

## June München

. . . In Austria this Monday as we jerked and plodded our way through gingerbread mountains in a Persian lorry, I tried to put me back together.

It was Charlie's birthday. It was the day he got busted. The day I got back to Munich. The day I realized how close I had come to losing my self.

My self? My independence? My integrity? My dignity? My value? My belief, my faith in me, my strength.

And when I thought about it while we kept on getting closer to Munich and the Heim, I was no longer wretched with hurt and loneliness as I had been the day before when I left Charlie in Yugoslavia. Instead, I was afraid; I didn't recognize it immediately but I gradually realized that the uncomfortable, uneasy, nagging creature clutching at my throat was fear. I regarded the fear with wonder because I didn't immediately understand it, but then I knew what it was that made me afraid. I had come so close, so close to losing my faith in myself. I thought, Have I lost my faith in myself? And I honestly didn't know the answer.

I had so much strength, so much faith in me, that I felt I could take anything. Nothing could destroy my belief in myself – but I somehow imagined only sudden, violent obvious assaults on it, assaults I knew I could withstand. But Charlie took me apart piece by piece, little by little, putting me together again just enough now and again to make me vulnerable for another destruction. He did this to me not because he hated me but because he didn't care. And he never tried at it either. He as an acting human personality was perfectly suited to effortlessly take me apart. It was chance that threw us together for 7 weeks, 24 hours a day, a chance in a lifetime, the computer couldn't have matched us better (did I destroy him, too? No because there is nothing of me, for him, to affect him at all). He never once attacked my integrity in any violent way, but in a thousand little, insignificant things he made me feel small simply because for him I am small. And he was the only one I had, the only companion and friend for 7 weeks. I was bound to him physically by my fear of being alone there without money, and emotionally by the fact that I love him. When you must depend on a person, you give in. In the small ways, the times when you know you are right but say, "I'm sorry" ("Not as sorry as I am," he always said), the times when you asked for a cigarette and he flatly said, "No," so you shut up and hurt rather than make a scene, the times when he smiled at you or kissed you but you knew it was because

he wanted something, that was all. The little degrading things like having to automatically relinquish a book you're in the middle of because he wanted to read it, or – oh God – to have him want you there only because there was absolutely no one else, and to know this fact. So many little, thoughtless, meaningless hurts, giving in so many times, being considered valueless, because of my sex, for so long by the only one around to judge – and so I dissolved, not really cracked because that is sudden and what happened to me was so gradual, so unnoticed. So that when I wept silently in car after car in Yugoslavia, and never spoke to him for 2 days, and hated myself and him, and then left him, it was not so much because he hurt me. It was because he was able to hurt me that much, so much that my feelings about me were beginning to reflect his. My strength had been undermined for the first time and I had never known it till it was too late and I had cried and cried. I believed in my strength, more than I believed in anything.

So we bounced through Austria while I thought about all these things and realized that I had become a different person and so the world had become a different world. I thought then that what had happened to me was not, as I had believed, all Charlie's fault. I couldn't forgive myself for "dissolving," so I hated myself, which made me hate Charlie, which made me hate myself and so on. It went on and on, without my knowing what was happening (meanwhile the fact that we were doing without food, rest and sleep for weeks didn't help any). So I thought, I must forgive myself for cracking. And what about Charlie, who I had decided I must get away from? Charlie was no longer than center of the problem; I felt that when I had forgiven me, I could forgive him, when I had dealt with myself I could deal with the relationship, if any, I had with him.

Then in the midst of all these thoughts came the shocking scene at the customs post, the vast table with a scale at one end and long counters on either side, the tall, skinny customs guard with blonde hair and steel-rimmed glasses, pawing and snuffling through Charlie's things, opening the plastic drawstring bag with his shoes in them and in a slow motion suspended instant of reality peering into a shoe, removing the sock, replacing it, pulling the sock from the other shoe and then it was all chaos, all over, all collapsed, all the trip from Vienna to Teheran to Salzburg, was sucked down the drain of reality leaving only this moment and this smell, this flood of smell drowning the whole office, sweet, pungent, illegal – the smell of Beirut-taxi-driver-hash (haschisch). We came so close, so close, we came over 5000 k's and finally came back, 130 k's from Munich and that was a far as we were going to go. "Now they'll search my

stuff too,” I said irrelevantly, not knowing what else to say, and Charlie gave them the little bit he had in a match box in his pocket as well. From then I just let things happen, from that chaotic moment of hash-smell, everything had been taken out of my hands and my control. I remember after they took him away and searched my things trying to think clearly: what should I do? I must get to Munich, I must find Kitty and Laura, I must get some money, and I must suspend my detachment from Charlie, oh shit and oh well. And it was as though someone else was thinking all these things and not me. And it was only a little later that I said, “Oh, no!” because I remembered it was his birthday.

When I got back to Munich that night at 1:30 I walked down the end of the autobahn nearly sick with joy to be home with Munich there just ahead of me with the Heim, tram 19, the Deutsches Museum and everything. We had wanted to be there for so long and it was really there, oh wow. It was not until I got to the Heim and saw everyone again that I realized how much I had changed, how close I was always to pain and how incapable I had become of communicating with human beings again.

He did this to me, I thought, but he is my responsibility now anyway. Later I thought, Am I helping him then because I love him, or because I don’t love him? I still don’t know.

*May 29, 1968*

*MUNCHEN!*

*Dear Mama,*

*Well, as you can see, I made it back to Munich safe and sound – relatively. We ran out of money about 4 days before we got here but we could sleep outside and people gave us food and money on the way. What happened was this: We bought plane tickets in Beirut to Adana, Turkey, leaving Charlie \$5 and me \$3. We gave blood for \$10 in Beirut and flew to Turkey. Then we hitched to Nafplion, Greece (took us about 6 days) where we rested for 5 days. Then we hitched from there to Salzburg, just across the border from Germany (about 130 kilometers from Munich). Yugoslavia was sickening – took us 4 days to hitch it and it rained 2 nites while we slept out. But then on the border between Austria and Germany, we had trouble, to say the least. Charlie was carrying some hash he bought in Beirut and when the customs police searched his knapsack they found it and arrested him there on the border. This was about 9:00 at night. They*

*searched me and my stuff but since I was clean, they let me go. So I hitched from the border to here – got to München at 1:30 am but got a lift from the autobahn to the Heim from some GIs and thank God they let me in even tho it was past curfew. So K, L & I had a joyful reunion and Laura's loaning me some money till I can cash my check, which I got today (goody goody). But the Munich American Express is more stringent than Beirut & won't cash the check. So I'm returning it so you can make it a bank draft and try again. Please hurry, I guess I need not add.*

*Anyway, the police here in München took me down to make a statement about the whole business today, as well as re-searching my stuff as well as the room I'm in. Don't worry, tho – there isn't anything they can arrest me for. I guess I'm sort of a witness. They tell me it will take 1 or 2 months before Charlie is even sentenced, so I'm going down to Bad Reichenhall (a town just inside the German border) tomorrow (that's where they're holding him) to talk to him and see what I can do about getting his money out of the bank in Munich where he's keeping it.*

*I have to mail this letter right away so I'll close now. Will write again soon with more detail on whole trip.*

*Glad to be back in Munich –*

*Tif*

*June 3, 1968  
Munich*

*Dear Family,*

*Did you ever get the letter I mailed from Baghdad, the one all about what it was like in Teheran? It suddenly occurred to me yesterday that you probably didn't because we were told while in Iraq that that it was forbidden to correspond with the United States there and that all mail to or from there is confiscated by the government. But I forgot about that by the time I mailed your letter, and it's too bad because it was a good, long letter, and I really can't duplicate it now. I hope the Iraqi censors enjoyed it.*

*Well, it's a week now since I got back to Munich and Charlie is still incommunicado in jail. I took a train down to see him last Thursday (26 D.M. crap) and after getting shuttled around for several hours from office to office found no one could visit him without an interpreter who could translate our conversation into German for the police. But I was able to get authorization to get some money for him out of his bank here in Munich. Then Friday I hitched back there with Laura (that's free & faster than a train) to give him the money & it was yet*

*another run around. No one there speaks much English, you see. You know how hard and awful it is dealing with police anyway – well, in a foreign country it's even worse. Laura & I got so mad we were going to report one of the men we had to deal with – whenever we find out who we should report him to. Meanwhile we haven't the vaguest idea what will happen to Charlie so I'm calling the British Consulate tomorrow (it's closed today due to a holiday called Pfingston) (Also I will see the American consulate about my own rights as far as how they searched & questioned me.) to see what they can find out. I can't get an interpreter because it costs about 50 DM an hour – too much.*

*Meanwhile I'm hoping I get my money soon, like about Wednesday, since I have none to say the least. They give me credit here at the Heim, so I can sleep here & eat breakfast, but it's missing those other 2 meals which is sort of a drag. I hate to borrow money from Laura as I owe her 28.20 DM now, and Kitty has little money too. In fact, she got a job about 2 weeks ago tending vending machines at the GI hotel here in Munich and is now living there because it's cheaper than the Heim. She has to work 8 days in a row and then gets 2 days off, poor thing. I hope to try & get a better job than that. My plans at the moment are very vague. I don't feel much like traveling at the moment for awhile, and anyway I wouldn't want to go anywhere just yet anyway until I can find out what's to become of Charlie (since I have temporary "custody" of the tortoise named Robert George Samson Houdini sometimes Humbert Humbert, which he acquired in Greece). And it's difficult hitching here in summer anyhow because there are so many kids doing it. I would like to hitch to Lichtenstein and back, which takes about a day, because they have beautiful passport stamps (incidentally my passport is really getting filled up now). But I will most likely get a job here in a few weeks. The consensus of opinion here is that Charlie will be deported, in which case we will have to do something with Robert & the other things he has here. Everything is so complicated, isn't it?*

*You must have heard about all the "civic disturbance" going on over here (e.g., Paris). I understand that around the time I got back, the Munich students took over the Hauptbahnhof (rr station) here, occupying trains & sitting on the tracks & stuff, protesting the "emergency law" now before the German legislature (you know, laws giving the government dictatorial powers in case of an emergency, reminiscent of Hitler). I agree with the students, but it looks as tho the law will pass . . . sometimes the Germans frighten me, much as I like them . . . Anyway, I would like to have seen the Paris riots, but since there is no gasoline being sold in France, there is no*

*traffic & no hitching so no one is going there. Except Charlie & I hitched with a Frenchman for 2 days in Yugoslavia who was on his way home to Paris . . . I have to wonder if he ever made it.*

*I should tell you more about the trip, really. Did you know “our Arab” ditched us in Teheran without paying Charlie and leaving us stuck with the hotel bill? We decided then not to go to Afghanistan (which turned out to be good because about 3 weeks later they closed the Iran-Afghanistan border due to a cholera epidemic in Afghan.) but to hitch back thru Iraq, Syria & Tuckey, stopping off in Kirkuk in Northern Iraq, where Charlie lived for 6 years. So we hitched off to Baghdad, taking 3 days from Teheran to get there. The first nite out we slept on carpets at a sort of truck stop where about 12 truck drivers & one French hitch hiker were sleeping. This was in Iran, about halfway to the border, in a place called \*Turkistan. It was raining that nite so we were grateful for a warm place to stay. I’ll never forget slogging thru the mud out back to go to the outdoor toilet with a gas lantern lighting my way and all the old, beat-up truck drivers stretched out on carpets & cots everywhere snoring and scratching by the light of dim green light bulbs. They served us tea (of course) the next morning and we got the first of a series of truck rides that were all alike. The drivers there expect to be paid so they cram as many hitchers in as they can – usually 3 to a truck, plus the driver and a guy who seems to be the driver’s sidekick or something. Anyway there would be a guy on the driver’s left, Charlie on his right, then me, then a very foul smelling Persian pauper with no teeth and dirty, baggy clothes. It would be so packed that the driver would shift gears between Charlie’s legs & we couldn’t move at all. Our knapsacks usually went on top of the cab, so when it rained they got good & wet. And thus we made it to a border town called Khosravi, thru Karmenshah, Hamadan and Shah Aban (incidentally on the first day we met an English family – man, wife & 4 year old girl, hitching back from India) where we got a lift at nitefall in one of the “free” taxis of Persia, which we still don’t understand, to the border. It was a weird ride. The driver used no lights at all, except he would occasionally flash them on-off, on-off, like a signal. Halfway to the border, 2 guys got out of the taxi in the middle of nowhere and sped off across the fields and disappeared. Meanwhile all kinds of peculiar but spectacular electrical disturbances were going on in the sky over Iraq (a forecast of the floods we were to see in Baghdad). Anyway we were*

---

\* Note from 2017: This appears to be actually a place called Tuyserkan, a place that is indeed on the route between Teheran and the Iraqi border. Turkestan is not. The other Iranian place names are also phonetically spelled; some of them appear on maps of Iran and some do not. Khosravi seems to be the name of the actual border station, not a town.

deposited at the Irani border station, got checked out of Iran after I made my usual sensation with the border police (“A fine girl,” they said of me to Charlie) and then we walked for 20 minutes across no-man’s-land into Iraq. We spent the night sleeping on hard benches there at the border station and breakfasted with the chief border guard who was very nice, tho he did stroke my hair and plant wistful kisses on my cheek all night, which was more annoying than insulting. Then we got some more lifts and eventually made it to Baghdad. When you hitch out there, here is what usually occurs. You stand by the road in a dirty little village and a crowd gathers around you. You convey the information that you are hitching somewhere. They get real excited and completely take over the situation, hustling you into cars, busses, trucks and God knows what all while you try to explain that you have no money & cannot pay. Usually you don’t pay anyway – we rode in more mysterious, empty busses without having to pay, busses with busted seats & floors littered with nutshells & orange peels – but the bus that took us to Baghdad demanded money so we had quite an ugly scene when we got off. Meanwhile Baghdad when we first arrived was a sea of mud. They had had the worst rain in 10 years, and added to the usual middle eastern city’s dirt, flies and confusion, were great mud holes and whole sections of town under 3-4 feet of water. Well, right away we discovered that there was no American Express in Baghdad – we met a student who had lived in London several years who helped us find things. We also met another student who said he could provide us a free place to stay for a few days. Ha ha. Free. In our naiveté we accepted and were taken all over the city, including a very nice outdoor café on the Tigris River (do you believe it? The **TIGRIS RIVER**, I actually saw it!), one of many. But when we were taken to the rooms we were to stay in we discovered that the stipulation of course was that I sleep with this student, the rich S.O.B., because that’s what he was. So we packed up our stuff – at 12:30 at night in the rain – and left to go to another cheap hotel, which was different only because one of the walls in our room was glass (?) (!) Next day we were determined to get out of the Middle East, so that was when we decided to hitch north to Kirkuk, and then on into Turkey. We got hustled onto another bus, a Mercedes Benz 10 seater this time filled with honest to God Bedouins in burnooses and driven by “a good Kurdish boy” who would not charge us. Baghdad to Kirkuk is nearly all desert, tho some of it was flooded then. The ride was somewhat eerie because suddenly the bus would stop in the middle of nowhere, with nothing but sand and sky to be seen for miles - & one of these Arabs would actually get out of the bus and set out across the desert going God only know where.

*In Kirkuk we immediately hitched out to where Charlie remembered having lived. You see, Kirkuk is surrounded by huge oil fields owned by Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), owned partially by the British. Charlie's father worked for IPC for years, in Tripoli, Lebanon (where Charlie was born) for a while & then in Kirkuk. The oil fields & homes attached to them are in these sort of compounds, heavily guarded & controlled by the military now. Our first mistake was to try to hitch into the K-1 compound. We were immediately picked up by the military, questioned, propositioned (me) and then driven to a military stockade in a jeep whose driver was so inept that he ran into a post and nearly turned the truck over with all of us in it. At the stockade we were shuffled about from officer to officer, each higher than the other, telling how Charlie wanted to see his old home at 8 Lime Grove, until we finally got authorization to see it, and we also got a little money from them when they heard how broke we were. So we were driven to a compound called Baba West in an army jeep and taken to 8 Lime Grove, whose present occupants showed us around. Then they drove us all over Baba West to places Charlie remembered – swimming pool, golf course (where they bought us some sandwiches) and stuff like that. It was quite interesting, because Charlie had told me so much about when he lived in Kirkuk that it was as tho I could remember it too. Plus Kirkuk, at least the oil fields part, is a spectacular sight anyway. There is a background of vast brown desert and craggy, fierce looking, uninhabitable mountains, and then are these vast petroleum works with giant flames 50 and 100 feet high pouring out of the top into the desert sky. It is a dramatic, somewhat brutal and terrifying, but interesting sight. And at night it is really something to see. Our second day in Kirkuk Charlie spoke to a man from IPC who knew his father who gave us 5 pounds and told us how it was impossible to hitch further north in Iraq. He also advised us to get out of Kirkuk, which is crammed with police & army men. (In fact all of Iraq is uneasy & scared, with secret police, wiretapping & censors everywhere ... we were told that everyone expects another revolution after the expected war with Israel). So back we went to Baghdad, to have one of our most incredible experiences, and one that nearly broke me. We went out to a "tourist camp" in Baghdad (got a lift in an ambulance!) but found we needed sleeping bags to stay there. Meanwhile a family – couple with 3 small kids – was picnicking there. They turned out to be friends of the man who ran the camp, & offered to let us stay at their place. Very wary by this time, I said flat out, "Yeah, okay, but I'm not going to sleep with him," & we were assured that no, all was well – and it looked okay, with a wife & 3 kids. They drove us home & all seemed*

well for awhile. The kids ran around, we were served dinner and shown our room (2 mattresses on the floor), we saw a little Iraqi tv (more military on tv, this time giving newscasts), and – believe it or not – played handball together in the courtyard in the center of their house (an open courtyard that all the rooms open out on). It was a regular cozy little family group – until the father got me alone in the living room a minute. He grabbed me, and I struggled (boy, was he strong) & I ran back to our room and brother I completely broke down and cried & cried & cried while the man & wife are fluttering around apologizing and giving us cokes and little tokens of their esteem and Charlie is telling them to go away and general pandemonium reigned. We stayed the night there & went to the main IPC headquarters in Baghdad next day, me with a firm resolve to get the hell out of the Middle East forever. We went to see another man, Mr. Langly, who knew Mr. Denne (Charlie's dad), whose secretary, Menahil, heard our story & took us under her wing. Mr. Langly advised us to get the bus to Jordan & plane to Beirut and all, & we spent that night at Menahil's house. We met her husband and all her family (they all live in the same block) all of whom are very westernized upper class Iraqis who eat English breakfasts and pride themselves on their European travel. They are also secret Royalists – supporters of the King who was brutally assassinated in the last revolution, and they disdain the ordinary Arabs in Iraq. But they were kind, friendly people with large, modern houses who threw a sort of "family" party just for Charlie & me.

Next day we got on the "Baghdad express" – the bus to Amman Jordan, where we ran into Dennis, a guy we met before we left Munich here at the Heim. That bus was just awful, all 22 hours of it, and the Iraqi soldiers searched Charlie's, Dennis's & my baggage about 20 minutes out of Baghdad, looking not for hashish (which Dennis was carrying) but books of some sort. Weird. I could write about that bus ride all day because it was one of the worst experiences of my life. Charlie & I had slept only 2 hours the night before we got on the bus. We didn't eat on the bus either. We bounced and rocked and sweated & gasped (there was little air in the back & it was very hot & crowded) and I was a mass of aches & bruises by morning. I thought I was losing my mind in the night. You know stories along the "Hell bound train" theme? I honestly thought at one point that nite as we jerked our way across the desert, when everyone else was asleep and the only sound was the mournful, dissonant Arab music on the radio and the only sight the endless rocky desert by the road & the only feeling that endless, Godawful bumping, I thought I had died and gone to hell and this was it, this bus going on

*forever thru Iraq toward Jordan. By the time we got to Amman next day, the only way I was able to stand it was by somehow disassociating my mind from my body, pretending the hunger, thirst, dirtiness, pain & weariness were not mine at all, but some other being's. I was only semi-conscious then anyway.*

*So after this unbelievable bus trip, we boarded a lovely air conditioned plane in Amman, where we were served cookies & chilled fruit juice and sunk back into soft cushions while watching great hunks of Syria go by & under the window. It was dark when we got to Beirut, and the airport bus took us right out to the YMCA, where Charlie & Dennis checked in immediately. But the YWCA was full up, so I ended up sleeping at the YM and then sneaking out at 7:00 in the morning so I wouldn't get caught. But I saw some of Beirut that morning, enough to love it for the sea, the Mediterranean, for its cleanliness and modern-ness, its clean, friendly people and its warm, beautiful climate. Later that day I checked into the Youth Hostel, which is way out of the center of town, but has hot baths, a kitchen you can use, no rules & no occupants (at least then). Charlie stayed at the YM, and thru it we met a bunch of really nice guys. A Nigerian named Immanuel and an Indian named Matthew were the grooviest, tho the group included a Libyan, an Egyptian, a Lebanese, and a Persian. Plus there was a real weird character of a Pakistani there, too who I could write more on, but it's a hassle. Anyhow, you know how I got a job typing for 3 days, which I eventually packed up (as Charlie would say) as it paid \$1 a day. Plus I got sick and became convinced I had cholera, which I didn't. Also Charlie & I became thick as thieves with the vice ring of Beirut (the taxi drivers) somehow or other. And that was the seeds of disaster. Before Dennis go on the boat for Athens he turned Charlie on for the first time. Then Charlie wanted to try some more, & the Beirut taxi drivers, who are stoned most of the time anyway, are more than eager to sell hash. To make a long story short, Charlie bought \$10 worth of hashish late one Saturday night, and we flew out of Beirut the following Thursday. In Adana we spent the night on air mattresses on the roof of the American consulate. We made it to Ankara the next day, and slept in the car of the last lift we got. We got to Istanbul the next day. Hitching in Turkey was lovely – we never waited long for rides, most of them were going hundreds of K's, and they bought us meals and cokes. In Istanbul we stayed at the Hotel Gul Hane, where all the hippies go to pay 24¢ to sleep in a tent on the roof of the hotel (what a freak out of a place that was!) We paid 50¢ and got a room with 2 pleasant Englishmen in it. There was some (cold) water to wash in so I was able to wash some of the cement dust off me*

*and my clothes (we got a lift between Ankara and Istanbul in the back of a cement lorry and cement dust blew everywhere – in our hair, ears, eyes, up our noses and all over our clothes). The police raid the Gul Hane for drugs about 3 times a week but fortunately they didn't while we were there. The next day (we had spent less than \$3 from Beirut at this point) we got a series of really great rides towards the Greek border, plus it was a beautiful, sunny day. We were about 4 kilometers from the border by about 5:00 waiting for a lift when a large crowd of adolescent boys and girls gathered around us and gave us some bread and orange cola. I sold my MJC sweatshirt to one of them for 10 lire (about \$3) – so some Turkish kid is running around out there now sporting an MJC sweatshirt! Anyway, we walked the last kilometer to the border and thru no man's land (which is a long bridge over a swamp) after we had quite a scare at Turkish customs when we were told by some guys coming thru the other way that the guards search everything very thoroughly. But they didn't search us at all, so by nitefall we were slapping at mosquitos on the Greek side waiting for a lift into Greece (the mosquitos there & in Beirut were so bad that our hands, arms and faces looked as tho we had measles). We met a Swedish fellow named Max there also hitching & we all got a lift in a van driven by an Israeli & Englishman. Those 2 were leaving Turkey for 1 day because their Turkish visas had run out so they were going to get them renewed in Greece & then go right back to Istanbul. So we entered Greece by moonlite and drove till midnite thru the land of Ulysses and Zeus, etc. It was fabulous – I fell in love with Greece at that moment. It's another must for anyone who comes to Europe. Charlie, Max & I got a room at a hotel in town called Komintini that night - & the sheets were clean! Then we split up again next day and Charlie & I hitched to Thessaloniki, the second largest city in Greece, where we stayed at the Youth Hostel. We wanted to sell blood again there but Charlie told them we had just given in Beirut so they wouldn't let us, worse luck because Thessaloniki pays highest for blood in all of Greece. In Thessaloniki we also tried to swipe youth hotel blankets so we could sleep outside (our money was very low by this time), but – we got caught, and spent an hour in a Greek police station staring at gruesome military propaganda posters (Greece was taken over by the military, remember) and wondering if we would be sent to concentration camps or just deported. Well, they tried to give us a lecture but since we couldn't speak Greek & they couldn't speak anything but, they let us go and wiping our brows with relief, we set off for Athens. We were looking for a little village by the sea where we could sunbathe all day and sleep on the beach at night for a few days before heading back to Munich. We arrived*

*in Athens next day but went straight thru it. Just south of there we saw a poster of a place named Nafplion that looked pretty good, so we decided to hitch there - & we did. It's southeast of Corinth in the Peloponnese & is very nice altho a tourist trap (every day 8 busses or so arrived bringing schoolkids & foreigners for a few hours visit). It had beaches and a dock, a big old medieval castle on a cliff, picturesque little Greek houses - & a cheap youth hostel. We stayed there 5 days, living on spaghetti, bread, and plain yoghurt (which I've come to just love as it's very popular in the Mideast & in Greece - also quite cheap), & not much of those either. When we were down to \$5 between us, we left to give blood in Athens & then head home (incidentally, I left forwarding addresses for the Beirut Amexco) & this time Charlie succeeded in nicking a blanket from the hostel. We got a lift all the way from Nafplion to Athens with an American & his little kid. He was really a nice man - took us to some ruins (including Agamemnon's castle, which I thought was really neat; I consider it with the Houses of Parliament in London & the Tigris River in Baghdad), drove us to the hostel in Athens where he paid for 2 nites for us, & gave us 50 drachmas (about \$1.50) for food. Well, no one knew where one gives blood in Athens, so we didn't stay more than one night there & decided to make a last-ditch, desperation measure attempt to hitch to Munich on our \$5. We wanted to get a ferry to Brindisi & hitch up Italy (as hitching in Yugoslavia is awful) but simply didn't have enuff money. So we started off north & in the first day, Monday, got within 18 K's of the border. But - it was the most unused, unknown, untraveled border road in existence, & we waited till 12:00 noon the next day for a lift - & not one car went down the road. We got one lift on a donkey cart that took us 1 kilometer & that was all. So - we backtracked south again, cut across Greece to Thessaloniki again & up towards the most traveled Greek-Yugoslavia border, having wasted a whole day. Oh, meanwhile we were sleeping outside every nite, shivering to death under one blanket & one flannel sheet of mine. We were also hitching till as late as 1:00 am and getting up to hitch again at 5:30 or 6:00. Bleeah! On no food, too. Anyway, we hitched up towards the border and arrived at a little town in Greece at about 11:30 pm. As we walked thru the town we passed a tavern about to close & got given some bread and (gasp!) meat by the people there (our first meat in 1 1/2 weeks!). With many thanks we set off down the road, only to get called over to another tavern 500 meters further down, where we were given our pick of anything on the menu for free. Fantastic! The Greeks are great people. Then before we left the guy gave us some bread & a tomato and cucumber for breakfast next day. Oh, & I forgot. That same day earlier, by 4:00 we*

*hadn't eaten or drunk anything, & at one point we got let off near a fruit orchard. The men working there let us into the orchard & let us have the run of a whole cherry tree - & we ate and ate and ate those cherries, oh wow! Were they good. Also the same day we acquired Robert the tortoise. Anyway, after leaving the second tavern, we got the funniest lift, at about 2:00 am. A Mercedes filled up with happy, drunk Greeks, men & women, weaved to a stop, picked us up with hearty whoops and laughs, & then took us careening down the road for about 6 kilometers, singing all the way. We slept out that night again, & got a lift in a bus to the border next morning. The bus already had 2 other hitching couples - & good lord, both the girls were from Washington DC, one from Chevy Chase & one from Silver Spring! I almost dropped my teeth & so did they. Well, we got thru Greek, Yugoslavian customs unscathed, & got a lift with an American as far as Skopje. And from then till we got to Austria, it was pure hell. People in Yugoslavia do not pick up hitch hikers, especially people as dirty & tired and tough-looking as we were. It wasn't so much that no one would speak to us, or smile, or pick us up, or that the road never went near anywhere where you could get water. But they went out of their way to be rude. Little kids jeered at us, and people in cars would slow down pretending to be stopping - & then speed away laughing at us or shaking their fists at us. Plus it rained 2 nites while we were there & we got quite wet. It took us 4 days to get out of that damned country, & I never intend to set foot in it again unless my passage is paid & secure from border to border. Anyway, we picked up a Frenchman named Patrick at Zagreb & hitched with him for a few days. North of Zagreb we got dropped off in a little \*village (where we saw the house where Tito was born) in the middle of nowhere. Literally. We walked on this deserted dirt road for hours & hours, begging bread from Yugoslavian peasants, & finally split up, Patrick & Charlie going on ahead & me hitching alone. But by a very complicated process we eventually got together again in a car driven by an Austrian couple heading for Graz, Austria. But not before I had left my coat in a car driven by 2 Canadians. Too bad. Anyhow the Austrians were great - they gave us bread, wurst & some Yugoslavian wine that tastes like apple cider, & our German had improved to the point that we could talk to them (only they spoke to Patrick in Spanish as he knows no German). We crossed the border then with no mishaps - & you should have seen us in Graz - we were*

---

\* Note from 2017: Evidently this place is called Kumrovec, in Krapina (I recall the name Krapina from 1968), and photos of it online look a lot like how it was in 1968, only more spruced up. Even now it's off the beaten track & I can't see how we ever ended up there.

*practically hysterical to be in a noncommunist country again, plus I had a little Austrian change (about 50¢) left over from when we went thru before. So we got some milk and yoghurt and then hitched about 100 K's further.*

*We knew it would rain again that nite so we decided to see if we could sleep in somebody's barn. We sited a likely looking place off the autobahn and went & knocked on the farmhouse door. This fat little old lady answered and we explained in broken German our plight - & we couldn't have picked a better place. It was great. We weren't even the first hitch hikers to show up there. It was a huge family living there with married daughters & their families. They gave us a place to sleep, a huge hot meal with hot coffee (hot coffee! Not Turkish coffee!!!), breakfast the next day, and 20 schillings (about \$1) to boot. And they were so nice. Well, next day, a beautiful sunny day, we bid them good by, split up from Patrick and got a lift in a Persian International Transport to Salzburg. We hitched for 3 hours in Salzburg before we got a lift to the German Austrian border (only 8 K's away from there). We were so happy to be getting back into Germany! And then . . . .*

*When they found out we were coming from the Middle East, they searched our knapsacks, & of course found the lousy little bit of hash Charlie bought in Beirut. Before I had a chance to even talk to Charlie they whisked him away, searched me & my stuff and then told me I could go. They were so awful! You know how Nazis act in the movies? It was like that - they acted like they had caught an arch criminal dope smuggler - & Charlie had never even smoked hash till he smoked it with Dennis in Beirut. I was just sick. So with Robert in tow & no other choice I got a lift with a truck driver who turned out to be the amorous type who kicked me out of the truck about 40 K's down the autobahn. There I was, at 11:30 at nite, alone, hitching right on the autobahn, which is illegal. What a down! But another truck finally stopped, and once the driver ascertained that he & I were both heading for München, he said not another word to me till we got here, thank God. And when I was walking down the end of the autobahn with Munich right around me, I didn't even care if it was 1:30 in the morning because it was like I was home. And then the GI's gave me a lift to the Heim, & you know the rest of the story.*

*Well anyway. I called the British consulate this morning (it's Tuesday now) and told them Charlie's story. They are calling Bad Reichenhall and I am to go see them today at 4:00 to find out what's happening.*

*Also. I would appreciate it if you could send me some things (to the Heim of course) – not airmail, as it costs too much. (1) My blue leather purse. The other one I have here is falling apart after the rigors of the journey (2) My green and white summer dress (3) 2 short sleeved blouses or shirts that I may have left – have Janet pick out the best. I think that's all.*

*Give everyone my love and tell them all the news you can. I'll be writing to everyone as soon as I can. Also, thank all the people at work for the letters – I really enjoyed them.*

*Next day: So now it seems that Bobby Kennedy was shot. Now it seems that Bobby Kennedy will either die or live with permanent brain damage. Now it seems that the free and democratic election, symbol and epitome of the great American system, has been all shot to hell because some idiot with a gun saw fit to eliminate one of the nominees the easy way.*

*We all gather in groups together at the Heim, all of us Americans (because at times like this we fall away from our French, German, English, Austrian and Swedish friends and without speaking seek one another out), in quiet, bitter groups and exchange a word or two on the assassination until finally someone says what we are all thinking: "Makes you wonder if you ever want to go home, doesn't it?"*

*Because we now have an inkling of what it's like to see America with the eyes of a foreigner. Nearly all of us have been here now thru King's assassination, the following riots, and now Kennedy's shooting. I don't know how it is to you all back home, but to us it's as if our country were falling apart, or maybe "failing" is the better word. We rack our brains for some sort of frame of reference to put all the violence into, to relate it to what we know of home when we were there – but we can't. We shrug and shake our heads when the foreigners look to us for an explanation and we say, "I don't know. I would have said it couldn't happen, not in the States I knew. I would have said, 'Not Washington, they'll never burn Washington,' I would have said, 'No, no more assassinations now, not ever, an assassination is a freak occurrence.'"*

*But is it? What has happened? How do people at home feel about it? Are things the same now – or are people beginning to be afraid? Should we ever come home?*

*Love,*

*Tif*

*ps Got the money.*

Owing to the rising cost of wheat tomatoes will be more expensive three year's ago.

Peter Kenneth James June 1, 1968  
The Heim  
Munich

June Munich

I have these images. The image I have now enrages me with a futile, impotent, pointless rage, a rage concerning no one in particular and everyone I have known.

It is the image of the gauzy eyed and giggling hash smoker with his secret joke that is no less a secret because everyone knows he's stoned. He sits back triumphantly, sagging his neck and head into loose shoulders, contained and confident in himself, his lips and teeth set in a smug grin, a superior grin because he thinks he has it all over us all, over every straight person existing then or before or since, since he's so wrecked he is eternally one-up on every eternally straight person around. You can tell by the way he walks in the room what he's been doing, the secret joint in the secrecy of the toilet or in the nook behind the bush, or the precious pipe eagerly circulated around the group with its smoldering bowl going from hand to hand, from one pair of eyes to the next. They are so goddamn pleased with themselves, these hash smokers, they are so unreasonably confident of accomplishment when they have done nothing and they add insult to injury by expecting your homage and respect. You are to excuse them, please them, serve them and adjust reality to accommodate their exalted state of consciousness. They feel that about them is a mystique that is not to be denied or ignored. They may act paranoid but they want you to know they're stoned, they seem to swell and burst with the "secret", they are in a world of their own but not entirely because they want you to know they are (here comes 2 now, Aagaron and Rabbit, pompous and pleased because they are on the verge of a sale or a deal, I'm not sure which) and admire them for it.

I want to turn them in. I have so much bitterness now, from I don't know where, I want to bust every goddamn pot smoker I ever knew, I want to bust my best friends and my sister, the freaks in Dupont Circle, the Beatles, the Beirut taxi drivers, Larry and Mike, I feel like calling up the goddamn narcotics police, whom I hate even more or I probably would, and busting every human being I ever knew because I know this is not a crime, and only in the absurdity of busting them all and exposing them all for what they are, ordinary goddamn human beings with no mystique and no evil, can the bitterness and futile fury inside me end.

I am hating now listlessly; I will do nothing. I should break windows or beer bottles or I should howl unforgivable insults at my most needed and trusted friends. But I am tied up in knots by my own restlessness. Goodness and evil alike infuriate and torment me. I hate straight people too. I believe I hate smugness and I say with smugness that I too am smug.

There is an Israeli boy in this room now playing a guitar. When he first came here today, encased in the dirt and knapsack of all of us when we come, Rabbit introduced him to Laura. "I don't want to meet any girls," he said, "I'm only interested in getting to New York." "Why?" they said. "Because my parents were just killed," he retorted angrily and fell into a sulky silence. There are so many of them and they all come here. They look alike when they arrive in faded jeans, with toughened, brown, dirty, bearded faces and they all go straight to the showers in the basement. But in one day they play the guitar and sing in furious, sad nasal whines like this one, or they shoot Arabs in Kuwait for \$1000 a month, or they smuggled 6 keys of hash from Istanbul last week, or they whip up bananas flambé in the kitchen. Their diversity, their color and enthusiasm, and their incredible backgrounds become sometimes a bore, just as everything can become a bore.

A pause just fell over the group and the music. The Israeli glared at me accusingly. "What are you doing?" he demanded suspiciously. "Rolling a cigarette," I replied. "Oh." He resumed playing, this time with a kazoo accompaniment. "Is that cool!" Jim exclaimed, and Aagaron left. Sometimes music affects him this way. Sometimes it gets to be too much, you see. Then Peter entered, Peter who is delightfully unique because he is the only one who isn't unique at all. "What a combination!" Jim exclaimed, meaning the guitar and kazoo. The Israeli stopped abruptly. "Speaking of combinations," he said, "is there a pool hall in town?" "I donno," they said. He resumed playing. He never smiles, this Israeli. He is defiantly morose, and sings "Ain't She Sweet" with a morose defiance that gives the song a peculiar, unbecoming flavor.

I have not been considered straight for a long time. I think from this time forth I will become straight in the eyes of others and today's will be the last dope deal I will ever witness. It is too bad because I like Aagaron.

I think one of the things that makes us alike here at the Heim is our lack of commitment. Maybe not so much that really, since I guess most young people lack commitment, but the fact that we are all acting on it by traveling. There is no place where we belong, nothing and no one that we belong to – we just keep going from place to place, person to person, and job (when we do get jobs) to job. We are all pending, so to speak, moving and waiting. We are professional seekers who don't know what they are looking for.

James: I don't belong here at the Heim.

Q: Why not?

James: I donno.

Q: Where do you belong?

James: I don't know. That's what I'm trying to find out.

And so we move, we pack up our knapsacks and hitch or drive to Amsterdam or Teheran or Morocco or Greece or Paris. We think in the beginning that it's just because we'd like to see Amsterdam or Greece but eventually, when we have seen some of these places and formed our judgments of them, we know different. We are looking for something, for a place where we belong, where we feel right and content and not bored, a place whose very horizons accommodate our souls, so to speak. We are all so very restless and find it so hard to stay anywhere for as much as three weeks or a month. The restlessness is like a doubt or a guilt, a feeling that something will catch up with us here, or that something is fleeing from us there and if we don't go, if we don't get out on the road with our thumbs stuck out, we will miss it and will have lost our chance forever. We complain heartily about the rigors of the road, about waiting 4 hours for a lift, or a day, about having no money, or sleeping outside in the rain, or visa troubles at borders – but we are never more content than when we are on the road. It's often hard, disagreeable toil, but it always holds a promise of some sort. You can never tell what will happen; anything can happen and usually does. It's like standing by the road waiting for your next lift. You stand with your thumb out, offering yourself to a world of strangers in strange cars and no matter how long you wait and how bored you get, there is an undercurrent of excitement. Out of all those VW's and Mercedes, vans and trucks and cars, old beat up jobs and gleaming new ones, local and international plates, single businessmen and secure looking families – out of all of this random sampling of humanity streaming past – who will stop for me when? How far will he/she/they be going? Will they speak English? Will they be friendly, cold, rude, fresh,

insulting, gabby, quiet, rich, poor, ugly, pretty – or what? Will I have to swing-heave myself into the back of a dump truck, or ease myself into the sleek comfort of a new Mercedes? Will I ever get a lift? (For that is a nagging thought in the back of the mind of the hitch-hiker, his dread and nitemare and fear: that one, certain, somewhere existent autobahn entrance or country road where no one ever stops, the one place where you never, never get a lift. It's an ever present possibility that becomes more and more real after the first 2 hours of hitching.) There is the challenge and excitement of uncertainty in hitching. The point of course is to get somewhere, and every hitch hiker will tell you that if he only had the cash he'd take the goddamn train, but the true fact and substance of the trip is the hitching, and this is the fact that leaves you at a loss when your last lift drops you off in Athens/Rome/Madrid/Istanbul or wherever you were going. There is a kind of vague, anticlimactic feeling when you have arrived, and in a very few days you find yourself itching to be on the move again.

The best hitching – meaning the most enjoyable hitching – I have known was when Charlie & I first got to Greece. And that was because we weren't going anywhere, ridiculous as it may seem. We had a vague dream of some sort of village by the sea where we would spend a few days – but which village where was irrelevant. We were in no hurry and had no destination, so we had the opportunity to just hitch for the sake of hitching. And it was fine. For several days we just relaxed and hitched. We sat on our knapsacks in the shade of trees along little village roads playing tic-tac-toe in the dirt and sharing a cigarette, not caring much if a car stopped or not. We hiked thru sunny towns and villages buying ice creams when the whim struck us. We were unconcerned about whether our lifts were long or short, comfortable or uncomfortable. We started and stopped our hitching day as we pleased. We devoured beautiful Greek cherries and spit the seeds out of truck windows, we lolled on cushions in the back of a Green van with the Aegean sea speeding past the back opening, and we smiled at anonymously friendly clusters of Greek schoolchildren. If I had the money, I would travel that way forever, just hitching for the sake of hitching, with no rush or hurry, no anxiety nudging me across the map, just blundering along at my own rate in the beautiful Greek (Italian/French/German/etc.) sun.

And that seems to me to be the proof of my lack of commitment and restlessness, this desire to be simply traveling, not even going anywhere, but even stopping unless some place catches my fancy. It carries the young traveler's syndrome to the extreme because it leaves out

even the small commitment of choosing at least a tentative destination. I want my destination to just happen to me while I drift because for now it is the drifting that matters and not the goal.

I don't think I've ever been so pleasantly and deliberately rootless and idle. My days are pointless splashes of time following one another in meaningless succession: me at breakfast, wasting my energy and moral judgment on pleasure or dismay over the jelly flavor I drew today; me scribbling half-heartedly with pen on piece of paper in the back garden, writing letters that say "Anyway, I suppose I'll get a job for a few months since Laura has my knapsack. . ." and alternating my disinterested imaginary conversations with relieved dashes at the tortoise who is escaping again; me in the front room deepening my boredom by playing 10-20-30 with a Sandpipers' album on in the background; me in the bathroom, virtuously scrubbing my face with a soapy washrag, just beginning to get bored with the late novelty of hot water; me carrying on inept (on my part) verbal exchanges with Peter, feeling vaguely guilty because I know he likes me but I still feel somewhat at a loss to conversational topics in his presence; me dutifully donning and then discarding the old curious worry for Mike and Larry (will my worry over Charlie become as automatic?); me promising myself with a self-indulgent sigh that I will look for a job next week, if I don't go to Norway, and then rolling a cigarette and forgetting about it because of the total nature of cigarette rolling.

It is as though, now that I am physically alone for the first time, I have found myself with very little identity and am somewhat smug about the fact. I feel dreamily detached from goals, attitudes, values, and responsibilities; decisions seem meaningless, commitments trivial. They are all the same to me, what used to be so important. I have lately violated my own rules, seen my convictions topple with a little struggle only, felt my commitments slipping through me and out the other side, and I did not die. I am only mildly surprised now and mildly wondering what will happen next. For others I play the automatic role of the Tiffy that left for Teheran, or maybe the Tiffy that left for Europe, because it is easier and so automatic . . . but the feeling of their being a connection between how I act and what is left of me inside is gone. My empirical self has little relevance to me, now. I halfheartedly feel that I must go out among strangers to find out who I am and reestablish the link between the two, but I am in no hurry because hurry is not a characteristic of the bewildered, unformed being with me.

Charlie has ceased to be an existent being with eyes and hands to touch me, attitudes and words to hurt me. He is a memory of situations and occurrences that I reexamine and reevaluate often, looking for their meaning and explanation, looking maybe for what happened to the other me. He is a link and a broken link; a link in time with the other me, and a causal factor in the breaking of the link between the empirical and inner Tiffys. He is also an object of bureaucratic shuffle and question, a thing discussed, apprehended, notified about, questioned concerning and informed regarding. He is sort of gone from me, and I'm sort of wondering if he's got me with him because I sure don't . . . that is one reason that I don't let go.

Another reason that I sustain a readiness to believe in Charlie's reality, if and when it again presents itself, is related to one vague but no doubt important shred of the old Tiffy that clings milkily to the lining of my insides . . . this unformed, undirected feeling that I am important and so other people are too and some of them must be treated as such somehow. Somehow they never quite make it as things, they have a consciousness of their own which has to be taken cognizance of because it is rewarding. Whether guilt follows failure to take this cognizance or not – and, ah, it does not always and this is the barb that pierced the old Tiffy, or one of them. No, the only punishment is the lack of reward . . .

Maybe I should consider myself lucky because a few times in my life I've really perceived things. Now what do I mean by that? It's that so much of the time I don't know how to take things, I don't know what counts most about a moment, what are the most important things to sense, feel and learn about it, what it really is and what it means to me. Most of the time, really, I don't even try and the rest of the time I mislead myself by picking the wrong emphasis and then, tho I usually know immediately that it's wrong, feverishly milking it for all it's worth in order to convince myself that it was right. That usually happens when something dramatic happens, and the result is melodrama or sentimentality; the ultimate result is a feeling of uncomfortableness, an illness-at-ease, a sensation of being plastic, brightly colored, and mechanical. The attempt is to bring some semblance of meaning and interpretation into the cloudy formlessness of reality and the result, if the attempt fails, is a desperate, useless attempt to force the reality to conform to the interpretation. Example: When the tortoise joined Charlie and me in Greece, Charlie became much more interested in the tortoise's wellbeing than mine, or even his own. That's the bare reality. What was most important about it? The scene of Charlie

feeding the tortoise while we starved? The sun glinting on Charlie's black hair? The rumbling gravel and dirt under Robert's agitated feet? The hollowness in my stomach and the resentment in my heart? The alienness of the surrounding countryside? Was that occurrence, or circumstance funny? Sad? A moral lesson? Typical? Enlightening? Trivial? Important? Dull? Heartwarming? Pick any three, or two or six, Tiffy, and if they don't fit, pick some more, or else stubbornly stick to your guns and make them fit . . . .

And most of the time I am confused and uncertain when faced by so many possible interpretations. I cannot pick and I do not pick and then I feel as though I am not entirely existing. I suspect most people spend most of their time in this state. Other times I pick wrong; after that I may shrug the mistake off and forget it, especially if it was a purely personal circumstance between me and objects, or I may make the reality conform as above, or I may regret it and keep wearily, ploddingly looking for the real Truth about the circumstance (because really I suppose Truth is what I seek). The latter two cases usually occur when my relationship to other people is involved, because I feel a great responsibility toward other people, some other people.

But sometimes it has happened that I really perceived and felt a moment as it really was. It is an instantaneous, spontaneous realization, usually, and happens without thought or decision. It's a sudden penetration through the cloud of possible interpretations to a realization of the truth of the moment, like a perception-warp, where my mind leaps over all intervening thought and consideration to a oneness with or total perception of, a reality. How seemingly trivial it can be, the reality! It can be a pool of evaporating gasoline on the asphalt under a car. It can often be a piece of music – most often it is that. It can be rolling over into the tickly puff an eiderdown. With a person it can be the exchange of one word, or a laugh or a raising of an eyebrow at the right time. Whatever it may be, when this full perception occurs, there is no doubt, this feeling inside me then is what this reality really is, and the somewhat awesomely wonderful thing about it is that the feeling is always total, piercing joy – no matter how seemingly joyless the reality may be. These perceptions are what I try to catch in writing, what I have seen other writers, like John Updike, capture. And it is not easy, it requires a total purging of the self of all preconceptions and clichés, a total freshness and innocence, in a sense, of outlook, but the rewards are so great. It's a release, a heady freedom to sense, feel, and judge with directness and truth.

On a Saturday night at the Heim I was sitting in the front room expecting something dramatic to happen to me, and something did. It never takes much for those moments to happen to me: a mood of a kind of restless, melancholy somewhere between self-pity and self-satisfaction, darkness (either night time or perhaps a rainy day) with a little light, preferably artificial, lurking the corner of my eye, an poignant, emotional music fawning at my ears. On that Saturday night all the ingredients were there and I was there too, wallowing clumsily in a great pool of sloppy, undefined longing, resting my cheek on the knuckles of my right hand, wrinkling my forehead over passages of Porgy and Bess, and pressing my teeth into the inside of my lips. I wasn't really yearning for anything particularly dramatic; I was alone in the room and wanted Someone to Come Along.

So Charlie came along and I was waiting. For Godot? For emotion, maybe. I was overflowing with undirected emotion and vulnerable to any need, any shoulder, and any request for rapport. "I don't want to go to Granddaddy's tonite," he said putting his arm around me. It smelled of the denim jacket he wore and was hard and firm. "Do you?" I didn't want to go to Granddaddy's, a club somewhere in Schwabing that we were all to go to that night. I wanted to sit around with my cheek on my knuckles and rebuff all attempts at conversation with quiet truthfulness. I wanted to daydream and wonder, and I was ready to cling. To Charlie. And I was pleased that he didn't feel like clubbing either. Because he joined my quiet, wistful moment rather than intruding on it, because he was the one I had vaguely wanted to come Along, I was solemn and regretful when he said, "Let's go to a cheap pension," and I said, "No. I'm sorry, but no." "You don't go?" he asked, without resentment. "It depends," I said. It depended because after one crack at a one night travel romance in someone else's unmade bed that left me with a bewildered, unfinished feeling, I had decided against instant intimacy. It was like an unfulfilled promise or starting something that was never completed.

He left it at that and on the same night my "no" slid into a "yes" without a struggle on my part. I was vulnerable that night, so vulnerable – and we stood in a mobbed nightclub in Schwabing watching the dance floor and listening to I'm a Believer (which increased my vulnerability more) while he swirled and downed two whiskey and cokes in as many minutes. We walked down Leopoldstrasse after escaping the club, then, lively Leopoldstrasse where

plastic German hippies with finger paint faces joined gleaming, honking cars in dodging around construction refuse piled up like scabs over the wounds hacked in the asphalt for the sake of the projected (such a lovely word! So practical and businesslike sounding, yet so visionary and hopeful) subway. We walked hand in hand (he always held my hand in those days) and in the midst of the bustle and of my vulnerability, he lifted my hand to his lips and kissed it. I looked at him, puzzled and touched, and later, walking down Einsteinstrasse back to the Heim, pulled him into a kiss because I needed to feel his reality and need against my breast. I stopped holding back then, my defenses had collapsed, my detachment was broken thru. For better or worse, he had moved me, in that one simple wordless gesture – and I was committed. And it was already too late when he told me later that evening that he had been in a mental hospital (“I always tell girls I go out with,” he said later, in Teheran. “Why?” I asked. “To warn them off,” he said. “I’ll probably be a wife beater.” “And that idea is probably another symptom of your inferiority complex,” I replied carefully.) My commitment had been given, my emotion had found an outlet, my hand had been kissed under a pair of sad brown eyes on Leopoldstrasse, and I would not easily let go.

Today I went thru Charlie’s things, ostensibly to pack them off to the storeroom in tidy boxes marked “C.R.A. Denne, Haslemere, England” because Jim Graham, the fellow he left them with, is leaving for Africa Friday. It was probably just as much for the sake of seeing the things, touching and smelling them, these objects as tangible evidence that he does exist and does have old letters addressed to the Innsbruck youth hotel and a calendar with autumn German landscapes on it. I climbed on a slippery wooden chair painted a hard, shiny basic red and confronted an upper cupboard the sight of whose contents affected me like discovering an undreamed of side of Charlie’s personality. I know Charlie’s things. I know the things he took with him to Teheran like I know my own: his 2 v-necked short sleeved summer shirts, stained at the neck and unraveling at the seams; his black trousers and the white ducks he bought in Teheran; his denim jacket, grown soft and familiar from much use; his brown print drawstring pajama bottoms, his 2 pairs of underwear and odd-dozen handkerchiefs, some marked C and some marked R; his Afghan coat reeking of rancid sheep and taciturn Teheran leather salesman; the “wellies” in the heavy plastic bag (those fateful wellies!); the miscellaneous books – Lolita, Confessions of a Spent Youth, The Way of the Transgressor, The Dream Makers; the little

flowered cardboard boxes filled with Teheran junk silver; the youth hostel blanket he stole in Nafplion; 2 plastic bags filled with washing supplies and odds and ends like tape, string and scissors; and the brass ash tray given us by the same faggot merchant who sold us the junk silver; and his mini-union jack.

I write down all this, not because the contents of his knapsack are so interesting per se but because I know the contents so well, and it was all I knew of Charlie's possessions. Yes I know Charlie, I would have said, I know his face, his walk, his voice, his laugh, I know even every item in his knapsack; I know Charlie. But what was this cupboardful of junk looming over me in this room where he lived (it was bed three, the upper bunk on the left by the window where he slept)? These were things of which I knew nothing and I was moved and a little intimidated by their strangeness. I found it a little difficult to accept them as Charlie's. They seemed like a hidden, private part of Charlie, a part I was not welcome to view, and I handled them hastily and guiltily as tho by seeing them I was surprising Charlie in some private and personal act and could save the situation only by removing myself from it as soon as possible. So I rather hurriedly sifted thru the books, the clothes (this turquoise Indian shirt and this satin smoking jacket (?) Charlie's these Beatle boots? Charlie wore this drab brownish-gray corduroy sports jacket and this pin-striped shirt? When?) the piles of foreign change, the letters (oh, especially the letters – how almost frantically I slapped them into a pile and out of my view!), the miscellaneous washing items, the tape recorder, and the box of OMO. I made little neat, motherly piles, thinking of how his mother, whom he hates, and his father, whom he adores, had gone about his life before he left home making neat, orderly piles, not wherever he left disorder, but before he even had a chance to contemplate disorder. All of these things, I thought, bought by his parents to begin with, chosen and packed by his parents before he left with the passport filled in by his father. We had discussed this once, in the cab of a lorry in Turkey. "Everything?" I asked incredulously, sliding painfully, on aching muscles that collapsed in surprise when I dropped to the ground, out of the cab. "They even bought your – black leather jacket?" "My father did," he answered calmly, aware of my surprise but unable to empathize with it; Charlie is unable to shock himself with his own upbringing. "And shoes?" I prodded on as we walked sorely around the Turkish Ofisi petrol station, "Did they buy your shoes?" "Well, not always," he admitted. "It is a problem fitting shoes." And I think now, no wonder dependence on the charity and help of others comes so easily to him. Not that he can't live without it, but he feels easy and

comfortable in such a state of dependence. He has never learned to care enough about what he would prefer to choose for himself. And I, who fear dependence and resent having to accept whatever I get, regardless of what I want, I have not had a single thing bought for me, except as a gift, since I was twelve years old. Maybe earlier.

So I rapidly categorized the things, thoughtfully packed them in boxes and a big plastic bag, and felt safer when they were ordered and out of sight.

As a Californian named Don pointed out once, “Teheran Export” sounds like the front name for some sort of crooked enterprise, or the name for a nonexistent company invented by the kind of men who sell Brooklyn Bridge to hicks (for the purpose of selling useless stocks). It is located on a side street down the block from Hertz carwash near the hauptbahnhof in Munich, and it consists of a parking lot and two prefabricated shacks painted an intense, nondescript blue. I have heard that there is a “main office” that “really runs the whole show” somewhere else but I refuse to credit its existence.

It is very easy to miss the “Persian parking lot” unless you know where it is exactly. There is a dimly lit bar-restaurant called the Café Lido on the right as you walk down the street. The Café Lido is the kind of place that looks like a mahogany cave on the inside and a shady joint on the outside; just beyond it is a lumpy gray driveway in the process of losing its gravel like middle aged men lose their hair. This driveway leads to the Persian parking lot. “Persian parking lot,” someone else pointed out, sounds like a mythical place peopled with genii and magicians in pointed hats with crescents on them. As such, Teheran Export is ill-nicknamed; it may be somewhat fantastic, but it is not of the stuff of fairy tales.

The lot is bordered by gray wooden fences and a brick wall and it can be seen from the windows & balconies of the many apartments in the buildings hidden in that block near the bahnhof. I often wondered while I was waiting around the lot if the German hausfraus behind those windows ever passed a dull afternoon watching the dark, frivolous-looking Persians incoherently herding the confused, sardonic American, Canadian and English youths amongst the battered and crowded Mercedes and Opels. Do they ever pity us or even laugh at us? I thought. Do they ever want to

[BIGFOOT CARTOON HERE, DRAWN BY KITTY: I'M THE MALE FROM CALIFORNIA]

warn us and say, 'It's useless, we've seen the same kid come down here every day 2 weeks in a row, expecting every day to leave for Teheran'? Or do they think about us at all?

Teheran Export ships cars from Munich to Teheran and points in between. It picks up Mercedes, VW's, Opels and Peugeots in Munich, pulls them together into operable shape, and then hires young men with beards, no steady income, and American passports to drive the cars to Iran, where no one with any pride buys anything but a Western car. It is a complicated risky business, it involves registering the cards on the drivers' passports (necessary for evasion of Iranian auto import laws and taxes) and the Persians revel in it. They come pouring out of the dilapidated shacks that serve as an office, unexpectedly (because the shacks are small) ten strong and fill the air with their excited jabber. They dress like second-rate con men in movies: dark silk shirts with light ties and tired-looking suit coats. They argue with one another in Persian with much drawing back of lips over sharp white teeth and impatient shrugging of shoulders. They carry on extended discussions amongst each other that boil down to one question directed to a prospective driver – "Have you a drivers' license?" "Where is your passport?" and the like. Passports delight them. They never tire of demanding one's passport, feeling it, holding it, waving it in the air to punctuate the discussion, leafing thru it, then losing interest in it and absentmindedly giving it back till the next time – 5 minutes later. The bearded itinerants who make up the Persians' drivers are only too happy in the beginning to play the pass the passport game, because they are going to get paid 300 or 350 marks to go to Teheran. They arrive eagerly each day with their knapsacks, all ready to go and are greeted by dazzling white grins, rolling white eyes and hearty handshakes. 'Today. You go,' they are met with. After the third day they begin to sag a little. They begin to come prepared to wander restlessly around the parking lot all day, wondering at the 5 foot stack of empty wine bottles beside the offices, staring up at the potted plants in the apartment balconies and windows, thinking, I wonder if they ever look down here and pity us? . . . They are never exactly sure why their departure has been delayed; they grow morose and discouraged, they catch themselves noticing things like the fact that each day a Persian has a bandage on his wrist – and each day it is a different Persian! They become accustomed to the idea of being in a permanent state of "going to Teheran". Beside the flighty, excitable, passport-happy Persians, these young Americans, Canadians and English seem like big, plodding, slow, irritable bears. And frustrated bears, because they learn that the parking lot

is a world all its own, that no power on earth can extract a straight answer from the grinning Persians, and that the job of driving a car to Teheran for 350 DM is not quite as perfect as it seemed at first.

Charlie and I didn't drive for the Persians. We drove for an Arab named Omar Tahir, but his real name isn't important because we only learned it 2000 kilometers from Munich from ownership papers for the car. To us he was Ahab. Charlie always wanted to take a photograph of Ahab and it was really a pity he didn't. I could see the snapshot so easily: a tall, thin, almost willowy man with narrow wrists and ankles, standing with one hand resting possessively on the white Peugeot he drove down. He looked more like a mixed negro than an Arab with his close cut kinky dark hair and muddy, sallow skin. When he stood, he rested all his weight on one leg, but there was still grace in him, even in such a lopsided position. His age was indeterminate; he could have been anywhere from 30 to 50. In the beginning I thought him 30, but near the end, after the 3 of us had spent one night sleeping in the Mercedes, I was shocked in the morning by his lined, weary face and the gray I had never noticed in the wooly hair above his high forehead. His walk was a loose, easy, vague lope – from the chest down. In the neck and shoulders he was always tensed up. His face was long and gaunt; he had small shifty eyes under large eyelids. He was convinced that the world was out to make a fool of him, and it always did. He took precautions, and it still did. This must have made him the taciturn, suspicious man that he was.

In contrast to the giddy, chattering Persians, Ahab seemed dignified, businesslike and austere. He worked for a sheikh in Kuwait, but he operated out of the Persian parking lot and this is where Charlie agreed to drive for him. We felt that this silent, unlikable looking character could organize a convoy to the Middle East more efficiently than the gregarious, happy Persians and that was our first mistake. It was perhaps true that Ahab made elaborate plans – but they always fell through. He would take the greatest precautions to pick the fastest route from country A to country B – but he would ignore the necessity of getting visas for country B, thus causing a 6 hour delay at the border. Or he would drive long, excruciating hours from sunup to 3:00 am to get to a place like Sofije, Bulgaria – and then spend 2 days there sitting around doing nothing. Or he would lead us at 1:00 am in that white Peugeot into a city and then fall into a resentful sulk because there were no hotel rooms available. And whenever any of his plans

failed to work, or anything went wrong, be it a knock in the Mercedes engine or a landslide on the road by the Black Sea, he took it as a personal affront, and a stroke of ill luck directed by a vindictive fate directly at him. At these times he would nearly shake with silent rage; he would draw in long, furious breaths thru his nostrils and protectively tense up his shoulders even more. Most of the time the bad luck was brought on by his stupidity, but perhaps it was better for his self-confidence that he didn't realize that. We should be charitable; Ahab had his good points. He spoke a very amusing Pidgin English (we "made eating" instead of having a meal, cities and countries were fine if they were "too much cheap" and – our favorite – all forms of English cursing were reduced to a hissed, "fucking, fucking!"), he idolized a famous Egyptian singer, he had a brother studying at the University of Cairo. His very pigheaded stupidity came to amuse us eventually; he courted misfortune so consistently that each new blunder aroused in us a certain amount of gratification, even if we were stuck right there in shit creek along with him. Anyway, what did Ahab have that would have made him happy, relaxed and likable? An endless procession of cars driver over kilometer upon kilometer of some of the most uninviting, uncomfortable country in the world? An endless series of corned beef sandwiches gulped down in patches of grass by the road? An endless series of women (myself included) who wouldn't sleep with him, for some reason? No, Ahab was not really a vindictive tyrant, as we sometimes felt on that long trip. He was rather more pitiful, the straight man of a playful, somewhat childishly cruel fate into whose hand he always played. And so if Ahab's view grew narrow, his eyes edged with shadows of self-pity, his heart hard for anything but his Mercedes's, Opels and Peugeots, who can blame him? Surely not Charlie & I, who forfeited our right to condemn when we joined fate in laughing at the sly, vicious jokes played on this unwittingly compliant clown.

In the beginning Ahab promised us that we would be driving down in a convoy of five cars, led by him. Though the specter of the convoy never entirely disappeared (we were to meet them in Vienna, in Belgrade, in Sofije, in Istanbul), what left Munich and arrived at Bazargan were 2 cars – a white Peugeot ("Bijou Car") as Ahab called it, much to our disgusted amusement) driven by Ahab and a black Mercedes driven by Charlie with me as the passenger.

I feel now as though the Mercedes should arouse at least a trace of emotion in me, since it was my only permanent shelter for 10 days and nearly 5000 kilometers, but it does not. It was the physical center of my life from Munich to Teheran, but that was all. I can remember it quite

clearly: the reddish tan upholstery that got sticky in the sun, the reclining seats and the center arm rest, the broken glove compartment door, the cardboard covering below the dashboard that was wearily loosening itself from the tacks that held it in place, the floor carpet that became dirty and tangled itself up under my feet, the sun roof that slid open or shut by twisting a knob in the white ceiling with the rows of tiny black dots, the radio with its 5 square black buttons (M, K, L, U, U) and dull olive green face, the shoulder strap that Charlie made me wear because he didn't trust his own driving, the headlights that wouldn't work on dim, the oval white and black German international license plates that were held on by pieces of string and wire, and of course the silver Mercedes symbol itself floating proudly above the center of the hood, bisecting our road from Munich to Teheran and preceding us by 4 feet wherever we went. But in spite of its familiarity, the Mercedes never aroused any friendliness in me. It was always impersonal, like a railway car or an elevator, always some else's car, never more than an anonymous setting for whatever happened within it. In some places I can feel so at home and at ease with my environment that the very surroundings seem to merge with me, my thoughts, my relationships. I could never feel that way in the Mercedes, tho I ate there, slept there, was sick there, was tired there, and was in love there. Perhaps it was because we moved so fast in the Mercedes and covered so much territory in so little time, never seeing the same sights from the window twice or establishing a stable point of reference for events; but the entire trip to Teheran and everything that happened in the Mercedes, has an unreal, dreamlike quality about it now, as though it were all invalidated by our vacating moment by moment each space we had occupied the moment before, It doesn't count if it happened while you were in movement from one place to the next, is the idea I guess.

So there were only a few things that happened in the Mercedes that lack this hazy, unsolid quality in my memory. I can remember very vividly the pulse of changes in the engine revs when, cursing Ahab for his dangerous overtaking (we watched first in horror and eventually with a malicious desire for disaster as Ahab overtook on the crests of hills, on wet pavement, at hairpin curves, with 25-ton trucks coming the other way), Charlie would impatiently slap the gear shift stick into lower gears to overtake. I can feel the demanding cling of the sweating upholstery. I can recall fearfully guiding the steering wheel while Charlie would snap himself into his own shoulder strap. And I can remember my right arm resting on the windowsill with the bright, continuous sun gobbling up its whiteness and leaving it brown, browner than my

sheltered left arm resting on the arm rest in the shady interior of the car. And that lopsidedness of tan exasperated me.

These few things seem real, tho perhaps there are a few others that I have forgotten. The rest of it is like a dream, some of it a beautiful dream and some of it a nightmare, but all of it unsubstantial.

We left for Teheran on a Wednesday, spent Wednesday night in Vienna, and were in Yugoslavia by Thursday afternoon. I can scarcely remember Austria; from the border to Vienna all we saw of it was at night, and all I remember of it from the following day was a flat, lifeless impression of pale green fields, winding roads, and German radio commercials featuring sugary, artificial children's voices. I know Charlie and I disinterestedly discussed the country (Was it semi-communist? Semi-developed? In NATO?), but our interest was really galloping beyond Austrian cows and signs written in German to the East, to camels and mosques and palm trees.

The Communist countries of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria genuinely shocked us. For the 3 ½ days we spent there, all that we saw from the car windows and experienced on the streets seemed to be the square root of life, not life itself. I have the impression that the sunlight at the Austrian-Yugoslavian border went from 100 watt strength to about 50, and that the process was reversed again at the Bulgarian-Turkish border; these countries were just plain gray and colorless. Even the colored propaganda posters, the stylized mosaic murals (in roadside cafes) of peasant dances and the neon signs in Belgrade and Sofia seemed to exude non-color, as tho the creators didn't really believe that color existed but laboriously threw it in, in the doubtful event that it might. People's clothes were the same – very subdued – and the expressions in their faces and voices were noncommittal. All existence there was subdued; it was as tho here were two countries stealing quietly around trying not to be noticed. They were twilight countries, caught perpetually in the still grayness between 5:00 and 6:00 on a November night. It was unnervingly quiet there, even in the large cities, quiet as people are at the bedside of the very sick, or in final examination rooms. On all the buttons but the 2 U's, the radio, too, was silent – until we got to Bulgaria. In fact we joked about that. “Christ,” I said at the Bulgarian border, shoving in the buttons and uselessly twisting the dial. “Yugoslavia just jammed out Western broadcasts. Bulgaria is so communistic it jams its own broadcasts!” There was no response in Bulgaria even on the U buttons. Next to the appearance of the sun being turned up again, that is the first thing I noticed

when we reached Turkey – the sound of German radio coming from a car parked next to ours at the border.

In addition to being depressing and repressing, making us feel as though we had to whisper and avoid making sudden movements, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria were also nothing else but poor. ‘Piss poor’, an expression used by my father, kept echoing in the back of my mind everywhere I looked in these countries. When we saw people plowing with oxen or sowing by hand in gray, dusty soil. When we drove through tight, gray, unpainted wooden villages surrounded everywhere by splitting, sagging, unpainted wooden fences. When we entered grocery stores whose stock consisted entirely of large jars of washed out looking peas and many different sizes of tan sacks filled with rice, flour, noodles, white beans and God knows what other varieties of tasteless grain. Piss poor, piss poor kept playing and replaying in my ears. Not the brilliant, colorful, smelly poverty we saw later in the Middle East, but a dry, drab, hopeless, silent poverty, an introspective, unimaginative poverty extending everywhere from the tired soil to old women who walked along the road bending under impossible loads. “They’re probably not over 30, these women,” I theorized, remembering all I had heard about premature aging among women in places like Appalachia. “They probably just look old because their lives have been so hard.” I stared at them with new interest after that, wondering how old they really were. Even the young women sitting over grainy cups of Turkish coffee in cafes, their too-long skirts and shapeless imitations of Western blouses seemed sexless, unyouthful, and dry. Sex (we even felt vaguely uneasy in Belgrade about walking in the streets with our arms around each other), laughter, color, emotion, unseemly language, anything that makes life something other than cold, unsugared oatmeal seemed out of place in these countries.

We encountered little evidence of actual, detectable, school book Communism. There were the inevitable propaganda posters whose design and color remind one of the illustrations on cheap canned vegetables. (“It’s in poor taste,” I complained to Charlie of one of these posters. “It isn’t the propaganda that bothers me – it’s that cheap, tasteless art.”) They could be seen anywhere and everywhere. There were the radio jams and the propaganda in English on Radio Prague (we listened in half-guilty fascination to one of these propaganda shows and found it ultimately quite dull). There were (just like on the tv programs about Communist countries – or maybe it’s junior high lectures on the dangers of Marxism) the monotonous, slightly frayed looking rows of modern apartment buildings, hugging the main roads to shield the slummy

conglomeration of human habitation behind them from the visitor's eyes. (There is something almost touchingly naïve about this ploy. In the first place, the slummy habitations wouldn't really look so bad if they weren't being concealed by, and contrasting with, the modern buildings. The attempt at concealment gives them a taint of dishonesty & shame they would not otherwise possess. In the second place, anyone with half an eye can spot them behind those innocuous apartment buildings anyway.)

I have a few pleasant, or at least retrospectively funny memories of these two countries. There was the pale sunny afternoon in Belgrade when Charlie and I sat on a fence across the street from the Bulgarian Embassy waiting for our visas and, when they were ready, running across the road to have them passed out the window to us. Later the same afternoon when we were sitting & sunning in the Mercedes, waiting for Ahab (who had mysteriously disappeared), I remember opening a container of "milk," swallowing a hearty gulp – and discovering it was yoghurt. As soon as that alien, unexpected burst of sourness scalded the inside of my mouth, I stuck my head out the window and spat the entire mouthful out – all over the side of the Peugeot. Then there was the stout, middle aged pink-faced Bulgarian border guard whose job it was to search cars with the aid of a long black stick shaped like a push broom with no bristles. He had a severe, dignified air about him, as though his job were both complex and important – a fact which was charmingly belied by the way he gave the Mercedes two or three whacks on the bumper with his stick and then passed it through with a pompous nod.

But for the rest, the communist countries surprised me by living up to my expectations of them. I was educated in communism in the era when it was America's greatest and most sinister foe, when people barely repressed a shudder when the word was mentioned. I read books in the ninth grade like What We Must Know About Communism and A Nation of Sheep, books that started from the unstated assumption that communism (a) was intrinsically evil and (b) must be destroyed. Our teachers never even questioned this assumption so of course we didn't either – at least not until we entered college. With junior high earnestness (and subjectivity) I confronted the "problem of communism", never doubting that it was a problem right along with sin and disease. And we knew all about conditions in communist countries; they were poor, drab places filled with stout, unsmiling, fearful people who struggled all night in the protection of their cellar to get Radio Free Europe on the radio. And were "concentrated" (a word Charlie and I invented meaning "sent to a concentration camp") the following day on their own children's testimony.

When I became older and questioning, when I ceased to Believe, I came to think that most of what I had ever learned about communism was pure propaganda. I thought so, that is, until I saw Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

I woke up in my forlorn, frightened little hotel room in Vienna the day after we left Munich and discovered that my period had started a week early. My womanhood was impressed upon me then as it had not been since the first time I ever had a period. I was the only female on the trip. My human world was bounded by creatures with hard, angular bodies and unspotted underwear. My needs, my problems and my desires would be in certain ways different from theirs, and would not be comprehended or sympathized with. In certain ways, I was alone. And an inkling of that fact and its consequences dawned on me that morning in Vienna. But only an inkling, because what I was really thinking about then was Charlie.

We both knew from the beginning of the trip, and particularly after Laura dropped out, that we would be sleeping together at the earliest opportunity. We had not discussed it in so many words since the night at the Heim when I said No, but we knew it anyway. The only question was when – when would Ahab give us a chance to room together. In addition to his other attributes, Ahab was a ‘dirty old man’ who had expected somebody on this trip to be doing a lot of screwing around with somebody – the main hang up was who with who – so we vaguely hoped and expected that he too would assume that we were sleeping together and book the rooms accordingly. Or else Charlie could just slip into my room at night. Or something.

Oh shit, I just thought peevishly that morning in Vienna. Now what? I had never made love to someone while on my period and considered it against my better judgment to do so. “Ugh, think of the mess,” I and my friends – virgins all, at the time – had said solemnly and flatly. One girl did insist that she saw nothing so offensive about it, but we cancelled her opinion by ignoring it. So for the next two days I had my first lesson in the difference between men and women, or perhaps between partner and partner, in regards to sex. Charlie was still eagerly anticipating our sharing a room, and I was dreading it, hoping for five days respite, knowing I would have to refuse him otherwise.

And I didn’t want to. We were very close in those days, or maybe amiable is a better word. We would become much closer later, but it was to be a closeness of pride, resentment, hurt and boredom as well as of affection, laughter and shared experiences. Then we hardly knew

each other; there was no deep feeling based on trust and knowledge, but there were no disillusionments and hurts either. What our relationship lacked in depth was more than balanced by its freshness. What we did know of one another was reasonably pleasing.

So we held hands and quickly excused each other's errors and failing. We laughed a lot and did little things for one another – Charlie would give me his tobacco to roll cigarettes with, and I would strain at the radio dial late at night searching for good stations (which eventually came to be any station on which English was spoken), barely able to hold my eyes open but willing to do it to help him stay awake. We began to tentatively talk to one another about our past lives, our travel, our friends. A favorite topic of conversation of course was Ahab's stupidity, and favorite mutual fantasies featured Ahab's untimely death over a sheer cliff, Peugeot and all smashed and smoldering ("Then the Mercedes would be ours! It's on your passport, you know." Actually it wasn't. We later discovered that suspicious, wary Ahab had the Peugeot on Charlie's passport, probably in the eventuality of just such a crash.) We enthusiastically liked one another so well in those days, and to add impetus to it all was the promise of sex.

I meant to tell Charlie immediately that my period had started, but I didn't. The information lodged itself somewhere between my will-center and my tonsils, and just wouldn't come out. And I got severe cramps in that car between Vienna and the Bulgarian border, the kind of cramps that deaden all other sensation and tighten the skin around your lips and eyes from the pain. I was swimming in cramps, white with cramps, my whole being was burrowed into dull, aching claws of pain digging into the center of my body. And perhaps I was delirious with cramps, because as I lay limply back in my seat that first night in Yugoslavia, exhausted from the pain and travel, I stared at Charlie's profile in the darkness and thought, I love you, Charlie. I love you. Don't worry about it because it won't hurt me. But I love you. Out of the great waves of pain welling thru me came that one thought, IloveyouCharlie. I deliberately focused my attention on that thought kilometer on black, meaningless kilometer, until we finally pulled up at an anonymous motel for the night. And the cramps weren't so bad the next day.

The next day we finally slept together in Sofia, Bulgaria. It has always seemed odd to me that the first time I ever slept with a man I loved had to be in Sofia, grim, tired, colorless, repressive Sofia. The last place in the world for romance, tenderness, or passion. Sofia is a stout, dry, brown old woman with a tightly disapproving mouth – and we debauched her. We

debauched her in a 3 room pension decorated in Early Genteel Deprivation. A flat with a double bed disguised by day as a couch and a green jar containing 2 dying goldfish in the front room, and amateurish imitations of Van Gogh on the wall in our room. The shower in the bathroom simply stuck out from the wall so that when you used it, you soaked everything in the room. The 'stove' in the kitchen consisted of one electric hot plate upon which I was to cook our meals, and the entire room was large enough for two people to stand in.

The proprietress was a plump Turkish woman with anxiety hiding close behind the welcome look in her eyes and a chubby 11 year old son with horn rimmed glasses and short pants on. His picture stood on a table in the front room. Charlie and I slept in the 2 small beds in the back room; Ahab, the Turkish woman, and her son all slept in the front. An interesting arrangement on their part. (Did the solemn little boy watch them go at it all night? we wondered.)

In the end it didn't matter as far as our sex life in Bulgaria went whether I was on my period or not. I rapidly overcame my reluctance and we slept together anyway. One thing that had struck me about physical contact with men from the first time I kissed Charlie in Munich was the fascinating way that a kiss or an embrace can turn a previously quite ordinary, seemingly sexless person into another person entirely, a person that is all warm, masculine breathing and hot, restless masculine hands. This transformation, quite definitive & pleasing in Charlie's case, was one of the factors that must have caused me to begin considering him more than a distant Heim friendship. Sex with Charlie was more of the same, those 2 nights in Sofia: he was so warm, so actually physically warm, and affectionate – but also aggressive enough to excite me. And his eyes, Charlie's eyes when his mind is on sex, are the greatest transformation of all. He has very expressive eyes anyway, and lust is one of their most definitive expressions. They become blurred, heavy lidded and almost smoky. They seem to be fairly smoldering above that black moustache of his, giving his entire appearance a smoldering, excitingly dangerous appearance. His eyes are, simply, a turn on.

At night we made love in the relatively cozy (relative to what we were to find from Sofia on) little back room and by day we wandered restlessly from the front of the flat to the back. Ahab disappeared again that day and the woman and her son went off to work and school, respectively. We stared out the front window into the sunnily dismal side street running past the flat (once you're outside of downtown Sofia you may as well be back in one of the gray,

ramshackle Bulgarian villages again) and wondered why in the hell Ahab picked Sofia as the city to spend two nights in. We nosily examined every item in the front room: the chipped china frogs and other knick-knacks carefully arranged on one of those modern 2-color knick knack shelves,

June 17, 1968 Tuesday

And now Charlie is dead.

I sat on the bench in the [Heim] garden with Kitty feeling mildly bored and she said to me, “Tif, I hate to tell you this . . . but the British consulate called this morning. Charlie committed suicide last night.”

He hung himself on his trousers. Oh, Charlie, oh poor, self-doubting, unhappy Charlie. It was only six months at the most, but he never believed in himself.

There are things I want to remember about Charlie. How he loved the sea, and how he loved animals. How much he liked plain yoghurt, and how he would say “I’m not bloody stupid” (though he believed he was). How his favorite swear word was “cunt” (“cunt you! You’re a cunt!”) His beautiful shoulders and back – beautiful clothed or nude – his beautiful sad brown eyes and black, long, thick hair (there was a lock of it that I was always pushing out of his eyes, his right eye especially). That low pitched, half-cheering noise he made, that came from someone he knew in school making crowd noises for a classroom play. The way he would introduce funny stories by saying “I’ll tell you a joke . . .” The way he wanted to “astound” his brother Keith with his Turkish puzzle ring. The way he loved all rings. “Wo ist der Flughafen?” and “Wo solle ich dies wagen parken?” The way he loved to have his back rubbed (and how I loved to rub it! “You’re the only female who could ever relax me,” he said of my back rubbing, the only compliment he ever paid me). The way he would say, “Do you want a . . . (pair of pajama trousers/load of building brocks/copy of the Bible) whenever we saw some absurd useless item for sale. Or the way he said “I want it!” if he saw something (like a giant Goodyear advertisement tire on a hillside) he liked . . . and also, the companion “I want two!” I even want to remember his hay fever. And how much he liked Red River Rock. And how he liked little competitive games like flicking rocks or floating bottle tops in water to see whose sunk first, or went fastest, and how he always won.

It was so important for Charlie to win. And so often he didn't, so often he failed, and he came to believe in his failure more than in himself. He was a trusting person who wanted to be a sharp cookie and trust no one. He had so little belief in himself, so little faith. He considered himself worthless and unlucky ("It always rains on Charlie," he would say), and I suppose he got tired of fighting 'fate'. And in jail he was so alone with his failure, with no one to talk to him, and I suppose he couldn't stand it. I am surprised; so little of my pain is for myself. It's for Charlie, for Charlie as he was, not a failure but a good, intelligent, sensitive person who could have lived and found it out, and for Charlie alone and so unimaginably, unbearably unhappy, with no one there to help (how heartless can prisons be?) – oh, that hurts me so much, to imagine his pain and I loved him. And death is so final, so totally too late for regrets or correction.

I cannot write the rest of this account of our trip, at least not now. I did love him.