

이십일

Chapter Twenty-One

During the first week of our training cycle at Ft. Jackson Thanksgiving had arrived, and I'd flown to Rochester, where I was picked up at the airport by my entire family, minus my older sister, and subsequently discovered on a very subdued ride home that Winnie wasn't going to be with us over the holidays.

"What happened?" I asked my younger sister as soon as we arrived at the house. I'd dragged her outside to the garage on some pretext and grilled her until the story came out haltingly.

Winnie had arrived a few days earlier, flying in from Boulder, where she was in the fall semester of her junior year at the University of Colorado. I should add, parenthetically, that the fall of 1969 marked a watershed moment in America's cultural landscape: Woodstock had just taken place, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King had been assassinated the previous year, and revolution was in the air. Now active in the anti-war movement, my sister was the embodiment of fiery-spirited independence.

Arriving for Thanksgiving, she'd apparently taken one of the family cars (my mother's) and headed off to discuss

joining the Peace Corps with two of her former high school friends—a discussion that lasted into the wee hours of the morning.

Meanwhile, my mother lay in bed upstairs, mentally drumming her fingers as the bedside clock crawled past 3:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m., my father's rhythmic snores punctuating her mounting fury.

This was a confrontation that had been brewing since the summer of '68 (the summer following our freshman year in college), when my parents began to feel obscurely that their eldest children were beginning to wander off the path—Winnie with her unquenchable independence and me with my scholarship-losing grades. During that first college summer, Winnie, at any rate, was not about to be controlled, and my mother, for her part, was not about to be defied: “Not in our house, *Missy!*”

I'd arrived home from work one afternoon that summer to find a summit meeting being convened in the kitchen, my father and mother seated somberly at the head and foot of the kitchen table, my sister filing downstairs to take her place. I slid into my chair across from Winnie, and the four of us regarded each other around the table in what now seems to me an arrangement of Freudian symmetry.

My mother was wearing her reading glasses (never a good sign), a notebook open, the page filled with her exclamation-pointed entries.

“*While you are living in OUR house,*” she began, regarding my sister over the top of her glasses, “*eating OUR food . . . and Driving OUR cars . . . you will OBEY the RULES OF*



Winnie and I preparing to go off to summer jobs, Canandaigua, NY—
August 1968

THIS HOUSE! These rules INCLUDE . . .—and here followed a list of domestic imperatives that governed the use of the car, hours of curfew, acceptable dating practices, etc., etc.

Winnie returned my mother's look coolly, as if wondering who had placed this unstable woman in a chair next to her, and this sent my mother right over the top.

"You are IMPERTINENT!" she said, leaning forward, her



My twentieth birthday dinner, Canandaigua, NY—November 25, 1969

forefinger driving emphatically into the page of notes.

“*YOU’RE impertinent!*” retorted my sister—and, reacting automatically, my father reached across the table and slapped her.

This was the first time he’d ever struck one of the girls, and several things happened at once: I was suddenly up out of my chair, chest-to-chest with my father, both of us surprised at this turn of events. He pushed at me quizzically, without using his strength, and I shoved him against the dishwasher. My mother immediately became hysterical. Winnie rose from the table, crying bitter tears, and marched upstairs to her room.

None of us ever referred to this incident again, and it seemed to shock everything back to normal in that summer

of '68—but I see now that it only postponed the inevitable, each of us rapidly moving beyond the reach of the others.

Thus, a year and a few months later—as Thanksgiving Day approached and I was completing Jump School—my mother heard the car door slam at an unacceptable hour and rose from her bed in a cold fury, the first light of dawn just touching the eastern sky. My father, who'd been abruptly



With Josh, Thanksgiving weekend, Canandaigua, NY—November 1969



With Susie, Thanksgiving weekend, Canandaigua, NY—November 1969

awakened from an untroubled sleep, mechanically followed my mother downstairs, her groggy enforcer.

They confronted my sister in the kitchen, Winnie depositing the car keys on the hook where they belonged, and the confrontation quickly mounted beyond the point of reconciliation.

And suddenly, irrevocably, she was on her way back to Colorado.

“Not with those suitcases, you’re not!” announced my father in one of the more ignoble moments of his life, removing the matched set of Winship luggage that enclosed my sister’s belongings. Hence, when Winnie’s friends arrived later that morning to drive her to the airport, she departed with her



With Aunt Pete, Thanksgiving weekend, Canandaigua, NY—
November 1969

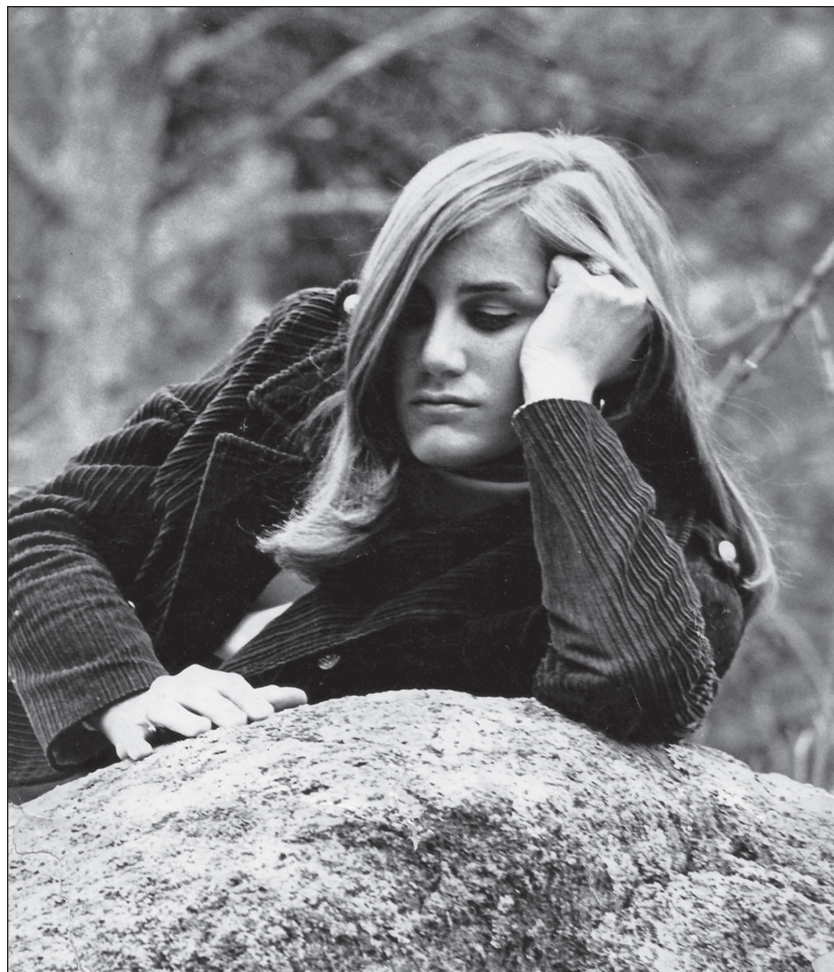
clothes in shopping bags, my younger brother and sister peering anxiously from the laundry room as this drama unfolded.

Thanksgiving 1969 was full of the usual family bonhomie, with both my grandparents and my Aunt Pete in attendance. It was also the occasion of my twentieth birthday, but the whole thing felt hollow for me and, I think, for everyone else—the absence of Winnie creating an unfillable void.

“What kind of training are you doing down there in South Carolina?” my grandfather wanted to know.

As I explained about being an instructor in Advanced Infantry Training, detailing the various weapons we employed, my brother remembers seeing my mother start, her head coming up sharply.

She’d somehow failed to absorb the particulars of my infantry job classification in the U.S. Army—owing, no doubt, to the lack of a coherent explanation from me. But she hadn’t failed to absorb Walter Cronkite’s recent observation on the *CBS Evening News* that the war in Vietnam was completely unwinnable.



Winnie, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO—Fall 1969