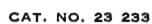


**Date Due**  
AUG 22 2014

[illegible]

PRINTED IN U.S.A.

# THE GOLDEN TIME

by

William Teunis

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
in the Department of English in  
the Graduate College of the  
University of Iowa

June, 1965

Chairman: Assistant Professor Vance Bourjaily

T 1965

T 351

1

THE GOLDEN TIME <sup>1610 A</sup>

One.

Mather Academy is by one year the oldest preparatory school in the United States. Even the students and alumni of Roxbury Latin School, founded twenty miles south of Salem in 1645, reluctantly admit that Mather has seen more American history than any other institution except Harvard.

Picture Salem history as a spinning roll of microfilm, spin it fast backwards, a streaky whirl, stop anywhere you like: say March 12, 1862, where you see Mather hiding on the high ground in the northeast part of the city, its trees, its old stone, the dusty reek of its traditions, its seniors drilling with real rifles in Salem Common and then riding, six of them, south through the better part of the windy afternoon so they can sit that evening in the upholstered darkness of Wallack's ornate old theatre in Broome Street and see Booth--John Wilkes Booth--play Richard III to applause led by the handsomest and most excited of the six, leaning recklessly out over the balcony rail. Spin the handle again. Fourscore and seven more years, stop. There's Mather in 1776, its headmaster helping bring order to the confused town meetings, and some of its teachers riding with chafed buttocks through the night to help light fires to the

The University of Iowa  
LIBRARIES

south, so keep on spinning: no matter how fast you go, Mather doesn't disappear.

The oaks and maples and fantastic elms pass in a kaleidoscopic streak of foliage, but trees remain much the same from century to century. For a long time some few buildings keep pace with the trees, matching them year for year, but eventually even the Tower concedes defeat and drops away, unbuilded stone by stone, and between 1755 and 1730 the eight-foot stone wall to the south, separating the academy from Grove Street and Ledge Hill Park. The old weathered merchant ships in the harbor grow fresh coats of paint and shed their barnacles. Every decade or two, the picked bones of a beached whale sprout bulk and flip backwards off the sand. Your wrist will be tired before you've gone back the better part of three centuries to find yourself, rather alarmed, in the badly-lit meeting-house where judges shout and children roll on the floor and men and women, accused and accusing both, shrink back in the wooden chairs: the meeting-house where Richard Mather's grandson sits, attentive and perplexed, and weighs as best he can, in his unofficial capacity, the hysterical evidence that will send at last nineteen townspeople from those wooden chairs to the unswept cells of Salem Gaol and thence by horse-drawn carts to the base of that bleak, rolling high ground--lonely, wind-swept, rocky, steep-sided--whose name, forever after, will derive from the inverted L of the great oak and its fatal limb and where no house has yet been built so that today it's as barren and lonely as it

ever was. 1692 and you haven't got past Mather yet, though you've reduced it by half its size: a chunk of land to the south has reverted back to the city, but what is left is still forested, the Circle not yet cleared and just four buildings up, three frame, one brick. Spin another half-century away, 48 years further back, a dull hum of two generations of pedagogy from The New England Primer and The Bay Psalm Book. The buildings fall away and are gone. The trees close in. Another inch and Salem itself will be gone. Just the forest now. Dirty Indians, big bears. Stop. Go back the other way.

From the dark undergrowth comes the creak of saddle leather and the clump of shod hooves. Horses appear. The men dismount and survey. Then workmen come and the first trees are felled: chunk of axe, splintering crashes. Stud by stud, plank by resinous plank, rises the first frame house. Clean-shaven Puritans stare intolerantly at the poison ivy on their forearms. They spit and bring benches. The first door opens to the first select Puritan boys, an elite even then. Classes begin. Sit on one of the hard benches through the hours of Biblical interpretation taught by the first asthmatic and nearsighted headmaster, whose uncles had drunk ale with Shakespeare. This is a dry instant: the narrow downcast faces of the boys, witch-killers to be. Dark heavy wood. The straight lines. A narrow, diagonal shaft of illuminated dust below the poor window. God. Schoolbooks. Pages with the texture of stale home-baked bread. Your straining pupils dilate to read the dark print. A twinge makes you blink. Ahead of

you is the bent thin adolescent back of a classmate. The schoolmaster stands beside you. Your elbow twitches. Dust on his dark jacket, smell of wool and old sweat. His patient, oppressive snuffle. On the table beside the open book, your hand, pale, looks like something dead, two lifeless fingers still following your eye down the page. Where's the handle, the wheel? You look around for it, it's not here, all the future's rolled up on a spool in the sky and this is all you have, his hand with its thick veins coming down to rest on your shoulder.

Yes. It would be a poor joke to leave you here. Only history would laugh. Whirled back to 1644 in minutes via a roll of microfilm, you could then walk back to the present. Feetsore, on your own, you'd need more than 319 years, a mere stitch in time, a button on the costume of eternity, but big enough in human terms so that you just wouldn't have the time, the lifetime. A fraction of it, maybe a fifth at most, before you died. And there you'd be, buried in a bare field in 1711. Not a particularly good year. Of course, you might argue that no year is a good year when it holds you forever in one place, fixed beneath a windy afternoon, 1644 or 1711 or 1911 or the fall of 1963. Nobody else will be staying: only the dead.

At the present moment at Mather--10:10 P.M., 22 September 1963--Robin Rutland is one of ten boys in the basement theatre of the New Building who are excitedly watching two others rape the most desired among the faculty daughters, Anne Terry, a dark-haired girl of

seventeen. Her little pleading means are drenched with revulsion and terror. Sprawled alertly in the fourth seat of the first row, Rutland feels the short unsightly bristles along his jaw. His acne-scarred cheek, deeply indented, is propped on two long fingers of his right hand. Under his ferociously unkempt eyebrows, his eyes bulge with critical intensity. A paperback copy of Titus Andronicus lies on his stomach, opened across his wrinkled shirt. The back of his neck itches against the dusty red fabric covering the seat, but otherwise he's much less uncomfortable than he usually is when other people are around: it's rehearsal, and though he's not clothed in the safety of his role onstage, no one is looking at him in his naked state; the stage is the focus of all attention. He has propped his heels on the edge of it.

Anne's struggles and little cries are having a strange effect on the faces of her attackers, which show neither lust nor depravity; Badger, the great effeminate lout with a football player's build but no corresponding anomaly of individuality in his mind, Badger looks embarrassed, and the other boy looks annoyed. Anne's eyes roll toward the grid, her mouth is opened and screaming now.

"No, no, no, no, no!"

The cry freezes the action. For a moment, the three hold an impossible, absurd, almost comic tableau of violence, then they fall apart against the approach of their director, the only adult in the theatre. Down the dark aisle, past Rutland and up onto the stage

bounces a lean man with a small black goatee: Harry C. Martin.

Rutland grins. Like a spastic marionette, elbows akimbo, tie still flying, Martin grabs Badger by the arm and squints up into his face.

"No, no, no," Martin repeats, to Rutland's delight going through his whole repertoire of jumpiness--shaking his head violently, gnashing his teeth, dilating the hairy nostrils of his bony nose, torturing his eyebrows. "You look like you're arresting her, not raping her.

You think you've just picked her up off the sidewalk at a sit-in?

Ha?" In his nervous excitement he jerks the hulking Badger back and forth, like a barracuda striking at a floating dugong. The other boy grins sheepishly. "Watch your faces, watch your faces." Under the worklights, Martin's own contorted face looks somewhat yellow. "Your expressions. That's the thing. That's what'll do it. Here, like this. Ha?" He pounds fist into palm with a jolting report. "Watch me."

Anne has stepped back demurely and stretched her arms down behind her. She stands with the carriage of a ballerina, holding her head as if she had a vase balanced on her chin. Her face, with its opaque smile, is the face of a perverse angel. "This is how you rape a girl, class," whispers a boy behind Rutland. "Show us, show us," clamor two boys beside him, giggling and punching each other with their heavy shoulders. Rutland half-turns his face and tries to say, "Shut up." The words stick somewhere down in his throat. He was afraid they would. Stifling the gant of his anger, he gives all his mind back to the stage. Sights like this go a long way to making up for a lot of things:



the master at work, shaping talentless mediocrities like Badger and people like Anne who, in a way, are even worse, who look like they've stepped out of soft drink advertisements, shaping them into something different and fantastic. At the apex of one set of wooden steps upstage center, an eleventh boy has climbed up to sit attentively, and down center right Peggy Jane Becker, Tamora Queen of the Goths, is listening ironically with her hands on her fat hips. Rutland gets out a stick of gum. He feels his usual twinge at supporting, in his small way, the advertisements of this particular gum company, one of whose billboards he'd taken special pleasure in felling last summer off a state road in Ohio. Fumbling off the wrapper, though, Rutland forgets about the billboard as he watches Martin, who has begun to leap about on stage, pushing, pulling, pointing, gesticulating; his voice-- a fascinatingly unbeautiful instrument, nasal and harsh, the rasp of cleats over broken bottles--appropriate perfectly to the spastic quality of his jerks. "Okay! Titus Andronicus, act 2, scene 3! The rape of Lavinia! Chiron, this side, Demetrius go on up, up the stairs, you've just disposed of the body--sit tight, Nick, we won't drop you off again for a while, Lavinia here honey, that's it, and face the audience, arms behind you, now, Chiron, you're holding her like this, see, keep that hand over her mouth, tension in your forearm, see, now, honey, don't really struggle, just shake every few seconds and roll your eyes up, you're trying to see what he's doing to your husband. Ha? That's it. Demetrius, come on down...take her arm--both hands--

okay, now we just--walk--upstage. Lavinia, you can try to struggle. Not all the time--now and then. Good. Chiron, see how I'm looking at her? You get it?" The lout is nodding eagerly. One of Rutland's heels in its torn sneaker is beginning to be creased by the stage edge, and he shifts his feet impatiently, moving his eyes from actor to actor, not wanting to lose a spark of the emulative tension which Martin can excite so quickly. Martin's head turns to profile, mouth open, his tongue hanging, wide eyes: grotesque, ridiculous, and, Rutland sees, as effective as all his techniques have proved: already Chiron's face has assumed an expression of bestial lust, not Martin's exactly, but better, without the comic strain: the expression Martin wants. "Demetrius, breathe more heavily. Pant. Lick your lips. The lower lip. Okay. Good. We get her through this gap and Lavinia, you tear your face loose and scream. A little more despairing, draw it out, it's the last sound you'll ever make--remember your tongue's going to be cut out in a few minutes--so make it a good long one, ha? Again." All the dusty air in the theatre seems to vibrate. "Better!" Squeezing her hands together, tossing her long blonde hair, Peggy Jane is moving up and down excitedly; warm breath stirs the hairs on the back of Rutland's neck. "Okay Chiron, your hand over her mouth again and Demetrius, down, your left hand, pick her up, the knees, so..." Martin carries Anne off in a lustful lope, an undersized satyr bisecting a horizontal beauty taller than he, and then while they're still in sight between the two sets of steps up center, he puts her down with

a surprising gracefulness and they come back between the steps to delighted laughter and applause from the students in the seats, Anne demurely straightening her sweater, Martin clicking his teeth and peering up with a bent head at the two boys. "Now, would you like to take a break before we try it again?" Chiron shakes his head eagerly. Demetrius says, "Now...now--" "Okay!" Take it again from Tamora's last two lines."

Martin hops down off the stage and throws himself into the seat beside Rutland. He's breathing hard, teeth bared, and Rutland swings over to give Martin's elbow the scope it's going to take anyway. "Go ahead!" Martin begins to contort his face and jerk his hands in an admirable manner, and on stage the students respond. Peggy Jane speaks to the imploring, kneeling Lavinia with a controlled relish:

So should I rob my sweet sons of their fee.  
No, let them satisfy their lust on thee.

Martin is sitting forward in his seat, frowning, lips pulled down, fists clenched, as Demetrius, scarcely able to wait till his cue, grabs Anne's arm and pulls her up. He speaks with a voice coarsened somehow--the lips swelling, eyes hot, face suddenly brutal and choked with impatience. "Away! For thou hast stayed us here too long." Martin's left hand chops down, and Anne leans away from Demetrius, Martin's right hand gradually rises, palm up, fingers spreading, and Anne shrieks her lines into Peggy Jane's coldly smiling face. "No grace? No womanhood? Ah beastly creature! The blot and enemy to our general

name!" Martin jerks his arm back and half rises, Demetrius jerks her to center stage, "Confusion fall--" and Chiron, crossing down, cuts her off--"Nay, then I'll stop thy mouth," as his hands go across her lips; Martin's hands push away from him, lips back, tongue against upper teeth, smell of nicotine in Rutland's nostrils from two feet away as they drag Anne upstage; he draws his hands back to his chest and Chiron, trembling with eagerness, "Bring thou her husband. This is the place where Aaron bid us hide him." Demetrius races up the steps, swings Nick by the armpits over the edge and drops him feet first to crash and bump to the floor, out of sight, and turns to race back: but Martin sweeps his right hand, pattering fingers in the air, and Demetrius closes his eyes and turns back, bends, pantomimes putting branches over the hole, and races down again to the others, jumping the last three steps, forcing the tempo faster after his mistake. Nodding, nodding, nodding, Martin draws his lips back in a rectangular grin, licks his lips, and Demetrius is licking his lips even before he reaches Lavinia, Martin's hand with its strong sensitive hairy fingers moving as if for a succession of karate blows now as the trio moves, struggling, away, and as soon as they disappear behind the steps his forefinger goes to Peggy Jane, as caught up now in the heady pace as the others, dropping her voice and giving it a sinister ring that makes Rutland shudder:

Farewell, my sons, see that you make her sure.  
Ne'er let my heart know merry cheer indeed

Till all the Andronici be made away.  
Now will I hence to seek my lovely Moor,  
And let my--

"Spleenful," Martin's lips form, silently moving--

--spleenful sons this trull deflower.

"Cut! Very good!...Just one thing, when you're picking Lavinia up, don't let her sag like that--Anne, keep your body stiff. We'll just run through that again. You were very good." And, Rutland reflects happily as they reenact the carrying-off, in fact it has been very good, this scene, so powerfully composed, so powerfully acted under the impetus of Martin's demonic example, with only one real slip--Demetrius forgetting to cover the hole with branches--that some visitor, not knowing better, might assume a level of preparation and experience for these students somewhat beyond the fact: the three boys on stage had never been on any stage before last week, and tonight was the first rehearsal for this scene. Luxuriating in his involvement with such excellence, Rutland rolls the gum around in his mouth while he looks sideways at the moving profile and hand of Harry C. Martin.

## Two.

A few minutes later, when Martin ends the rehearsal, Rutland is tossed back into the thick-tongued banality of the everyday. His safe-conduct has been revoked, he must move among people who are very different from him, attractive and well-dressed and successfully ordinary, people who perform with disgusting, enviable ease the social acts, such as saying, "Hi. How are you?" for which he has to spend minutes of agonized preparation. To a chorus of "Goodnight"s from the cast, Martin goes out, through one of the upper doors. He's heading down to the room of the custodian, to tell him they're leaving. Rutland wants to walk back to the Tower with Martin, and so he stays in his seat, staring expressionlessly at the couch which he can see against the back wall of the theatre through the gap between the sets of steps on stage. He's aware of assured movements on the periphery of his vision, and he listens to the easy, sociable byplay of the boys and the two faculty daughters as they collect their belongings and put on their jackets.

When the boys and two girls have left, Rutland gets up, feeling more himself now that the theatre's empty. He steps onto the stage and looks curiously up at the grid. From one of those bars Virgil Ehliter fell while setting up lights late at night two weeks ago: that already legendary fall which no one witnessed, since the semester had not yet started and only a few students were even living on campus



Rutland is not as uncomfortable in the presence of someone so negligible as he would be if it were Anne, he stays over the fountain until Badger has gone on by toward the door. Not exactly as a penalty for his cowardice, rather just as an offering to his sense of the spirit of rightness of things, Rutland forces himself to keep drinking all the time he's bent over the fountain waiting for Badger to get out of range, actually swallowing the water instead of just letting it bounce off his lips down the drain. The water is extremely cold and by the time he raises his head and licks his lips, he's feeling a little sick. His teeth ache and his throat tastes like a conduit. He sits down on the musty old couch. After a minute or two, he decides it'll be better if Martin, who seems to have stopped to talk with Christy, the custodian, finds him waiting outside instead of here in the empty theatre. He gets up. The springs relinquish his weight with reluctant squawks. He walks across the stage, jumps down onto the carpet and goes along the aisle to the side door at the bottom of the theatre, opens it, and steps out into the night.

The air is cool and fresh, the stars are out, and up on the grass over his head some students are still talking. He lets the door swing closed behind him: to close it carefully would be as impermissible as to go back inside now he's come out, but he hopes they won't notice the sound of its closing. He hears Peggy Jane's voice: that means the other form leaning against the rail above him is Anne. Yes: the voice that responds has that familiar musical breathiness. Above the



door in the brick wall behind him, there's a single burned-out bulb. He stands on the tiny rectangle of cement with its leafy center-drain and looks up the long narrow flight of concrete steps. The flight is so steep that the two girls are almost directly above him, half-sitting against the rail that guards the well, with their backs to the building. He's glad it's dark down here. The bulb has been out for two nights. Christy must not have noticed, or else he just forgot to replace it. Peggy Jane has apparently just concluded some coarse reference to Tamora and Anne, despite her notorious chastity, is laughing demurely, along with someone else, a boy, who's out of sight. Probably Mel. Quietly Rutland goes up a couple of steps and stands right below the girls, leaning back against the concrete wall. Unless they swivel around and look straight down, they won't see him while he waits too. Anne and Peggy Jane have walked back part of the way with him and Martin before, and no doubt that's why they're waiting now. "Who do you think's the better director, Anne?" Mel is asking.

"Well, Mr. Ehliter was very nice...but he couldn't have directed Titus Andronicus the way Mr. Martin does. He wouldn't even have selected Titus Andronicus in the first place. Really, I don't think it's fair to anybody to be compared to Mr. Martin."

"I've never had so much fun in rehearsals," Peggy Jane says.

"That's how everyone feels," Mel says. "The funny thing is, he doesn't let you goof around. He's the strictest teacher I've ever seen."

Rutland shows his eyes to their feet, but he's not here to recover. The girls take an immediate interest. Anne looks at him and says, "That's how everyone feels," Mel says. "The funny thing is, he doesn't let you goof around. He's the strictest teacher I've ever seen."

Yerk Rutland closes his ears to their talk. He's not here to eavesdrop. Those girls make an incongruous pair: Anne lovely, slender and tall, first in her class at the high school, pure of speech, inaccessibly self-contained; Peggy Jane shorter, very heavy, not averse to profanity. No shrines will be built to Peggy Jane's chastity, but Anne, just by walking across the dining hall with her parents, excites incredibly vicious arguments among the boys at Rutland's table about saltpetre in the food. Anne is Catholic, Peggy Jane Protestant if anything. The differences tell: the girls do come to rehearsals together and leave together, but in the theatre they're together only when on stage. During the five-minute breaks Peggy Jane will be wisecracking among a crowd of boys, while Anne will generally be by herself, looking over her lines or reading a book, sometimes talking with Mel. In the dark, Rutland blushes and his skin prickles as he remembers the time he'd tried to start a conversation with her, while she was by herself like that, and she'd raised her eyes from her book with a big smile and answered courteously whatever it was he'd said, and then just dropped her eyes to her book again--it was Profiles in Courage--and kept on reading, as if she'd forgotten he was there. With his heart kicking and his cheeks burning like hell, he had forced himself to stand there for almost a minute--she calmly turned a page--looking up foolishly at the grid as if he was trying to estimate the exact pipe from which Ehliter fell, before he walked over to get a drink, thinking as he drank of how he'd cut down that Wonder Bread billboard in New

York State last August just before dawn, feeling the axe handle solid and smooth in his hands. The soft, breathy music of her laughter comes down from the rail. Rutland turns his head to look up. If she leans back much further, she'll fall right on top of him.

From the other side of the door comes the premonitory rattle of the handle. Rutland takes two silent steps down to pull the door open. Martin will think he was with the others at the top; they'll think he came out with Martin: Rutland is not proud of his antisociality.

Martin mutters, "Thanks," and turns to lock the door.

Rutland comes up the steps, catching his toe on the top one and stumbling, an awkwardness he'd never commit on stage, but the sort of thing to which he's prone, offstage with other people. "I don't see how you do it," Peggy Jane is saying to Anne, who is pushing down her upper lip as if smothering a giggle, an outrageously appealing trick she has that makes her lovely perverse-angel's face look somewhat simian. "Blank verse is so much easier than prose," Anne says. "Which would you rather memorize, Robin?" Mel asks courteously, drawing him into the conversation.

Mel, a good actor, playing Titus, is lazy at learning his lines, whereas Rutland has learned his not only for the scenes they've done, but for almost the entire play, at the expense of American history, Mather Academy history, and his other courses. Unable to speak, his throat tight, unable to frame any remark that'll seem original without seeming insulting or vain, Rutland grins wretchedly and shrugs.

"They're harder for Titus than any prose play I've been in," Peggy Jane says.

"Titus Andronicus?" Martin sprints up the steps, elbows swinging.

"Don't you know Titus Andronicus is the greatest play ever written?

Ha?" He slaps Rutland on the back with his prompt book and winks at the rest. Anne and Peggy Jane laugh. As they start to walk along the building, Rutland drops back a couple of steps so he can trail behind. Very conscious of his ugliness, in the woolly fog that otherwise obscures his picture of himself when he's with other people, he admires, as always, how Martin, the shortest man here, has become the dominant figure, his gesticulating hands seeming to draw the others into his orbit. "Ah, I know it's a shocking play, full of blood and horror and dismemberment, mutilation, but so what? Maybe that's the secret of its charm. Ha? Is everybody happy?"

They step onto the narrow asphalt service drive that bounds the circular lawn on which most of the academy buildings face. The moon throws shadows of the superb old elms on the smooth grass. Across the Circle, windows are lit in the dorms where cast members have got back already: their lights-out has been extended by Dr. Kuntz until 11:00 for the duration of rehearsals.

"Mr. Martin," Peggy Jane says as they walk, "how did you happen to be registered with a Boston agency, while you were living in San Diego?"

Martin turns his head. "I'm not only registered in Boston, but in

Minneapolis, San Francisco, New York, Washington, Anchorage, and a dozen other cities. I like to keep feelers out. You never know where you'll be needed or--" his hands stop momentarily--"when you'll have to leave some place."

"How many different productions of Titus have you directed?" Anne asks.

"God, more than I can say. I'd need a while to add them all up."

"My goodness. And each one in a different place?"

"Yes, every one somewhere else...every corner of the United States except Hawaii...maybe I'll make that my next stop."

"Where did you go to college, sir?" Peggy Jane asks.

"I didn't."

Mel quickly says, "Sir, how are we going to show that Anne's hands and tongue have been cut off?"

"I still have to decide that," Martin says briskly. "Sometimes I do it realistically, sometimes not. I vary the realism depending on the location, the cast, the audience. There've been times when I used no special effects at all, just had Lavinia pull her sleeves down over her hands--did that once with sixth graders in St. Louis. Other times, I've used red streamers from her wrists and mouth. When I think the audience can take it, I use--" Martin's gestures are getting progressively more excited--"red dye, washable, have Lavinia keep a small bag of it in her mouth and break it when she comes back on stage after being raped."

"What did you use in San Diego?" Rutland asks. The others turn and look at him and he stares ahead expressionlessly. He forces his eyes not to blink.

"We used the vegetable dye, until the last performance when-- then--" Martin's hands stop, he breaks into a fit of coughing and his shoulders hunch. "I haven't decided what we'll use yet." Into the silence that follows, Mel whistles a few notes of "Faith of Our Fathers." "That's one thing I've noticed about Mather," Martin says eagerly. "Those bells twice a day, playing hymns--a good idea. Very nice. They're recorded, aren't they?"

"Yes," Anne says, "a phonograph plays them automatically over the loudspeaker in the chapel. My father showed me once how it works."

"Twice a day, every day, 11:15 and 6:15. Very nice."

"We turn off here," Rutland says.

"Right! I hadn't even noticed, Robin."

"Goodnight, Mr. Martin; goodnight, Robin," say the girls, almost in unison. "See you tomorrow," Mel calls. He'll walk the girls home and then continue on around the Circle to his dorm. "See you tomorrow," Martin echoes. "You're doing fine," he adds, with an incongruously wistful note in his voice. Mel waves goodnight and the five of them, now in two groups, move apart, the three continuing on the circular drive towards the far lights of Faculty Row visible through the trees, while Rutland and Martin cut between Digby Hall and Mather Hall. The fog lifts from Rutland's mind and he takes a deep breath of the crisp

air.

"Too bad we didn't have time to get to your scene again at the end there," Martin says.

"I don't mind. I got in enough time on stage tonight at the beginning."

"And you were going very well. The best I've seen you, which is really saying something." Martin gives him a happy, painful jab in the ribs and grins wickedly above his black goatee. Out of habit, Rutland keeps his face expressionless, but Martin's jab warms him. "You'll be even better, though, when you've all gotten used to working with each other." Martin jabs the air this time.

Outside of rehearsals Martin uses his hands just as much, but in some other respects he's less frenetic. He shuts up now. Under Rutland's tennis shoes, the grass is soft and slippery. He feels equally comfortable in Martin's silences and his conversations. This is a good way to end an evening. In the deep shadow as they pass Mather, he looks up at the dark, three-storey brick bulk. Beyond this almost windowless wall is the Old Section of the library, not a single bulb illuminating its spidery metal stairways or the dusty, uncatalogued stacks of unbound pages along those narrow aisles where the history of three centuries has accumulated. Sometime soon he'll have to spend a whole afternoon up there, emerge at 5:30 sanctified with the good gray dust of the past, instead of just stealing an occasional half-hour before lunch after finishing his scholarship job early.

They pass Mather and approach the dark line of trees along the creek. Still in comfortable silence, they turn left on the flagstone walk. Lights above the back doors of Digby and Mather show the veins between the stones. Rutland's shoes strike silently, Martin's with confident clicks. To their right loom the curving trees. Rutland remembers Dr. Kuntz saying in a lecture in Mather Academy history that the 18th century landscaper used this perfectly semicircular curve of the creek to lay out the Circle. The walk becomes a path going on north into the woods that border the playing fields. To the right arches the stone footbridge. The date on its cornerstone--1679 or 1779--isn't entirely legible as they go up the steps. Martin's feet sound different on the stone of the bridge than on the flagstones. The water is dark and almost silent. Rutland half-consciously starts to whistle another hymn, "Sweet Hour of Prayer," played either at 11:15 this morning or sometime yesterday--the repertoire of the recorded bells is somewhat limited and it's hard to remember when a certain hymn was last played. They descend the steps on the far side. Above them, atop the rising ground, the Tower slumps like a stone rook out of a giant chess set. The flagstones begin to form steps.

As the crenelated top of the oldest building on campus cuts off more and more of the starry sky, Martin seems to be moving his lips, talking to himself perhaps, starting to swing his arms like a sprinter. "You know," he says sharply, "I remember one time in Nome when we had no lights at all and had to stage Titus in daylight hours if anyone



was going to see it. God! That was a time! Snow, wind, cold, an audience of servicemen, the middle of the winter, barely enough daylight hours to fit it in. We started at 11 in the morning, and lunch was served between acts." He stops, turns, grips Rutland's arm and grins. "Of course, I was using a lot of business we could have cut if we'd had to, but time wasn't even our main problem then; it was casting. Casting! I had to use some Eskimo women in the female roles. My Lavinia couldn't speak English! Can you imagine that? I had to teach her to memorize her lines phonetically." He shakes his head in reminiscence. "By the time she got her tongue cut out, everyone thought it was high time, I'm afraid."

They go on, more slowly. It's a beautiful night. Rutland wishes he could tell of actions in his own life that seem afire with a quality like Martin's dedication, that bizarre extremity that makes Rutland feel so comfortable with the man, but his anecdotes would all be of destruction, not creation, and he senses that Martin, teacher, proctor, at least twice Rutland's age and aloof in his own way, stickler for rules, wouldn't be amused or impressed by knowing of Rutland's picaresque and criminal foray last summer against the General Outdoor Advertising Company, the trail of felled billboards following its snaky and irregular course through three states behind the tiny red hum of Rutland's bicycle. So instead of bringing the conversation to himself, he says, "Maybe the Titus you did in Nome set a geographical record. The most northerly production of a Shakespearean play." He

starts to laugh.

"Well, I like to think so," Martin says, perfectly serious. The rough stone surface of the Tower is so close that they can touch the juniper bushes which pad its base. "Ha! You know, though, there's probably been a production of Hamlet, say, aboard some Russian icebreaker or whatever, right over the pole itself. But I imagine mine was the northernmost production of Titus Andronicus ever given. Ha." He puts his hands in his pockets, hunches his shoulders, and does a spasmodic little dance, in place, as he talks. "Which do you think is the best role in the play, Robin? Not that I'm going to switch anybody, just for curiosity."

Thinking, watching Martin's feet give their short kicks, Rutland notices a small gleam from beneath a rather crushed-looking bush under the Tower, something lying there, but he doesn't want to interrupt his train of thought to kneel down and take a closer look. Any major role would be fun, acted on that dusty stage for a director like Martin; he decides, naturally, on his role, Aaron, and says so. Martin peers at him dubiously. "If you had to choose a defect in Aaron's role, what would it be? I'm not criticizing the way you're playing it, God knows."

"Well...the only criticism I'd make is that...there's a lack of purpose, of reason..."

"That's the beauty of it!" Martin protests.

"I can see what you mean, only..."

"Don't let me tell you. When we've been through the whole play you'll see for yourself. Anyhow, Robin, don't sell the role short. Listen, you could go to the moon with it if you wanted to." Martin nods manically, tapping his finger on Rutland's chest. "You're doing things with Aaron that professional actors I've directed haven't been able to do. And you've only had the role two weeks. My God! The way you made that cross last night without me telling you...fantastic. The only thing is...I've noticed you usually do your really best work when there's hardly anybody else there. You've probably noticed it too. Any reason for that?"

Rutland shrugs. It would be too simple to say that people make him sick: people with their frightening blandness, their self-satisfaction, the morticed union of their consumerhood. "Well, hell," Martin says quickly, putting his arm around Rutland's shoulders and walking him down to the first door in the wooden annex that connects to the Tower. "It doesn't really matter, I was just curious, I always notice little things like that. But listen. If you could ever learn to depend just on yourself when you're up there on that stage, and not on me, you'd really take off. Ha?" He pats Rutland's shoulder with an uncharacteristic gentleness. "Goodnight. See you tomorrow." Without looking back he goes whistling down to his own door. Rutland goes up the step and opens the door to the cloakroom. Standing there, half in and half out, still warm at Martin's praise which almost makes him forget that he's never gone to the moon with anything, with anyone,

but regretting the truth of Martin's criticism, he remembers the gleam from beneath the bush, and, leaving the door open, he goes back and kneels down on the dry ground. There it is. The stiff bristles of the juniper brush his averted chin as he reaches underneath, grasps it and pulls it out. A necklace of little wooden beads. Maybe a child's toy. Not disappointed, rather pleased in fact to find any artifact where there might have been only a pebble, not knowing what exactly he'll do with it, he slides it into his pants pocket and goes back into the cloakroom, shutting the door behind him.

## Three.

After hanging his windbreaker on a hook opposite the lockers, he goes into the next room of the annex, the bathroom, beyond which Martin's row of rooms begins. Unlike the Tower, the annex is equipped with electricity; he switches on the light. With the door closed, he rolls up his sleeves at the washbasin, looking at himself in the mirror, as he always has to do after having been with people. He feels the usual anger that has never quite congealed into resignation at the bulge of his eyes under the uncivilized brows that look long enough to comb, but too tangled, the right eye with its cast, the thin acne-scarred cheeks and the scattered dark bristles on the long jaw and the throat that he'd shaved only yesterday morning. When he gets out of school, he'll let his beard grow. He tried it last summer on his billboard-destroying pilgrimage, but even before someone began to shoot at him, he had to shave for fear the beard was making him too conspicuous: people would remember him riding by, remember that leather case on the luggage-carrier with the axe handle sticking out of the end. How, he wonders for the thousandth time, did he ever come up with a name like Robin Rutland: a name whose alliteration alone should grace him with beauty. He carefully washes out the bowl, rubbing the scum off the porcelain and then washing his hands afterwards. He can go for weeks without washing, but when soap and water are available, he likes to use them. However sloppy and unkempt his clothes may be, it takes

something out of him to go for a long time feeling grimy. He fills the bowl almost full with hot water, rubs up a lather between his hands and washes his face luxuriously, hearing the water splash down onto the wooden floor. There'll be a pool down there when he finishes. He pulls the plug and listens, eyes closed, to the gurgle down the drain, then refills the bowl and rinses his face. He grabs his towel from the rack beside the door. While he's rasping it over the stubble on his jaw, he hears the Tower door open and the sound of several people crossing the cloakroom, then the outer door opening and closing and the faint sound of their footsteps on the flagstones outside. Still drying his face, he moves to the window and looks out. Four figures are moving silently in single file down the hill toward the bridge. The moon is bright enough to let him identify those four friends--acquaintances, associates?--of Omar's, four sophomores from one of the dorms across the Circle. He's seen them around before, always together, never speaking: just eight darting eyes and an occasional dark snicker. They give him the creeps. Trust Omar to know people like that. Rutland goes back to the mirror, flips his towel over the rack and practices some of his Aaron faces in the mirror. He strikes a pose and proclaims in a stage whisper:

stare at me as I pass

Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves,  
And set them upright at their dear friends' door.

him a little while ago

Well, enough of that for tonight. He still has to study for Kuntz's false hand test tomorrow. He opens the bathroom door, switches off the light,

and goes across the cloakroom to the candle-rack, where he selects a candle, puts it in one of the holders, lights it with a kitchen match from the box, and drops the match into a shallow bowl of water. It fizzles and floats. Someday the Tower is going to be gutted and the whole damn annex is going to burn down. He steps to the great wooden door of the Tower, set with massive iron hinges in the thick stone. In his two weeks here, he's got so used to the place that he no longer even considers the Freudian aspect which he found somewhat amusing in the first few days, though not so amusing that Omar's constant remarks about it didn't begin to get a little tiresome. It really takes both hands to push the door open, but he's holding a candle, so he manages with just one. The hinges give their customary snarl. He steps in and, with a final-sounding crunch, shuts the door. The candle casts a steady light on the door in front of him and the worn stone steps winding narrowly up. A little moonlight comes through the narrow opening of the window halfway up to the next landing, out of sight around the curve of the stairs. He has just put his foot on the bottom step when the candle-light increases and he feels a draught on the back of his neck. Almost immediately he feels something on his left shoulder and looks down. With a disapproval verging on shock he sees a hand there with long sharp fingernails, hair, naked tendons, torn flesh, clots of blood. "Jesus Christ," he says. Behind him a low voice says insinuatingly, "Ssssssst! You wanna buy feelthy false hand?"

## Four.

Rutland groans and pivots toward the hand. Jerry Omar, a little red-haired senior with the face and aggressive style of a bantam rooster, wearing shiny blue pants and a filthy red suede jacket, is standing before the open doorway in the inner stone wall, blue eyes piercingly alert in his predatory face. He taps Rutland on the other shoulder with the hand. Then he lightly slaps his face with it.

"That's not much of an opening line," Rutland says.

"Yeah, well...shit. Come on in and have a drink then."

"I have to study for a test."

"Fuck the test, God damn it. Come on in and have a drink."

Rutland gives an exaggerated sigh of disgust and walks by Omar into the room. He blows out his candle, flops into a derelict Morris chair to the right of the door, and sets the candle-holder carefully on the floor. Omar's spirited involvement in his illicit commercial empire has so disarmed and fascinated Rutland that Omar's the only student at Mather he's gotten to know. Rutland props his feet up on the foot of the bed. Although his posture is extraordinarily erect when he stands and walks, his bones seem to dissolve when he sits. Omar shuts the door, throws the hand on the bed, where it bounces once, and goes across the room to the deep alcove of the curtained window, where he reaches under the top edge of the window-seat, releases a hidden catch, and lifts up the seat itself, revealing the top of a



padlocked box--illegal, of course, in student rooms--which entirely fills the cavity. While Omar fiddles with the combination, Rutland looks around the room. Like the other three rooms in the Tower, Omar's is high-ceilinged, circular, about twelve feet across. It's lit by candles in niches around the wall. The floor is swept, the bed made, and the general appearance neat enough to withstand Martin's occasional inspections. (On Rutland's second morning at Mather he'd left his bed sloppily made in order to get to chapel on time; when he got back he found his bedclothes heaped on the floor.) The maroon bedspread is standard for academy students; so is the bureau at the head of the bed, and the chair and littered desk opposite. A dirty, wrinkled beige throw rug, dropped in the middle of the dark wooden floor, is often found in academy rooms. In certain respects, though, Omar's room is unconventional. The mirror on the bureau is obscured by a large, clay-colored pot from which flourishes a growth of poison ivy; and on the table beside the window is an extremely elaborate, expensive, and large fishbowl. Its single occupant is swimming aimlessly around in quick little spurts, his triangular body apparently there just to let his jaw taper off. Animals are illegal in academy rooms, but Omar has no doubt convinced the relevant authorities that fish are not animals. Behind the fishbowl is the most eye-catching feature of the room, dominant in its deceptiveness, a tall magazine rack, stolen from a library. Omar's profanity-embellished story of its theft, one morning as he'd caught up to Rutland who was walking alone to breakfast, was the thing that

endeared him to Rutland, who'd worked in a public library for some months in the evenings without relishing the experience. In the rack, old and unspectacular covers are visible of LIFE, LOOK, SHOW, THE SATURDAY EVENING POST, TIME, NEWSWEEK, U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, others. At the window-seat, Omar is pulling open the padlock. He raises the lid and reaches into his treasure-trove of pornographic books and films and tapes and God knows what-all, gropes around, brings out a bottle of Black and White scotch and then a thermos of water. "Have a drink."

"No, thanks," Rutland says, watching Omar curiously. Drinking is punishable by expulsion at Mather.

"What did you have me get it out for, if you didn't want one?"

"For dragging me in here in the first place."

"Aw, come on...well, I'll just put it back and save it for later then, I don't like to drink alone. Have a cigarette?" He holds up an opened carton. Smoking is punishable by suspension, and Rutland knows that Omar himself doesn't smoke in his room; the taint would remain in the air, and Martin would notice it immediately. Last summer in upper New York State, Rutland had sawed down a billboard which advertised this particular brand--in fact it was the first time that a warning shot was fired by his ear, though not until after the billboard was down. Later on, the anonymous marksman didn't wait that long. Omar is still holding up the carton, perhaps out of friendship, perhaps for some incomprehensible reason of his own. "No thanks,"

Rutland says.

"You incorruptible shit. You don't even want to buy a false hand." Omar stands up and points to the magazine rack, where the covers are so dirty, torn, nondescript, and old--not enough to be interesting, between five months and a year--that any normally fastidious person standing next to them, for instance a procter inspecting the room, would feel reluctant to take out a magazine and leaf through it. Omar stalks over to the table and pulls down an especially dull-looking issue of LOOK: a street-scene of a midwestern town on the cover, obscured by what looks like someone's muddy footprint. With a dramatic gesture which Rutland admires as technique for its own sake, since Omar knows him well enough to know he's not going to spend any money on the damn things, Omar yanks the magazine open with a rustle of slick paper, revealing--before he snaps it closed--a full page color photograph, not from LOOK at all, of a bare-nippled blonde, a hard commercial grin, soapsuds and high heels, beckoning the camera with a crooked finger. Rutland's quizzical expression doesn't change. Without looking behind him, Omar puts the magazine unerringly back on the shelf. "What's the matter? Our magazines too old for you? Our rates too high? Maybe you don't like girls. Is that it? Don't be embarrassed, we cater to all types here. Something for everybody, regardless of race, creed, color, or sex. Now here's a NATIONAL REVIEW that...no? No physical culture pictures? How about some playing cards?" He goes back to the window-seat. "Just

a quarter gets you a cursory examination, fifty cents to let you take them back to your room--that's less than a penny a position--sell you the whole pack for five dollars." Grinning fixedly he gropes around inside his warehouse. "Hey!" He pulls out a pair of opera glasses. "A dollar an hour to let you take these up to the roof. Now, you probably wouldn't be interested in the dormitories, but there's a fine view of some of the faculty houses...Anne Terry? How about her? I tell you, Rut, I've had platoons of guys up on that roof, so crowded they were standing up on the walls and leaning out the slots, you know, fighting for the glasses--I've only got three pairs now--to see that girl bare-assed. Just don't lean too far out, or we'll have a helluva time scraping you out of the bushes. What do you say, Rut?"

Rutland doesn't say anything. Omar puts the glasses back. "Well, you're probably wise. Silly bitch always pulls the shade down anyway." He shakes his head. "The weather's gonna turn cold as a witch's tit soon, too," he mutters. "Nobody'll go up there then. Fucking New England climate was invented to frustrate individual enterprise." Omar articulates the g in "fucking." He closes and locks his benanza-box, lowers the window-seat which clicks into place, takes off his suede jacket, throws it on the desk, and lies down on the bed, propping his head on the pillow outside the maroon spread. He kicks the false hand onto the floor. "I laid in a stock of those last week, and I've sold all but that one and two others. There's something sexual about them, don't you think?"

Sprawled in the Morris chair, Rutland examines the hand, which is lying half on the floorboards and half on the throw rug, palm up, its fingers slightly curled. "Yeah, I guess so, in a perverted sort of way."

"I've seen guys almost throw up when one of those tapped them on the shoulder."

"It looks real, all right, but it smells and feels like plastic, or rubber. That looks like real hair on it."

"That's what he said."

"What?"

"Forget it. I haven't seen you around for a few days. What's this you're doing with the Dramat?"

"I thought you knew everything that was going on, on campus."

"Just the things I can turn into a profit. Once I heard the Dramat was putting on something by Shakespeare, I discounted it as a possibility. What's the play?"

"See if you can guess."

"Hamlet."

"No."

"Romeo and Juliet."

"No."

"Julius Caesar...King Lear?"

"No."

"Jesus Christ."

"That's not by Shakespeare."

"Fuck you. A Midsummer Night's Dream."

"No...it's not any of those. You probably haven't heard of it.

It's called Titus Andronicus."

"What?"

"Titus...Andronicus."

Omar is silent, frowning.

"What's it about?" he finally asks.

Rutland puts his fingers against his forehead. "Titus Andronicus is a noble Roman who returns to Rome from wars with the Goths. He's captured the Queen of the Goths and her two sons--three sons, actually--and he has his sons, the ones who are left after all the fighting, kill the oldest son of the Queen, her name is Tamora, as a sacrifice to the spirits of his sons, the ones who were killed..."

"Yeah?"

"Tamora gets mad at him for killing her son...Then Saturninus, the Roman emperor, falls for Tamora, which is bad, because he's engaged to Lavinia, the daughter of Titus; but Saturninus's brother, Bassianus, was already sort of engaged to Lavinia, and he rushes in and carries her off. Titus doesn't approve, but his four sons do. One of his sons, Mutius, tries to stop him from pursuing Bassianus, and Titus kills Mutius."

"Titus kills his own son?"

Eyes closed, Rutland nods. "So Saturninus gets married to Tamora

and Bassianus marries Lavinia--all more or less in the first scene."

"Pretty crowded scene."

"Then at a fox-hunt in the woods, Tamora's two sons kill Bassianus and dump his body in a pit...then they rape Lavinia and cut off her hands and tongue."

"Terrific."

"Then two of Titus's sons come along and fall into the pit. Aaron fixes things--"

"Who's he?"

"A very tricky Negro whom I'm playing. He fixes things so it looks like Titus's sons killed Bassianus. They're arrested and about to be executed, but Aaron tells Titus that they'll be spared if Titus cuts off one of his hands and sends it to the emperor. So Titus cuts off his left hand. On stage."

"Do you have a false hand yet?"

Rutland opens his eyes. "I don't know. We haven't been using any."

"This fucking play has bigger possibilities than I thought. Go ahead."

Observing the intent and impersonal look on Omar's face, Rutland is tickled by what feels like the incipience of one of his bouts of laughter. "Titus sends his hand to the emperor, but it's shortly sent back, along with--" Rutland chuckles--"along with the heads of his two sons. Naturally this upsets Titus. He carries the heads

off to the emperor and has Lavinia carry off his hand."

offstage and his Lavinia carry off his hand."

"How does she carry Titus's hand if her hands have been cut off?"

Laughing, Rutland finally manages to say, "She carries it off in her teeth."

"Are you kidding me?"

Rutland sits up in the chair. "Honest to God, Jerry, that's exactly what happens. I have a copy of the play right here if you want to see it."

"Never mind, go ahead. What happens next?"

Gasping with laughter at the look of hostile curiosity on Omar's face, Rutland goes on: "Titus eventually discovers that it was Tamora's two sons who--raped Lavinia. He tricks them into his house and--ha ha ha--cuts their throats, on stage, while Lavinia holds--oh, ha ha ha ha ha ha--holds a basin to catch the--blood...Then he bakes their heads into a pie, and invites Tamora and Saturninus over for supper. After Tamora has--ha ha--cleaned her plate, he kills Lavinia--to spare her any more anguish--and tells Tamora what's she's been eating. Ha ha ha. Then he kills Tamora. Saturninus kills Titus and Lucius, Titus's only remaining son, kills Saturninus! And that's--the end of the play."

"And everybody lives happily ever after, huh? My God, Rut, that's the most morbid play I've ever heard of. Who did you say you played?"

"Aaron, the Moor...Oh, I forget to tell you--ha ha ha ha--Aaron is sleeping with Tamora, and there's one scene where a maid brings in a little black baby that Tamora just had, and--ha ha ha ha ha ha ha--Aaron kills the maid!"



"What happens to Aaron in the end?"

Rutland slaps the arm of the chair. White stuffing is peking through rents in the black leather. "Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. He's tortured to death. Ah ha ha ha ha ha."

"On stage?"

"No"--Rutland is forcing himself back to sobriety--"after the play is over."

"Too bad, too bad."

"They...bury him in an anthill and...smear him with honey... That's not in the play, though. It's in the story the play comes from." Rutland wipes his eyes.

Omar is silent again for about a minute. Finally he says, "Let's hear some of Aaron's lines."

"Aw, hell, Jerry, I have studying to do. I'll say them tomorrow."

"Okay, if you want to be a bastard about it."

Rutland gets up slowly and walks over against the door. "This'll give you a good idea of Aaron...Lucius has just asked him if he's not sorry for all the evil things he's done."

Without noticeably hunching, Rutland's body seems to become more compact; he has bent his knees slightly, raised his shoulders, pulled his chin down. His lips bulge, eyes widen, the pupil of his left eye focuses like the point of a throwing-knife on Omar, malignant, the planes of his face seem to shift, broaden, and when he speaks, his voice is thicker, deeper, his enunciation lascivious and clever, his

tone violent, feline:

Ay, that I had not done a thousand more.  
 Even now I curse the day--and yet, I think,  
 Few come within the compass of my curse--  
 Wherein I did not some notorious ill;  
 As kill a man or else devise his death,  
 Ravish a maid or plot the way to do it,  
 Accuse some innocent and forswear myself,  
 Set deadly enmity between two friends,  
 Make poor men's cattle break their necks,  
 Set fire on barns and haystacks in the night,  
 And bid the owners quench them with their tears.  
 Oft have I digged up dead men from their graves  
 And set them upright at their dear friends' door,  
 Even when their sorrows almost was forgot,  
 And on their skin, as on the bark of trees,  
 Have with my knife carved in Roman letters,  
 "Let not your sorrow die, though I am dead."  
 But, I have done a thousand dreadful things  
 As willingly as one would kill a fly,  
 And nothing grieves me heartily indeed,  
 But that I cannot do ten thousand more.

The last line spoken, Rutland falls out of character like a man falling out of bed, assuming his usual look of precarious defense.

"Think you're pretty goddamn good, don't you."

"I can tell when I'm going well. It's a feeling you get."

"Dead men from their graves, huh? That's pretty good. I'll have to remember that. It'd be more effective to put 'em in their dear friends' beds, though, instead of upright at their doors. How'd you like to go up to your room some night and find a body in your bed?"

There's a soft knock on the door.

Rutland doesn't shift his posture, but the shutters in his mind bang up around his sense of comfort. Omar gets up, takes a quick look

at the window-seat and over at the magazine rack before he pads silently to the door and opens it. Ted Blair comes in, giving a giggle in lieu of saying hello. He's wearing pajamas and carrying a candle in one hand and a wallet in the other. "Do you have any new..." he asks, looking coyly at the magazine rack. Rutland, feeling all at once like a man drowning, grabs up his candle, gets up, steps by Ted Blair who's looking back and forth now from the rack to the window-seat. He lights the candle at the nearest niche and leaves.

Going quickly up the yard-wide flight that spirals steeply over the window-wells, past the flat landing outside Ted Blair's slightly opened door, through which a breeze comes from the opened window, he breathes the cool air deeply. His shadow mounts on the inside wall, just behind him. It was time he'd get upstairs anyway. Omar is okay, but his clientele is more than Rutland can take even in daylight, much less before going to bed. Without using the key in his pocket, Rutland opens his door on the third floor and goes in. It's past eleven, so he draws the curtains before he goes around the room lighting the candles in their niches. He blows out the one he's carrying and puts it in the niche by the door to take back down in the morning.

## Five.

Sitting at his desk in the candle-light, tapping out erratic rhythms with two fingers on the grainy desk-top carved with a score of initials and names, Rutland is irritated to find that his notes from Kuntz's bi-weekly lectures given in the chapel are just as laconic as he remembered them to be. Mather Academy History is a half-course, for no credit, but it's required for graduation. He looks desperately around the room, stares up at the high ceiling which looks like any other ceiling but which, on the other side, is so decrepit that the door is kept locked to the unoccupied room John Amen had as an undergraduate a century ago. Rutland drums his fingers some more, yawns, looks at the little wooden necklace he's dropped on the desk, and finally looks back to his notes from the introductory lecture.

Most places past dissipated by passing decades rather than preserved  
Shoe-buckles & (something illegible) conical hats can't survive at  
street intersections with gas stations on every corner

Arsonist hoofbeats & polit. pamphlets, arm-waving (something  
almost illegible, perhaps abolitionist) orators and drilling recruits

Mather seen more American history than any other institution  
except Harvard

Harvard Harvard Harvard

Hugo Kuntz, AB Harvard 1929, AM 30, PhD 33

Past dies with people who lived it

Attempts to preserve it can be dark & perverse, usually don't work anyway

Guided tours

House of 7 Gables, tourists

South of Salem 500 miles fellow colony Williamsburg commercially dedicated to preservation of past cannons & Georgian bldgs Only some of forms not spirit

Different at Mather

Bldgs, landscaping, walls etc. from all historical periods

SPIRIT

Qqch from every period even if only a gravestone

partly by conscious policy of directors partly by accident & inertia

Vertical shaft plummets to far point in time

Space, trees, privacy: spirit of place

Kuntz surely couldn't test them on the introductory lecture.

Rutland finds that his notes on the geography of Mather are just as sketchy, but on that subject he shouldn't need notes, and he shoves them away, leans back and reviews the geography as he remembers it.

First, the boundaries.

On the east there's a high wire fence, hidden by trees and bushes until one is close enough to touch it, he recalls, and then a quarter-mile of small, fairly modern houses, beyond which lies a cemetary--no, two cemetaries, Greenlawn and the Catholic, and then undeveloped lands--

a marshy waste, full of trash, he'd walked by there--and Salem Harbor. To the north, beyond the trees that fringe the playing fields, he had sat on the knee-high stone wall that marks the city limits of Peabody and looked down the slope to the North River's flaccid trickle. On the west there's Harmony Grove Road, a gently curving highway with the steep wooded slopes of the academy rising directly from the shoulder. And to the south that eight-foot stone wall, with the gate in the middle barred at night, through which Rutland had first entered the academy grounds, the very wide paved drive going north through the woods to the brick dormitories, there turning left to make its perfectly semicircular arc before it turned off to the northwest and became Faculty Row. From an airplane one would see two circles, concentric. He knows the geography well enough. What else might Kuntz be expected to ask them about? In Rutland's notes there's a drawing of a gravestone carved with a winged skull. No doubt a reference to the graves on campus where a number of former bachelor headmasters lie. Surely Kuntz wouldn't ask for their names? Dismally, Rutland recalls that Kuntz did read several names and even gave their dates of headmastership. The only ones Rutland can remember are Kuntz's predecessor--what was his name?--who vacated the office rather tragically a few years ago after he'd picked himself up from his bicycle lying on the frozen ground, wheels still spinning, one windy February day when he'd been riding across the Circle to teach a class in Greek, looked rebukingly at the terrified boy whose bicycle had collided with his, and collapsed and

died. Since that time, Rutland remembers with a frown, it's been illegal to ride bicycles across the Circle. A small stone tablet at the point of collision commemorates the event. The grave itself is down in the woods near the creek. Why are only bachelor headmasters buried on campus? Perhaps married men, family men, would have a family plot elsewhere. It would stand to reason. The whole campus couldn't be turned into a graveyard for the families of headmasters. John Amen, the founder of the Edwin Booth Dramatic Society, is buried somewhere on campus too. Rutland remembers his term, 1885-1911, and a great deal else about Amen, but for the life of him, he can't think of any more headmasters.

He spends ten more minutes looking over his notes and then gets up and undresses, tossing his wrinkled khaki pants across the chair. Maybe he should wear another shirt tomorrow, this one's pretty wrinkled. No, what the hell, it's good for another day. He drops it on top of the pants. He looks again at the little necklace of wooden beads. Wondering what he should do with it, he twirls it around one finger as he walks over to the bed to put his watch around the short metal post at the head. He hangs the necklace over the other post. As he puts on his pajamas, he catches a glimpse of the yellow leather suitcase under the bed. He hasn't looked into it since rehearsals began. With his toe he pushes it further under the bed. After he goes around blowing out the candles, he opens the curtains and kneels on the window-seat to push up the window as far as it will go. For a moment he stays there,

breathing in the night, looking at the dark woods between the Tower and the playing fields. From Ted Blair's room beneath him rises the rhythmic squeak of bedsprings. He crosses the bare floor to the bed, pulls back the spread and covers and climbs in. It feels good to be lying down with the soft pillow under his head, alone, smelling the cool smell of the linen against his chin, no sound in his ears save his own breathing. He shuts his eyes, the high ceiling disappears, and falls asleep at once.



## Six.

Against one of the crenels on the Tower roof, a figure was kneeling in the dark, looking into a pair of field glasses which he held with trembling hands. His forearms rested in the crenel. His knees were cushioned only by the slippery, wet fallen leaves, plastered against the stone and one another. Incongruously, in this damp and silent hour, he was wearing a light blue suit, a tie, and expensive leather shoes. In the windows of the houses along Faculty Row, a few lights were still on, tiny rectangles so dim as to be almost invisible, and it's toward these the man was looking, across the dark bulk of Mather Hall and through the branches of the elms in the Circle.

Frequently the man peered down toward the bridge. Several times he got up and walked about the Tower roof--only twenty feet across--blowing his nose. During these short walks he checked his wristwatch several times in a minute.

Once when he came back to the battlements and peered through the glasses again, his whole body shook. He blew his nose and fell to his knees more forcefully than before, with a grimace of pain. Half-smiling at that, he put his hand into his jacket pocket and took out a little necklace of wooden beads. He lifted his eyes to the cloudy sky and moved his lips rapidly as his fingers played over the beads. He made the sign of the cross and returned the beads to his pocket. Then he raised the glasses again. The handkerchief was a flutter of white

against them.

His hands became absolutely still, his body rigid. His nose ran unheeded. He cast one wild look down toward the bridge and then lunged up from the Tower roof and put one foot in the crenel, leaning forward. He started to bring his other foot up into the crenel, put it back down, then did bring it up and leaned forward with both feet in the crenel and both hands on the glasses, steadying them.

There was a squeak of leather on wet stone.

The glasses were flung far out. No cry came from his wide startled inverted mouth, just a hesitant "uh" as if he was clearing his throat to address a class. There was a crackle from the junipers. The handkerchief floated gently down, like a parachute, like the fluff from a dandelion, past the windows of the Tower, and settled on the man's chest.

After a few seconds, a patch of light fell on the man as the curtains were drawn back in a Tower window, and then the light was darkened by a shadow as someone looked out. The patch of light disappeared, and five seconds later a figure came quickly around the Tower and bent over the man on the ground. The newcomer rose, gave a quick look around, and started to run down the hill. He had gone only a little way when he stopped suddenly, went back a step, and leaned to pick up something from the ground. He examined it, shook his head, looked back toward the prone figure and continued quickly on down over the bridge and out of sight.

For some time there was no movement in the night.

Then five figures came silently across the bridge and up the hill. Four of them stood silently beside the man, looking down. The fifth went into the Tower. Before very long he came out again, carrying what appeared to be a large key-ring. The other four were still waiting silently. None of them had spoken. He pointed down across the creek, toward the New Building. The four crouched down and picked up the man. They silently carried him down the hill toward the bridge.

## Seven.

"That's not a necklace, it's a rosary."

Rutland cringes under the scornful knowledge of the boy who's expertly arranging magazines near the lost-and-found desk in the library. He mumbles something at the boy, shifts his feet on the thick carpet, and holds out the wooden beads. "Just leave it on the desk," the boy says impatiently, turning back to his work. His face afire, Rutland walks over and drops the beads on the desk. They slither off onto the floor. He bends over to pick them up. He carefully puts them back. Not daring to meet the attendant's eye, he heads for the door, nearly tripping over the feet of a boy reading in one of the chairs. With his undershirt soaked through, he goes up the stairs. Even such an encounter in the tiny commerce of life can make him feel he has a cleft palate and three thumbs. The life-sized portraits of long-dead headmasters, arranged in their progressive order up the stairs, look at him undemandingly as he passes.

Rutland had had the beads in his hand last night when he'd woken from that dream. A second after he'd opened his eyes, he'd forgotten the dream, except that it had involved darkness and a rather unpleasant fall. He'd dropped the beads on the floor beside the bed, turned over, and slept the rest of the night without any more dreams. Now as he climbs the stair past the headmasters' portraits to the second floor of the library in Mather Hall, he feels a tiny satisfaction that he's

disposed of the rosary, mingled with a huge dissatisfaction at his clumsiness in the disposal.

The second floor is deserted, the tables bare, hardly any of the leather chairs occupied. Most of the students are still at athletics. Slim tall ladders rise to the high shelves along the wall. Under the pools of light from the lamps, the dark wood of the long tables is more restful to the eye than any clean blond wood under the humming of fluorescent lights in any new public library. He waits at the sign-out desk while the boy behind it checks his card. Students need special permission, a card signed by a teacher, to enter the Old Section. Permission is granted more or less automatically to any student who needs to use the Old Section for research on a term paper in American history, and Rutland has started his early, far ahead of anyone else. In two previous ventures into the Old Section he's been the only one there. The boy gives him back his card and turns to the gate behind the desk. Rutland lifts the wooden bar and steps in beside him, watching him unlock the big square lock and pull open the narrow grating to let Rutland slide through. He shuts the gate behind Rutland. "Pull that bar across," he says. Rutland remembers the procedure. He fastens the door from his side. In accordance with safety regulations, he can get out simply by moving the bar, but no one else can get in without the assistance of the boy behind the desk. A number of rare and valuable volumes and manuscripts are kept in the Old Section.

Rutland is now in a narrow, enclosed sort of cage with a light

bulb just over his head in the low ceiling. He walks a few steps and the cage opens out into the dark complexity of the stacks. To his right there's a narrow stairway with metal steps and railings. At the landings, a bulb throws a little light into the aisles directly opposite the stairs, and down the long side aisles. Otherwise, things are pretty dark. On the far wall, he knows, the few windows are all shuttered, and the three low-wattage bulbs along each transverse aisle are turned on when you enter, and off when you leave, by a switch at the end of the aisle. No one else is on this level right now, since none of the lights are on.

Rutland goes up the spidery stairs to the third level.

Along the far wall of the third level are small cubicles, individually lit, and he's made one of them his own, leaving the books there that he's using, along with a couple of pencils and his notes so far on the native American theatre of the 19th century. When his work gets far enough along, he intends to bring a typewriter in here and use it, if the Old Section remains as deserted as it has so far. He doesn't go directly to his cubicle this afternoon, but instead spends some time wandering around the stacks, fascinated by the old books: tiny Bibles, great big Bibles illustrated by Dore that he can hardly lift off the shelf, complete sets of Fenimore Cooper, Grant's autobiography in Twain's original edition, a first edition of Cotton Mather's Wonders of the Invisible World rebound so stiffly he can scarcely keep it opened, a collection of Jonathan Edwards' sermons with the covers

falling off. Eventually he goes to his cubicle and reads for a while.

When he gets tired of taking notes, he switches off the bulb above his small table and goes down a dark aisle and up the quaint stairs to the fourth level. Here the orderliness of the lower, catalogued levels is absent. On the lower levels, someone goes along the metal shelves with a dustcloth every now and then; up here, the dust of decades has accumulated. The books on the fourth level are piled helter-skelter, not just on the shelves but in the aisles. And not just books: manuscripts, posters, newspapers, political pamphlets, extinct magazines, playbills, dime novels, cardboard boxes full of Christmas cards sent between the Spanish-American War and World War I, sheaves of letters tied with ribbons of faded colors, menus of meals served at a Concord inn a century ago, sermons of forgotten ministers, baseball lineups from 1869, 17th century hymnals, bales of Plastic Man comic books tied with twine, requisition forms for Revolutionary War muskets, diaries of colonial headmasters' wives, photographs of graduating classes since 1864, regulations concerning dress in the early 18th century, stacks of unused letter-paper, empty envelopes, requests for donations, and a thousand other things too idiosyncratic and obsolete even to be guessed. Rutland loves it up here. He loves to go from one bit of historical debris to another, marking his fortuitous and lingering passage by lights turned on and lights turned off. As he sneezes at the dust which rises from a coverless first edition of Common Sense that he's discovered under a pile of receipts for chapel furnishings

dated between 1927 and 1930 and tied with a rotten string that breaks when he lifts it, he thinks of the public library where he worked five evenings a week for forty weeks last year with its neatness, its cleanliness, its order and light and the polished blond wood of its tables, the plastic-and-chrome of its chairs, and its books to match, and not for the first time he thinks that the past must certainly have been preferable to the present, its contrasts of light and dark sharper, its heights dizzier and its depths unsounded, its colors more intense, its odors more pungent and its sounds more thrilling.

An hour later this observation strikes him again. Leaving the library to go to lunch, he has stopped beneath the portrait of John Amen at the very top of the broad flight of steps. Kuntz's remarks about Amen in an early lecture had inspired Rutland's first trip to the Old Section, to look for more material about the headmaster. He had found two obituaries, one from the Boston Globe, and from these yellowed columns and Kuntz's lecture, Rutland has formed an overwhelming opinion: there was a man. The embodiment of the history through which he lived insofar as it was romantically dazzling, its antithesis insofar as it was dull and corrupt: aesthete, soldier, duellist, friend of the great, the finest conversationalist of his time and one of the handsomest bachelors, at seventeen so drunk with Booth's apocalyptic playing of Richard III that his first act back at Mather after throwing himself off his sweating horse was to found the John Wilkes Booth Dramatic Society (renamed in April of 1865 while



Lincoln lay unconscious with a bullet in his brain); fought and wounded in Pennsylvania in the last year of the Civil War, a civil servant for a year in Florida where he'd fought a duel and been wounded again, and killed his man, before he even went to college; years of study and travel, then a classics teacher at Mather, then head of the department, then headmaster, a scholar and a versatile drama enthusiast, sponsor of the Dramat and director of many Shakespearean plays during his 37 years as teacher and headmaster; friend to Twain, friend to Howells, friend to Whitman, implacable opponent to Susan B. Anthony; at last, elegant as ever at 66, found dead in the chapel before the first rehearsal of a play he was never destined to do: his beloved Richard III. Though Amen must have been in his forties when the portrait was painted, he looks twenty years younger: a thin tall man with straight, very long hair and a face that the tradition of headmasters' portraits has succeeded in making solemn. He's wearing a dark scholar's gown.

Rutland goes on down the steps, looking cursorily at the other portraits, wondering which of them would repay research in the Old Section as well. It has been a typical day for him: he had a few classes in the morning, washed some faculty windows before lunch, left athletics early to immerse himself for a while in the dusty darkness of the past and before reaching that safety was humiliated in his only face-to-face encounter of the day. As he leaves Mather Hall and starts around the Circle toward the dining hall, rather uncomfortable because he may meet somebody whose name he knows, and have to say hello, he

anticipates tonight's rehearsal almost breathlessly. In less than two hours he'll be able once again to assume Aaron's role.

Eight.

Headmaster Hugo Kuntz's study. 11:00 the next morning. The room contains two desks and a couch. However, both Kuntz and Martin are standing.

"Hugo--in that last performance--we ran out of vegetable dye."

"That was what Mrs. Powell said in her letter."

"I swear to you, Hugo, I didn't know anything about it until after the play was over. I was out in the last row of the audience."

"But you do know what I'm talking about."

"Yeah, sure."

"Apparently you instill considerable dedication and self-sacrifice among some members of your cast. Usually that's laudable, of course. But--"

"Hugo, that girl was not a normal girl. She was half off her nut."

"Yet you still cast her as Lavinia."

"What else could I do? No one else came near her, as an actress."

"So you figured the play was the thing."

"Well, isn't it?"

"What do you think?"

"Hugo, tell me honestly. Isn't a great performance--a really great performance--much more important than--than being afraid to take a chance?"

"Was the last performance a great performance?"

"Hugo, it was the greatest ever."

"Better than any of the others?"

"Yes. Better."

"Do you think the....added realism...had anything to do with it?"

"I think it may have."

"And you think it was worth it."

"Well, Hugo, it's hard to say...all I know is, that audience will never forget it. When they think of theatrical power--they'll think of Titus Andronicus in September of 1963 at San Diego State College!"

"And what will Diane Powell remember? What will her mother remember?"

"Hugo, the girl was half off her nut."

"Harry, I didn't want to do this. I was hoping I wouldn't have to. But much as I understand your attitude, much as I appreciate your dedication to your art, I don't really feel that I have a choice. I won't be able to allow you to produce Titus Andronicus here on the school grounds, using academy students in the cast. I'm sorry, believe me I am, but that's my decision."

"You must be kidding."

"No."

"Hugo, you must be kidding me."

"Of course, this has nothing to do with any other aspect of your position here...I know you're doing a fine job in your language classes... and as soon as you decide on another play, you can go right ahead with

it. Perhaps your Dramat members will be eager with some ideas."

"Hugo--I beg you--reconsider your decision."

"I know you won't take this as a reflection on your abilities, Harry. Quite the contrary. It's just because you're so effective, so popular and inspiring, with the students, that I...I just can't take the chance. After having been warned, it would be criminal negligence on my part if anything happened. I'm sorry."

## Nine.

The grass on the Circle is splendidly tended. Rutland admires its smoothness, admires the leaves fluttering down to it from the arrogant old elms as he walks along the drive on his way to rake leaves in the faculty yards. Now is the hour of his scholarship job. Here and there around the Circle, the dark brick buildings of the academy rise against the omnipresent background of trees. Far away, a group of three students walking close together comes out of a dormitory and starts around the Circle toward the classroom buildings. On another sector of the Circle, a hundred yards away, Christy Mathewson is raking leaves, the old caretaker who's been at Mather longer than anyone can remember, his bald head bent over the rake. Except for the boys and Christy, the morning is deserted. Rutland is glad to be alone. He whistles a lugubrious hymn as he walks, contemplating the beauty and order of the trees and the old buildings and the grass, the pathos of the leaves drifting down through the autumn air as they have for quite a few autumns. In their falling, he thinks, and in the banal odor of their burning, they start subtle vapors in the human mind, letting one understand the poems about fall which poets write on the impetus of more original stimuli. Meanwhile, outside the classrooms and the centuries-old lawn, a bland fat nation is dedicating itself at some expense to the production and consumption of impermanent shiny crud, apotheosized in its public libraries and public schools and in its

billboards. At least, Rutland thinks, he's done his bit to speed the impermanance of that last aspect of the culture.

Christy's dog comes running up, a big hairy collie, chasing a squirrel that's already at the base of a tree before the dog starts his charge. Rutland wonders if animals feel any mystery and nostalgia at the change of seasons. The dog barks at Rutland and goes charging at another squirrel near another tree, swinging his head and panting. He pulls up, thwarted, at the tree, then starts circling around it, trying to catch sight again of the squirrel, who is keeping on the opposite side from the dog as he spirals up around the trunk. Probably they don't. This engaged dog doesn't hear dead men's cries through the autumn air across the hollow chasm of the centuries. The squirrels can take no sad pleasure in the perpetual reminder of the autumn that all who live must die. Animals miss something by not being human. On the other hand, they don't have to think about the way things are nowadays. Billboards don't bother them. For a dog, all a billboard represents is just another thing to lift his leg against. Rutland smiles. He might try that if he ever goes on the road again. In his wanderings last summer, he always had a moment, the billboard down, when he stepped up to the edge, prepared the muscles of his throat, and spit on it. Urinating would be perhaps an even more appropriate act. He wonders if the situation is better in other countries. How about Canada, for instance, or Mexico? He'd like to see Mexico someday. Since his involvement in Titus Andronicus, though, he's felt less urge to destroy

things, and if he does ever go to Mexico, it will probably not be with a trail of felled billboards in his wake.

He starts to say some of Aaron's lines half-aloud. The dog is running back across the Circle, chasing birds now. If there be devils, would I were a devil, to live and burn in everlasting fire... Some of the lines are so good, so mouth-filling... I tell you, younglings, not Enceladus, with all his threat'ning band of Typhon's brood, nor great Alcides, nor the god of war... If only Aaron's mischief were not quite so gratuitous. He's still saying the lines to himself when he sees Harry C. Martin on the cinder walk that connects to the outer drive. Rutland stops talking. Even from here he can see that something is wrong.

Martin's head is down. His shoulders are slumped. As he comes closer, along the service drive now, Rutland is not only puzzled but alarmed at the lack of bounce in his stride. Still closer, Rutland can see his disconsolate face. When they're five feet apart Martin looks up. He gives a start when he sees Rutland. They stop and face each other. "My God, what's wrong," Rutland wants to ask, but Martin's awful, lifeless attempt at a laugh terrifies him and he can't speak. "What's--?" he finally manages to say.

"We aren't doing Titus Andronicus."

Rutland is so numbed at the zombie-sound of Martin's voice, that Martin could have said anything, "We're not going to have meatloaf this Thursday," and Rutland's response would still be a confounded, "Why-- why not?"



Martin shakes his head in despair. "Can't. Not allowed. Aren't doing it. No Titus Andronicus. Sorry." He stands there with his arms hanging down, his fingers lax. His head is cocked a little to one side, and he's staring at the ground with eyes full of tears.

Choking, Rutland jerks his hands in an abortive gesture of bewilderment.

Martin nods and walks on by like an automaton, feet hardly leaving the asphalt. His head is still down. A few steps away, he suddenly straightens a bit and turns around. He looks back at Rutland. None of the old alertness lights his eyes. Shamefaced, his voice still dead, he says, "I shouldn't have told you, Robin. I'm sorry I said anything about it. Don't tell anyone else. I'll have to make the announcement at rehearsal tonight. I don't want anyone to know till then, it'll just start rumors. Hell." He turns quickly away, raising a hand to his eyes. After a few quick steps he falls back into that lifeless shuffle, arms hanging straight down, head bent.

Rutland stares after him in an amazement that slowly turns to outrage at whatever force could have done this to him, to them all, as he gradually realizes. From the chapel bells comes the ringing of a recorded hymn. During the whole course of the bells Rutland remains stock-still, looking after the receding figure of Harry C. Martin. The boys who were across the drive have gone; Christy, far away with his rake, seems frozen in place. Martin is the only moving human thing now in a landscape vacant of all movement save the falling leaves and

the distant frisking of the collie. As the bells chime, the dejected figure gets smaller and smaller. Eventually he turns off past Mather toward the bridge, not looking back.

Rutland blinks furiously.

It must have been Kuntz who cancelled the play, nobody else would have the authority, and as Rutland automatically performs his scholarship job in Kuntz's backyard, among the red and brown and gold crackling underfoot, he contrives to look through the window of Kuntz's study, now deserted, as if he could find in the dignity and sobriety of the book-lined room and its heavy, dark furnishings, some clue to what monstrous and inconceivable thing had just happened. No Titus Andronicus. All his work come to nothing. Aaron banished like the smoke of the leaves. All the work of the others too. And Martin no longer himself.

As Rutland rakes he constructs a fantasy of another billboard-destroying pilgrimage, a journey south down into Mexico and even beyond, bicycling, hitching rides, stealing burros and jeeps, walking, down through the swamps and jungles of Central America and the coastal deserts of the giant southern continent until even Tierra del Fuego is at his back and he sticks his toe into the chilly waters of the South Atlantic that arches down to Antarctica with its penguins and walruses and polar bears and perhaps, among the cliffs of ice, some lonely snow-lashed billboard advertising Pepsi-Cola to the members of the scientific expeditions and the weather stations, waiting to be

added by axe and saw to the fantastic pile of felled billboards stretching all the way back up through the Americas to Salem and marking his descent.

Ten.

As he comes down the Tower steps that evening, having spent the last half-hour sharpening the axe and the saw-blades in the open leather suitcase on his bed, Rutland hasn't spoken to anyone at all since morning, except his French teacher when called upon to translate, and his face has settled into a sullen trepidation. He had heard one of his tablemates at supper say that Martin's late-afternoon German class had been cancelled.

Though it's nearly dark, Rutland carries no light. Martin will announce that there'll be no Titus Andronicus. The rest of the evening, whatever happens, will be a lifeless, confused, dreary, aimless affair with actors as disheartened as Martin. Probably there'll be some dull-spirited and random suggestions from the cast as to what play they can stage instead, suggestions getting nowhere in a group which is still spinning centrifugally away from its lost center. How many students will even want to be in an alternate play, after seeing all their work on Titus come to nothing? And what other play, in any case, could hold the same appeal for the cast that Martin's enthusiastic omniscience had succeeded in giving this one? Unable in the dark to see the blunted edges of the steps, Rutland walks more carefully than usual, each foot feeling its way to the safe center of the step. On the bottom landing, he's about to open the ponderous door to the cloakroom when Omar calls to him through his closed door. "Rut! Come

in here a second, God damn it."

Rutland can't read his watch in the dark, but he knows he has time before 7:15, and there'll be nothing to rehearse anyway. He opens Omar's door. Across the room Omar is sitting on the window-seat, the ark of his covenant, grinning conspiratorially. His eyes are bright with enthusiasm. "Rut, you stupid bastard, you know tomorrow is the last day you can sign up to run for class office? They're holding the primary Friday. I have a form right here. You just fill it out and I'll take it down tomorrow morning."

Standing in the doorway, Rutland finally breaks his nine-hour silence. "For what?"

"For president, you jerk. With me as your campaign manager you can't lose."

When Rutland can focus his eyes again after his fit of laughter--shaking, stamping, coughing, weaving back and forth, finally running out of breath and leaning, exhausted, against the doorway--he says, gratefully, "Omar, that's the most absurd idea I've heard in years. Where the hell did you think of it?"

"Whattayasay, Rut? Don't you think it's a good idea? You'll have a helluva time!"

Rutland starts laughing again. When he can, he shakes his head and turns toward the Tower door. "I've got to get to rehearsal."

"Just sign this form first."

"Don't be ridiculous. Out of all the guys here, you couldn't

have picked anyone less interested." He coughs harshly to forestall another laughing fit.

"Why not, for Christ's sake?"

"First of all, I've only been at Mather a few weeks. Second, I don't know anybody here except you. Third, I wouldn't have a chance in the world of even getting through the primaries. Fourth, the whole idea of being president of anything is distinctly repugnant, not to mention silly as hell. Fifth, the idea literally never occurred to me, and the more I think about it, the more insane it seems. Sixth--well, five's enough."

"Only two other guys are running. Mel Hooker and Charlie Kalmus. Only one of you will be eliminated Friday. And once you're past the smell, you've got it licked! With me as your campaign manager--"

Rutland pulls open the Tower door, for once enjoying its sarcastic creak. "I've got to go, Jerry. I'll see you later."

"Just sign this first!"

"I don't want to run for president." Omar has come to the Tower door. "I do not choose to run!" Rutland calls back as he steps down onto the flagstones. This sets him going again, and he almost falls on the first flagstone step down the hill. He swings his arms to catch his balance, sobering a bit as he realizes he might meet someone on the walk, and he has himself in control again as he walks across the bridge over the rubbery slither of his footsteps. Running for president of the class. What gave the crazy little bastard the idea?

Has Omar given up his drive to expand the commercial vicarious illicit sex on campus? Or has his commerce succeeded so completely that he's bored and looking for new worlds to conquer?

By the time Rutland gets to the New Building, though, the picture of Omar sitting in the window-seat like some eager, red-haired bird of prey, holding out the sheet of paper, has been replaced by the joyless anticipation of what is to come and the picture of Martin that has dominated his mind all day, Martin walking slowly around the circle that morning, back bent, head down, his life pulled out from under him like a rug. Rutland watches the edge of the grass rise above him as he walks down the cement steps, grass and trees and sky vanishing as if cut off by a rising curtain. He's descending into a composition of failure. From now on the whole day, instead of just most of it, will be spent in the silence of a concentration only half-successful at protecting him from the irreconcilable demands of smug and nearsighted eyes. The purposelessness of Aaron's malice would have made the role impossible to master, but with the loss of this character has come the loss of all purpose. No more will there be, each evening, a formal place for Martin to transform these ordinary, sociable, alarming boys and girls into a fantastic creation of his own and Shakespeare's.

Anne is sitting in a first-row seat, reading. Ordinarily Rutland would walk right on by her, since his memory of the other time he tried to start a conversation is still a white-hot needle in his

self-regard, but tonight he feels a sudden pity for her, sitting there so ignorant of the blow that has destroyed her role, too, which she enjoys so much, and this pity, combined with the usual stifled desire she always makes him feel, is enough to make him stop by her seat. His shadow touches the page of the book she's holding in her slender lap. Her head is bent and he waits, frightened, immediately wishing he hadn't stopped, for her to look up. He'll be able to endure anything but what happened the other time: the brief acknowledgment and then the return to her book. After several seconds, it dawns on Rutland that she's not even going to look up this time, and he goes on by her and up the center aisle, outraged yet relieved, thinking perhaps she didn't notice him, thinking she must have, not turning until all the other students are below him and he can look down at their backs and profiles. Here he stands. People make him sicker than ever, and the fumes of his resentment at Anne's frozen, self-sufficient disregard mingle with his dream of the moment soon to come.

It's eleven minutes after seven and all the other boys are already here. Two big scenes were to be rehearsed tonight. Martin always arrives exactly at 7:15 and expects that the scene to be first rehearsed will be set up, on stage, ready to go the instant he sits down in his first-row seat. After the first rehearsal no one has dared to be late. Tonight, though, the cast's punctuality and discipline will merely ground the shock; Peggy Jane and the two boys on stage will be left high and dry when the play is pulled out from under them, and in



their plight, in their confused walk to the wings or over the apron, all the students scattered among the seats will see, if they look, their own confounding. Rutland imagines a giant hand opened above them. He has had this feeling of danger and suspense before, sometime, and he tries to remember when it was. Nervously he flexes his fingers, and he remembers the scene: working with the saw in the minutes before dawn, seeing the sawdust fall from the deepening groove and waiting, scared, for the warning shot, so close if it comes that he'll be able to hear the bullet, the shot that will tell him his unknown and unseen pursuer has found him again. Here, standing and waiting halfway up the center aisle, he feels that same dread of the inevitable. In two minutes the side door will open, Martin will come in. As the thin hand on Rutland's wristwatch circles toward 7:15, heads turn eagerly and expectantly toward the side door. Rutland feels sick that he alone knows what's going to happen. Will Martin still be walking with his head down? On his face, will there be that embarrassing pain and regret, a hangdog look of guilty anger? Conversation stops. Pages no longer turn. Feet stop shuffling.

"SWITCH! CHANGE THE STAGE PICTURE!"

Heads swivel around, startled, toward Rutland. He turns too. A few steps above him is Martin standing coiled at the top of the center aisle. He looks as cheerfully charged with energy as ever. Rutland's anticipation swims dizzily as the thought flashes across his mind that his meeting that morning had not happened. Martin has

used this device before, to loosen them up, but never so dramatically. He jumps down two steps. "Test your ability to improvise! Larry, downstage left! Sit on the edge of the stage! Peggy Jane, center right! Mel center!" Amazed, Rutland turns back to the stage as Peggy Jane and the two boys jump to their positions. Rutland feels the thud of Martin springing down two more steps. The lean goateed teacher is beside him, radiating excitement, and Rutland gets a stinging whiff of nicotine as Martin grips his forearm and thrusts a sheet of paper into his hand. "Don't read it yet," he whispers with vicious insistence. Then, loud, for the benefit of the cast: "Robin! Down there beside Larry--to his left!" After half a second of pure dumbfoundedness in which not only his thinking centers but his reflexes have been temporarily paralysed by the directed energy that Martin throws off like a beam of heat, Rutland, in a delayed reaction, still not thinking, goes down the aisle in three big strides, vaults over the first row of seats and half-falls backwards onto the stage, breaking his fall with his left arm and Larry's shoulder. Martin is standing where Rutland was. His fist jabs behind the knife of his forefinger as he speaks. "Here's the situation! You three boys are brothers! Ha? Mel, you're king--powerful, lecherous; Larry, you're his alcoholic younger brother; Robin, you're the youngest, a magnificent cripple with a hunched left shoulder and a limp--a Caucasian Aaron. You want to be king. Mel, you're lecherously looking Peggy Jane over; she's proud and pure. You two younger brothers are secretly making fun of Mel and this woman.

Ha? Pantomime it, okay!" Martin chops his hand down.

Rutland throws a convivial arm across Larry's shoulder and looks for the first time at the script in his hand, which, to his horror, seems to be a seventy-line soliloquy. He taps Larry on the shoulder and nods at Mel and Peggy Jane across the stage. Peggy Jane, so surprised by Martin's onslaught that she hasn't had time to move her eyebrows quizzically at the idea of playing someone "proud and pure," has moved so she's facing full, profile to Rutland, with her head high and eyes lowered, arms held so that her hands meet in front of her crotch. Mel, not so quick in adjusting to his character, moves into profile beside her, stroking his chin, looking her insolently up and down. Rutland takes in all this and somehow manages to roll his eyes knowingly as his mind wrestles in desperation with the lines on the two stapled sheets of paper in his hand. He catches a glimpse of Martin moving down the aisle toward the stage, and a section of the speech falls into place. Larry grins back at Rutland somewhat weakly, rolls his eyes too, hiccups. Mel crosses behind Peggy Jane, turning his head to slide his eyes down her body and up. She turns further away from him. Martin makes a sudden leap up onto the stage, momentarily blocking Rutland's sight of Mel and Peggy Jane. He quickly moves out of the way, and with Martin still in his view Rutland points his left hand at them, chortles silently, remembers that he's a hunchback and moves his left shoulder up against his ear; the forearm and hand, still pointing, respond to this movement by twisting so that

the hand, too, looks crippled; it feels right and he keeps it. Martin moves out of sight. Larry chortles too, hiccups again. Mel is moving back left, he reaches out his hand toward Peggy Jane's arm. Rutland races his eyes over the speech in quick glances, trying to find the movements of meaning, the caesuras and periods. If he had time to try, he wouldn't be able to remember a technical exercise more difficult than this furiously paced thinking. Martin is still out of sight. Rutland feels confused and cold. In the first row, Anne is looking across at Peggy Jane and Mel. Rutland forces himself to keep in mind the characteristics of his role which Martin had told him. Mel's hand is on Peggy Jane's arm.

"Fine!" Martin's just behind Rutland. "Robin, stay in character, stay there, the rest of you, stay in character, exit together right. Ha?" Larry gets up and goes quickly across the stage to the others, staggering a little. Rutland wonders how to stay in character when he doesn't know his character; the lines scarcely have meaning for him yet. He hears Martin's whisper behind his ear: "As soon as they're out the door, go up center and read it. Make it good, it's important." Rutland had already gathered this, but it throws him into a kind of panic to hear Martin say it. Forlornly he watches the other three go into the wings and turn; the air moves behind his ear, Martin must be waving them on out, for they go down the wings to the door and out into the seats. Slowly, unwillingly, Rutland gets up, one foot on the carpet and one on the stage. He sees Peggy Jane, Larry, and Mel take

seats in the first row, in front of several boys who are watching him now. Angrily, he fixes his attention on the spot where he's going to turn. He rises to the stage with a jerky motion and begins the weak cross, doubly long and awkward now with his unpracticed limp, hitching himself along with an exaggerated swing of the hip, very conscious of his lack of preparation, his ugliness, his history of unsuccess, the cast sitting out in the house-lit seats, singly and in bunches, watching him, Martin somewhere behind him putting him through all this for what weird purpose, the grid up over him from which Ehliter fell--fitted, Rutland notices for the first time, with several spots--and the dusty curtains over there, afraid to look at his script now even though he's forgotten what he just forced himself frantically to learn, feeling that he has to keep his eyes up, keep his head up. He gets to the spot, pivots on his good leg, dragging the left one around behind him, holds the script out as far as he can and still read it while his head tilts back and sideways, not like Aaron's at all, but it feels right and it lets him keep his face and eyes visible while he reads. But the people out there in the rows of seats that go up almost to the ceiling are impinging on his consciousness too much, he tries concentrating on the frayed carpet up the center aisle, but it's no good, not even with Martin back there at the control panel just offstage left, and he knows that whatever Martin expects from this reading, it won't happen, he won't be able to do it, and he pauses, silent, confused.

the other hand goes off

The lights go out.

In the utter dark he waits for two seconds, sensing at last with a grim vindictive comprehension what Martin is asking of him and then with a kind of suicidal joy. He can feel the infra-red ray of Martin's nervous energy burning across the darkened stage, tingling the skin on his withered arm and crippled leg, raising his shoulder still another half-inch, before a spot comes on from the grid and he stands there, utterly alone at last except for Martin invisible in the dark at the control panel. With his first slow syllables he feels his chest and vocal passages alter subtly to project the voice of a mighty cripple, not at all like Aaron's voice--he's surprised to hear--and as he takes that first line slowly, slowly, to let his eyes run one last time down the page, the whole speech falls into order and becomes his own and he feels that even if the script burned to ashes in his hand he could go through the whole seventy lines word-perfect.

Ay, Edward will use women honorably.

A pause again, and he can hear one of Martin's hands ~~knifing~~ the air, feel the other circling with fingers spread, and he goes on fast, but with his lips wrapping jealously around every syllable.

Would he were wasted, marrow, bones, and all,  
That from his loins no hopeful branch may spring  
To cross me from the golden time I look for.

Another spotlight appears downstage and he moves, limping, along into it, as the other spot goes off.

And yet, between my soul's desire and me,  
 The lustful Edward's title buried,  
 Is Clarence, Henry, and his son young Edward,  
 And all the unlooked-for issue of their bodies.  
 A cold premeditation for my purpose!

He pauses down center, not quite on the lip of the stage. He stays there in the beam of the light, reading with a savage, broken rhythm, some lines twisting from his mouth as slow as a cripple's hobble, others leaping quick as a sword.

Why then, I do but dream on sovereignty,  
 Like one that stands upon a promontory  
 And spies a far-off shore where he would tread,  
 Wishing his foot were equal with his eye,  
 And chides the sea that sunders him from thence,  
 Saying he'll lade it dry to have his way.  
 So do I wish the crown, being so far off,  
 And so I chide the means that keep me from it,  
 And so, I say, I'll cut the causes off,  
 Flattering me with impossibilities.  
 My eye's too quick, my heart o'erweens too much,  
 Unless my hand and strength could equal them.

The light gets brighter and he moves back a step, limping heavily, holding his right hand out in supplication.

Well, say there is no kingdom then for Richard.  
 What other pleasure can the world afford?

He's moving away upstage left, back turned, even before the narrow spot goes out and a flood comes on to cover him. Almost in the dark for a second, he spits out his sarcasm:

I'll make my heaven in a lady's lap,  
 And deck my body in gay ornaments,  
 And witch sweet ladies with my words and looks.

He stops, whispers:

O miserable thought, and more unlikely  
Than to accomplish twenty golden crowns!

Pivoting and moving center, he screams the first line,

Why, love forswore me in my mother's womb!  
And for I should not deal in her soft laws,  
She did corrupt frail nature with some bribe  
To shrink mine arm up like a withered shrub,  
To heap an envious mountain on my back  
Where sits deformity to mock my body,  
To shape my legs of an unequal size,  
To disproportion me in every part  
Like to a chaos, or an unlicked bear-whelp  
That carries no impression like the dam.  
And am I then a man to be beloved?  
O monstrous fault, to harbor such a thought!

Standing stage center, Rutland smiles gently.

Then, since this earth affords no joy to me  
Save to command, to check, to o'erbear such  
As are of better person than myself,  
I'll make my heaven to dream upon the crown,  
And whiles I live, to account this world but hell  
Until my misshaped trunk, that bears this head,  
Be round impaled with a glorious crown.

He has almost thrown the last seven lines away, but he knows he had to, to do what he wants with the next. He turns up right and limps toward the corner. The light, as if to contradict him and call him back, stays where it was, in the center. He keeps on going anyway in this weakest of possible crosses. The light behind Rutland fades and goes out so that it's from the darkness that his voice comes, lost, wailing,



bewildered, straining piteously to the awful, audible rhythm of his limp:

And yet I know not how to get the crown,  
 For many lives stand between me and home,  
 And I, like one lost in a thorny wood,  
 That rends the thorns and is rent with the thorns,  
 Seeking a way and straying from the way,  
 Not knowing how to find the open air,  
 But toiling desperately to find it out,  
 Torment myself to catch the English crown,  
 And from that torment I will free myself,  
 Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.

As if finally concurring in his decision, a spot comes suddenly down on him, and Rutland feels the audience out there now, welcomes it, sees himself as they do, huddled in the back corner of the stage, against the rear curtains, a bent, crippled twist staring out into the darkness. As if surprised by the sudden light he waits, motionless and soundless, his lips working. Then, as he speaks, he slowly, insinuatingly limps downstage center, with a serpentine grace now in his movement, his face and arms pantomiming every line, the light going up obediently now as he oozes toward the watchers:

Why, I can smile, and murder whiles I smile,  
 And cry content to that which grieves my heart,  
 And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,  
 And frame my face to all occasions.  
 I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall,  
 I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk,  
 I'll play the orator as well as Nestor,  
 Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could,  
 And, like a Sinon, take another Troy.  
 I can add colors to the chameleon,  
 Change shapes with Proteus for advantages,

And set the murderous Machiavel to school!

Without halting, Rutland leaps from the apron over the footlights. It feels a long light-hearted time in the air as if he were flying, or falling from a great distance. He lands heavily at the bottom of the center aisle, keeps his balance. As he runs fast, horribly fast because of his limp, faster than the laws of nature should permit a limping human being to run, up the center aisle, step after step, the light behind him on the stage goes down and out. Gleefully he shrieks,

Can I do this and cannot get a crown?

And then the last row of house lights, above the aisle in the back, comes on as the audience swivels around and Rutland turns quickly at the top, hands high over his head, actually touching the low ceiling, finger-tips against it as he looks down at the turned heads, the twisted shoulders, and holds the pose, silhouetted, for his last, thrown-away line:

Tut, were it farther off, I'll pluck it down.

The house lights go out and he's in the dark again.

Then all the house lights and working lights come back on. Every face is still turned. Rutland takes two steps down the aisle before he realizes he's still limping. He smiles and comes the rest of the way naturally. There's no applause. Every face, without exception, turning to watch him as he passes, is locked in an expression of

profound shock, which makes all the boys so identical that Rutland wants to laugh. The faces look unreal, they're so similar, so exaggerated. Rutland keeps his own face controlled to cover the beating of his heart, the airy wobble in the tendons of his knees, the new and tumultuous knowledge that he's created something better than anyone else could have done. A thought comes to him that what he created was better than he, himself, could have done, and he acknowledges it, accepts it, dismisses it, for he sees that Martin has moved out to center stage and that his face, too, is made strange with startled wonder. As he starts along the bottom aisle toward the empty seat next to Anne, he still watches Martin's face in the silence, and sees there not just the shock and wonder of the others, but pride and an amused acknowledgment. Martin nods his head the tiniest fraction of an inch. Rutland grins and sits down. He notices that Anne's face, while as startled as the rest, is perhaps not quite as awe-struck. She gives a start as she realizes he's looking at her, smiles courteously back at him and looks up at Martin.

"What do you think of that?" Martin asks.

He goes on, speaking slowly and emphatically, pausing after every sentence. "Okay! This is what you've really been working for, these two weeks. This is what I've been building you toward. Every rehearsal I've been watching you. I know what each of you can do. I think you're ready. These last two weeks have been one long audition. Ha? And I think you're ready for the play you're really going to put

on. You just saw part of it--the greatest melodrama ever written by any playwright!"

Leaning forward, Rutland stares at Martin. Is it possible that this device should succeed? Can even Martin's galvanic inspiration make it work? He looks around: the boys are grinning tightly, leaning forward. Martin is holding the pause for all it's worth. "It's a bigger Titus Andronicus," he goes on in a lowered voice, "by Shakespeare, of course--Shakespeare's great play--about the dangerous times of the Wars of the Roses--and the most notorious king in England's history--"

"Richard III!" a thin voice whispers joyfully in Rutland's ear. Startled, Rutland turns, but the seat behind him is empty. Perhaps it was...no matter. "RICHARD III!" Martin shouts.

Amid the babble of conversation, Rutland hears Anne saying to herself, "Oh, it can't be, I just read Richard III a few months ago, and I know that wasn't in it." She's wrong for once: if Martin said it, it's so. Now, Rutland anticipates, will come the cries and questions that Martin will dispose of in exciting style. But before any can even be framed, Martin is rushing ahead. "All of you, up here on the stage! Fast!" The students scramble out of their seats and line up along the edge of the stage, Rutland on the far end. As Martin, carrying a cardboard box of paperback books, walks down the row, reaching up to pass them out, part of Rutland's mind finds a curious interest in one of the manifestations of his excitement: when his head is turned sideways, watching Martin come down the row, he has

the impression of someone sitting far up in the seats, in the last or next-to-last row--an impression that vanishes when he looks directly at the spot but then returns when he looks away again. It's so vivid that he amuses himself while Martin approaches by characterising the figure he sees: tall, leaning forward, darkly dressed, a man with very long hair, his face in deep shadow but at times his mouth open as if laughing. Rutland gets his book last. He looks it over excitedly. It's Richard III, all right, a yellow-covered Folger Library edition with a thin face on the cover against a background of shrouded corpses.

"I wanted to watch you in Titus Andronicus," Martin says, walking back up the line, "so I could know where to cast you in this play. This is the one we'll be doing. I'll give you your roles right now, and our first reading will be tomorrow. You'll find a rehearsal schedule posted on the bulletin board tomorrow morning. I don't have time to give you a detailed plot analysis right now, but you probably learned a lot from watching the scene we just did, and there's a summary at the beginning of the play which you can read as soon as you get back to your rooms. Okay. Mel, you're King Edward, and also Richmond. Anne, you're Lady Anne, a beautiful role. Peggy Jane, you're Queen Elizabeth..." Martin goes down the row, goatee jutting, pointing finger mowing them down, giving each student at least one role, most of them two or three. "We'll have to get a couple more faculty daughters to join the Dramat," he says to Anne. "I'll

talk to you about that tomorrow. And, oh, yes, Robin, you'll play the title role. Okay? Are there any questions? I hope there aren't because I've...got some work to do back at my rooms." Rutland notices the hesitation, watches Martin closely: his eyes avoid Rutland's.

But there are questions, from the girls.

"Mr. Martin," Anne asks, "was the scene we just did from Richard III?"

"It's from an earlier play about the same people."

"Should we keep on bringing our copies of Titus Andronicus?"

Peggy Jane asks.

Again Rutland watches Martin carefully. Was the scene this morning the imposture, and all Martin's talk tonight genuine? A muscular spasm flickers over Martin's face and is gone. It's not enough to tell Rutland one way or the other, and perhaps, Rutland thinks, it's only his imagination that puts the note of reluctance in Martin's voice when he says, "Don't bring them to rehearsals any more... but keep them...you never know when...Okay?" The manic concentration is back in his manner. "That it? See you tomorrow here then, same time." He picks up his empty cardboard box and runs out the side door.

Rutland, the last in line, turns his head as Martin passes. At the door, is there a change in Martin's face? Is his posture as jaunty after he's half outside? It was a quick exit. Again Rutland half-glances a spectator sitting in the next-to-last row, perhaps

the last, doubled up with silent laughter--Rutland blinks and the seat is empty.

Lined along the edge of the stage, the boys and two girls are looking through their new books, looking at one another, looking at Rutland with that glazed wonder still in their eyes. Rutland grins at them and is the first to jump down off the stage.

Carrying a lighted candle from the rack, Rutland knocks once on Omar's door and walks in. The red-haired boy is standing by the table, dropping bits of hamburger into the fishbowl. "Where's that form?" Rutland asks, walking over to him. He sees the form beside the fishbowl, takes out his pen and writes his name in the blank. "Fill in the rest of it yourself," he says.

"Right," Omar says, apparently not at all surprised, continuing to feed Pete, who lunges and gulps. Pete's mouth, opened, is bigger than one would have thought possible, and fuller of teeth. Rutland says goodnight and Omar, absorbed with his fish, lifts a hand without turning around. Rutland goes up to his room.

Up there, he walks excitedly around the room several times, then sits down at his desk and reads Richard III through from beginning to end. He goes back and reads the introduction. Then he rereads the play. When the bells from the chapel begin to strike eleven, he realizes that his curtains aren't drawn, and instead of pulling them, he decides happily to comply, for once, with the lights-out. He runs

a race with the bells, dashing about the room blowing out the candles before the bells finish their toll. He undresses in the dark, dropping his clothes on the floor, gets his pajamas from under the pillow and slips into them, and climbs into bed. Pictures and lines from the play he's just read are cascading through his brain. Behind them all is the sight of the theatre below him, how he must have looked, standing alone at the top of the steps and reaching, reaching to touch the ceiling with his finger-tips as he said his last line. He can't get over that feeling.

Lying in the dark, he plays it back for some time, well past 11:30, before something else occurs to him and he sits up on one elbow. Martin--on his sudden, dramatic, punctual appearance that evening--must have come in earlier, before any of the cast arrived, and crouched to wait behind the last row of seats until his moment had come round. Either that, or something else just as extreme: he could have asked Christy not to lock one of the upper doors, then waited outside it until about 7:14:30, opened it with stealthy silence, and crawled along behind the last row of seats until he could stand up at the top of the center aisle.

Either picture strikes Rutland as somewhat comic. The more he thinks about it, the funnier it seems, until he falls laughing back onto his pillow. For a while he lies there on his back in the dark, laughing aloud. One of his last thoughts, before falling asleep, is that his high ceiling has made the room more of an echo chamber than



he'd realized, but a rather erratic one, since only at times is his laughter thrown back at him, and then distorted oddly. Rutland has also been half-consciously aware, ever since he blew out the lights, that those versatile rotted boards above him have been ticking here and there, with considerable variation in loudness; and his very last thought, forged in the whimsical arbitrariness of imminent sleep, is of a grandfather clock jostled into activity and running again, however irregularly, after its years of silence.

## Eleven.

Fifteen minutes before rehearsal, Rutland snarls his favorite lines as he grimaces at his reflection. The glass of the old full-length mirror is scraped in places, or perhaps simply worn out, and so the reflection it casts is somewhat phantasmagoric, almost like the mirror in a fun-house, but it suffices, it's a lot better than the small mirror on top of the bureau. The ornate frame is gilded; so are the brass gryphon's feet on which it stands. Omar located it somewhere and Rutland has put it next to his window, moving the bed a couple of feet closer to the door to fit it in.

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks  
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass,  
I, that am rudely stamped, and want love's majesty  
To strut before a wanton, ambling nymph;--

At night, with the curtains open, the window down and the candles lit, Rutland has an almost-continuous reflecting surface several feet long, composed of the window-glass and the mirror, before which he's been spending at least an hour a night working out Richard's appearance. He likes it best at night because of the lighting effects. With the candles out and the full moon shining through the window, he can achieve some extraordinary things, and some of his best ideas have come at those times, with his image a dark movement against deeper darkness.

I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,  
 Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,  
 Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time  
 Into this breathing world, scarce half made up,  
 And that so lamely and unfashionable  
 That dogs bark at me as I halt by them;--

There's much he's had to do, and he's not satisfied yet. His seventeen years must be aged another thirteen or so--makeup will eventually help, but he's been imagining he'll have to do without it, forcing himself to express Richard's age in his stance and bearing, the set of his face and the angle of his neck, a twitch in his left cheek, a flutter in his left eye-lid. His mobile face must be half-frozen so that the left side, jerked occasionally by twitches, looks unfinished, paralysed. His eyes must be fanatic. Rutland's natural grace of movement onstage, a grace perfectly suited to Aaron, has had to be altered, but not discarded; as he limps and bobs and rolls, he must seem gracefully graceless--on that problem alone, Rutland has spent hours. His six feet of height must be shortened. All these tasks have been self-imposed and, in the main, self-executed, Martin being content to answer questions when Rutland asks them but otherwise leaving it to Rutland to create his character. From two feet away he glares at those shaggy eyebrows, that intractable right eyebrow--if only it were the left!--and the scarred thin cheeks, like those of a cripple who has fought in the field all day and then slept without shelter through the winter night so he can fight again tomorrow.

Why, I, in this weak piping time of peace,

Have no delight to pass away the time,  
Unless to see my shadow in the sun  
And descant on mine own deformity.  
And therefore, since I cannot prove a lover--

About time to go. If he gets there a few minutes early, he can talk with the others before rehearsal starts. He grabs his windbreaker and goes out. As he clatters down the stairs, he reflects that while Martin's description of Richard as a Caucasian Aaron was a brilliant capsule summary under the circumstances, it is really inadequate to describe the man with whom Rutland is coming to feel so intimate.

## Twelve.

Gripping his last poster in his teeth, tasting the bakery-fresh paper and the thin smell of the black ink, Rutland reaches up to grasp the thick bottom limb of an oak dwarfish in its senility and swings himself up on it, bark scraping his palms with a dusty feeling. He walks up the trunk until he can bunch his legs under him and swing himself up onto the limb. Sitting below on the massive gravestone of Francis Cilley, d. 1947, Omar watches skeptically. Rutland slowly rises from his tight crouch, spreads his arms wide, fingers hooked, and takes two steps. He totters, arms waving, mouth clamped on the poster, catches his balance and runs along the limb to lean against the trunk. Using long tacks which he removes from his shirt pocket, he fastens the poster to the trunk, about twelve feet from the ground, and steps back to look at it, keeping one hand against the trunk.

"Who the fuck is going to see your poster up there?"

"Squirrels, birds."

"At least you didn't waste one of the colored ones."

Every prominent tree that students are likely to walk by has been decorated, during the last hour, with Rutland's face, full, over the injunction "Robin for President." The likeness was accomplished by an ally of Omar's in the art rooms of the New Building, using a process which involved photo-duplication by silk-screening. Rutland looks at the strong ugly face caught in a comically surprised

expression. "He did a good job."

"Yeah. But we'll need more than just posters to get you elected. Remember, Mel's been here four years, and you've just started..."

"That's exactly what I told you when you asked me to run."

"Why did you decide to run, then?"

"You asked me to." Rutland turns around and drops down to straddle the limb, catching himself with his hands.

"Trying to ruin yourself?"

Eight feet off the ground, Rutland leans back against the trunk and stretches his legs out along the limb, ankles crossed. "Just be thankful that Charlie Kalmus withdrew from school before the primary, or you wouldn't have any campaign to manage."

"Good old Charlie." Omar snickers. "Yeah...I had a little talk with good old Charlie..." He gives a surprised, appraising look up at Rutland and quickly says, "How do you think the cast is going to vote? How about those guys you weren't getting along with in Titus?"

"There were a lot of them."

"I mean the ones you really couldn't stand."

"Athey, Sergeant, Badger." Rutland laughs. "They're playing the queen's relatives and I get to kill two of them and exile the other one. Sergeant I even get to kill twice." He assumes a fencing position, insofar as he can sitting on the limb, and thrusts at Omar. "Martin knew I didn't like him when he cast us. He has a fantastic sense for personalities. And I really love to put Badger down with

some snotty line." He thrusts again, labors to pull the blade out. The sun of the October morning is shining in golden patches through the technicolor foliage of the enormous old oaks. "What, marry, may she? Marry with a king!"

"It doesn't sound like you're wooing their votes."

"Who needs them? Rivers--that's Badger's role--would vote for Richard before Badger would vote for me."

"Badger's the big prep that looks like a wrestler and talks like a fairy, isn't he?" Rutland nods, though he hadn't known Badger was only a freshman. "You'll need some votes. Who else knows you?"

"Exposure! What I need is exposure! Right?"

"You sound like Mr. Lewis. 'I'm going to have to expose myself here.'" Rutland smiles at the allusion to the characteristic remark of an unpopular history teacher. "But you're right."

"I'll get exposure tomorrow." Rutland lets his legs fall, leans forward and grips the limb with both hands.

"How?"

"Don't you remember? We're having a theatre assembly in the morning. We'll put on one scene, just to stimulate interest and make people want to buy tickets."

"What scene are you doing?"

"Act 1, scene 2. My wooing of Lady Anne. God, what a great scene!" Rutland slides off the limb and hangs first by both arms, then by one, in midair as he chuckles out his lines.

What though I killed her husband and her father?  
 The readiest way to make the wench amends  
 Is to become her husband and her father,  
 The which will I--not all so much for love  
 As for another secret close intent  
 By marrying her which I must reach unto.

Tensing his calf muscles, he drops, feels the rubber sole of his sneaker mash an acorn into the springy ground.

"Who else is in the scene?"

"Here's a playbill." Rutland takes it from his hip pocket and unfolds it. Just as he had for Titus Andronicus, Martin has dittoed them up and passed them out to everyone in the cast, as an aid to remembering one another's names and roles. Rutland leaps up onto the rough granite lump of Cilley's gravestone, which is as big as a table, and adopts a Richard III posture as he squints down at Omar, holding the playbill out in his withered left hand and reading aloud. "Cast in order of appearance. Richard, Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard III--"

"Let's see it," Omar says. Rutland drops the paper fluttering down to Omar, who grabs it. "All the kids who had roles in Titus, have roles just as important in this play?"

"Sure. Not only that, most of them have three or four roles now, and they only had one or two before."

"How about Mel?"

"Two big roles--Edward and Richmond, and he gets to help kill me in the end."



"In Titus he was the lead."

Rutland shrugs. "Has he said anything?" Omar asks.

"No, even if he did resent it, he's too nice a guy to say anything."

"Yeah, well...nice guy...just remember he's running against you for class president. Don't get to thinking he's so nice a guy that you vote for him."

"Don't worry."

"Who the fuck are all these names...George, Duke of Clarence... Stanley, Lord Derby..."

Spider-like, Rutland leaps a few feet through the air onto the gravestone of Leonard A. Reckford, d. 1929. This spot in the woods seems to appeal to bachelor headmasters, or at least to their executors. Poised on the large, rounded lump of granite with its carved date, he points an accusing finger at Omar. "Off with his head!"

"Cut the crap."

"Most of them are Plantagenets. Of which Richard is the last."

"Who were they?"

"A family who supplied England with kings for about three hundred years. Richard wants to be king, but he has two brothers and a couple of nephews who are ahead of him in line--"

"You don't have to tell me the plot."

"--and also some people in another branch of the family, and he has to kill all of them to get to the throne, so he does." Rutland

leaps back onto Cilley's gravestone, whirls. "He stabs Prince Edward, stabs King Henry--that eliminates the other family--and has his brother Clarence drowned in a keg of wine. Then his other brother, King Edward, dies of venereal disease." Rutland jumps onto Reckford's gravestone, balances on one leg. Omar is looking over the playbill again. "Finally he does get the crown. His ally, the Duke of Buckingham, collects a lot of citizens and Richard pretends to let them persuade him to take the throne against his will. He tries to consolidate his position by marrying his niece, after he's killed her uncles and her brothers, but that doesn't work, and meanwhile everyone has started to revolt. Lord Stanley is a noble whose loyalty Richard suspects, so he locks up Stanley's son George as a hostage. At the end, just before his battle at Bosworth Field against the Earl of Richmond, he has a nightmare in which the ghosts of all the people he's murdered, come back to haunt him. The next day he's killed, fighting gallantly against terrific odds. You should see the battle scenes Martin's arranging for us." Rutland takes a long step down from the rock, puts his foot up on it and pulls the untied, thick white laces tight, enjoying the pressure against his instep, the tension in the laces. He keeps the laces taut while he ties the half-knot. He enjoys the rubbery feel of his sole against the worn rock, the sweaty smell of the canvas sneaker. His back is in shade as he leans forward, sunlight warming the top of his head. All his senses are alert and resilient among the fiery leaves.

"Does Richmond become king then?"

"Yes, but actually his title isn't even as good as Richard's. He's descended from the youngest son of their great-grandfather through an illegitimate daughter, or something like that. A very shaky claim. Actually, Richard is the better man. It was a shame he lost."

Rutland stands up and stretches. Drifting down into the woods on the smell of burning leaves comes the sound of bells, joining the occasional plop and roll of falling acorns, the scurrying rustle of squirrels and the resonant chirping of the very small gray birds. "11:15."

"Those fucking bells."

Rutland listens to the tune. "Have you heard my record from the soundtrack of Titanic?"

Omar shakes his head, frowning.

"The ship's band is playing this hymn while the ship goes down, hundreds of people screaming and going frantic."

Omar nods vaguely, scanning the cast list again. "Judy Lewis? Mr. Exposure's daughter? She must be all of nine years old."

"She's eleven. Anne Terry persuaded her to join the Dramat. Martin is convinced that with make-up she can play an old lady. Anyway, we don't have anyone else."

"Hmmm. Peggy Jane Becker...what're you doing?" Rutland has pushed aside some of the leaves with his foot and is drawing circles in the dirt with a stick. "Christ, we have enough fucking circles around here as it is...do you know which house is the Beckers'?"

"Sure, I take care of their yard."

"Do you know which bedroom is Peggy Jane's?"

"No, I don't."

"First window on the left, top floor. Last spring we had a period of maybe two weeks, after it got warm, when she left her curtains open. Then again this fall, too, until the students came back." Rutland sighs, gets up from his rock, and walks down to the edge of the creek, careful to maintain his limp, looking as he goes for acorns to crunch under his feet. Along here the creek is three feet deep in places, and it flows with a marvellous soundlessness. Rutland kicks an acorn into it and watches it sink diagonally down to the bottom. "Christ, I was raking it in, even raised the rental on the glasses 30%. Things were so busy I couldn't even afford to look myself more than once a week. She's got her points, all right, no doubt about it...You know, Rut, when you think about it, there's probably no more ideal place for someone like me, than a boys' preparatory school. I'm really in my element. Money, money, money. They need it and I provide it, one vicarious way or another. Got a new shipment of magazines in just day before yesterday. Pretty hot stuff. Then there's my video service, which is sort of dormant right now because of that vigilant bastard Martin, and my records, my tapes, my newspapers and donut service, little sidelines like my false hands."

Rutland, listening, leans over the water, trying to see his reflection. "How was Ehliter as a proctor?" he asks.

"Very friendly, easy to get to know. Very liberal. For some reason he was thinking of becoming a priest. You'd never know it when you got to know him. Too fucking bad he had to take that fall... Have I told you my plan to sell contraceptives to the students before the fall dance?"

"No."

"My goal: to sell one contraceptive--at least one--to every boy here."

"That's pretty ambitious."

"You're fucking right it's ambitious."

"Do you think it's possible?"

"Hell no, of course it's not possible. Look at the odds. First of all, not everyone will be going to the fall dance. Second, a lot of the guys here don't even know what a rubber is, much less how to use one. That sounds fantastic, but it's true. So I need to educate them first. Pamphlets. Mimeographed sheets. Drawings in toilets. I can't leave any stone unturned. And all the time I'll be doing this, mounting this fantastic campaign, I'll know it's ridiculous, I'll know it's statistically impossible for me to sell a safe to every boy here. No one could do it. Jesus Christ himself couldn't do it. But I'll still be in there trying." The water breaks in concentric ripples from Omar's tossed acorn. "Man dies without a dream. Right?"

Rutland admits that Omar has a very creative attitude toward his work.

"But all this is nothing, really. Especially when you consider the potentialities. Incredible! I could kick myself in the ass for being so complacent the last two years, thinking I was a smart operator, when all the time I was just skimming the surface. There are untouched depths here at Mather. And I've just begun to realize that this year. I went to a public school my first year in high school, did you know that? Switching to Mather was the best thing that ever happened to me. You know the biggest difference between a public school and a private school, a prep boarding school? Evil is more concentrated at a prep school. In a high school it's diffused, spread out over buses, homes-- here it's all together. The boys have nowhere else to go. For someone like me, it's one big green light. I've done some things...You weren't here last year but there was a kid who thought he'd set up business in competition with me, figured there was room for two in the field. He was a senior, but he was living in a freshman dorm because he figured the opportunities would be wider there and he could build up his own clientele. Well, four guys I know who are sophomores now were living in the room across the hall from him, and one night they noticed smoke coming out from under his door and managed to get the door open. They got him out and then put out the fire. He'd been overcome by smoke and he was damn lucky to get out of it alive. But everything in his room was destroyed, all his books and everything. It was an act of God and it sure eliminated that source of competition. Ever since then I've thought that God must approve of monopolies...He's one Himself,

in a way...not many polytheists around anymore...You know, Rut, I'm capable of anything. Anything at all. Name something that most people wouldn't do."

Rutland thinks for a while. "Cannibalism."

"You know, cannibalism sort of interests me. I'd like to try it sometime. The trouble is, the opportunities are so limited."

"Homosexuality."

"Well, again, that's something I haven't tried...it doesn't appeal to me the way cannibalism does...but if I found a profit in it, I'd jump right in with both hands. Hmmm. You know, if I could only organize the homosexuals on campus, I could start the greatest, most profitable call-business...I know they're here. My physical culture magazines are always out. The trouble is, most of them are so God damned repressed, they won't admit it even to themselves. There's general awareness--it's fucking paranoid, in fact, everyone looking sideways at everyone else, guys in groups staring at anyone who's alone, but no commerce, except my NATIONAL REVIEWS! It's a God damn crime."

"How about incest?"

"These are all pretty trite. Can't you think of an original sin?"

Rutland thinks.

"Anyway, incest is out, you've obviously never seen my mother. But I wish I had a good-looking sister, oh, say--"

"If you get a bigger, more concentrated dose of evil at prep school," Rutland interrupts, "and I don't think you do--"

"Yeah?"

"Then don't you get a bigger inoculation, too?"

"I don't know about that. I'm happy as a pig where I am. And I have a plan that'll--" The appraising look comes over Omar's face again, and he leans forward. "What're you doing, getting set to jump across?...Let's see you."

"Standing or running?"

"Standing."

"No."

"Running."

"Okay."

"Let's see you."

"What's it worth to you?"

"Not a fucking thing."

Swinging his arms, bending from the waist, Rutland walks up and down along the creek, occasionally touching his toes, as if he's warming up for an event. At this point, the creek is more than ten feet wide. From the shortest of the oaks, his face looks down at him. After a while Omar says, "Here's something that'll give you exposure. An insulting match between you and Mel."

"How do you mean?"

"You just take turns insulting each other, in front of an audience. We could stage it in chapel on Sunday morning. Instead of the sermon."

"You'd have to have the sermon. Instead of the responsive reading,

maybe."



maybe."

"Right."

"It wouldn't matter how long it was--"

"--That's what she said."

"It'd be so different that no one would mind."

"With me writing your insults, you couldn't lose."

"Omar the Kingmaker."

"Listen, I'll pretend I'm Mel and we'll practice a little. If we come up with any good ones, we can save them for you to use."

"Okay."

"Ready? Rutland, you're a no good son of a bitch!...Go ahead, what're you waiting for? You shouldn't have any trouble topping that."

"I don't know," Rutland says. "I guess I overestimated my capacities for profanity in cold blood."

"Shit, you'll never get to be president that way."

"I'll get a little exposure tomorrow, if everything goes well."

"Tomorrow." Omar is blowing smoke rings, frowning as he watches them dissolve.

"Remember? With Anne." But it won't be just for political exposure, Rutland realizes. In the uncostumed rehearsals for the scene, Anne has been cold. He has felt his lips twitching with distaste as he's held that aloof, self-possessed body in his arms. Alone among all the cast, she's beautiful enough to have stayed untouched by his

metamorphosis, secure in the fortress of her charm. But in the costumes which are even now getting their last stitches on the sewing machines of faculty wives, and with an audience filling those seats, he feels that her self-possession may be penetrated. Somehow she still sees him as he was. He must surprise her into letting them create something so good together that she won't be able to back away afterwards, won't want to. Rutland whispers--almost aloud--one of his favorite lines of Buckingham's: "You shall see what I can do."

## Thirteen.

When Rutland jerks his shoulder, the skin prickles under the tape holding the pillow on his back. Minutes before, in the crowded haste of the dressing room, Martin had taped on his hump. Now Rutland stands at the top of the center aisle of the basement theatre, concealed by two screens as he looks down at the incredible audience. Every seat is taken. In the far aisles, boys are crammed on every step. On the center of the apron before the closed curtain, Mel stands alone and uncostumed, talking. Hectically Rutland champs on his gum. He shifts his weight ceaselessly from foot to foot, sound foot to crippled one, flexing his toes inside the strange leather boots. He smoothes the black velvet of his doublet again. The heavy, knotted sleeves of the damned thing almost touch the floor. A few inches more and he'd leave swaths behind him in the dust. His legs are cold in the thin black tights. Under the makeup his face itches greasily. He loosens his sword in its scabbard, thirty inches of polished steel, the real thing.

The whole school is here this morning, all those backs of heads, filling the tiny place until the fire laws have been not only violated but--an Omarian metaphor strikes Rutland--gang-banged. With deferential competence Mel is telling the audience what they'll need to know to understand the scene Rutland and Anne are about to give them. In fact, he's telling them more than they'll need to know. In order to let the two candidates for president have less unequal time before their voters,

Martin has padded Mel's part. Mel wouldn't have asked for it, just as he hadn't objected when Martin named Rutland's big scene with Anne as the one they'd present two days before class elections. Still, Rutland resents Mel's presence down there, he wishes he'd finish and leave the stage to the actors. At the same time he wishes Mel's explanations would last half an hour. The audience is ridiculously big. He wishes the damned costume had been finished before this morning. Rutland's irritation grows as Mel seems to be concluding his speech.

"...in the previous play, then, Richard helped kill Anne's husband, and he stabbed her father-in-law to death, Henry VI, in the Tower of London. These murders alone would make Anne hate him, and his deformities are an additional handicap. But for political reasons, rather than love, Richard still plans to marry Anne, to get the support of the rival House of Lancaster. Anne is another step on Richard's ruthless climb to the throne. But first we must win her--a task that seems impossible in the face of her hatred."

The applause as Mel slides through the curtains is rather more enthusiastic, Rutland thinks, than such an overlong and undramatic prose speech deserves. The house lights go off. His heart leaping oafishly, Rutland removes his gum from his mouth with his ungloved hand and thumbs it to one of the screens. In the dark begins the funereal bump of the drums. The curtains pull back, swirling, on a stage bare except for a mosaic of papier-mache stone blocks against the gray drapes.

Anne comes quickly on.

There's a gasp of astonished lechery from the audience, and Rutland stares. Before this moment he hadn't seen her in her costume. She's wearing a low-cut maroon gown with a darker cord around her waist. Her graceful beauty seems amplified a hundred-fold to Rutland as he looks across the dark gulf of the full house to the lighted stage. Did he ever think he could stir up that beauty, did he ever think he could put another expression on that angel's face except the assumed expressions of the stage, or the big charming smiles of courtesy, or the perverse simian mockery of quiet attentiveness?

The low, open coffin, draped in red and gold, is carried stage center by the four hooded bearers. Sadly and imperiously Anne bids it be set down. She kneels at that splash of color.

In her lament for Henry, there's a note which wasn't there in rehearsals: a throbbing urgency, an almost hysterically vibrant tension. It suits Anne Neville perfectly. Is any of it the response of Anne Terry to the crowd watching her? Rutland twists his head doubtfully on the hilt, and out of his nervousness a silent laugh wells up: he imagines what his entrance would be like if the center aisle below him were as clogged with spectators as the side aisles: first his bellicose shout, "Stay, you that bear the corse, and set it down!" and then, "Excuse me, please...coming through...can I get by, please?...sorry...excuse me..." On the wings of this fantasy, his hopelessness swoops close. She will be as untouchable as ever. To try to make her

otherwise will only ruin the scene. Again he wiggles the fingers of his crippled hand inside his black glove. He sees his first line rushing up on him like a train, getting bigger and bigger as Anne's lament goes on. It's upon him. He steps through the screens to the top of the steps. "Stay, you that bear the corse, and set it down!"

Heads swivel collectively in the audience. With his nervousness dropped on the floor behind him like a heavy coat, he holds the pose: arm out, finger pointing, fist loosely clenched, right hand spasmodically playing on his sword-hilt. Anne has turned, half-crouching. Rutland limps down the aisle through the turned faces and the startled murmur, no longer entirely aware of them, and in fact, no longer entirely capable of reflective thought, the role transforming him like dye running through the veins of a leaf. With every jolting step Anne gets bigger, nearer, clearer, like a figure on a progress of slides, dark hair and wet eyes and the small nose and wide mouth, and the two bony bumps on her flat collarbone, above her tiny breasts. Suddenly he's onstage, she's immediately before him and the first movement of their duel is starting.

They work well together, as smoothly as a sword sliding from its sheathe, Anne tearfully cursing him, tears trembling in Rutland's own eyes as he offers excuses, but somewhere in his consciousness is the knowledge that they're doing nothing they didn't do in rehearsal, only now there's an audience out there to eat it up. She's good, he is good, but he senses now that he won't be able to surprise her into something

odd which he vaguely remembers he wanted. Anne Neville is the perfect Anne Neville, dancing passionately to the pull of Richard's spider-thread as he lets it out. Anne Terry is still Anne Terry, the inaccessible. She always will be. Rutland will never touch her.

"And thou unfit for any place but hell."

"Yes, one place else, if you will hear me name it."

"Some dungeon."

He lifts his hesitant fingertips to her cheek, smooth with the makeup and warm.

"Your bedchamber."

In a swift blur, Anne's open palm comes up at his face. Acting on a half-thought, Rutland disciplines his eyes: they stay open, looking into hers, as his face stings under her hand. He keeps them open. Her own magnificent eyes widen slightly. When she says, turning away, "Ill rest betide the chamber where thou liest," there's just a suggestion of amusement in her voice.

And now they work smoothly into the second movement of their duel, carrying all the audience with them in a breathless fascination that thrills Rutland and yet makes him feel, more than ever, Anne's distance. As her hands rise, fingers clawed, up toward her wild-eyed face, straining to tear that beauty from her cheeks which has led to her husband's murder, and Rutland takes three steps to catch her wrists in a movement requiring the most delicate timing, and which he hardly gives a thought in performing perfectly, he senses strongly that it's

not just Anne's loveliness of face which permits her awful independence, not her sweet slender-hipped body nor her model's carriage, not her ballerina's grace nor her first-in-her-class intelligence nor even her perfect manners, but her excellence, the fact that she's as good as he at what they're doing. She knows she has only to repeat what Martin has had her do in rehearsals. He feels this complacent knowledge like a tiny wisp of smoke deep down in her dark eyes, behind his own reflection in her pupils, while he holds her face to face for fifteen lines, his thumbs overlapping his middle fingers about her wrists. In five lines she'll tear herself loose and spit at him, and he'll blink and lift his hand and wipe away the moisture. It will get a laugh. Now it's four lines, three, two, one. Rutland relaxes the pressure of his fingers. She pulls herself away and turns her whole body into the spasm as Rutland watches her lips opening and the fine cloud leaping out.

Acting on instinct again, he doesn't blink even when he feels the spray in his open eyes. With the moisture collecting and running down his face, he raises his gloved ~~left~~ hand and then, deliberately, halts the gesture. Very slowly he lowers his hand, without having touched his face. The saliva stays cool and wet on his skin. Anne's eyes show something new for a second.

Her furious movement has put her close to Rutland, as always, and now, free to go, Anne Neville stays there, off balance, leaning forward. She answers his whisper in a breathy sob: "Would it were mortal poison,



for thy sake."

"Never came poison from so sweet a place."

"Never...hung poison...on a fouler toad..." Her face tilts further up, just as they've always done it, and there's a deeper breathing from her open lips, a trembling in her throat as her eyes go half-closed. Her breath is the color of water, her lips are parted so that he can just see the white of her two upper teeth. Anne's face moves till it's an inch away and she holds it there. Rutland is immobile, smelling her powder, feeling her breath on his lips. Tiny beads of sweat lie along her forehead. Perhaps a little sooner than they'd been doing it, she turns away--does that mean anything?--with a convulsive disgust and cries, "Out of my sight! Thou dost infect mine eyes!"

Rutland makes the cross down to her. He whips out the sword, whirl of steel on leather, offers her the pliant whipping weight of the bright blade balanced on three fingers. Trembling, mouth still open, she takes it. In a moment when the audience can't see her eyes, he notes that the shade of smoke is fainter than before, diluted with something else.

--Which, if thou please to hide in this true breast  
And let the soul forth that adareth thee--

his hands go to his throat, his arms quiver and his knuckles go white with the effort, and with a terrifying rip the doublet is ruined and

his chest is bare almost to the navel--

I lay it naked to the deadly stroke,  
And humbly beg the death upon my knee.

On his knee, he lifts his hand to bring the point of the sword through the tatters of the doublet and against the tingling skin over his heart.

The sharp point trembles against his ribs as Anne's hands tremble. He feels her try, in an infinitesimal movement, to draw it back, but his fingers are still gripping it. He sets his face wildly against the pain. It only takes a second. Keeping his tear-filled eyes on hers, he feels the blood trickling down his stomach.

Anne Terry gasps.

She makes the two ineffectual tries to stab him, frustrated each time by his gentle voice. Trembling, she lets fall the sword. Rutland picks it up and goes to her. Anne will not look at him. He puts an urgent tenderness into his honey words that he's never managed before.

"I would I knew your heart."

"'Tis figured in my tongue."

"I fear me both are false."

"Then never man was true."

"Well...well, put up your sword."

"Say then my peace is made?"

"That shall you know hereafter."

"But shall I live in hope?"

"All men, I hope, live so."

And now the embrace while he slips the ring over her finger. From behind, he slides his arms about her waist. He keeps the gentleness of his voice in his hands. Anne trembles in his black-sleeved arms as they tighten around her. Half bare in the maroon gown, her perfect back is warm against his bare chest, and wet: why should it be wet, he wonders, and then realizes it's wet with his own blood. He smells her dark hair against his cheek. She is still trembling as she moves away, nor does she look directly at him even during her coquettish exit.

Alone on stage Rutland still feels the slender trembling warmth of Anne Terry in his arms, that fragile yet solid softness, as he's never felt it in rehearsal, still feels her bare skin against his and smells the powder on her neck as he capers and crows.

My dukedom to a beggarly denier,  
I do mistake my person all this while!  
Upon my life, she finds, although I cannot,  
Myself to be a marvellous proper man!  
I'll be at charges for a looking-glass,  
And entertain a score or two of tailors  
To study fashions to adorn my body.  
Since I am crept in favor with myself,  
I will maintain it, at some little cost.

And not knowing whether Anne will even speak to him again, knowing only that he's breached the outer walls and perhaps even caught a glimpse of an inner court, he makes the long cross upstage right and turns to look at the single spot blinding him. Imperiously he points a long arm.

Shine out, fair sun, till I have bought a glass,

That I may see my shadow as I pass.

Afterwards, hand-in-hand with Anne for the last four of their nine curtain calls, Rutland wonders happily how many duels had just been fought. One between Richard and Anne Neville, and another, of course, between Anne Neville and herself. One between the two actors and the audience: the perpetual duel. Another, quickly resolved, between Rutland and the lingering fears that the full house had excited. An important one between presidential candidate Rutland and his voting public: the stamping and clapping is, at least in part, a very promising response to his enactment of a fantasy that they've all had. Perhaps most portentous of all, the duel between Robin Rutland and Anne Terry. What Rutland remembers most vividly during the entirety of the rainy school day is the pressure of Anne's hand in his during those last curtain calls, and the memory of how, with Peggy Jane using some kleenex on Anne's back, she herself, still in costume, still trembling, not meeting his eyes, had cleaned the blood from Rutland's chest with a handkerchief dipped in cold water from the fountain, as soon as the curtains had met in their dusty swirl for the last time.