell me, don't you see that?"

"I'm sorry, Chris, I know. But there's some risk in what's on my mind...and maybe some hurt. I want to share everything with you, but I don't want to hurt you. I want to protect you." I knew I was contradicting myself. So did she.

"Hey!" She was smiling, but she was forceful. "You *do* share hurt. That's as important as sharing the joy, isn't it? You know it is, Paul. I like risk. You ought to know; you're the one that found me on that risky cliff. Come on, risk it Paul."

I knew I would. I told her I would. I started. I stopped. "Chris...this week. I promise. Let me try one thing first, one line of thought, please."

She nodded. Her look was one part patience, nine parts love and faith. "But let's learn from it, Paul. Let's never wait again. Let's share everything *as it comes*. Promise me that?"

I nodded.

I'm home now. We went from the bridge over into Harvard Square, had a pastrami sandwich at Elsie's, walked back to the library.

How can I tell her that I may know who I am, and that *if* that's who I am, I can never be worthy of her?

Saturday, October 25 (6th month)
Cambridge, Mass.

I guess it was another fight. I've been sitting here trying to think of something else to call it, but it was a fight. I guess it was inevitable. Our wills just about match each other. I suppose I'm learning, making connections. The reason why Chris is capable of such deep support, such deep love, and the reason why her caring for me means so much, is that she is so strong. If a weak, follower-type person says she loves you, wants to support you, wants to share your ambitions, your dreams, your life, you might suspect that it is because she doesn't have abilities and potentials of her own. Chris has so much, and thus she can give so much.

The other side of that same strength, however, is stubbornness. She is as stubborn as I am, and headstrong... I guess she had a right to react as she did. I can't fault her logic. We had driven to the Cape, alone in the crisp, moonlit night. As we sat near the water on the dunes, she presented her case. The essence of it was, "Look, you know everything there is to know about me. Sometimes I think you know me better than I know myself, and you know I love you with all my heart. I know you too, Paul. I'm sure I know you better than *you* do in several ways, because while your searching for a past identity, I'm falling in love with *you*... the real you... the *now* you. I know who you are because I know how you *feel*, how you react, what you think. But Paul, you know something that you're not telling me. I've been patient. I wanted you to bring it up in your way, but it's gone on long enough. We can't have secrets, we can't hold anything back. We've both risked too much for that already..."

I tried a comeback, but the logic was weak. "Chris, it's *not* something I know, that's the problem. It's something (part of it anyway) that I can't believe, don't want to believe. I'm just trying to sort it out, make sense of it before I burden you with it."

"*Burden* me?" It was the wrong word. She was genuinely mad now. "*Burden* me! How does that fit with what we've said to each other? What about our oneness, commitment? *Burden* me! Paul, you'd better burden me, and you'd better do it soon. This is no guessing game we're playing."

There were tears in her eyes. A breeze had come up, rustling the grass on the dune. It was cool. She was shivering. Our eyes held each other. Hers softened; the snap of anger was still there, but with it vulnerability, even a hint of fear – fear that I didn't need her, couldn't tell her, wouldn't take her in my arms.

I did. She was sobbing now, quietly, gently. Tears blurred my eyes too. I was holding her as tightly as I could, rocking back and forth, my face pressed into her soft hair. "I'm sorry, Chris. I want to tell you so badly, I love you so much. I've been afraid, afraid it could change something, hurt you somehow, change what we have. I'm sorry. Oh, I need you, Chris. I need to tell you this. I need to tell you right now."

There was a long silent moment. A calm seemed to come, a strength that I didn't have but could give her, that she didn't have but could give me. The mood changed. It seemed to get warmer. The breeze calmed.

With my hands on her shoulders, I pulled back slightly, our faces together. Her eyes were clear now... a look of courage, ready for any challenge, almost anxious.

Something about her absolute attentiveness made it easier and structured my thoughts. I was direct, open; there was no thought of choosing words or lightening the impact.

“Chris, there are three things. They’re all hard to say. The first one is a man named Forge. He tried to kill me, and he will probably try again. The second thing, which I fear more than the first, is what Forge told me. He obviously knows me well, he proved that; and he says I’m a criminal, a criminal and a traitor, that I framed him, got him sent to prison. Also that I turned on my own father.”

Chris’s look was defiance now; a fighter, on my side, rejecting totally Forge’s claims about me, ready to go after him, to fight him. She didn’t say it, her eyes said it. I couldn’t help smiling. Her look made me smile. “It’s *us* he’s after,” her eyes said. “It’s *us* he’s trying to hurt.”

I waited. She waited. I had said “*three things*.”

“The other one, Chris, isn’t something I know, but I feel some things I can’t explain. You know part of it...when I see children...Chris, what if I’m already married? What if I...? Every once in a while I have a longing I can’t explain...not for *anyone*, I don’t think...but, I don’t know. It’s deep. A deep feeling. I can’t sort it out, I don’t know if it’s a need or if it’s a memory...”

Chris’s look had changed. Somehow she had never thought about his. The look was different. She hadn’t feared the first two things. She was ready to fight...for me...with me against whatever threatened me. But how could she fight this one? Maybe when my memory returned, with it would return a love for another woman. Her eyes were wide; the fear had returned. She was shaking again.

I don’t know what it was; I can’t imagine what it was...but suddenly I *knew*. I saw her fear, her trembling. I took Chris in my arms and I *knew*. There had never been anyone else like this. *I had never felt this before*. It was new. It was so new that it was about to burst inside me.

The calm didn’t return. There was something else...an elation. I wanted to get up and shout it into the starry sky. I stood, pulled Chris up with me, looked down at her. “I love you, Chris. I’ve never loved anyone else, no like this, I know it now. I knew it just then as I took you into my arms. Thank God. I know it. It’s a longing I’ve felt, yes, but not for someone else, not for some ghost from the past...for you Chris, only for you.”

There were tears again in her eyes, soft ones this time, misty, peaceful, soft tears. She believed it. She knew it even as I did.

“The children...maybe it’s my younger brothers and sisters I half remember...maybe it’s *our* children and I feel them even before they’re here. Oh, Chris, it’s only you, thank God it’s only you.”

Another long silence. The first part in each other’s arms. The second part sitting on the dune again, cross-legged, face to face, listening to the waves. Now it was Chris’s turn. Her voice was light, almost carefree.

“Okay, Mr. Woodcock, or whatever you are, you just took care of number three on your big list of worries. Now I’m going to handle numbers one and two. You’ll have to tell me a little more about this Forge, but before you do, let me tell you something. You are no criminal, no traitor. It’s hard to hold a straight face and say it, Paul...it’s so incongruous it’s almost funny. It’s like worrying that Kathy is too reserved and shy, or that Bob Peterson is disloyal and unfriendly. You are *you*, Paul. I know you. Your standards almost frighten me, and yet you don’t even know you have standards. You wouldn’t hurt a flea, Paul Woodcock; you’d never hurt your father. You didn’t frame this Forge into anything. The question is, What is he trying to frame you into? Where is he? Does he know where you are? Let’s get *into* this!”

I guess my face was giving some signals now. She could see I wasn't ready to talk details yet, that I was still back on the deepest worry of what I was...of whether I was what Forge said I was.

She tried harder. She took both my hands in hers. "Paul, listen, now really listen to me. I am in love with you. Love doesn't cloud my vision and make me less objective. Maybe it works that way with some people, but not with me. I'm careful. I know I may not have given you much evidence of that, but I don't let my feelings go as far as they have without some pretty strong self-warnings. I know you, Paul. I've watched you in a hundred different situations. I watched you with a beggar we took to lunch. I watched you with Kathy when she was about to drive us both nuts. I watched you when you were trying to make up an excuse for Bob Peterson to tell the tennis club about why you weren't coming back. You are *you*, Paul. You don't deceive, you don't even tell white lies, you don't have it in you. Believe me, have faith that I know that much."

I felt better at that moment than at any time since the depression started in the hospital room with Forge. Faith in Chris. I would let my faith in Chris work in place of faith in me until I could find some evidence to replace it. I'd let her belief in me be enough for both of us...for now.

She read the thoughts and was anxious to get on. "Now, the details on this Forge, please."

I told her everything. She made *notes*. Mental notes at first, but then she got a pad and pen out of the pocket of her jacket and started making actual notes. (The moonlight was bright enough.) She made me go back, clarify, restate. She would nod her head, make another note, ask me to go on.

"I think we can be sure of about five things," she said, ready with the comment the minute I'd finished my details.

"Is this how they train you to think at the Business School?" I was amused, impressed.

"Keep your mind on *this* business," she said. "Listen to my list.

"1. Forge did know you well, and you knew him well; very likely it *was* from the ski patrol, as he says.

"2. Forge is a madman. He's obsessed, he's violent, he's psychopathic. He is also very cold, very calculating, very intelligent in a cunning, frightening sort of way.

"3. He is convicted of a crime, he went to prison, and you had something to do with putting him there.

"4. He's not going to be around for a while, so unless he gets someone else to work on his vendetta for him, there is no immediate threat.

"5. He is making use of the half-truth. He's telling you enough that *is* true to induce you to believe the lies that are mixed in with it."

I was amazed...no shred of doubt, no flicker of the possibility that Forge's allegations were truthful. Chris's assumption was that I was good; and from that assumption, her extended logic was impeccable.

I just smiled, I felt still better. She went on.

"Now, I think with our heads together we can work out a separation of the truth from the lies. You may have lost your memory of *things*, of faces, of names, but you *haven't* lost your memory of feelings. That's why you were able to sort out that third worry a while ago; that's why some things seem so familiar to you. Let's use those 'feeling memories' to sort this one out. When you really think about it, Forge told you only four basic things. I'm going to state them, and you go just by feelings. Does it feel true or false? Don't analyze it, just tell me how it feels."

“Okay.” I shut my eyes to concentrate.
“You had a great father whom you loved, respected, almost worshipped.”
“True...definitely true.”
“You robbed that father, turned on him, deserted him.”
“No, false.” The doubt crept back as I answered, but I knew I had answered with my true feeling.”
“You looked up to Forge, respected him or at least idolized him in some ways.”
“Yes, true.” I wanted to say no but the feeling was “true.”
“You deliberately framed him, got him sent to prison, but you yourself were actually the guilty party.”
I paused. I didn’t know, I wasn’t sure, my feelings were mixed. I said so.
“Okay, let’s separate that more. You got him sent to prison.”
“Yes...I think so.”
“You committed the crime...then framed him.”
“False.” (Was I really feeling that, or was I just trying to convince myself?)
“Don’t you see it, Paul? Forge *is* cunning. He can’t hurt you physically now, so he’s trying to do it mentally. He’s playing on your loss of memory, *using* it to plant seeds of self-doubt, mixed in with enough truth that you let them grow together.”
“I’ve thought that, Chris, I’ve hoped it, but how can I know it?”
“You can know it because I know it. You can have faith in me.”
I was feeling free...more free...not convinced, not beyond doubt, but better, freer. I held Chris close. “Thank you, Chris, thank you, my love.”

Friday, October 31 (6th month)
Cambridge, Mass.

I’ve found out that Chris is a violinist. She is also so modest that I had to find out the way I’ve learned several things about her – from Kathy. We were eating lunch at the English Tea Room. Kathy was with Vince Rogers, her on-again, off-again beau, and I was refuting Kathy’s claim that “There is about as much culture in the West as there is now in Hawaii” by telling her about the chamber music I used to enjoy at the lodge. (I also told her about the Jackson Polo Club.) Kathy asked if Chris had ever played for me, and I revealed my ignorance by saying “played what?” I got the full story then, above protests from Chris. She was concert mistress of the Michigan State University orchestra and had offers when she finished her undergraduate work there to play in the Detroit Symphony.

I could hardly wait to get away from Kathy and Vince, to tell Chris about my discovery with the cello. Kathy and Vince still have no notion that I am without memory. No one does. Chris and I have worked out a fairly detailed but imaginary history for myself that contains an answer to virtually every question...worked out largely for the benefit of Chris’s parents, whom we’re going to visit next month.

Chris was more excited than I was when I told her. “I know a girl at Radcliffe who has a cello,” she said. “Let’s go borrow it.”

“But it’s 10:30.”

“It’s alright, she’ll be up. Come on, let’s stop off and get my violin.”

It was an incredible night. The Radcliffe girl not only had a cello, she had two roommates who were away, and thus there was a spare room. We closed the door, put up two music stands,

and went for it. Chris was vastly better than I was, but I surprised myself. I could sight read well enough to stay with her on some of the pieces. There was one number, the same Pachelbel canon I had heard in Jackson, which was so familiar that I felt the mind-door start to open again... a moody, mellow harmony that tugged at my heart strings and felt familiar to my hands. There was a harmony that went well beyond the music. The music symbolized what Chris and I had found. A harmony of thought, of heart.

Sunday, November 2 (7th month)
Boston, Mass.

Dear Chris:
I'm different when it rains.
Late autumn, soft rain.
A kind of fresh-smell, see-your-breath aliveness.
I'm more thoughtful, more mellow, more
Oriented to relationships.
I want to be with people, quiet
I want to listen and feel
And create.
My ambitions calm,
Nothing is more important than the beauty, the moment.
Then suddenly,
Thunder,
Streaming horizontal rain,
Crack-flashing bolts.
A dark-sensitive mood reminds me
Of you
Because the storm is exciting and
Meaningful
And
Alive,
Yet it has hidden feelings of great depth
And
I love it.

Monday, November 3 (7th month)
Cambridge, Mass.

Atlantic Monthly accepted another of the Teton poems and even sent a check. Actually, there's another financial input into my insolvent life that may turn out to be more predicable. Chris and I were coming down in the elevator of Peabody Terrace, the married student high rise where we had been visiting friends, when a timely, "serendipity" even occurred. An Arab fellow who turned out to be a first-year Business School student asked me a point-blank question. "Is that your old beat-up Ford out in the lot, the blue and white one?" He spoke perfect English.

"Yes," I said, a little defensively, unable to think of a quick counter-insult.

“You wouldn’t want to give me some driving lessons, would you?” I supposed his instincts told him I was looking for some way to keep a few bucks coming in. “You see, I don’t drive at all, and I thought I ought to learn while I’m here.”

Chris was taking it all in, an amused look on her face.

“Well, I . . . ah . . . sure, I guess I could.”

“I don’t mind paying . . . you just tell me what’s fair.”

“I’m *sure* I could.”

“When do we start?”

“Anytime. Listen . . . I’m Paul Woodcock.” I put out my hand.

“Abdul Hussain; I’m at the B-school”

“Right . . . ah . . . just curious . . . why me?”

Abdul was very direct. “Well, it just seemed sensible. I don’t know how fast I’ll learn. If I were to crack up your Ford, I doubt it would even show.” He smiled. We were friends from that moment.

Abdul was a slow learner. Abdul *is* a slow learner, at least with regard to driving. I’ve given him a one-hour “lesson” three times a week for three weeks (at \$20 a lesson . . . *he* suggested the figure). It looks as if he’ll need several more. Chris went along once but hasn’t dared since.

Chris has a healthy bank account (her father puts in as much as the IRS will allow him to give tax-free each year), and she keep wanting me to use part of it. I keep refusing. The absence of a past is not an excuse for the absence of the power to support oneself. With a few more poem or story sales (and other Abdul or two) I’ll not only keep my bills paid, I’ll buy an engagement ring and start thinking about supporting a family.

Wednesday, November 5 (7th month)
Cambridge, Mass.

The news hit me like a brick. Forge had escaped. I read Bob Peterson’s letter again, hoping I’d read it wrong the first time. No, Forge was on the loose. He had escaped from the hospital three days before he was set to stand trial. No clues; no one knew where he might be. There is was, in black and white. Bob had sent the press clipping from the Jackson Hole *Sentinel*.

Would he come here? Had I left a trail? If he wanted to, Forge would be able to find someone who knew about Chris’s accident, my rescue. Could he get her address? Could he locate me? Somehow I knew the answers as I asked the questions. It wouldn’t be easy, but there was some way he could find us. People could always be found, clues were always left, connections could always be made . . . if someone wanted to badly enough.

People could always be found – except perhaps by themselves.

I got Bob’s letter this afternoon. I haven’t told Chris yet. I will tonight.

The question is how soon he’ll come after me. What are his priorities? Will he be more concerned with staying ahead of the law, making a good escape, perhaps getting a new identity of his own? How long will that take?

Will looking for me risk his own recapture too much? Which is more important to him? There are no answers on this one, just a lot of questions.

There’s no point in thinking about it. Nothing can be done. Nothing but waiting.

Saturday, November 8 (7th month)
At the rest home
Visiting Chris’s grandmother in

Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

I like being with old people...
No hurry to get anywhere,
Less rush, less anxiety,
Less vested interest, less ulterior motive.
Relaxed, slower, easier.
More time to listen,
To reflect, to notice
To look you straight in the eye and wait.
Part of me is already old, I think—
Very old.

Sunday, November 9 (7th month)
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

I have not met Dr. and Mrs. Jacobs. They live in Bloomfield Hills, outside Detroit, where he is a highly regarded orthopedic surgeon. It was only a weekend, and a flight I really couldn't afford, but Chris felt it was important for me to meet them before any more time passed. They had known Jim, Chris's fiancé, very well. He was from Grosse Pointe, not far away, his father also a doctor, a close associate of Dr. Jacobs. I guess Chris, not very objectively, had hoped their meeting me would help justify in their minds her decision about Jim.

I'm not sure it worked out exactly that way. Dr. Jacobs is a hard man to get to know. He has an air of suspicion even before it is clear just what he is suspicious about.

Chris and I had originally decided that the whole truth was just a bit much, so we'd pieced together a fairly general "background" for me that we thought we could use to answer her parents' questions. But the more Chris thought about it, the more she knew she couldn't fabricate something to her parents. I knew too that it would catch up with us at some point. So we told them...straight out told them that I had no idea who I was. We had planned to wait until Sunday morning, but the questions started coming at dinner on Saturday, so we told them.

Mrs. Jacobs was great. She listened carefully, believed every word, wanted to help. Dr. Jacobs cocked his eyebrow and seemed to be making subconscious comparisons with Jim. In the end he responded fairly well, although urging us strongly to get some professional help, and to go to the authorities and use all available official channels to try to trace something.

Sunday (today) was a better day. With the burden lifted, I relaxed a little, I guess, and by the time we left I felt remarkably close to Mrs. Jacobs and at least tolerably congenial with her husband.

He's right, of course. I need to make my search wider and more official. He doesn't know of the Forge risk though, so he may never understand why we are going about it the way we are.

Tuesday, November 25 (7th month)
Cambridge, Mass.

It seems funny, a little ironic, that Chris should give up her good name, a real name inherited from her father, for my made-up name. On the other hand, *Woodcock* will be a more worthy name once she has it – more real, more substantial.

She loved the ring, gazed at the small diamond as though it was four times its size. And I really did manage to surprise her. There is a tower above Baker Library there at the Business School, and on top a little dome. And there's a narrow catwalk stairway leading up to it. I went over about seven, three hours before I was to pick Chris up, and talked to the night watchman. I gave him a concocted story about being in a photography contest and needing to get up in the tower to take a shot of the moon on the Charles...at about midnight. He didn't buy it, not for a minute. "No dice, buddy, nobody goes up there, not for any reason."

When all else fails, try the truth. I said, "Oh, let me tell you the real reason." I took out the engagement ring, opened the box, showed it to him. "I'm getting engaged tonight, and the tower would be the most memorable spot in Boston. We'd only be up there for a few minutes."

The guy turned out to be an incurable romantic. His eyes lit up (he was a short little European fellow, Swiss or French), and he said "Ahhh...now why didn't you say so in the first place? Here, let's synchronize our watches."

"What?" I didn't get it.

"Our watches. Look, that's the door to the stairway. I'll unlock it at five to twelve, but I won't be here when you come. You go up, and be down by 12:15. I'll come back and lock it."

It was the most fun he'd had in years. I could tell. We synchronized our watches.

I picked Chris up at ten, and we went on a long drive through deserted downtown Boston. Just before midnight I turned into the Business School. Chris couldn't imagine why we were going to the school, couldn't believe the staircase was open and unwatched, couldn't wait to see what on earth was up there, and couldn't keep back the tears when I had her shut her eyes and slipped the ring on her finger.

The setting was incredible. A light snow was falling, the first of the year, and yet the clouds were thin enough in some parts of the sky that the moonlight got through. Just as I put the ring on her finger and she opened her eyes, the moon itself appeared through a small cloud-break and the world was bright white, the river silver, the air filled with diamonds like a thousand reflections of the one that sparkled from her hand.

Obviously, we lost track of time. We must have been up there for over an hour. Finally, during one of the long, delicious, eye-gazing silences, we heard a hesitant, German-accented voice floating tentatively up the stairs from below. "Are you two all right up there?" We came down. I apologized to the night watchman for staying so long. He understood perfectly.

Chris called her parents from a little pay phone in front of the library, there in the snow. Her mother answered, pleased, obviously happy through her drowsy voice; her father, polite but unconvinced, hoping things would be for the best, wanting to get dates and schedules into his appointment book. Then I called Bob Peterson. He laughed, Kate cried...good friends! He would be here for the wedding, he said...no, don't worry about the distance, he'd come...and Kate too, if possible. Chris called Kathy too, saying she'd rather tell her on the phone than in person...easier to end the conversation after five minutes.

Then we walked and talked, across the bridge, up Memorial Drive, back down the other side, into the old Harvard stadium, stood on the white 50-yard line for a few minutes, walked some more. I agreed with her idea to say our own vows, to compose our own marriage commitments; she agreed to hold it in a church. I felt strongly about that, without knowing quite why. I took her home about an hour ago, came home, wrote this.

I think I'll call. It's 3:30 AM, but she asked me to call before I went to sleep, to read her what I'd written. (She's going to read everything in the leather envelope this weekend.) She said she'd have the phone by her pillow.

Friday, December 5 (8th month)
Cambridge, Mass.

At first I thought the best clues to my identity were the *things* that seemed familiar – the places, the spaces...someday, I hope, the faces.

I'm realizing that the real keys are not the things outside of me but the feelings inside of me. The fact is that I *am* me. My conscious memory has forgotten the name and the personal data, but I am still me. I still react like me, I still feel like me, I still respond like the real me.

The clue that I was a tennis player didn't come when I recognized tennis courts; it came when I *felt* tennis...inside. It works the same way with more important things. I'm thinking tonight about Chris, about the *kind* of love I feel for her. And I'm finding that what I feel is not only a key to my love for her but a key to who I am. Physically I am so attracted to Chris that it is hard to describe. In addition to her beauty and her independent spirit, she has a vulnerability that makes me want to hold her, to touch her, to possess her. When I do kiss her and hold her, I want to do much more.

But there is another deep feeling. Even deeper. It is a sense of valiance, of nobility, of wanting to protect Chris and to save the deepest physical contact for the perfect time, the perfect place, the perfect sealing of the deepest commitment.

Since I don't remember anything about religious beliefs or moral training, I can't attribute it to that. I think what I feel is natural. I think it is what people usually refer to as conscious, an inner light of some kind that clarifies absolute right and absolute wrong. It is right to save some things for marriage...it is inherently right. And it is right in the *positive* sense, in the sense that it makes marriage better, it makes the marriage commitment more total, it makes love more noble, more beautiful. It is like discipline. We discipline ourselves not so much because we fear penalties and punishments for lack of discipline, but because we want the rewards that discipline brings.

Chris and I both feel that conscience is a real and valuable thing. It is not the morals and subconscious remnants of things learned in Sunday School. It is much more than that. It is *light* of some kind...intelligence beyond our own that tells us what is right and noble and good and what is base and wrong. The light is not strong. It is easy to ignore, to snuff out, to override. We feel, though, that when we ignore it, when we argue with it, we rob ourselves, we throw away something of great value.

Part of what I'm writing now I prompted by a serendipitous experience I had yesterday. I was at the Harvard library waiting for Chris. (She was the one who was late this time.) I was scanning the card index, looking for a familiar title, a familiar author. (I've done this before; it has occurred to me that if I really am a writer I must also be a reader, and if I find familiar books, maybe I'll find clues.) I flipped a card, and it happened. *Chesterton*. G.K. Chesterton. I not only knew the name, I knew the author, about him, about what he wrote. Names of essays. Chris still wasn't there. I pulled a book, opened it. Here was an essay titled "A Piece of Chalk." I knew it, knew it as if I had written it. The metaphor was an artist, sitting on an English hillside drawing on brown paper. He had all his chinks except white; he had forgotten to bring the white. Could he do without it? No, because white is not the absence of color, it is the total color...white spaces are not blank, they are put on by the artist...the most important thing to his canvas. Should he return home for a piece of white chalk? Then he realized that he is sitting on chalk – England is

made of chalk, he says. He breaks off a piece from a white chalk rock and completes the drawing.

As I read (or reread) this essay, it captured what I had been thinking. For both Chris and me, conscience has its no's, but the yeses are there too. So virtue is not a void, the absence of wrong; it is the presence of right. It is the key to the beauty of the rest of life. And it is all around us. We must find it, apply it. In Chesterton's language, "The chief assertion of religious morality is that white is a color. Virtue is not the absence of vices or the avoidance of moral danger; virtue is a vivid and separate thing...Mercy does not mean not being cruel or sparing people revenge or punishment; it means a plain and positive thing like the sun, which one has either seen or not seen. Chastity does not mean abstention from sexual wrong, it means something flaming, like Joan of Arc."

That captures how I feel with regard to Chris. The reason we're not sleeping together is not because we are afraid of moral punishment or rebuke. It is because we want the reward of waiting. Virtue, to us, in that sense, is not the absence of "sin." It is the *presence* of deep respect, the presence of true beauty, the proving to each other that our love is far more than physical, far beyond mere passion. It's not so much that we feel it is wrong to go ahead, it's that we feel it is *right* to wait...that I don't want to rob myself (and Chris) or something we could never recover.

I don't feel animosity as the society around us practices its versions of amorality (it's not immorality, really, because the question of right and wrong doesn't occur...it's just the *norm*; it's just what everyone else does). I don't feel anger or spite toward them for their choices. Rather, I feel sorrow for them – pity in a way – because I think they are giving up something very special, tossing away a chance to have a higher feeling, a more valiant love, a more prized commitment in marriage.

Chris and I talk about that a lot too...the commitment of marriage, the partnership of marriage, the *synergism* of marriage.

We believe that great security lies in great commitment. We've decided that marriage, to us, *means* commitment.

Anyone who has ever fallen in love knows the incredible joy of having everything else superseded by the love for a from one person. The world is brighter. Everything is beautiful. Failures or disappointments in other areas mean little; they are overshadowed, overcome, by the light of love. Chris and I believe that this wonder, this security, this protection from fear and failure, can go beyond, can last longer than the falling in love period. We believe that when real commitments are made, when courtship is continued into marriage, when selfless love is given and the partner is given the highest priority, then the feeling of being above the world, of being in a higher realm, can last...can endure.

High-sounding rhetoric? A little unrealistic? Perhaps. But to someone totally in love, to me, today, it all makes ultimate sense!

End of Part I,
Part II coming soon