

**DIGNITY OF BOUNDARY**

**“JACK LONDON SLEPT HERE”**

**(A NOVEL)**

**“FOREGROUNDING DIALOGUE: AN ETHICAL APPROACH**

**THROUGH COURAGEOUS RISK”**

**(AN EXEGESIS)**

**Robert Sedlack**

Thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Discipline of English and Creative Writing

School of Humanities

University of Adelaide

May 2017

**“JACK LONDON SLEPT HERE”**

**(A NOVEL)**

**Volume 1**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE .....	i
TITLE PAGE (NOVEL) .....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	vi
DECLARATION .....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ix
<b>VOLUME 1: NOVEL</b>	
<i>JACK LONDON SLEPT HERE</i> .....	1
JACK LONDON HOUSE (PHOTOGRAPH) .....	2
NOTE ATTACHED TO TRANSCRIPTS .....	3
CHAPTER 1	
<i>Playboy</i>	
Entrevue Interruptus .....	4
CHAPTER 2	
<i>Rolling Stone</i> (Part One)	
Swinging for the Moon: An Unexpected Rendezvous	
With Brilliance .....	16
CHAPTER 3	
<i>Rolling Stone</i> (Part Two) .....	34
CHAPTER 4	
<i>Ladies Home Journal</i>	
Dinner with the Queen of the Court: An Interview	
With Hartley Sickerdick .....	62

CHAPTER 5

*Architectural Digest*

A Spin Around the Jack London House ..... 99

CHAPTER 6

*Nintendo Power*

Capturing Ghosts: The Hartley Sickerdick Way ..... 127

CHAPTER 7

*Rave*

Up and Atom: Get Hip to the Cool Hot Clues ..... 165

CHAPTER 8

*Girls and Corpses*

The Songwriter and the Exotic-Dancing Porn Star ..... 221

CHAPTER 9

*Esquire*

Birds on the Line ..... 237

CHAPTER 10

*Parenting*

Pounce of the Now ..... 257

DEAD END (PHOTOGRAPH) ..... 294

**VOLUME 2: EXEGESIS**

“FOREGROUNDING DIALOGUE: AN ETHICAL APPROACH

THROUGH COURAGEOUS RISK” ..... 295

INTRODUCTION ..... 296

Chapter Outlines ..... 308

CHAPTER ONE	
THEORY .....	311
Bakhtin and Pure Dialogue .....	311
Friedrich Spielhagen and Objective Narrative Theory.....	321
CHAPTER TWO	
OMISSION .....	335
Pretty Words .....	336
A Chary Approach to the Chamber of Consciousness .....	344
CHAPTER THREE	
TEXT ANALYSIS .....	350
<i>Eternal Curse on the Pirates of Privacy</i> .....	350
<i>Doting on Carpenter's Gothic</i> .....	361
CHAPTER FOUR	
A NOVEL UNDER THE EXEGETICAL INFLUENCE .....	372
Foregrounding Plot in a Dialogue Novel .....	372
CONCLUSION .....	380
ABBREVIATIONS .....	386
WORKS CITED .....	387
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	395

## ABSTRACT

The thesis couples my creative work, *Jack London Slept Here*, with an exegesis that argues for an “ethical” approach to the foregrounding of fictional dialogue. My argument will take into consideration the role of the reader and characterisation through dialogue rather than author-intention and self-interest. It invites participation and collaboration as a gesture of abdication of control. My original contribution to knowledge will be found in my argument that this ethical invitation is not the product of ideological positioning or experimentation with novelistic technique, but rather, the result of courage – manifesting through risk; humility – manifesting through erasure; and ultimately, a respect for the boundaries of reader and character.

The novel is composed entirely through a series of interviews with my protagonist in his house on a dead-end alley in Hollywood. These interviews take place shortly before and after a shooting massacre at a nearby golf and country club. The interview structure has afforded me the opportunity and challenge to not just reduce narrative description but to eliminate it altogether. It has allowed me to forego all reliance upon speech tags to convey the emotions of the characters. There are no interior monologues and any attempt to interpret character consciousness must be made by the reader based upon their relationship to the dialogue presented to them.

The exegesis will investigate the foregrounding of fictional dialogue as a narrative choice for the unobtrusive author and how this function requires a collaborating

reader. Bronwen Thomas, who has made significant contributions in the scholarly study of fictional dialogue with her book, *Fictional Dialogue: Speech and Conversation in the Modern and Postmodern Novel*, was initially inspired by novelist and critic David Lodge's assertion that novelists who foreground dialogue "have been somewhat undervalued by academic criticism because their foregrounding of dialogue makes them resistant to a method of analysis biased in favour of lyric expressiveness." [*After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism*. London: Routledge, 1990. 83.]

My research takes the form of a critical reflection of the dialogue novels of William Gaddis, Henry Green and Manuel Puig by employing the theoretical lens of the nineteenth-century German author and theorist, Friedrich Schlegel.

## DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for photocopying and loan subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The experience of writing this thesis felt similar to running the Los Angeles Marathon. If the marathon is monologic then thesis composition is dialogic. I would like to thank the University of Adelaide for providing such an extraordinary opportunity to explore craft and theory. My principal supervisor, Brian Castro, has what can only be described as a “beautiful mind.” His attention to EVERYTHING helped to make this thesis possible. I will always be indebted to Brian. Thanks also to my co-supervisors Joy McEntee and Phillip Edmonds. Phil Butters brought humanity and humour to the paperwork path of postgraduate work. As did Jennifer Osborn and Cally Guerin. I would also like to acknowledge the many candidates and faculty who attended the English and Creative Writing seminars. Your voices were an inspiration. I was fortunate to find additional voices outside the university. I would like to thank Brian Poole for his superb scholarly work and his dialogue with me. Other scholars who were kind enough to offer guidance include Ken Hirschkop at the University of Waterloo and Andrew Gibson at Royal Holloway, University of London. I would also like to acknowledge the shimmering assistance of Rowan Scott. And thank you, Nicole Winstanley at Penguin Canada, for your generosity and insight. Thank you, dad (Ron Sedlack), for the support. And to my beautiful wife, Belinda Reich, thank you for your guidance, encouragement, and superb editing. I love you. Also, to Jack and Millie who helped keep everything in perspective, I promise I will no longer be grumpy when you sashay into my workroom at 5:00 a.m.

**VOLUME 1**

**NOVEL**

***JACK LONDON SLEPT HERE***



Reich, Belinda. *Jack London House*. Los Angeles, CA: 2004. JPEG file.

Hi Mom,

The police still have the original reels but I made a digital copy of everything before they took them away. Not sure I was supposed to do that so mum's the word. Ha-ha. Not sure what they're going to end up using.

I've typed everything up for you, the reels that have to do with us. There are other reels. You don't need those. I can't bring myself to listen to them. Like I said on the phone, I still think this is a bad idea for you. But you said you wanted the transcripts. So here they are.

I'll probably stay out here for a while. Get some stuff sorted.

Love

Max

*Playboy*

"Entrevue Interruptus"

PLAYBOY: So your real name is not Hartley Sickerdick?

SICKERDICK: It's the name I've used for a long time. It's real enough.

PLAYBOY: But it's not the name you were born with?

SICKERDICK: No. I had been searching for weeks and was out walking and found the names on separate tombstones in a cemetery, side by side, Hartley on one stone and Sickerdick on the other. They fit together at the time.

PLAYBOY: Which cemetery?

SICKERDICK: Hollywood Forever.

PLAYBOY: What name were you born with?

SICKERDICK: I don't want to tell you.

PLAYBOY: Why?

SICKERDICK: Because you'll get stuck in the sand and this will go nowhere.

PLAYBOY: It can't be that bad.

SICKERDICK: It's worse.

PLAYBOY: Can't be worse than Hartley Sickerdick.

SICKERDICK: What's wrong with that?

PLAYBOY: It creates impressions of a diseased penis.

SICKERDICK: Maybe if you got your mind out of the gutter you might not see it that way.

PLAYBOY: You can't tease our readers like that. Somebody will find your birth records. It's not hard.

SICKERDICK: Manson. Charles Manson.

PLAYBOY: Your name?

SICKERDICK: Correct.

PLAYBOY: Who names their kid Charles Manson?

SICKERDICK: My parents did.

PLAYBOY: This was before?

SICKERDICK: Obviously.

PLAYBOY: And he was also a songwriter. What a coincidence.

SICKERDICK: He was not a songwriter.

PLAYBOY: He wrote songs. I think he had an album. Or somebody put together an album of songs he wrote.

SICKERDICK: You want to know the real coincidence? I had dinner that night at El Coyote.

PLAYBOY: What night?

SICKERDICK: The night Sharon Tate was killed. I saw her at the restaurant.

PLAYBOY: You were Charles Manson then.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

PLAYBOY: You were Charles Manson at El Coyote and you saw Sharon Tate eating her last meal?

SICKERDICK: The three other people who were killed were with her. I don't want to make this all about Sharon.

PLAYBOY: Fair enough.

SICKERDICK: Jay Sebring. You ever see that movie, *Shampoo*?

PLAYBOY: No.

SICKERDICK: Warren Beatty. The character was based on Sebring. I think.

PLAYBOY: What character?

SICKERDICK: The hairdresser. Abigail Folger. Heiress to the Folger's coffee dynasty. Wojciech Frykowski. Fifty-one stab wounds. I kept looking over. Sharon was so beautiful. She wasn't a big star but she was known. I had seen her movies. *Valley of the Dolls*. *Fearless Vampire Killers*.

PLAYBOY: What did you feel when you heard she was murdered?

SICKERDICK: Just kept going back to that night at El Coyote. Not just her face. The faces of the other three. I kept seeing all four of them. You just don't know what's around the corner, right?

PLAYBOY: Now I'm thinking that our readers might look into your birth records to prove that you were not born as Charles Manson.

SICKERDICK: Be my guest.

PLAYBOY: It all seems so unbelievable.

SICKERDICK: Why?

PLAYBOY: You were Charles Manson at El Coyote ogling Sharon Tate on her last night of Earth.

SICKERDICK: You see? What you did right there I don't like.

PLAYBOY: What?

SICKERDICK: Ogling. Who said I was ogling? Why do you assume I was ogling? She was a beautiful woman, captivating, sparkling. That doesn't mean I was lusting after her.

PLAYBOY: Okay, so maybe now we need your birth records.

SICKERDICK: I don't have them right here.

PLAYBOY: Charles Manson.

SICKERDICK: Why is that so unusual? Charles is a normal, popular name. Manson is a last name that is not unique or strange or anything that would imply a terrible, deceitful coincidence if one had the same last name. It's just not news. What is striking is that we both took LSD. He went one way. I went the other.

PLAYBOY: What does that mean?



SICKERDICK: I'm not in the mood to talk about that right now. Have you ever seen a woman eight months pregnant?

PLAYBOY: Yes.

SICKERDICK: Can you imagine stabbing that person to death?

PLAYBOY: No.

SICKERDICK: It's bad enough what they did to other three but how do you stab a woman with a belly extended that far, with a baby inside that belly. It defies everything, even things that are beyond normal, beyond horror. It's in a place that nobody can even contemplate.

PLAYBOY: Okay, so let's stop contemplating it. You were born, Charles Manson.

SICKERDICK: Correct.

PLAYBOY: And so what happened when he became the name we know?

SICKERDICK: It wasn't easy to convict him. You know that, right?

PLAYBOY: No.

SICKERDICK: He didn't actually kill anybody. Well, I can't say that for certain. He might have killed lots of people out in the desert that we'll never know about. There were rumours Jim Morrison had done that once.

PLAYBOY: Done what?

SICKERDICK: Killed someone in the desert. To experience what it felt like.

PLAYBOY: Manson.

SICKERDICK: Okay, the murders that we know about, some people think he did those killings. He didn't.

PLAYBOY: Okay.

SICKERDICK: They had to prove that he ordered the killings. And you know how they did that?

PLAYBOY: No.

SICKERDICK: By using one of the great albums of all time. The Beatles. *The White Album*.

PLAYBOY: Overrated?

SICKERDICK: Then so are sunsets. He used some songs from the album to convince these kids that if they committed these murders, these murders of rich, white people. Helter Skelter. That the blacks would be blamed. Blackbird. And that these killings would result in a race war. And because, according to Manson, the blacks would win that race war because they were, in his opinion, physically superior, and that once the blacks had won and blacks had control of the planet then Manson and his family would emerge from the desert and Manson would, in his words, "Kick nigger in the ass, tell him to go pick cotton and he would be ruler of the world." Now *that's* unbelievable. I don't care

that these kids were on hallucinogens. Who would believe that this sequence of events could ever, in any way, shape or form, happen just like that? Could happen by killing those four people. And two more people after that?

PLAYBOY: Maybe they just liked killing.

SICKERDICK: But that was the motive. As presented in court. Needless to say by the end of the trial and once the conviction was read, I could no longer walk into an office, a studio, a bar, and say, Hi, I'm Charles Manson, I have a song for you. And I had just arrived in Los Angeles that summer.

PLAYBOY: Talk about bad timing.

SICKERDICK: Bad timing was being at 10050 Cielo Drive that night.

PLAYBOY: Or golfing at the Wilshire Country Club.

SICKERDICK: What?

PLAYBOY: They think a bunch of golfers have been shot. It just happened. That's just around the corner.

SICKERDICK: About a mile away. Are you going to grace us with rolling updates from your phone?

PLAYBOY: Sorry. My Twitter feed is exploding.

SICKERDICK: Exploding.

PLAYBOY: I'll turn it off.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

PLAYBOY: Back to bad timing. Stepping off a bus in Hollywood to begin a career as a songwriter just before Carole King released *Tapestry*. Does that qualify?

SICKERDICK: Well, that was about a year and a half after I landed. February 10, 1971. A dark day indeed.

PLAYBOY: A monumental album.

SICKERDICK: A monumental talent. Was the beginning of the end for cats like me. Right away the songwriter was the singer, the performer. Seismic shift.

PLAYBOY: Did you perform?

SICKERDICK: Never. Too scared.

PLAYBOY: Of what?

SICKERDICK: Booing.

PLAYBOY: But surely if the Carole Kings were no longer writing songs for other people then there would be more opportunities for guys like you?

SICKERDICK: You'd think so but people weren't as interested in hearing songs from singers like Sinatra.

PLAYBOY: You had a close call with him.

SICKERDICK: Close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades.

PLAYBOY: What's that?

SICKERDICK: You want to meet Cady? That's how she gets my attention. She smacks her head on the porthole. Hang on, she's hungry. She's also a bit of a mottled mess. Don't touch her. She'll rip you open. Cady's a

blow-top. She breaks into people's homes, destroys everything, tears wallpaper down, smashes dishes, shreds curtains, attacks dogs and people but never me. And I've never seen her so much as hiss at another cat. Imagine that.

PLAYBOY: I take it she's not your cat.

SICKERDICK: No, she's been coming to see me for a few years now. Don't know where she goes when she's not here. I'm the one who named her. I thought she was a feral tomcat so I gave her a man's name, Max Cady.

PLAYBOY: *Cape Fear.*

SICKERDICK: Well done. Robert Mitchum. It got shortened to Cady once someone else saw that she didn't have balls. The neighbours have been trying to trap her since she started causing trouble. One neighbour, Crandal Cobb, even shot a gun at her. They finally brought in a professional, an animal control officer. You'd think he was hunting Moby Dick. He finally did trap her. Broke my heart. He knew his business, this guy, and he said Cady was the meanest cat he'd ever seen. He drove her away in his truck and that was that. She was going to be executed. I was told they stick a needle in their heart. About two weeks later there's a smashing on the porthole glass just like you heard and guess who's back? I just about did back flips. I had no idea how she escaped and I don't know how she found her

way back here. I looked on the map and the place where they take the strays is about ten miles away. Ten miles! How did she do it? She's in a locked trap inside a truck with no windows. Houdini.

PLAYBOY: You're sure it was the same cat?

SICKERDICK: There's only one Cady. Think about it for a second. How did she know what streets to go down to get back here? Why did she come back here? Which direction did she go? I'm telling you right now, when she came back, when I saw her in the porthole and opened the door for her and she ran inside, I was a wreck, a sobbing blubbering wreck. It's hard to describe what was going on. I know she's a stray and makes troubles for people but she came back. To me. I'm listening to myself beating my chops and I sound like a crazy, old man but bear with me. It was as close to a miracle as I've seen, okay? Nobody can tell me how she got herself out of a cage at the animal shelter, maybe when they were moving her from the trap to the cage she made a break for it, I don't know. But she was on death row and she escaped. It told me that something special had happened. I'll be honest. I wasn't feeling too sharp at the time. It wasn't pavement-rash low but it was tricky. She got my lamp lit. That's pretty good.

PLAYBOY: You said it would be okay if I asked about the letter you got on Saturday.

SICKERDICK: It wasn't a letter. It was a small newspaper article. In a pale-green envelope. No return address. No date. I read the first paragraph and I realise, Christ almighty, that's my son.

PLAYBOY: What did he do?

SICKERDICK: He saved a swan that's what he did. There were two drunken teenagers and they had set upon a Whooper Swan and her seven eggs. They were going to kill her with a tennis racquet and smash the eggs. My son was on his way home from work and he saw these two chumps and what they were doing and he punched their lights out. Pow. Right in the kisser. He's a hero. It's a strange feeling.

PLAYBOY: What is?

SICKERDICK: Pride. I haven't seen that boy since he was four. He's a grown man now. I felt proud as hell reading about this. You don't know if it's genes or maybe the ex-wife raised him right. Either way it's a hell of a thing.

PLAYBOY: Do you think he mailed it to you?

SICKERDICK: It's possible. Or maybe my ex-wife did it to show me that he turned out okay. But why now? I don't think it was any of her relatives. They hate my guts.

PLAYBOY: Why is that?

SICKERDICK: C'mon, you do the math, Oppenheimer.  
Hartley Sickerdick dumped his son and his wife because they were interfering with his songwriting.

PLAYBOY: I wouldn't hazard a guess as to what the reasons were.

SICKERDICK: It wasn't that.

PLAYBOY: What was it?

SICKERDICK: Not now.

PLAYBOY: Do you have any pictures of him?

SICKERDICK: They're in the garage. In boxes. I know that sounds cold but I can't look at them. He had long hair. He looked good with that hair. I think there was a photo in that article but someone clipped it out. I do wonder what he looks like. It's all a bit overwhelming. Okay?

PLAYBOY: We can do this another time.

SICKERDICK: I think that's right.



*Rolling Stone*

"Swinging for the Moon: An Unexpected Rendezvous With  
Brilliance"

(Part One)

ROLLING STONE: How is it out there?

HARTLEY SICKERDICK: Strange.

RS: We should explain. You've just been out on the  
roof of your building.

SICKERDICK: It was pouring rain all afternoon and  
now a fog has rolled in. It's as thick as peanut  
butter, which is another way of saying you can't see  
twenty feet in front of you. Never seen anything like  
it. Maybe, sometimes, out in Santa Monica or Venice,  
early morning, but not here, not this far from the  
ocean. And never this late in the afternoon. Can't even  
see across the alley.

RS: Is this an alley or a street?

SICKERDICK: The city calls it a street but it feels  
like an alley. Right now it looks like an eerie London  
mews at the time of Jack the Ripper. Boo.

RS: You were playing us a song before you went out  
to look at the fog.

SICKERDICK: *Wichita Lineman*. Jimmy Webb. One of the ten most-perfect songs ever recorded. According to one list.

RS: What list?

SICKERDICK: I don't know. A music magazine. And I don't remember which one so don't ask. It was a good magazine because I don't waste time with crap. More important, in my head, it's one of the ten most-perfect songs ever recorded. I happen to agree with the fact that it was on this list that a reputable music magazine put out. Is that okay with you?

RS: I'm not being combative. I'm just not a big fan of those lists. It's one thing to say that you have ten favourites but it gets muddled when the word perfection gets thrown in.

SICKERDICK: It's a great song.

RS: I'm not saying it's not.

SICKERDICK: It's informed opinion, okay?

RS: Okay.

SICKERDICK: A respectable board of music critics says that *Wichita Lineman* is one of the ten most-perfect songs ever recorded and I happen to agree with them. You don't have to agree with me. I'd be insulted if you did. It would tell me that *Rolling Stone* sent over some harvey that doesn't think for himself. I'm telling you where I'm coming from. *Wichita Lineman* is a

great, fucking song, excuse my French. It's one of the gold-standard tunes. No discussion, no debate, end of story. I judge my own songs against a song like that, which is why I haven't pitched a song in awhile.

RS: How long is 'awhile'?

SICKERDICK: Well, guess what? I'm not going to tell you. So there you go. All I'm saying Woodward and Bernstein is that a song like that sets the bar ---- up here, up high.

RS: Too high?

SICKERDICK: I'm swinging for the moon, pal. Why put out some mediocre, half-baked, nothing burger? The world's full of that and needs something more, something better. You gotta believe, absolutely one-hundred percent, no hesitation, no compromise, no nothing, you have to believe that you have it in you, you have that song in you that's going to be played on a million car radios and that the people listening to your song, driving around with tears in their eyes, are going to be moved to places they've never been before.

RS: In the meantime what's wrong with a few nothing burgers if they pay the bills?

SICKERDICK: I don't need the money.

RS: You have some old albums on your walls.

SICKERDICK: They're not that old.

RS: They're not new.

SICKERDICK: I'm proud of those albums but there's only one song of mine on each of them and the albums didn't sell very well and they're not singles. Have you heard of those singers?

RS: One of them.

SICKERDICK: That's because you're a professional. You did your research. You know your history. Not many people have heard of them. That's one of the reasons I've been so patient about getting one of my songs recorded by someone like Frank Sinatra, Glen Campbell or Tony Bennett.

RS: Frank's dead. Glen's got Alzheimer's and you better hurry up with Tony Bennett.

SICKERDICK: I'm telling you what the dream was and what I had been hoping for. You don't need to tell me things I already know. It makes you sound like a fool. Like telling a smoker that cigarettes are bad for them or telling a child to look both ways before crossing the road. You're better than that. I'm not completely oblivious about what gets played on the radio. There's great songs out there. And they get your heart pounding so that's all you want. Someone that can take your song and blow the salty out of people's minds.

RS: And you have one.

SICKERDICK: I have half of one.

RS: Which half?

SICKERDICK: The lyrics. I've had them sneak up on me before but these ones came out after my nap this afternoon, came on like explosive diarrhoea. Or a sneeze. Ejaculation. I had no control over them.

RS: You've had a strained relationship with lyrics over the years.

SICKERDICK: That's kind of you. Yes, they were either guts in your face, stinking and steaming or so distant you'd need a NASA telescope orbiting out in the twinklers to look for signs of life. There was rarely in-between. The melodies have always come easy. The lyrics, not so much.

RS: Tell us about that process.

SICKERDICK: No, it's boring and self-indulgent.

RS: Not to everyone.

SICKERDICK: Look, I like a good interview. I'm as curious as anyone about gossip. Tell me some stories I haven't heard about Lee Marvin and I'm all rabbit ears, which is to say I'm interested. But asking a songwriter what time of day he or she writes? Or what he or she gets inspired by? Or the joys of having a baby in a swimming pool? I don't care. I just want the song. I don't know where lyrics and melody come from. All I know is that when the two come together, when they really come together and they soar, you get something that books and movies and paintings and sculptures and

puppet shows can't touch. It's a vibration, a tremor that starts in the neck and blooms, sometimes explodes out the top of your head. It's sorcery. It's magic.

RS: How often have you had that feeling?

SICKERDICK: Many times. There are so many great songs out there.

RS: How many times have you had that feeling from a song you have written?

SICKERDICK: Never.

RS: I'm surprised.

SICKERDICK: I'm just being honest.

RS: You must have had that feeling with the song that Frank Sinatra almost recorded.

SICKERDICK: You guys keep asking about that.

RS: It's not every day you almost get a song recorded by Sinatra.

SICKERDICK: Look, I blew it. I was young and stupid.

RS: What happened?

SICKERDICK: My manager called me.

RS: When was this?

SICKERDICK: A long time ago. It's so old it's a fairy tale. Sinatra was recording a new album and one of the studio musicians called my manager, they were good friends, and the studio guy said that Frank wasn't happy with two of the songs and did my manager have

anything. At that time my manager thought I had good stuff. So he picked me up and took me to the studio. Waltzed in. That's not how you do things. You send your cassettes around town and hope for the best. You don't blow into a studio with a new song, especially Frank Sinatra's studio but that's how it happened. I had a good manager. I had good stuff. Met Frank.

RS: What was that like?

SICKERDICK: What do you think? I was a punk from Nebraska. I played the song on a piano.

RS: Were you nervous?

SICKERDICK: I was on the other side of nervous. I don't know what that place is called. Maybe it's the place you reside when you're hours from your execution. I blasted through the song. My singing was never too sharp but everyone got the drift. It was a good song. Frank liked it so that's all that mattered. The bass player suggested changing the second bridge ever so slightly. It was the smallest of small adjustments. A tweak. A nothing. Frank liked the change. I told Frank that the bridge would stay just the way it was. The way I wrote it. A couple of cats, the musicians there, thought I was joking. There were a few laughs. I thought they were laughing at me. So I told everyone, again, that the bridge, I think I said, the fucking bridge, was just right and the bridge the bass player

was suggesting was off the wall. I think I also said something about, take it or leave it.

You know, Sinatra had a tough reputation, from stuff you read, and if you had ever talked to my old neighbour, Phil Stern, he would have told you some great Sinatra stories.

RS: Who's Phil Stern?

SICKERDICK: He was a photographer. Took that famous shot of James Dean with his sweater pulled up over his face. He shot all the big wheels. Brando. John Wayne. Bogart. Sinatra. He lived right across from me. He was friends with Sinatra. I call him Sinatra, Phil called him Frank because he could. Phil always said if you talked straight to Sinatra he'd listen. He didn't want cats fawning all over him but he also didn't want cats acting chesty just because they had something to prove. Well, I got chesty. But that wasn't the worst part of the night.

Sinatra actually tried to rescue me from myself. He said, "Look, pal, we're all in this together. Let's talk it through and see where we land." And you know what I said? No dice. No dice. You could have heard a pin drop, which is to say it got real quiet. And then everyone in the studio went back to work like I didn't exist anymore. And I didn't. My manager pushed me out the door and into an alley. I was still barking about



why my bridge was better. He walked away and never spoke to me again.

RS: What a disaster.

SICKERDICK: Unmitigated. Hindenburg. Esque.

RS: There's something about that story that doesn't ring true.

SICKERDICK: I beg your pardon?

RS: It just seems strange that Frank Sinatra would be recording an album and then decides in the middle of recording that album that he doesn't like two of the songs. Surely a lot of effort and time have gone into the songs selected for the album and people other than Frank Sinatra, like people from the record company, would have been involved in that selection process.

SICKERDICK: If Sinatra decides he's not happy with the way a song is going he won't sing it, won't record it. What's suspicious about that?

RS: I don't know. It doesn't feel right.

SICKERDICK: You want witnesses?

RS: No, it's not that important.

SICKERDICK: I'd say it's critically important if I'm telling you stories about my past and you're sitting there thinking I'm full of shit.

RS: It also doesn't make any sense that you, a struggling songwriter, would sabotage yourself so

badly, that you would fight for a bridge and destroy your chance.

SICKERDICK: I didn't like the change made to my song. It felt arbitrary and senseless. Who knows, maybe I thought Sinatra would respect me for standing up for myself, standing up for my song.

RS: Okay, let's just assume it's true. What a wasted opportunity.

SICKERDICK: Not wasted. Destroyed. My own hands. Crushed.

RS: What happened after that?

SICKERDICK: Right now I'm excited about these lyrics I just wrote.

RS: You told me that minutes after you wrote them you knew you just had an unexpected rendezvous with brilliance.

SICKERDICK: That's right. I don't know what happened. Maybe it was the pouring rain that came just before the fog rolled in. I wrote them out on this legal pad with a pencil. I didn't feel like I was in control. They weren't my words. It wasn't my mind. It was all over in about five minutes. And the rain stopped when I finished writing. That was a strange coincidence. Christ, I've spent weeks on lyrics for a song and they still didn't sound right. These are almost perfect.

RS: Can you give us a hint as to what the song is about?

SICKERDICK: It's about a letter. A letter from a father to a son, a son he hasn't seen in forever. But don't ask any more questions about it because I'm not answering them. It's bad luck and it makes me look like a fool, an amateur. It's not a song yet. The lyrics are done. But lyrics without a melody, well, that would be a poem and I'm no poet.

RS: So now all you need to do is find the right musical notes for your lyrics. That should be easy. You are, after all, a melody man.

SICKERDICK: Having a bumper run on the local news does not make me a melody man.

RS: You might need to explain what that is.

SICKERDICK: A melody man?

RS: A bumper.

SICKERDICK: It's a musical composition.

RS: What kind of composition?

SICKERDICK: A short one.

RS: How short?

SICKERDICK: Six seconds.

RS: That's short.

SICKERDICK: It's a bumper. Like the front end and back end of a car. They run it going into a commercial break and coming out of a commercial break. They bought

it years ago but they must like it because they still run it. When it plays I sometimes think about the fact that hundreds of thousands of people are hearing my music, something I wrote in this very room, they are hearing my music but they don't know who I am or anything about me.

I keep an eye out for other people who work behind the scenes. There's a mechanic's garage up on Melrose and out front they have a small advertisement for an oil change that swings back and forth in the wind. There's a photo of a man, a handsome, happy man, and he looks genuinely pleased as he holds up a clean oil filter.

I sometimes think of that man. He was probably a model. Maybe he still is a model although I think the ad is pretty old so who knows what he's working at these days. But there he is, smiling, captured in that moment when he held up that oil filter. Maybe he's dead. But maybe he's alive and walking around somewhere or sitting on something. I have this fantasy where I touch the advertisement and instead of his picture I see where he is and what he's doing, right at that moment. Maybe even talk to him. I think it's good that I can think of him like this, like a human being, not some guy holding an oil filter, and he's moving through life, sad, happy, crazy, scared, fascinated, disgusted,

in love, teetering, tired, yes, captured in that one moment with his oil filter but I think of him in the present moment and wonder what the hell he's up to.

RS: I read your *Playboy* interview and in that interview you talked about getting a newspaper article in the mail.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: And the article was about your son.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: How your son saved a swan from certain death.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: And how proud you felt. And I'm assuming sad. You haven't seen him since he was four. And now he's a grown man.

SICKERDICK: That's right. And I don't want to say anymore.

RS: Is your new song inspired by your son, written for your son?

SICKERDICK: Guilty on both counts.

RS: Will you now get in touch with him? You could send him a letter instead of writing a song about sending a letter. Or call him. It wouldn't be hard to find him. You have this newspaper article so you could begin looking.

SICKERDICK: I'm going to write the song first. That is my letter.

RS: And then send it to him?

SICKERDICK: I'd like him to hear it on the radio.

And then see him.

RS: What if it doesn't end up on the radio?

SICKERDICK: We're not there yet.

RS: You have this son.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: The last time you saw him he was four years old. Somebody, maybe your son, has sent you a newspaper article with him in it, him as a grown man. Clearly this was and remains an attempt to bring the two of you together, regardless of who sent it.

SICKERDICK: I don't disagree with any of that.

RS: Was there a return address on the envelope?

SICKERDICK: No.

RS: Was the name of the newspaper in the article?

SICKERDICK: No.

RS: But you would have enough information from the article to find out where he is.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: Just google him.

SICKERDICK: I do not need the newspaper article to find out his name.

RS: Of course not.

SICKERDICK: And I do not have a computer so I cannot google anything.

RS: You don't have a computer?

SICKERDICK: I used to have a Mac Classic 2. Do you remember AOL chat rooms?

RS: No.

SICKERDICK: I had heard from reliable sources that AOL was a good place to meet ladies. They had these chat rooms. I think they were themed, I don't remember. I watched the chats but I didn't participate. Just watched everyone talking to each other, trying to hook up, some for quick sex and some for something more. Then I found out about the private rooms. I thought this was more up my alley. I never did like public performances. So I set up a private room. And I waited. And waited. Two hours with my trousers bunched up around my ankles. And nobody came to my private room.

RS: Oh dear.

SICKERDICK: I didn't realise until I mentioned my solitude to a trusted neighbour that you set up a private room *after* you've met someone in a public chat room and then the two of you go to the private room that you created. You both have to be in on it. I created a private room that nobody else knew about. But me. I would have sat there for eternity.

RS: Is that why you don't have a computer?

SICKERDICK: No. My Mac crashed and burned. And I lost fifty-two songs.

RS: You didn't back your files up?

SICKERDICK: Nobody told me. I love my typewriter. An Olivetti MS25 Premier Plus. There was an old shop downtown that used to sell ribbons and when they were going out of business I bought up all that they had. When I run out of ribbons I'll stop writing.

RS: They are saying it might have been a terrorist attack.

SICKERDICK: Who? What? Where?

RS: The golf course shooting.

SICKERDICK: We are transitioning from your questions about my son, my song.

RS: I'm taking the wheel.

SICKERDICK: I'll fasten my seatbelt.

RS: There's over thirty dead.

SICKERDICK: Golfers.

RS: Yes.

SICKERDICK: After Sandy Hook I just can't summon the empathy. Or outrage. Those dead children.

RS: Golfers are people too.

SICKERDICK: They're hoping it was a terrorist attack. They'll call it the Columbus Day Massacre. L.A. wants to be just like New York, Madrid, London. Relevant.

RS: Los Angeles is a big city. It's not like nothing happens here.



SICKERDICK: It's not enough to be a big city. People want to feel that the city's worthy of a terrorist attack. They still have concrete bunkers outside the studios. What credible terrorist cell would target Universal Studios? They wish they were that important. Delusions of grandeur, my friend.

RS: Terrorists don't like Hollywood movies and they don't like Jews. If they can attack a golf course they can attack a movie studio.

SICKERDICK: Listen, pal, only a lunatic, a pathetic lone nut would attack a golf course.

RS: Lone nuts get caught at the scene or commit suicide. Whoever did this is still at large.

SICKERDICK: A terrorist wouldn't look twice at a golf course.

RS: What about India? They attacked a hotel. How do you know they wouldn't do the same to a private golf course?

SICKERDICK: It's not a smart target. It doesn't cause the intended fear, chaos and disruption. An airport. A subway. A train station. Buses. Even a hotel. Transportation and hospitality targets. A golf course? That not on anyone's list. What's going to happen? People stop golfing for a few weeks. Who cares. These guys are fanatics. Doesn't make them stupid.

Two days after New York got hit there was a terror alert at Hollywood and Vine inside the Metro station. Yes, Virginia, we do have subway service in Los Angeles. A chemical attack they said, in the same breathless tones they're using, saying this golf course shooting was a terrorist attack. All the police, fire trucks, ambulances, city blocks shut down in every direction, television news going crazy, people in a panic. You can look it up. It happened. There was an interview with the fire chief who was trying to explain to this wide-eyed reporter that the chemical attack might have been a natural event, a gas emission that originated from a human being. I saw all this live. The chief was trying to be discreet but the reporter wasn't getting his drift. He didn't want to come out and say that someone had probably farted on the train platform, that people nearby, people who were already rattled because of 9/11, smelled the fart and panicked. I would have loved to have been that guy.

RS: What guy?

SICKERDICK: The guy who farted on the platform. The guy who brought Hollywood and Vine to its knees. All from a fart. Now that's a story to tell your grandkids.

*Rolling Stone*

(Part Two)

RS: We had a short break while you answered your phone and you have a significant development.

SICKERDICK: Yes, well, I have a dinner to attend shortly so I can't do much more. I'm a little rattled, as they say. It seems my neighbour, he's right across the street from here, had a visit from the police. They found his gun at the golf course.

RS: What? From the shooting?

SICKERDICK: Apparently it was left behind so it's not like it was hidden or anything. Or maybe it was hidden and they found it. They assume it was the murder weapon. A machine gun. And it turns out it used to be Crandal's gun.

RS: Wait a second. The massacre was, what, six hours ago?

SICKERDICK: Well, now they have their murder weapon. My heart's a pounding.

RS: The police said that? It was the murder weapon?

SICKERDICK: No. They asked Crandal about the gun. They just left. An hour ago. Crandal put two and two together. He was shaking.

RS: Crandal.

SICKERDICK: Crandal Cobb. He's been here for years. From Idaho originally. I'm the only guy on the alley who doesn't hate him.

RS: I'm still catching up here. Crandal says that his gun was found at the golf course?

SICKERDICK: The police didn't tell him that but he's not an idiot.

RS: This all seems ridiculously fast. Something's not adding up.

SICKERDICK: Why? The golfers were killed around eleven this morning. They found the gun at the golf course. Probably found it by two o'clock. It has a serial number, right? How long does that take to check on a computer? Twenty seconds? Registered owner. Here's his address. Knock, knock. Hello, Crandal. Can you tell us about your gun?

RS: Are the police still there?

SICKERDICK: Not when I went over.

RS: He's making this up.

SICKERDICK: Who?

RS: Crandal.

SICKERDICK: Why would you think that?

RS: They find the gun used to kill over thirty golfers, they go see the owner of the gun? And then they just leave?

SICKERDICK: The gun was stolen.

RS: Oh.

SICKERDICK: New Year's Eve. Nine months ago. I have saved Crandal's ass.

RS: How?

SICKERDICK: His house got broken into.

RS: Last New Year's?

SICKERDICK: That's right. Crandal's a gambler. I probably shouldn't say that. But he is. A good gambler. So there's that. He makes good money. Not all the time. But most of the time. He'd been away at the casino that night, came home and saw a broken window. He had guns. Three handguns and his big prize, his machine gun. A heckler something. With a silencer. And lots of ammunition for the machine gun.

RS: A Heckler & Koch?

SICKERDICK: That's right.

RS: Is that it?

SICKERDICK: What's that?

RS: I'm googling.

SICKERDICK: I don't know. I never saw it.

RS: Heckler & Koch MP5 SD1. It's a German manufactured submachine gun. Not a machine gun.

SICKERDICK: There you go.

RS: You can get it with an integrated sound suppressor, which, I think, is the SD part.

SICKERDICK: That's probably what he had. He paid a bundle. Bought it in Idaho. Something like fifteen thousand dollars is what he told me, if I remember right.

RS: Sound dampened. They're not called silencers. That's for the movies. It's a sound dampener.

SICKERDICK: Good weapon for a massacre.

RS: Weapon of choice for the British and Australian Special Air Services.

SICKERDICK: Is that an airline?

RS: Military. Lots of other military and law enforcement agencies use it. It uses a thirty-round magazine, it's easy to handle, uses nine-millimetre ammunition. The British SAS used it when they stormed the Iranian embassy back in 1980.

SICKERDICK: I remember that. Didn't the Iranians shoot a cop standing outside the embassy? Killed her?

RS: I don't know. It was the weapon of choice for Crown Prince Diprenda when he massacred the royal family during a shooting spree in 2001. So how did you save Crandal's ass?

SICKERDICK: Crandal had bought the machine gun in Idaho.

RS: Submachine gun.

SICKERDICK: Paid fifteen grand.

RS: You said that.

SICKERDICK: The gun and the silencer.

RS: Suppressor, dampener.

SICKERDICK: These are illegal things in California. Big trouble. Crandal didn't know his Heckler gun was illegal until after he moved here. I know he had a membership at the Beverly Hills Gun Club and he kept his guns there but he got kicked out, had his membership revoked.

RS: Why?

SICKERDICK: Crandal said they accused him of shooting at other people's targets.

RS: How many guns?

SICKERDICK: The Heckler gun and three handguns. The handguns were legal. And the magazine rounds for the Heckler. Those were also not legal.

RS: And the sound dampener.

SICKERDICK: Also not legal. So it's New Year's Day.

RS: This past New Year's?

SICKERDICK: Nine months ago. Yes. And I'm talking to Crandal about his house being broken into. I hadn't heard anything. It was New Year's Eve so there was kids setting off fireworks and stuff. And he starts telling me about his Heckler gun.

RS: This is the next morning.

SICKERDICK: Yes. Well, next day. It might have been afternoon by that point. The police had already been by

and took a report about the burglary. And Crandal's telling me all this. You know he moves his body when he talks like he's got bugs crawling all over him. He's always twitching and moving his hands around. And he's doing all that, carrying on and he tells about the Heckler gun. And I told him, I put a finger in his face. I told him, "You better call the police right now and tell them about the machine gun."

I told him, "You got four guns out in circulation right now, out there in the public." He said that he reported the three handguns. But not the Heckler gun. I told him back then that whoever stole those guns was going to use them for something bad and when they did he would get roasted. He was scared. He was talking about felony charges about the Heckler. Maybe three felonies. Bringing the Heckler into California, being in possession of the Heckler and the sound dampener and the ammunition too. Thirty years in prison. \$250,000 fines. For each felony. That's almost a million dollars. And you know what he did?

RS: What?

SICKERDICK: He got his lawyer involved. And he told the police about the Heckler. He was able to get his possession charges reduced to a misdemeanour and he paid a ten-thousand-dollar fine. He wasn't happy about that. He lost his fifteen-thousand-dollar gun and had



to pay another ten thousand dollars as a penalty.  
Twenty-five thousand dollars. For nothing.

RS: You did save his ass.

SICKERDICK: You're damn right I did.

RS: If he hadn't reported that gun as stolen to the police and they find that gun after thirty-six people have been killed with that gun.

SICKERDICK: It's thirty-six now?

RS: Just confirmed. The last two guys just died in hospital.

SICKERDICK: Jesus.

RS: Crandal Cobb's gun. No report of it being stolen. It gets used in this massacre. Forget thirty years. He'd be doing more time than that. Thirty-six dead people. Shot to death with his gun. They might have thought he did it.

SICKERDICK: Hasn't been his gun for nine months.

RS: No, exactly. But if he hadn't reported it he would be screwed. They wouldn't have knocked on his door. They would have swooped in with guns drawn.

SICKERDICK: He's still not out of the woods yet.

RS: How so?

SICKERDICK: He brought a submachine gun into California illegally. The gun was stolen and used in the massacre. Once that gets in the press he'll get

burned. They haven't caught the lunatic who shot the golfers. He'll get blamed for part of this.

RS: As well he should. He should never have bought a weapon like that in the first place, let alone bring it into California from Idaho.

SICKERDICK: The gun was legal in Idaho so I don't have a problem with that. And it's not like they just handed it to him. He had to jump through a bunch of hoops to get it. Special gun dealer. Get approval from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Background check, make sure he wasn't crazy. Fingerprints. The whole shebang. Had to get a signature from his local sheriff on his application. And even then he had to wait months to get it.

RS: Why would anyone ever need a submachine gun?

SICKERDICK: I don't need one. I've never a gun. But if he wanted to shoot watermelons I don't care.

RS: It's just such a dangerous weapon to fall into the wrong hands.

SICKERDICK: Which it has. The sound dampener explains how thirty-six golfers died.

RS: How so?

SICKERDICK: It was bothering me that you have this big area on a golf course and you're hearing gunshots and not running away or hiding. You can't be that stupid. I could see some of the golfers getting killed

but now it makes sense. They didn't run because they didn't hear anything.

RS: Do you remember New Year's Eve? You'll probably be asked by the police. You have a great vantage point to see Crandal's house from your tower up here.

SICKERDICK: There was fireworks in the alley. Mostly kids setting them off. If I'd seen anything suspicious I would have told Crandal back then.

RS: This might be a good time to bring up Crandal's young men.

SICKERDICK: Now why the hell would you do that?

RS: You have discussed it previously.

SICKERDICK: Off the record, pal. You can ask me any questions you like but the last thing I'll do is smear a neighbour.

RS: No inference whatsoever that homosexuality is bad. Do you feel that way?

SICKERDICK: You're up to some tricks here.

RS: Not at all.

SICKERDICK: You're twisting things to make it look like I got something against homosexuals. That is cheap. And that is shabby. I've said in the past that I wasn't crazy about the fact that a perfectly good word, gay, was taken away and now you can't use it with its original meaning. I'm gay. What a gay party. I had a gay time. I feel so gay. You can't say that anymore.

RS: Well, you can.

SICKERDICK: Not if you're talking about happy you can't. But that's old, old news. No nothing from me about homosexuality. I had a fourth grade teacher talk about little boys getting erections during bowel movements.

RS: Why would he do that?

SICKERDICK: I don't remember.

RS: You have mentioned previously, on more than one occasion, that Crandal has had many young men staying at his house.

SICKERDICK: Again, off the record. So what?

RS: Not just any young men.

SICKERDICK: What's your point?

RS: These were troubled young men. Drug addicts or recovering drug addicts. Usually homeless. Neighbours have complained about it. They still complain about it. They've caused trouble. They still cause trouble. In fact there were rumours that drugs were being sold from Crandal's house.

SICKERDICK: Never said Crandal sold drugs.

RS: No, when Crandal's been away at the casino. These young guys sold drugs. Fights in the alley. Cars broken into. Is it possible that one of these young guys broke into Crandal's house on New Year's Eve,

stole his guns and used the Heckler and Koch to kill those golfers or sold it to someone who did?

SICKERDICK: That's possible. But what the hell? Why bring up Crandal's sexual side?

RS: Has Crandal come out?

SICKERDICK: I don't know. Maybe he's out. I don't care. I've never discussed it with him.

RS: Because it's going to come out. This isn't about his house being broken into on New Year's Eve. It's about the weapon. His weapon. The weapon used to kill all those golfers. It's a big deal, Hartley. They'll look at everyone, anyone who might have broken into his house.

SICKERDICK: Who's they?

RS: The police. Then leaks. The media. And those young friends of his will be looked at and everyone will know Crandal had these questionable young men living with him. For a gay guy who's out it wouldn't matter but for Crandal it could matter a lot. You might want to warn him. If he's a closeted gay man and has a bad reaction to being publically confirmed as a gay man it could get ugly for him.

SICKERDICK: He's not stupid. He'll figure it out. They'll catch the lunatic tonight and it won't matter.

RS: They haven't caught him yet. Or them. Could have been more than one person. The city's on a knife's edge. There could be more killings to come.

SICKERDICK: Why sensationalise it? More killings to come. You don't know that.

RS: We don't know anything. It's like earthquakes. You get a big one and you don't know if that was the big one, the only one, or a pre-quake for a much bigger shake.

SICKERDICK: It's still really foggy out there. I can barely see Crandal's house.

RS: When's the last time there was a mass murder where the culprit escaped?

SICKERDICK: I'm sure it's happened.

RS: I can't think of a single time. This has to be a terrorist attack. And if it wasn't there's still a homicidal maniac out there who has a connection to one of your neighbours. That doesn't make you nervous?

SICKERDICK: A gun got stolen. It might have changed hands five times before ending up with whoever shot the golfers.

RS: How well do you know Crandal Cobb?

SICKERDICK: As well as you can know a neighbour. Kinda well. Not well at all. What's your point?

RS: Your own tenants are scared of him.

SICKERDICK: Some of my tenants have had concerns about him. I'll admit that much.

RS: You have a neighbour. Mrs. Whipple. She lives next door to Crandal Cobb.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: She had a cat. Winston.

SICKERDICK: Correct.

RS: Winston was an outdoor cat.

SICKERDICK: All Mrs. Whipple's cats have been outdoor cats. They visit here from time to time.

RS: Winston used to go into Crandal Cobb's backyard from time to time.

SICKERDICK: That's what I understand.

RS: He doesn't like cats. And he especially doesn't like cats pooping in his yard.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: He had told Mrs. Whipple he didn't like her cat in his yard.

SICKERDICK: Winston.

RS: And he warned her that if any of her cats came into his backyard one more time he was not going to be responsible for what happened.

SICKERDICK: That's what Mrs. Whipple said. Crandal denied threatening the cats.

RS: What happened to Winston?

SICKERDICK: He was poisoned. Probably rat poison.  
Mrs. Whipple held him as he died in her arms.

RS: Did Crandal Cobb poison Winston?

SICKERDICK: I do not know.

RS: Would it be fair to assume that he probably  
did?

SICKERDICK: He said he didn't.

RS: Who asked him?

SICKERDICK: I did. Mrs. Whipple asked me to ask  
him.

RS: Why didn't Mrs. Whipple ask Crandal Cobb?

SICKERDICK: Because she doesn't like him.

RS: Is she afraid of him?

SICKERDICK: Not sure.

RS: Most people don't poison cats.

SICKERDICK: No.

RS: Most people wouldn't trust someone who poisons  
cats.

SICKERDICK: What are you driving at here?

RS: Most people wouldn't trust someone who buys  
submachine guns. Guns, yes. Handguns, maybe for target  
shooting or personal protection. Guns for hunting. That  
kind of thing. But not a weapon used by elite, killing  
units of the military. There's no reason to own a  
weapon like that except for killing people. There's no



reason to buy a weapon like that unless you're thinking of killing lots of people.

SICKERDICK: I'll admit. It's a strange thing to buy. Would I buy one? No. Why don't you google how many Heckler guns have been bought. Probably hundreds, thousands. How many times has the person who bought that submachine gun, or any submachine gun, used it in a shooting massacre? Probably zero.

RS: Well, I know of one time it's been used. Six hours ago.

SICKERDICK: You're angling to something so just get on with it.

RS: How hard would it have been for Crandal Cobb to make it look like his house was broken into? Pretty easy. Break a window and call the police.

SICKERDICK: Why would he do that?

RS: If he was planning this golf course massacre from last year he would do that.

SICKERDICK: Holy crap. You go from rumours about a guy's sexuality, to rumours of a guy poisoning a cat, to mass murder?

RS: It was his gun.

SICKERDICK: It was stolen.

RS: He said it was stolen.

SICKERDICK: He didn't even report the machine gun was stolen until I told him to. Why would he plan a

massacre, fake a break-in as part of that plan and not report, as stolen, the gun he planned to use in that massacre? Makes no sense. You make no sense.

RS: Bottom line. He did report that submachine gun as stolen. Perhaps you've been used as a layer of corroboration for his claim about his gun being stolen.

SICKERDICK: The police never talked to me.

RS: They didn't then. But they will now.

SICKERDICK: The lunatic will be caught or will commit suicide before any of that happens.

RS: Do you know where Crandal was today between 11:30 a.m. this morning and noon?

SICKERDICK: Enough. Your speculating is making me dizzy. I don't agree with Crandal buying that type of gun, okay? There's no rational reason for a person, a civilian, to have that type of gun. I agree. And not because the person buying it is planning a massacre. You know why? For the one reason that's just happened. Someone stole it and slaughtered a bunch of people with it. Or stole it and sold it to someone who slaughtered a bunch of people with it. Or stole it and had it stolen themselves. We don't know. And you know who probably feels the worst about all of this right now? Crandal. He knows. He knows that if he hadn't brought that gun to our alley there wouldn't have been a massacre. He's got to live with that. He's going to go

to bed tonight with that knowledge in his head. His gun, the gun he held in his hands, killed all those people. He doesn't buy that gun? Those people don't die.

RS: If he didn't do it then he better hope they find the person fast.

SICKERDICK: Why?

RS: Human nature. We need someone to blame. Right now the person who did this is nameless, faceless, unknown, so there's no one to blame. But everyone will soon find out that it was Crandal's gun and he'll get the full brunt of the blame until the culprit is caught. And that's assuming it was one person.

SICKERDICK: He should have had that gun locked up in a safe place, I'll give you that. What I won't give you is a standing ovation for how you tried to connect the dots to implicate Crandal, to make it look like he could be the massacre shooter. You remind me of me at my ten-year high school reunion.

RS: When was that?

SICKERDICK: A long time ago.

RS: What happened?

SICKERDICK: Well, like I said, it was my ten-year reunion in Nebraska and I had been in L.A. for almost all that time.

RS: You came out to be a songwriter?

SICKERDICK: Right out of high school. Took a bus to L.A.

RS: Why songwriting?

SICKERDICK: Radio. Grew up listening to tunes in the car, in my room. That was my great escape. Not TV or books. Songs. Never was much of a singer or performer so I never pursued that. Songwriter felt right then and it feels right now.

RS: Why L.A.? Why not New York? Or Nashville?

SICKERDICK: Los Angeles was closer. Never saw myself as a country music writer or a New York show writer. Nothing wrong with being either but I never listened much to country or show tunes. I was always a bit scared of New York and Nashville seemed boring. And there's something about going west in this country. There's a whole history there. Dreams. Chasing those dreams. You go west.

RS: Do you think people like yourself who come to L.A. have something to prove?

SICKERDICK: What are people like me?

RS: Actors, writers, singers. People who want fame, possibly fortune, maybe some glory.

SICKERDICK: You'd have to ask them.

RS: It should be noted that the building that we're sitting in has apartments and there are bungalows. You own all of these?

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: And you have many tenants.

SICKERDICK: I have four tenants.

RS: And would it be fair to say that most of these tenants, over the years, have been pursuing careers in the entertainment industry?

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: In all your years of observing and interacting with these individuals have you noticed any traits that are similar?

SICKERDICK: Not sure what you're driving at.

RS: This desire for fame, for recognition, must be strong, must be stronger, for instance, stronger than what your high school classmates felt.

SICKERDICK: Maybe.

RS: They didn't come to L.A. to be famous. What makes you different?

SICKERDICK: Courage?

RS: That doesn't sound entirely convincing.

SICKERDICK: What do you want me to say? Stupidity?

RS: You've owned this property for a long time. You've had many, many tenants over that time. Most, as we've already established, have been, and continue to be actors, musicians, writers. Do you ever get the urge to grab them by the shoulders and shake them, perhaps violently, maybe even yell at them, "Go home. Don't

waste your time. You're never going to be famous. You're never going to be rich. You're never going to experience the glory that you fantasise about in your mind."

SICKERDICK: I would never do that.

RS: Why not?

SICKERDICK: Each one of them has as good a shot at success as the next person. Let them dream. Let them try. And if you miss rent by a couple of weeks I won't kick you out.

RS: What you just said could be said about buying lottery tickets.

SICKERDICK: If you're not in it you can't win it.

RS: The odds of having success, even modest success, in music, television, movies, are about the same as hitting it big on a lottery ticket. The difference is this. Buying a lottery ticket is mostly harmless, unless you're spending all of your money on tickets. But for most of us it's something we do once in awhile. People like you, and the tenants you encourage, have moved away from family, from home, from friends, left everything behind in the hopes that they might one day be famous. And here you are in a dead-end alley and it hasn't happened for you. Do you have regrets?

SICKERDICK: It's a false assumption.

RS: What is?

SICKERDICK: That somebody is leaving behind a great situation.

RS: Was your situation that terrible?

SICKERDICK: I'm not looking to drag my mother and father into this.

RS: You were an only child?

SICKERDICK: I was.

RS: Happy? Unhappy?

SICKERDICK: I was happy listening to songs on the radio. I was happy when my mother played her dulcimer and I was sad when she stopped. I was happy when I watched television with my father and he tickled my hand with his finger and I was sad when I was too old for him to do that. I'm happy being a songwriter. I've done okay.

RS: How much money have you made from songwriting?

SICKERDICK: That's not fair.

RS: Would you have been able to better support your son if you had chosen a different career path?

SICKERDICK: You are scraping the bottom of the barrel, pal, and you're starting to piss me off. I was married. My wife, his mother, had a career, a good one. Money was not an issue. Drop it.

RS: I'm just trying to understand what makes you different. The move to Los Angeles. The dreams. You're

not alone. Obviously. There have been hundreds of thousands just like you.

SICKERDICK: I'll say it again. I've done okay with the songwriting. Am I rich? Not even close. Did I make enough every year to live on? Hardly ever. Do I still teach piano to make money? Yes I do. Did my songwriting pay for my house? No it did not. My father left a decent inheritance and I bought this place. Not proud of that fact, wish I had earned it on my own but there it is. Full frontal nudity. I want to make something special. Something that makes someone else, a bunch of someone elses, really happy. I want to give them three to four minutes of something they haven't heard before, something that makes their surroundings shimmer and shine, something that, when it's over, they want to have back, again and again.

RS: But with that shimmer and shine comes fame and probably money.

SICKERDICK: Songwriters don't get famous.

RS: Some do. Jimmy Webb.

SICKERDICK: Jimmy Webb could walk into any diner in L.A. and nobody would notice.

RS: Maybe fame is the wrong word. Recognition. Do you feel like you need to be recognised for what you do?



SICKERDICK: Everybody wants to be recognised. You cook a good meal, it's nice to hear people tell you so. I don't cook for anybody so I wouldn't know how that feels exactly but if I did I'd like to hear some compliments. You're in your car, inching along in traffic, you let a car in, the driver waves, thank you, that's recognition. It feels good.

RS: But there's something about you people.

SICKERDICK: Us people?

RS: Entertainment people. You're not looking for three friends to tell you they love your beef stroganoff, even if they didn't. You're looking for thousands, millions of people to tell you that you are good, maybe great, even amazing. You're different. I don't think you want that recognition. I think you need it.

SICKERDICK: I just want to write a great song.

RS: What comes first? The talent? Or the desire for recognition?

SICKERDICK: That's too deep for me.

RS: I think people like you are damaged. From early childhood. And you seek recognition to soothe that damage. And you pick dreams that are almost impossible to achieve, dreams that require thousands, millions of people, to see or hear what you have done, and then realise you by telling you that you are amazing.

SICKERDICK: You've done it again.

RS: What?

SICKERDICK: Just like when you accused Crandal of killing those golfers, you've accused me of having some childhood trauma that made me choose songwriting so people would like me. You've connected the dots in ways that make no sense to me. And I was trying to tell you about my own experience with bad dot connecting and you've driven us off, like a madman, on this wild ride about fame and trauma. I want the steering wheel back.

RS: It's yours. Ten years in Hollywood.

SICKERDICK: Ten years of sending my songs out, cassettes, dropping them off at record companies, blah, blah, blah. It's the boring, struggling artist crap that nobody should care about. Did a bunch of different jobs, stayed away from music company jobs, worked at the oil field at Baldwin Hills, constructing sets at Warner Bros. studios. Delivered sandwiches. You name it. Had a few songs recorded. Grew a pony tail, wore cowboy boots. Looked like a dickhead. And then I get a letter in the mail telling me about my ten-year high school reunion.

So I'm going back. Kimball. Small. Three thousand people. But it's the highest place in Nebraska. 4,911 feet. Back in the day, Kimball County was at the epicentre of the cold war. Missile capital of the

world. There's still lots of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. That's what my dad did. Missile work.

What I'm trying to tell you is that most of my high school friends stayed put. If not in Kimball, then Nebraska. A few went to Denver. But I was coming back to Kimball from Hollywood. The songwriter. Didn't seem to matter to anyone that my songs weren't famous. They were impressed that I had this dream, had gone away to L.A. and was living that life, the life of a songwriter. I had seen the Doors, Led Zeppelin, in small clubs. There was no end to the stories I was telling them. Famous people I'd seen just walking down the street. They loved all of it.

RS: I read the *Playboy* interview.

SICKERDICK: Can I finish this?

RS: Of course. You talked about your real name.

SICKERDICK: Yes.

RS: Did your old classmates call you Charles Manson?

SICKERDICK: Yes, yes, yes. Told them my new name but they got a kick out of calling me Charles Manson. So the reunion is at our high school. We're all drinking beer in the gymnasium but I end up out in the parking lot smoking a joint with some old buddies. Someone runs out and grabs my arm, "You won an award." An award? Well, okay then. I go back inside the

gymnasium and everyone is looking at me. And there's all these grad committee folks up on the stage. They're all wearing red sashes. Grad committee sashes. And they're waving me over. I didn't know what was going on. So I jog over to the stage and jump up. Because I hadn't been in there I hadn't seen that nobody who was getting awards was jumping up on the stage. The awards were handed down and you just go back and join the crowd. Not a big deal but I'm standing up there and I shouldn't have been. And then Kelly Alexander, known her since third grade. She hands me this Stanley tape measure and speaks into the microphone, telling everyone that of all the people who graduated and have returned that night, I have come the furthest. It's all about achievement. Dreams. Swinging for the moon, baby. A measure of success. I'm humbled and delighted. I hadn't had the big success but for Kimball, I'm a big deal. A kind of big deal. I'm about to lean into the microphone and give my acceptance speech, leaning, I'm inches away, about to start speaking, when, suddenly, Kelly starts announcing the next award winner. So I'm standing up there and I start getting uncomfortable because it's then that I realise that I'm not supposed to be up there. So I whisper to one of the grad committee members, "Am I supposed to be up here?" And she says, "No, but it doesn't matter." Well, I'm

thinking, it does matter so I click-clack in my cowboy boots over to the edge of the stage and slide down and away and join the mob. It was a little bit embarrassing because I had just won this achievement award and it looked like I was getting all chesty about it by jumping up there like I did. And I'm not like that so I feel bad for a moment. The awards keep getting handed out, I'm not really paying much attention and I'm standing with the mob. And Grant Dennison leans in and congratulates me about my award. I'm just about to tell him what I was going to tell the assembled mob using the microphone up on the stage, that dreams are important, that being acknowledged by your former high school classmates means a lot, it shows that they realise that this type of dream, to go off and be a songwriter in Los Angeles, takes some courage and it feels damn good to have that courage rewarded. I'm about to say all of that to Grant but before I can say one word, he says, "It's a good thing Rodney Shapka didn't come back for the reunion or he would have won your award," and he points at the Stanley tape measure in my hand. Confusion sets in. Rodney Shapka, I'm thinking. He's a bus driver. A good guy. An old friend. But he drives a bus. A school bus. I saw him for lunch a couple of times over the years. Who dreams of being a bus driver? Nothing wrong with being a bus driver. We

need bus drivers. But is that the kind of thing you get an award for? This is what I'm thinking. And Dennison can see me confused. "Doesn't Shapka live in Long Beach?" "Yes," I say. "Long Beach is further from Kimball than L.A. He would have come the furthest." Do you know that shot in *Jaws*? The one where Chief Brody sees the Kitner boy get taken by the shark? The one where the camera pulls away while zooming in on Brody? It's completely disorienting and makes you dizzy? That's the shot of me when I realise, standing there at my reunion that my Stanley tape measure is an award for distance travelled. Furthest. I travelled 1,168 miles to attend my high school reunion. I came the furthest.

RS: Well, there is that difference between furthest and farthest.

SICKERDICK: There are still nights when I bolt upright in bed, realizing, on that stage, how close to that microphone I came. So you see, when you connect dots in ways that are not accurate, bad things can happen. I'm late for my dinner with Mrs. Whipple. I'll ask her if she remembers seeing anything suspicious at Crandal Cobb's house on New Year's Eve. Maybe she'll agree with you that Crandal faked his own house break-in and murdered those golfers with his own weapon.

*Ladies Home Journal*

"Dinner with the Queen of the Court:  
An Interview with Hartley Sickerdick"

LADIES HOME JOURNAL: May we call you Hartley?

HARTLEY SICKERDICK: Of course.

LHJ: As you know, Hartley, we made several attempts to speak with Margaret Whipple but she politely declined.

HS: She's a private woman. In fact up until a few years ago I didn't know her first name. She's been Mrs. Whipple since I moved here.

LHJ: When was that?

HS: A long time ago.

LHJ: Was she known as the Queen of the Court back then?

HS: No, I think that's a distinction that comes with age. I was the one who gave her the title. It seemed appropriate given the fact that she is originally from England and has lived the longest on our alley. And our street name of course.

LHJ: Is La Vista Court a street or an alley?

HS: The city calls it a street but it's dirty and dusty like an alley. I used to raise hell with our local council to get a street sweeper to come here and

clean but they said it's too narrow for it to turn around at the far end.

LHJ: The dead end.

HS: That's right. Mack Sennett used to crash his Keystone Kops into a small pond at the end there. The dead end.

LHJ: Such history.

HS: Our court. La Vista Court. We've got four streetlights. Fourteen houses. How do I know? I counted them. Most of them are one-bedroom bungalows. There's one apartment building. Six apartments in there. I think. We're not as wide as a city street and we're not paved with asphalt. That's poured concrete out there. It's all bent and cracked. And like I said, there's a hell of a lot of dust on top. Every time a car drives past the dust swirls everywhere. Mrs. Whipple catches the worst of it. Can't leave her front door open. It's terrible.

If this alley had been built in England it would have had cobblestones and many years ago it would have had gas lamps and horses and buggies and the sound of wooden wheels and lots of fog.

LHJ: You have plenty of fog right now.

HS: I know. It's still thick tonight. What's causing that? Have your heard?

LHJ: It's a unique weather event.



HS: Bottom line. If this was England we would have cobblestones and be called a mews, a quaint, quiet, charming mews. But this is L.A. so I call it an alley. Even though it's not an alley. I just want your readers to know that it's not an alley like they might think it is.

LHJ: We certainly appreciate you taking the time. For those of our readers not familiar with Hartley, he is a songwriter and we understand that you enjoyed some success with a song recently.

HS: It's not quite finished. I have the lyrics written and tonight, after you leave, I'll begin work on the melody.

LHJ: Wonderful.

HS: Enough about me.

LHJ: How old is Mrs. Whipple?

HS: One hundred and two.

LHJ: My god.

HS: She's outlived the Queen Mother, which I think was important to her although she's too modest to admit it. She has her sights set on Princess Alice who lived for 102 years and 276 days. She's getting close. I'm not saying she keeps herself alive so that she can say that she lived longer than any member of the Royal Family but it must help her to get up in the morning. You could have found someone who is older than Mrs.

Whipple, even someone who is older and from England. She hasn't done much with her life so it says a lot about your publication that you chose to do a story on her.

LHJ: She cooked a Thanksgiving dinner.

HS: That's right.

LHJ: It's Columbus Day today and it pains me to even mention that terrible event at the golf course this morning. It is now being called the Columbus Day Massacre.

HS: It's also Thanksgiving Day in Canada.

LHJ: I did not know that.

HS: Neither did I until Mrs. Whipple started ...

LHJ: You don't ever call her Margaret?

HS: Never. Ever. Mrs. Whipple. Always was. Always will be.

LHJ: I'm sorry for interrupting. You said you didn't know Columbus Day was also Thanksgiving Day in Canada.

HS: Second Monday in October. For both. Same day. And I didn't know about the Canadian Thanksgiving until ...

LHJ: Why does Canada have their Thanksgiving so early in the year?

HS: I think Mrs. Whipple said it was the cold weather up there. They celebrate bringing their crops in earlier.

LHJ: It makes more sense to have Thanksgiving in October. It's too close to Christmas at the end of November.

HS: That's what everyone says.

LHJ: No more interruptions. Mrs. Whipple. You. Invited for Thanksgiving dinner. Canadian Thanksgiving dinner.

HS: Thanksgiving dinner to honour her dead husband. Rodney Whipple was a Canadian cinematographer. He never worked on any big pictures but he did a few low-budget movies. I don't think they're even available on video. He was in a helicopter scouting locations in Mexico. His helicopter crashed.

LHJ: That's perfectly terrible.

HS: He didn't die in the helicopter crash. Neither did the pilot. They both walked away with cuts and bruises. The two men celebrated their good fortune that night. Rodney drank forty-five shots of tequila and when he didn't show up for work in the lobby the next morning they went to his room and found him. Dead.

LHJ: Alcohol poisoning?

HS: That would be my guess too. That's a lot of gasoline. Poor Mrs. Whipple. She gets a phone call from

Rodney telling her about his helicopter crash and the very next day she gets a call from some stranger telling her that her husband is dead. Same day as President Kennedy's inauguration. It was supposed to be a day of hope. You ever heard of Phil Stern?

LHJ: Didn't he take the famous photograph of James Dean with a sweater pulled up over his head?

HS: That's probably his best-known photo. He used to live beside Mrs. Whipple. She has a print that Phil gave to her. It's a photograph from the inauguration ball. President Kennedy is leaning forward to have his cigarette lit by Frank Sinatra. You've never seen Sinatra look more nervous or deferential. It's quite something.

LHJ: Do you have any Phil Stern prints?

HS: I never asked for any.

LHJ: Did Mrs. Whipple ask for hers?

HS: She'd say she didn't but I'd guess that she did. Something to remember her husband by. A memorial thing.

LHJ: I thought that this is what her Thanksgiving dinner was supposed to be. A night to remember her deceased husband.

HS: What's your point?

LHJ: Does it bother you that Phil Stern gave prints to your neighbours but never gave one to you?

HS: The gifting of prints can all be explained by circumstance or manipulation. Would I have liked a Phil Stern print? Of course. But I'm not going to get petty and angry with a man who's no longer with us. I have too much respect for what he did. Christ, John Wayne had him over on Christmas morning to take pictures of his kids coming down the stairs. He knew all those cats. Brando, Sinatra. Phil was a legend. People wanted his prints. They still do. We had Michael Jackson show up at our alley to buy prints from Phil. I saw Michael from my roof, get out of his car and go inside Phil's house with his driver, slash, bodyguard. And then Michael left with a bunch of prints and didn't pay so Phil had to get his lawyer to get the prints back.

LHJ: He didn't pay?

HS: No. Phil wasn't sure if he had the money. It was a lot of prints. About thirty thousand dollars.

LHJ: Michael Jackson didn't have the money?

HS: Well, Phil didn't get paid so who knows. He said Michael was nice. A very nice man. He brought one of his kids with him. Seemed like a good dad. According to Phil. Michael liked a picture of Walt Disney that Phil took. He asked Phil if Walt Disney was a racist. Phil said he didn't know. He only met him once, on a five-minute photo shoot. Then he asked Phil, in that voice of his, "Was John Wayne a racist?"

LHJ: You do a good Michael Jackson.

HS: Phil and John Wayne were pretty good friends. Phil used to say they were whores who happened to meet on the same street corner. Phil talked about one night they got filthy drunk in Europe.

LHJ: Who?

HS: Phil and John Wayne. John Wayne called Phil a Molotov-cocktail-throwing Bolshevik and Phil called Wayne a Neanderthal fascist.

LHJ: Did Phil get beat up?

HS: Nah, I don't think so. They were just messing around.

LHJ: Can you imagine? Calling John Wayne a Neanderthal to his face? A fascist?

HS: That was Phil. So anyway. Back to Michael Jackson.

LHJ: Michael Jackson asking Phil Stern if John Wayne was racist.

HS: So Phil says he doesn't know whether or not John Wayne was a racist and says he's not qualified to answer the question. But he tells a story about being with Wayne in Texas while he's shooting a movie there. Phil said that John Wayne lived on steak and ribs.

LHJ: Didn't he having something like seventeen pounds of faecal matter in his body when he died?

HS: Who?

LHJ: John Wayne.

HS: I don't know. Back to Texas. Wayne's in a diner and he gets the best steak and ribs he's ever tasted. Ring-a-ding ribs. Ring-a-sing steak. So he calls out the cook. Cook comes out. A black guy. And Wayne tells him, "Those are the best ribs and steak I've ever tasted."

LHJ: That's a good John Wayne.

HS: So Wayne asks the cook if he wants a new job as his personal chef. Probably make ten times what he was making in the diner. And the guy says, yes, of course.

LHJ: Who's telling this story?

HS: I am. But it's Phil's story. Phil Stern. Michael Jackson asked Phil if John Wayne was a racist.

LHJ: Are we getting there?

HS: It's coming right now.

LHJ: Okay.

HS: So Phil says to Jackson that during one of his conversations with Wayne, John Wayne talks about the cook, his new personal chef, the black guy, and Wayne says this to Phil, "I like him but I don't like them."

LHJ: Who?

HS: This is what John Wayne said about the cook. This is what he told Phil. This is what Phil is telling Michael Jackson. "I like him but I don't like them."

LHJ: Got it.

HS: So Phil tells Jackson just what I told you. And Michael is sitting down, right? And he looks up at Phil with these big, innocent, watery, baby eyes, all confused and he says, "I don't get it."

LHJ: After all that.

HS: There's silence in the room. Now Phil wasn't always the most patient guy with stupid. He got really angry. "What's not to get?" That's what Phil said. He was jumping salty. He'd spent a long time telling that story and he was out of breath.

So Phil turns to the bodyguard, slash, driver, the guy who showed up with Jackson. Phil turns to this guy and he goes, "Do you get it?"

And this poor son of a bitch, hired by Michael to drive him, protect him, he obviously gets it but what's he supposed to say? He can't look sharper than his boss. So the bodyguard mumbles, "I think what John Wayne was saying was that he liked the cook because he cooked good ribs and steak but that he didn't like black people. I like him, the cook who happens to be black, but I don't like them, black people."

The poor guy was looking down the whole time like he was in confessional or something. It was awful. Then finally, Michael Jackson beams, the light goes on, kapow! He gets it. Phil had one picture I would have liked. It's a shot of Humphrey Bogart on a see-saw with



his daughter. Bogart has a huge head in the photograph. It's out of proportion to his body. I read somewhere that lots of movie stars have larger heads. It makes them look bigger on screen. Their heads that is. But that's not why I like the photograph. Phil told me he took the picture in the morning at Bogart's house just before Bogart was leaving for work. He's dressed smart. A jacket and tie. Those guys went to the studio like professionals. They put on a suit and tie and went to work. I like that. It says, "Yes, I may be Humphrey Bogart, the famous actor, but I'm going to get dressed up to go to my job." He could have worn track-suit pants and a torn T-shirt. It's a beautiful moment that Phil captured. Just Bogart and his daughter. He looks so happy.

LHJ: Maybe all you needed to do was ask Phil if you could have had it. If your neighbours have prints why would he deny you?

HS: I don't know why you keep pushing this.

LHJ: You should have had the Bogart print.

HS: Look, it's simple. If I had wanted the print that badly I could have manipulated the situation. I'd been in Phil's house many, many times. All I had to do was stroll on in, talk to him about the Bogart print and he would have pulled it out of a drawer. He would

have told me the story of the photograph, I would have whipped out my check book and asked him, "How much?"

He would have told me, "Twelve hundred dollars." And I guarantee, before my pen hit the paper, he would have said, "Here, just take it."

And voilà. I walk away with my Bogart print. But you know what? I don't like manipulating situations like that. I wanted it to be sincere. I wanted it to be spontaneous. That's a generous gift. No games. No bullshit. Just, "Here, Hartley, I want you to have this." That moment never happened.

LHJ: You were describing the mood on the alley before dinner at Mrs. Whipple's.

HS: The damn fog was still hanging around. And it's getting dark, right? And it started to sink in that the gun they found at the golf course was from here.

LHJ: The golf course shooting?

HS: Yes, the gun was stolen from this alley.

LHJ: That's extraordinary. Tell us more. Whose gun? Do you know?

HS: Yes but I don't want to talk about it. Creates suspicions you know?

LHJ: If someone's gun was stolen then it's not their fault is it?

HS: Maybe. I don't know. It took awhile for me. The murders. Just. Too big. You know? I heard on the radio it's the biggest mass murder in U.S. history.

LHJ: What about that Orlando shooting at the club?

HS: Forty-nine dead. But they classify that as a terror attack.

LHJ: Who does?

HS: The ones who classify. It was probably a hate crime. Closeted homosexual rage.

LHJ: What about the Oklahoma City bombing?

HS: What about it?

LHJ: Dead people. One hundred and sixty-eight.

HS: That was terrorism wasn't it? A political act? Revenge for the attack on that compound in Texas. They burned it down? If you start talking about terrorist attacks then you need to throw in 9/11.

LHJ: You don't think today's golf course massacre was a terrorist attack?

HS: No. I don't. Someone would have taken credit for it by now.

LHJ: I thought ISIS did.

HS: They want to. Not confirmed. Biggest mass murder in U.S. history. Twelve hours ago. Right here, walking distance from this alley.

LHJ: A long walk. There were seventy-seven killed in Norway.

HS: That was terrorism wasn't it?

LHJ: He was insane.

HS: But it was political. I think. If it's political then by definition it would be a terrorist attack.

LHJ: By whose definition?

HS: Mine. So forget about terrorist attacks.

LHJ: In 1990 Julio Gonzalez set fire to the Happy Land social club in the Bronx killing eighty-seven people.

HS: Where you getting this?

LHJ: Off my phone.

HS: Why did he do that?

LHJ: His ex-girlfriend was dancing with someone else. On April 26, 1982, Woo Bum-Kon.

HS: Who?

LHJ: Woo Bum-Kon. A South Korean. In South Korea. He had a fight with his girlfriend, he got drunk and killed fifty-two people. He shot some, stabbed some others, and blew some up with hand grenades. He was a policeman.

HS: I didn't say biggest mass murder in South Korean history.

LHJ: In 1927 Andrew Kehoe blew up a school in Michigan, killing forty-five people. Mostly children. And in 1955 Jack Graham gave his mother a Christmas

present that she took onto an airplane. The box had fourteen pounds of dynamite and a timer. The plane blew up and forty-four people died.

HS: An ex-girlfriend in the Bronx. A girlfriend in South Korea. And the mother in the airplane bombing.

LHJ: And the school bomber, his wife was dying of tuberculosis.

HS: There's women at the heart of all four of those.

LHJ: It's the woman's fault?

HS: Don't put words in my mouth. I didn't say that. These cats went crazy and they had women in their lives that triggered something bad. Crazy men. But all anyone wants to talk about is terrorism.

LHJ: Hard to explain that a husband with a dying wife is so overcome with grief that he decides to kill children.

HS: Who knows what goes on in the minds of crazy people? Nobody. We're just guessing. And I'm not blaming those women. This is how things get taken out of context and create trouble. And you're putting me in trouble. My water's on and it's boiling. You just read a list of these mass murders and it's revealing, to me, that these guys went crazy over women. It's the guys, not the women, even if the guys thought it was about the women. Who sees his girlfriend dancing with someone

else and decides to kill everyone within shouting distance? It's a crazy, messed-up man thing, which makes you wonder how much testosterone plays a role in all this mayhem.

LHJ: Testosterone? Too high?

HS: I wouldn't know personally because my testosterone levels have been dropping for decades. Maybe these guys had low testosterone.

LHJ: I doubt it.

HS: My doctor wanted me on a booster gel, rub it on your shoulders or some damn thing but I teach piano to kids and I heard if they accidentally get the cream on them then it can spark an early puberty. Or worse. I don't need an eight-year-old student with a beard. Especially if it's a girl. I don't think her parents would be too happy with me.

I used to wonder why some women like hairy men. Guys who are hairy have high testosterone, right? And guys who are really hairy are off the charts. And with high testosterone you get consistent erections. So there's something reassuring about a man who is hairy. I'm not worried about low testosterone. It's a good thing. It keeps you safe. And alive. You get less aggressive and are less inclined to get in a fistfight with an eighteen-year-old, a fistfight that might kill you.

Now take Phil Stern. I don't think his testosterone ever dropped. He was always picking fights. We have this guy who comes by the alley sometimes, a cousin of a family that lives in the apartment buildings. He's a gang member. Full stop. A killer. Neck tattoos. Scary. He's parked outside Phil's house and he's got his music loud. It goes on a long time and Phil comes out, puts his mitts on the guy's car, a gold car, and he says, "Turn your fucking music down." The guy yelled at Phil but he turned his fucking music down. That was Phil. No fear. Lots of testosterone. Always doing things I wished I could do.

LHJ: Another airline disaster. On December 7, 1987, David Burke, a disgruntled airline employee, got himself onto a Pacific Southwest Airline flight with a gun, shot the pilots, the plane crashed, and forty-three people died.

HS: So what are you saying?

LHJ: It's not the biggest mass murder.

HS: That's what they said.

LHJ: If you eliminate terrorist attacks and keep the list as personal attacks then the thirty-six at the golf course would rank sixth in the world. Or fifth if you only look at the United States. Not first.

HS: What about guns?

LHJ: What about them?

HS: The man in the Bronx set a fire. The Korean used swords and knives and grenades and also guns. The crazy farmer blew up a school. The Christmas present killer used a bomb and the lunatic airline employee didn't shoot the passengers, they died in the plane crash. What is the record for a mass murder using only a gun to kill all the victims?

LHJ: The U.S. record used to be twenty-three, George Hennard in Texas. Then came Virginia Tech. Thirty-two. And Sandy Hook. Twenty-six. And the previous world record was thirty-five. Martin Bryant in Tasmania in 1996.

HS: So that's it. That's what I heard. The largest mass murder by shooting, not terror-related, in U.S. history. That's what I heard on the radio but I'm not sure about that Orlando shooting. I don't think he was a terrorist. So maybe this golf course caper is second.

LHJ: We're still not at Mrs. Whipple's house.

HS: No. What happened? We have to hurry. It's past midnight and I got a song to finish.

LHJ: You were telling me about the mood on the alley before dinner at Mrs. Whipple's.

HS: It was supernatural. Like a horror movie. The fog hadn't lifted.

LHJ: Still hasn't.



HS: And cold. It was cold stepping outside. And we had just had the final death toll announced on the radio. Thirty-six. All of it happened on the back nine.

LHJ: Of the golf course.

HS: Of the golf course.

LHJ: And the killer hadn't been caught.

HS: Or killers. But you are absolutely correct. We didn't know then and we don't know now, even while you and I are cracking our jaws, where the mad man is. Or mad men. I think it's a mad man. So you put all those pieces together and it was tense. I was strolling across to Mrs. Whipple's front door and almost ran over Madeline Mendez. She lives in the apartments and she's also one of my piano students.

LHJ: Is she the little Mexican girl we saw when we arrived?

HS: She's Salvadoran.

LHJ: Pardon me.

HS: You're okay. I used to think everyone was Mexican when I first moved here. I've since learned that they come from all different parts of Central and South America. I didn't know they spoke Portuguese in Brazil until last year. Which means you can't call Brazilians Hispanic because they don't speak Spanish. I got corrected on that once. They are Latinos or Latinas. That covers all the Latin American folks.

LHJ: Was Madeline Mendez a birth-defect baby?

HS: Not at all but I can see why you would ask that. She scared me in the alley tonight. It looks like she's wearing a Halloween mask. I try and look at an empty space above her head when I talk to her. She doesn't have all her fingers so piano is tough for her. But she's determined.

LHJ: May we ask how she came to be so transformed?

HS: You can say disfigured. Or deformed. She was hit by a car. Right here in the alley.

LHJ: That's terrible.

HS: We're a dead-end, right? Sometimes cars turn into our alley thinking it's a through street. They reach the dead-end and sometimes these drivers blow a fuse. They screech their tires, get turned around and they barrel back the way they came. Except they're driving way too fast. Driving crazy. I see it every other week. That's what happened to Madeline. This driver, foaming at the lips, didn't see her.

She got knocked under the car and the car crashed into a telephone pole. Madeline was wedged underneath. The bottom of the car was roasting hot like a fry pan. I think she must have thrown her hands up to protect her face, which is how she ended up losing some fingers.

LHJ: We don't have to talk about Madeline.

HS: No, it's okay.

LHJ: It upsets you.

HS: Sure it does. It's one of those things, right? Wrong place. Wrong time. The opposite of a lottery win. Cruel. Not much else to say really. Neighbours around here become a bit like family.

LHJ: Madeline is such a beautiful name.

HS: That's what I've told her. Makes me think of Madeline Albright.

LHJ: Was she the reporter? The one who had her own special seat for the White House briefings and was traditionally given the first question for the president?

HS: You're thinking of Helen Thomas. Madeline Albright was Secretary of State for President Clinton.

LHJ: Why do I get those two confused?

HS: Both of them had high-profile jobs in Washington. Both of them were women with strong voices. Both of them proved that you don't have to be a swimsuit model to accomplish great things, which is exactly what I try to get Madeline Mendez to understand.

LHJ: Hartley. There's a difference between Madeline Albright and Madeline Mendez that you seem to be ignoring. Madeline Albright may not have been, in your words, a swimsuit model but Madeline Mendez is in a

category unto herself. She is, quite frankly, horrifying to look at.

HS: If you're accusing me of offering hope where there is none then I stand guilty as charged.

LHJ: You do that with your tenants as well don't you?

HS: I'm a good landlord. If the hot water heater is broken it's fixed before sundown. No one should have to step into a blast of cold water first thing in the morning. If a magician is melted out, I'll give him a few extra days or weeks to gather some chips. If an actor has had a tough run with no auditions I'll offer some encouraging words.

LHJ: Your words didn't help the actor who hung himself in one of your apartments.

HS: I do the best I can. I can't baby-sit my tenants. That actor who killed himself, let's call him Tom. He should have listened to me. Do you know what his job was? He drove a sharp truck. A shiny, silver-barrelled truck. You could see your reflection in the side of it. Tom drove it around to film sets. He ran a hose from his truck to the motor homes that actors were using on set. He turned a switch on his truck and he sucked the shit and urine from those motor homes into his truck. Actor shit. Actor piss. He did this for months. I saw what this was doing to him. I told him to

find another kick. He wouldn't listen. He might have been a masochist for all I know.

The morning he hung himself I was grocery shopping. I came home and on my kitchen counter I found a video copy of *The Big Sleep* and about seventy dollars in change. I thought this was strange because several months before that day, Tom had asked to borrow seventy dollars from me. I'm not clairvoyant but I got the heebies. I went down and knocked on his door. No answer. I called out his name. I opened the door and there he was, hanging from a big, wooden beam. He was a tall man. His toes were touching the floor. I found out later that his considerable size had cracked the beam. I tried to get him down but I couldn't lift him. Had to get a pack of neighbours to come over and help me cut him down. He was just like me and everyone else who comes here. He had a dream.

LHJ: Madeline.

HS: Yes, back on the street with Madeline. We can't seem to get to Mrs. Whipple's house but me and Madeline are standing right outside Mrs. Whipple's so we're close. The reason I mention Madeline is because she was scared. She told me so. She thought that the lunatic from the golf course was hiding in the alley and was going to get her. I told her I would protect her. But this is what got me. For the first time today I got

scared. Standing there with Madeline in the fog, couldn't even see Van Ness Avenue. It was spooky. And I started thinking, what if the blowtop that murdered all those golfers was hiding somewhere in the alley? That wasn't crazy thinking. We're close enough that whoever did it could have run from the golf course and be hiding in my garage like that Boston bomber they found hiding in some guy's boat. I guess it was bothering me more than I had thought, that they still hadn't caught who did it.

LHJ: Still haven't.

HS: No. But I dribbled all the right things for Madeline. Told her he'd be caught before her bedtime.

LHJ: She's asleep now. And he's still not caught.

HS: He. They. Who knows? Hopefully she's got twirling sugar plums in her dreambox. "What a confusing day." That's what Mrs. Whipple said. She still has her English accent. Yorkshire. I think is what she's told me. The golf course. The fog. She wasn't rattled. Just stating a fact. She had the table set. Three chairs so someone else was coming. She's got two cats. Sally and Freeway. And sometimes Cady sneaks in for some credileys. In fact, Cady was sitting on Mrs. Whipple's couch when I walked in. She hissed at me like she always does. But once she scratched my hand, drew blood, and sniffed me, she was jelly. Cady's a stray. I

named her Cady. Robert Mitchum. *Cape Fear*. Everyone's trying to kill her. Except Mrs. Whipple. And me. The last big doings we had around here was the riots from the Rodney King verdict and the big quake in the nineties. The last big deal for Mrs. Whipple was the Polar Palace burning down. She was talking about that tonight.

LHJ: What's the Polar Palace?

HS: Right at the end of the alley here. Where Raleigh Studios is. On Van Ness there. Used to be a big skating rink. It burned down.

LHJ: May 16, 1963.

HS: You got that googled do you? Mrs. Whipple used to skate there. Her husband taught her to skate.

LHJ: The Canadian.

HS: Yes. Rodney. It was big. Like a blimp hangar. Mrs. Whipple stood here in the alley and watched it burn to the ground. Would have been a big fire. Her memories of her and Rodney. She worked at the rink. In the coffee shop. That's where the fire started. She told me that a few people thought she had set the fire.

LHJ: That's a harsh accusation.

HS: I'll say. She said people thought she had been acting strange in the days leading up, was still in grief over Rodney. I told Mrs. Whipple about Crandal's gun.

LHJ: Crandal's gun?

HS: Crandal Cobb. My neighbour. The one with the Bin Laden walls.

LHJ: Bin Laden walls?

HS: Those high walls he was living behind when they found him in Pakistan. Crandal put up big walls like that around his house. I told Mrs. Whipple about Crandal's gun. The one they found at the golf course.

LHJ: The murder weapon?

HS: That's right. Mrs. Whipple hadn't heard that.

LHJ: Heard what?

HS: That they found Crandal's gun at the golf course. It made her nervous. She thinks he poisoned her cat. Winston.

LHJ: Winston Churchill?

HS: Maybe. Doesn't trust him.

LHJ: Who?

HS: Crandal Cobb. Never has. Told her, the police would probably be asking her about the break-in.

LHJ: What break-in?

HS: New Year's Eve. This past New Year's Eve. Crandal's house got broken into and his guns were stolen. Including the one they found at the golf course. Mrs. Whipple told me she didn't see or hear anything that night that would help.

LHJ: What night?



HS: New Year's Eve. The night the gun was stolen. But she did see Crandal coming back to his house right after the murders today. Right around lunchtime.

LHJ: So?

HS: He's always sleeping at that time. He gambles at night. Goes to a casino a long way from here. Drives there, gambles through the night, drives back, sleeps. Mrs. Whipple lives right next door to Crandal. She notices these capers because she's home all the time. And she keeps an eye on Crandal ever since Winston. That gun. His gun. She doesn't like any of this. And Rudy knocked on the door right about then.

LHJ: Who's Rudy?

HS: That's who also came to dinner. The Thanksgiving dinner.

LHJ: Who's Rudy?

HS: Rudy Cienfuegos. He may or may not be Hispanic. The jury's still out on that one.

LHJ: How so?

HS: He was Rudy Tucker when he came from New Orleans. An actor. Or used to be. I don't know if he's still doing auditions. He's an intense young man. He also used to be one of my tenants. Now he lives down the alley in one of the bungalows. He's a proofreader, corrects spelling mistakes in advertising. Don't ask me why. Who cares if there's spelling mistakes in a car

ad? I don't. But someone pays him for it. He gets hot about mistakes. One time he said he was proofreading an ad for a magazine that made some joke about hibernating bears and they had a picture of a polar bear. I said, "So what?" He yelled, "Polar bears don't hibernate." He made a huge fuss about it where he works and no one thought it was that big a deal so they ran the ad with the picture of the polar bear. No one cared.

LHJ: How does a Tucker become a Cienfuegos?

HS: He says his grandmother had a one-time fling with Camilo Cienfuegos.

LHJ: Who's that?

HS: Read some history books. Camilo was one of the architects of the Cuban revolution. There was Fidel, Che, Raul and Camilo. Che wasn't the heartthrob at the time. It was Camilo.

LHJ: Says who?

HS: Rudy. He died in a plane crash in 1959.

LHJ: Who did?

HS: Camilo. Camilo Cienfuegos. It was big news around here when Rudy found out about him. It elevated Rudy from actor-slash-proofreader to a descendant of revolution royalty. There's a significant population of Hispanics on this alley and they were impressed.

LHJ: All of them?

HS: Those who knew about Camilo and those who didn't got informed real quick by Rudy.

LHJ: You said the jury's still out though.

HS: What I know as the truth is what I experience with my own peepers, and even then I'm too sure sometimes. I need to sit with stuff for a while. So if I'm right there, watching and listening to something, while it's happening, and I'm evaluating everything in that moment, well, I think I'm getting some semblance of whether it's reliable or not. If I told someone something mundane, like say something about all the police cars and paramedics and fire trucks screaming down Van Ness Avenue earlier today, well, they wouldn't know for certain that I was telling them the truth about that. They weren't here so they don't know. It doesn't have to be reliable to them.

LHJ: They might wonder if you are reliable.

HS: Exactly. But I don't care if they believe me or not.

LHJ: Not at all?

HS: I'd like to think I'm reliable. That I'm shooting straight. Now here's the rub. If I get told about some caper that I didn't see then this is when you enter a different world, the world of someone else telling you about something that happened, and it's in this world when you have to have your sniffer on high

alert for bullshit. I haven't made the leap of faith with Rudy's story about his grandmother but I'm inclined to believe him.

LHJ: What story?

HS: That there was a significant sensuous consequence when his grandmother met Camilo Cienfuegos. She had been living in Vermont.

LHJ: Who?

HS: The grandmother. Rudy's grandmother. She was retired. She got sick. Rudy went to see her before she died. He came back to L.A. a few weeks later and started telling everyone, including me, that his grandfather was Camilo Cienfuegos. It was a big deal at the time. Camilo was a hero to some of the folks around here. When I heard he was going to change his name from Rudy Tucker to Rudy Cienfuegos I thought he had snapped. I always thought he was a good actor. I'd seen his audition reels. Rudy Tucker was a fine name for an actor. Rudy Cienfuegos? Not so much. Especially for a white kid from New Orleans. It would just get confusing. I invited him over for a scotch.

LHJ: From the Thanksgiving dinner.

HS: No. This was years ago what I'm telling you. I invited him over for a scotch so I could sort him out, set him straight about this whole Cienfuegos rupture. He ended up showing me some newspaper articles that his

grandmother had written in the 1950s. She was a freelance journalist.

LHJ: A what?

HS: A journalist. Reporter. The articles proved to me that, yes, in fact, his grandmother had been in Cuba in 1957, she had gone there to interview Fidel Castro in the mountains but the *New York Times* had beaten her to the punch, and then she asked about Che Guevara but he was derailing trains somewhere else. Raul? I don't think she even asked about him. So that left Camilo. I've seen these interviews with my own eyes. So there's a fact for you. Rudy's grandmother interviewed Camilo Cienfuegos. It was a revolution. Everyone was hopped up, it was hot and steamy and dangerous in the jungle. It doesn't take much to put two and two together. Did I see Rudy's grandmother and Camilo bumping uglies behind a tree? No ma'am, I did not. And do I know if Rudy's grandmother slept around a lot to the point where she couldn't know for certain who the father was? No ma'am, I do not. But it was his grandmother's motivation, a key word, her motivation for telling Rudy about Camilo that left an impression. You have to remember, she had kept this interlude with Camilo a secret for her entire life, she hadn't even told her own son, Rudy's father. So why did she tell Rudy? She believed he was ruining his life by pursuing a career in acting in Hollywood.

She believed that this career path was the shallowest endeavour he could ever have chosen and said that it served one purpose and one purpose only, to satisfy his misguided and naive desire for approval, for an elusive, probably impossible recognition that, even if achieved, would never fix the fact that Rudy was the victim of a gaslighting, abusive father and would forever see himself as a creep, a lowly creep with no self esteem, no confidence, no hope, someone who would amount to no good. She felt that if Rudy knew who his grandfather was he might find himself a more noble calling. And she was right. Rudy ditched the acting but I think he's still looking for that noble calling.

Where were we?

LHJ: Dinner. Thanksgiving dinner.

HS: That's right.

LHJ: You look tired.

HS: I'm running out of steam.

LHJ: We can wrap this up.

HS: The dinner. You wanted to know about Mrs.

Whipple's Thanksgiving dinner.

LHJ: We had heard that Phil Stern gave Rudy Cienfuegos one of his prints.

HS: Back on that? More gotcha journalism?

LHJ: Care to comment?

HS: It's not a Phil Stern print. I've seen it. It's a photograph of Fidel Castro and a bunch of other cats watching Che Guevara tap a ball with a putter at a golf course in Havana. This would have been after Batista jumped on a plane and flown away of course. Anyway, they're all in their battle fatigues from their jungle wars. What would an art critic call it? Ironic? Maybe that's what makes it so interesting to look at. Golf is for elites.

LHJ: Says who?

HS: Private golf clubs are for elites. Costs a lot of money. You have to be a certain type of person to join. It's mostly white, right? They take up a lot of public land, land that you could use for parks and playgrounds. But that's the irony. Here's Fidel and Che doing this elitist, privileged activity in their combat gear. You don't see that every day. That's something my son used to say.

LHJ: You have a son?

HS: Yes. But I haven't seen him in a long time.

LHJ: How long?

HS: A long time. That's what my son would say. You don't see that every day. He was only four years old and he sounded like an old man. And he'd say it about the most mundane, common moments that weren't mundane moments to him at all. Always made me laugh. Like a

bunch of ants scurrying around a dead bug at the edge of the sidewalk. I'd say, "Look. Ants." He'd squat and stare at the ants, shake his head and mutter, "You don't see that every day." Or an airplane drawing white lines across the blue Broadway. Looking up. "You don't see that every day."

LHJ: What happened that you haven't seen your son in a long time?

HS: Wrong time. Wrong publication. This is about Mrs. Whipple. Just to finish. Phil Stern didn't take that photo of Che and Fidel. It was Alberto Korda. Korda took that famous picture of Che, the one of him in a beret that people wear on their T-shirts or put on their walls when they're at college.

LHJ: Just like Phil Stern with his James Dean shot, the one with the sweater.

HS: That's right. You get that one shot that everyone knows and you've done something right. Phil used to go to Cuba a lot.

LHJ: I thought there were travel embargoes.

HS: I don't know how he did it. I think he was invited and whoever invited him would pay for everything. I think the embargo was about spending money in Cuba so if you didn't drop any chips then you were okay. Phil was a bit of a socialist so he was a popular guy in Havana. He would stay at the Hotel



Nacional, get treated like a dignitary. Phil was buddy cats with Korda. Phil asked Alberto to sign the golf course photo for Rudy.

LHJ: That's a lot of effort to do something for Rudy.

HS: What are you driving at? Phil just asked Korda to sign it. What's the big deal?

LHJ: Was Rudy that important in Phil's life?

HS: Rudy used to take out Phil's garbage bins on garbage day and he'd wash his car. Rudy's good that way. He also takes out Mrs. Whipple's bins and gets her groceries from time to time. But Phil was also a big fan of the idea that Camilo Cienfuegos was Rudy's grandfather. Pitched a boogie-woogie about that. And Rudy didn't get the Korda print for free. Phil didn't allow it. Korda should have made a bundle from his Che photograph but he didn't see a dime of the royalties until he was too old to enjoy the money and even then he gave most of it to buy medicine for Cuban children. So Rudy paid top dollar for that print. That was no gift. Don't you worry about that.

LHJ: But Rudy did get the signature from Korda. Because of Phil.

HS: Phil got the print signed by Korda. For Rudy. Correct. And I got nothing from Phil. Is that what you're driving at here?

LHJ: Not at all. It just seemed odd for Phil Stern to make that effort for a neighbour but given your story about Rudy's grandfather and the help Rudy gave Phil with the garbage bins and washing his car, it all makes sense.

HS: I hope you're not trying to gaslight me. I'm not a fan of that.

LHJ: Just asking questions. For clarity.

HS: Phil was always telling Rudy to get to Cuba. With his lineage Phil figured he'd be treated like a rock star. And Rudy did. Last year. He couldn't do it the way Phil did it because no one invited him. So Rudy went to Mexico and got a plane to Havana. Rudy did make it to Cuba. And he made it to dinner.

LHJ: How was the dinner?

HS: Good. Turkey. Mashed potatoes. Gravy. Green beans. Raspberries for desert. And homemade cream.

LHJ: Three people?

HS: That's right. Me. Mrs. Whipple. And Rudy.

LHJ: What did you talk about?

HS: The golf course shooting. The Columbus Day massacre. Rudy was there.

LHJ: I beg your pardon?

HS: Rudy was jogging.

LHJ: He's a jogger?

HS: Training for the L.A. marathon. He was jogging past the golf course, he thinks, right around the time that the golfers were getting shot.

LHJ: That's incredible.

HS: It's not that incredible. He says he does a five-mile loop from here, down to and across Beverly Boulevard to Highland, down Highland to West 3rd and across West 3rd to Van Ness and back up here. That's his route. Did it this morning.

LHJ: That takes him right past the golf course. Twice.

HS: That's what I just said.

LHJ: You ever look at Google Maps of the golf course?

HS: Nope.

LHJ: The golf course, the shape, it looks like a ghost. There's a head, shoulders and the ghost body, a tail, no legs.

HS: Mrs. Whipple told Rudy that the police will probably want to know if he saw anything.

LHJ: Did he?

HS: He says he didn't.

LHJ: Thank you, Hartley. It's late.

HS: Yes. You're welcome.

*Architectural Digest*

## "A Spin Around the Jack London House"

ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST: We are pleased to be in the house of Hartley Sickerdick. Good morning.

SICKERDICK: Good morning to you.

AD: Hartley is a composer of music.

SICKERDICK: That's not true. I'm a songwriter. I wouldn't know the first thing about composing.

AD: But surely you know how to navigate musical notes.

SICKERDICK: I know what keys makes what sounds and that's all I pay attention to. A wise man once said, "People that dry-hump stats to make a point probably prefer reading sheet music to hearing the song."

AD: Who said that?

SICKERDICK: Aqib Talib.

AD: Philosopher?

SICKERDICK: Football player. Cornerback. University of Kansas.

AD: You apologised when we arrived this morning, telling us you were up half the night composing.

SICKERDICK: Songwriting. Yes, a long night. Made absolutely no progress.

AD: Didn't have the flow?

SICKERDICK: Or something like that.

AD: Is songwriting a struggle?

SICKERDICK: This one is.

AD: What's different about this one?

SICKERDICK: It's more important than the others.

It's for my son.

AD: A tribute song?

SICKERDICK: I don't know about that. It's a letter I want to write him. It's a song about that letter. About how hard it is to find the words to explain.

AD: Explain what?

SICKERDICK: Why I haven't seen him in so long.

AD: And why is that?

SICKERDICK: It's in the song.

AD: The unfinished song.

SICKERDICK: I have the words. I just need the music. The sounds.

AD: What inspires you?

SICKERDICK: This song?

AD: Sure.

SICKERDICK: A newspaper article arrived in the mail. A few days ago. It was a story, a recent story about my son, a son I have not seen in a very long time. The article described how he, my son, saved a swan. A Whooper Swan and her eggs. Some punks, thugs, had tennis racquets.

AD: Were they tennis players?

SICKERDICK: I have no idea. But they were just about to smash the eggs and kill the swan and that's when my son swooped in, literally swooped in and beat them up. A hero. Saved the eggs. Saved the swan. You find out your son was a hero and you want to say something to him, you want to write him a letter and tell him how proud you feel, tell him other things.

AD: Why not just see him in person?

SICKERDICK: The song's about a letter. The letter I would write.

AD: Will you see him in person?

SICKERDICK: After the song's done. And maybe after it's out there.

AD: Out there?

SICKERDICK: On the radios.

AD: What if it isn't on the radios?

SICKERDICK: It will be.

AD: What if it's not?

SICKERDICK: You're giving me pavement rash. Let's keep this balloon in the air.

AD: Fair enough. We should mention that when we arrived this morning there was a large contingent of television crews parked outside your street.

SICKERDICK: Alley.

AD: Is this an alley?

SICKERDICK: Well, it has a street sign so I guess you can call it a street. I call it an alley. It looks like an alley and it feels like an alley. But you can call it a street.

AD: It seems that one of your neighbours owned the gun that was found at the golf course, the golf course where the shooting happened yesterday.

SICKERDICK: Not surprised. There's not much to go on. No one's been arrested. There's no leads. There's a killer on the loose. Someone from the police must have leaked that information. The gun. The murder weapon. That's a big deal, right? So if the gun came from our alley and I already knew that and there's nothing else to report on, they'll report on that. They'll move on once there's something else to talk about.

AD: Like the camera footage of the shooter.

SICKERDICK: Saw that on the news this morning. Some guy in his backyard?

AD: Yes. Uploaded his footage to YouTube.

SICKERDICK: Don't have a computer. I saw it on the news.

AD: You don't own a computer?

SICKERDICK: I used to have one.

AD: Are you a Luddite?

SICKERDICK: A what?

AD: You don't like technology?

SICKERDICK: I have a microwave oven. I like it just fine.

AD: The footage is very disturbing.

SICKERDICK: It's a horror movie.

AD: You can see the gunman killing one of the golfers. And he runs. You can see him running like he's trying to kill as many as possible.

SICKERDICK: Hopefully it helps the police.

AD: It's not the best footage. A little shaky. And it's from quite a distance. He's wearing a jumpsuit.

SICKERDICK: Looked like the jumpsuit Pete Townshend used to wear.

AD: Did he wear a jumpsuit?

SICKERDICK: A few times. He looked sharp in it.

AD: Your house.

SICKERDICK: But first. The big baby mask from *Brazil*.

AD: The what?

SICKERDICK: The torpedo. The killer at the golf course. He was wearing a mask. It was on that guy's video. The phone video.

AD: Yes.

SICKERDICK: It looked like the creepy mask, the baby-face mask that Michael Palin was wearing at the end of *Brazil*, the Terry Gilliam movie.

AD: Yes, Gilliam.



SICKERDICK: When he was interrogating Jonathan Pryce. Palin. Not Gilliam. The gunman wore it. The torpedo.

AD: The gunman.

SICKERDICK: That mask. It's not the last thing you want to see in your last five seconds on Earth.

AD: No.

SICKERDICK: I thought he got away.

AD: Who?

SICKERDICK: The guy in *Brazil*.

AD: Sam Lowry. The Jonathan Pryce character.

SICKERDICK: Him. Getting grilled with all those questions. Tortured. De Niro saves him. I thought it was a happy ending. That he escaped.

AD: But it was all delusion. His delusional fantasy.

SICKERDICK: He was still strapped to the chair. Getting tortured. I thought the same thing at the end of *King of Comedy*. I thought De Niro ...

AD: Pupkin.

SICKERDICK: Gets out of prison and is famous.

AD: Just his imagination.

SICKERDICK: Like Sam.

AD: Delusional.

SICKERDICK: That mask.

AD: The stuff of nightmares.

SICKERDICK: Who buys a mask like that?

AD: Or makes one.

SICKERDICK: Who gets a mask like that and wears it to go kill a bunch of people? If he bought it they'll find him easy.

AD: And the jumpsuit.

SICKERDICK: Yes. The white jumpsuit. Looked like one of those guys from *Clockwork Orange*.

AD: That too.

SICKERDICK: What did the guy say?

AD: What guy?

SICKERDICK: The one who filmed the murders.

AD: Not all the murders. There's only one that he filmed. A twenty-second clip. It doesn't last long.

SICKERDICK: Something about a movie?

AD: He thought it was a movie. That a movie was being made.

SICKERDICK: The guy with his camera phone.

AD: That's right.

SICKERDICK: That's why he said he never called the police.

AD: Notification tags.

SICKERDICK: I've had those here. Handle hangars. From my doorknob. Filming notice tags, telling you a movie is being shot on your street. We had a music

video shot here on the alley a few months back. Same tag.

AD: The guy said it was hanging from his door a few days before. Everyone got them. Apparently.

SICKERDICK: All the houses that had backyards overlooking the golf course. Not a terrorist attack. Who hangs filming notification tags on doorknobs and then goes out and kills thirty-six golfers wearing a big baby mask? They'll catch him for sure. If he was walking around a few days before the shootings and hanging tags on doorknobs someone saw him.

AD: Those are expensive homes. Most have security cameras.

SICKERDICK: They'll have footage of whoever dropped off the tags. They'll have their lunatic. Unless it was more than one person. Even two guys. Like Columbine.

AD: Or. Whoever did the shooting hired someone to hang the tags.

SICKERDICK: Then they find the bunter who hung the tags and the bunter tells them who paid him to hang the tags. And where did the lunatic get the tags? Maybe he worked in the movie business. This guy, this lunatic in the big baby mask, didn't want anyone calling the cops until he finished killing everyone on the back nine.

AD: But not everyone.

SICKERDICK: No. That was on the news this morning.

AD: Two guys. Golf course staff. Maintenance men.

SICKERDICK: Greens keepers.

AD: Mexicans.

SICKERDICK: Who knows? Might have been Salvadorans. Hondurans. Hispanic. Not white though. They saw the thing happen. The lunatic wasn't killing Hispanics. He was killing the rich, white golfers.

AD: No, they were Mexicans. Both. Originally from Mexico. That's what's been reported.

SICKERDICK: Didn't they have phones?

AD: Probably.

SICKERDICK: Why didn't they call the police?

AD: Too scared? Maybe they did.

SICKERDICK: And why didn't any of the golfers call? The lunatic was out there for twenty minutes. At least. According to the news this morning. One of the golfers must have seen what was happening.

AD: It's a big area. That back nine. The final nine holes. Acres of space.

SICKERDICK: I suppose. I heard it was the first nine. The front nine.

AD: And if he came upon a foursome at a tee-off spot then he kills four right there.

SICKERDICK: And the rest he ran down. Like on that guy's video. He was running. Fast. He wasn't killing Mexicans though.

AD: They also said he disabled a cart in a tunnel.  
Set it on fire.

SICKERDICK: I saw that.

AD: Half the course is north of Beverly Boulevard,  
nine holes there and the other nine holes are south of  
Beverly. It's the front nine south of Beverly. There's  
a tunnel that connects them.

SICKERDICK: What's the deal with the cart?

AD: The golf cart. The tunnel is narrow. It's how  
golfers get from one side of the course to the other.

SICKERDICK: Underneath Beverly Boulevard.

AD: So he must have disabled the cart and set it on  
fire to block the tunnel so the next group of golfers  
coming through the tunnel wouldn't be able to get  
through.

SICKERDICK: And see dead golfers and call the  
police. He wanted enough time to finish killing  
everyone on the back nine.

AD: Front nine.

SICKERDICK: Doesn't matter. Front nine. Back nine.  
I hate golf. There's nine holes on either side of  
Beverly. That's all that matters. He blocked them.

AD: That's right. The first golfers through would  
have seen the carnage, the dead bodies, and called  
police right away. But they couldn't get through. Fire.  
Smoke. In the tunnel.

SICKERDICK: Buying time. That's a lot of planning went into this. The filming tags. The filming notification tags. Hung from door handles. The golf cart. Set on fire. Buying time. This was no impulsive thing, no spur-of-the-moment kind of caper either. Planned. Planned. Planned. Almost, impressive, if that's the right word.

AD: Diabolical.

SICKERDICK: That too.

AD: We do need to talk about your house.

SICKERDICK: That's what you're here for. Fire away.

AD: You have this three-story house that towers over all the other dwellings.

SICKERDICK: Four stories. I have my tower at the top. My crow's nest. I see all.

AD: You have this dull, stucco exterior.

SICKERDICK: It's not that dull.

AD: It looks like the pavement from the road has grown like a creeping weed and crept up over your house.

SICKERDICK: No, it doesn't.

AD: Like so many houses in Los Angeles it looks boxy but your house has details that shine through the blank canvas.

SICKERDICK: You make it sound nice. Thank you.

AD: There's almost a fairy-tale quality about the place. Outside, down at street level, is an unusual, octagonal, stained glass lamp that I'm sure, at night, illuminates a small portion of the alley.

SICKERDICK: It does.

AD: You've got your songwriting space here at the top, which is where we are now.

SICKERDICK: I call it my crow's nest.

AD: You have a block and tackle that juts out from just below the roofline. You used this to hoist your piano up and in.

SICKERDICK: And a previous owner used it to winch wenches.

AD: You showed me that photograph. And the red nautical lanterns hang from your outside walls. You have a bell from a sunken ship, tattered fishing nets, a recessed nymph with a smile and cracked boobs, and the crown jewel, down again at street level, you have this bas relief of Jack London, and he stares fiercely out at people walking past.

SICKERDICK: He is blazing. It's intensity, not anger.

AD: I've heard the rumours.

SICKERDICK: What?

AD: You have a blue plaque, a poor, almost silly version of the plaques they have in London, England,

that say, so-and-so famous person lived here, such-and-such famous person wrote this song here, etcetera, etcetera.

SICKERDICK: It's not a silly version at all. A friend made the plaque. It's quite good. Yes? Go on.

AD: Your plaque says, Jack London Slept Here. This is a rumour, correct? This rumour has not been verified.

SICKERDICK: John Carradine stayed here. *Grapes of Wrath*? You remember Reverend Casy? Jim Casy? That was him. Talked about the big soul.

AD: Who?

SICKERDICK: Casy. Jim. That all men have one big soul that everyone's a part of. Roger Waters said the same thing.

AD: Pink Floyd?

SICKERDICK: No. When he was on his own. Every stranger's eyes. Books and banks. And suicidal cavalry attacks. His words. He realises himself in every stranger's eyes. All of them. The big soul. That's what I was getting after when I was telling you about Pete Townshend. Some folks see the big soul and understand their place in it. And sing about it.

AD: I don't even know what that means.

SICKERDICK: The big soul. It's the whole reason for being here.



AD: Oh boy.

SICKERDICK: It's about seeing it. Experiencing it. And once you see it there's no turning your back on it. So you sing about it. Sometimes it takes years of thinking like the monks do and sometimes it can happen fast.

AD: What is "it"?

SICKERDICK: The experience. Of the big soul. Hallucinogenic drugs. They can make it happen fast. Roger Waters tried it. Once. All those cats got changed by it. Lennon. Why are you there? When you're everywhere? Morrison. Break on through to the other side. Hendrix. Are you experienced? Pink Floyd. And I am you and what I see is me. The list goes on and on. And on.

AD: We need to get back on track. Your house.

SICKERDICK: This is not me chomping on crazy pills. You're looking at me like ...

AD: These things are easy to say, impossible to prove.

SICKERDICK: What things?

AD: The big soul. Your list of songs, performing artists, purveyors of secret knowledge. You end up sounding like someone who thinks they know who really killed Kennedy.

SICKERDICK: Which Kennedy?

AD: Exactly. It doesn't matter. It ends up as a conspiracy theory and guys like you think you have the truth, a secret truth, and everyone else is clueless. You're smart. They're dumb. You're wise. They're ignorant. It's how people end up at a bus stop wearing a hat made of aluminium foil and yelling at the passing cars.

SICKERDICK: There's no conspiracy theory. There's writers who have experienced the big soul and this experience is so thunder-clapping momentous that it finds its way into the words, into the music. It's a rapture that gets shared with thousands, millions, and there's a few of us who hear it and get it and can't help but have our lives completely transformed. I look at a stranger and know that I am connected to him. Or her. And he. Or she. Is connected to me. How is that a bad thing? That's the whole thing. And I'm not crazy for seeing it.

AD: Your house.

SICKERDICK: Victor Buono, the actor lived here. Do you remember *Batman*, the TV series? He was King Tut. Who could forget that? He had trouble with the stairs here. Very narrow. And steep. Or so I was told.

AD: Your stairs. Have you ever seen stairs after a snowfall?

SICKERDICK: No.

AD: After someone has walked up and down? The snow gets pushed to the sides of each stair, except in your case, you have pancake-sized piles of dust, chased to the edge of each stair. We saw this coming up this morning.

SICKERDICK: I need to vacuum.

AD: Did Jack London sleep here?

SICKERDICK: It's part of the legend of the house. I wasn't around when Jack London lived so I can't say for sure. But that's what has been handed down. From previous owners to me. That he stayed here. Slept here. I can't prove it or disprove it.

AD: Do the purveyors of the legend say if he stayed here one night or lived here? For longer?

SICKERDICK: Slept here. One night for sure. More than that? I cannot say.

AD: If a guy, even a famous guy, slept in a place for one night, does that place deserve a blue plaque? He didn't write a novel here. Or anything. What if he just slept one night? Nothing happened. Why a blue plaque?

SICKERDICK: It's not an official plaque. A friend made it.

AD: As a joke?

SICKERDICK: Not a joke. A gift. To me.

AD: People come to your street.

SICKERDICK: My alley.

AD: Your alley. And they come to look at a house where Jack London stayed. We're just trying to figure out if what they are looking at is real. That Jack London slept here.

SICKERDICK: I don't have control over what people believe or want to believe.

AD: But they believe it to be true.

SICKERDICK: You said yourself it doesn't matter.

AD: No.

SICKERDICK: That a plaque was a waste of space because even if he slept here for one night then who cares. It's a bit of rumoured history. No one's hitching self-esteem to it. Most of the houses on our alley have been around since the days of the silent movies. It's been rumoured that there had even been a small lake, constructed at the end of the alley that film crews used for stunts with Model T Fords. When we get heavy rain a small lake reappears at the end of the alley where they apparently shot these scenes. I've rented a bunch of old silent movies that were shot in Los Angeles and I have yet to see our alley. But that doesn't mean it didn't happen. What I do know for sure is that most of the houses on this alley, they are small so maybe we are safer calling them bungalows,

most of these bungalows were built by the studios for actors and writers. That's a fact.

AD: Your backyard area looks like Broadway Bohemian stage set.

SICKERDICK: Thank you.

AD: You have your apartments and a bungalow back there, all connected by wooden ladders and gangplanks.

SICKERDICK: And an outdoor table for meals, a water fountain that works and a washing machine and dryer.

AD: Do your tenants use the washing machine and dryer?

SICKERDICK: Whenever they want.

AD: How many tenants do you have?

SICKERDICK: Four. But I have a spare bedroom in the main building here if there is someone in need.

AD: And one of your tenants is famous.

SICKERDICK: More famous than me.

AD: Kitten Natividad.

SICKERDICK: Francesca.

AD: The Russ Meyer girl. *Beneath the Valley of the Ultravixens*.

SICKERDICK: An underrated movie. A great movie. I've known her for years. She used to look after my house, make my meals in exchange for no rent.

AD: What happened?

SICKERDICK: She called me crazy. Still calls me crazy. Said I treated her like a slave.

AD: Are you crazy?

SICKERDICK: You're asking me? Do crazy people admit to being crazy? Did you ever see *Rumble Fish*? It's a fat film, finger-popping good. Motorcycle Boy. Mickey Rourke. So good. His dad. Dennis Hopper. Gets asked by Rusty James if Motorcycle Boy, his brother, is crazy. And Hopper says, the Motorcycle Boy has acute perception but having acute perception doesn't make you crazy but it can drive you crazy. Does that work?

AD: Did you treat her like a slave?

SICKERDICK: She thinks I did so that's all that matters.

AD: That explains the dust.

SICKERDICK: Phil Stern used to call her guileless. Not the naïve part. Just the being a nice human being part. Not a bad bone in her body. You can never stay angry with Kitten. She pays rent now. I have a book that rates the thousand greatest beauties and bombshells of the ages. She's ranked one page before Christie Brinkley and one page ahead of Jane Fonda. Now that Phil's gone she's our only resident celebrity.

AD: You have a large swinging door on your second floor that overlooks the alley.

SICKERDICK: It's more like a gate.

AD: Two sections.

SICKERDICK: The bottom section is wood, red, and the top has a window in it. It's all about six feet high. We opened up both sections to get my joybox up here.

AD: Joybox?

SICKERDICK: Piano.

AD: Slang?

SICKERDICK: Yes.

AD: You like using slang.

SICKERDICK: Joybox. Tinklebox. Eighty-eight.

AD: Did you pick up those words from people you spent time with?

SICKERDICK: I listened to Lord Buckley. A lot. Hipster preacher. Some from books. Mezz Mezzrow. *Really the Blues*. That one stuck with me. Read it when I lived in Nebraska. Wrote them down before I took a bus to L.A. so I wouldn't sound like a hayseed.

AD: Wrote what down?

SICKERDICK: Some of the words I liked. And memorised them.

AD: So you could sound?

SICKERDICK: Different. I liked the words.

AD: They have a black history?

SICKERDICK: I suppose they do.

AD: Should white people try and sound black?

SICKERDICK: I thought we're talking about my house.

AD: We are. I'm just curious about people pretending to be something they are not.

SICKERDICK: Which is all people all the time.

AD: But this is about you.

SICKERDICK: I'm not black. I don't pretend to be black. I don't even like white guys playing jazz. Or blues.

AD: Why not?

SICKERDICK: I don't know. Call me racist. Just feels like a black thing. When whites are playing jazz or blues it looks like they try too hard. Like a not-so-good child actor putting on a funny hat. It's like they are pretending to play, not really playing. If that makes sense.

AD: It doesn't.

SICKERDICK: Maybe that's how you see it when you hear me using slang words like I do. What sounds better? I curled up under the dreamers? Or I curled up under the blankets?

AD: Dreamers.

SICKERDICK: Exactly.

AD: If I know what you're talking about. Otherwise I have to ask. Which can get annoying.

SICKERDICK: I don't mind answering.

AD: I don't want to have to ask.



SICKERDICK: I'm going to keep using those words.

AD: I won't ask.

SICKERDICK: Fine.

AD: A sculptor built this house.

SICKERDICK: Yes. A Norwegian.

AD: Finn Frolich.

SICKERDICK: He did everything here. The hoist, the swinging door. The plant-holder blocks underneath the windows.

AD: Just concrete blocks.

SICKERDICK: But I like the strength of the timber logs that support them. The lanterns. He's the reason for this place. All the little details. He built this artists colony that stands today. And he was buddy cats with Jack London. And that's why he did the sculpture of London out front here.

AD: Bas relief.

SICKERDICK: I just call it a sculpture.

AD: But it's not.

SICKERDICK: It's mine. I'll call it what I want.

AD: He was a world-renowned sculptor.

SICKERDICK: Finn.

AD: He travelled the world. Left home at nine to sail the seas.

SICKERDICK: He did.

AD: Studied in Paris.

SICKERDICK: That too.

AD: He was in South Africa before the Boer War.

SICKERDICK: Have you seen *Breaker Morant*?

AD: No.

SICKERDICK: See it.

AD: He sculpted the head of then President Paul Kruger. A chief's daughter. Was a sensation in Seattle. He's the reason so many notable people stayed here at your house. Including George Sterling.

SICKERDICK: The poet. Famous in California. I showed you the inscription.

AD: On a decal. You found it between two pieces of glass in a window in a bedroom on the second floor.

SICKERDICK: The young in heart shall find their love and laughter anywhere. He only in bohemia dwells who knows not he is there.

AD: It makes no sense.

SICKERDICK: Some of it does. Dedicated to Finn Frolich by George Sterling. That's what Sterling wrote. 1924.

AD: He committed suicide two years later.

SICKERDICK: Cyanide.

AD: Best friends with Jack London.

SICKERDICK: Just like Frolich. I like how he described San Francisco. The cool, grey city of love. Sterling. Not Frolich.

AD: Jack London died in 1916.

SICKERDICK: I'll take your word for it.

AD: Finn Frolich built your house in 1923.

SICKERDICK: I don't know when he built it. He was in California for many years. I don't know that there's a record of when Finn built this house. I'm not aware of one. I know that Jack London gave Finn a kitten that may have found its way to this house. Way back when. And we now have a stray cat that roams the alley that may or may not be a descendant of that Jack London kitten. Gifted to Finn. Who built this house. I'm pretty sure that Finn was in Los Angeles well before Jack London died. So those dates add up. I'm guessing that this place was built between 1900 and 1915.

AD: Have you heard of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps?

SICKERDICK: I have not. This is getting official.

AD: These are regarded as very reliable.

SICKERDICK: I'll take your word for it. Again.

AD: They started doing maps in 1867.

SICKERDICK: Long time ago.

AD: Streets. Locations of buildings. Commercial and residential.

SICKERDICK: I'm with you so far.

AD: They have a map from 1919 that shows your street.

SICKERDICK: Alley.

AD: There's no house on the map.

SICKERDICK: None?

AD: Not on your property block. There's other dwellings. On the street. But not in your spot.

SICKERDICK: So what?

AD: There's no house here in 1919. Jack London died in 1916.

SICKERDICK: And?

AD: There's no house for Jack London to have slept in. He was dead by the time this house was built.

SICKERDICK: Well.

AD: It's clear.

SICKERDICK: According to your map.

AD: There's nothing else to go by.

SICKERDICK: You seem to enjoy pushing your facts in my face, even going so far as to wave your map at me.

AD: The important person who lived here was the one who built the house. Finn Frolich. A famous sculptor. He's the reason this house exists and why it looks the way it does. All the nautical features. These are Frolich's ideas, his creations. Not yours. Not Jack London's. No one talks about Finn Frolich living here. And if not him then what about George Sterling? He was an accomplished writer in his own right. You have an inscription from him. He definitely stayed here. You

have evidence of that. Even John Carradine. Where's his plaque? You didn't mention Anthony Quinn. He slept here.

SICKERDICK: Yes, on Frolich, yes, on Sterling and Carradine and Quinn. But they're not Jack London so people don't care as much. Don't blame me. People are more interested in Jack London. He has a following. He's up here. And all those other people are down there somewhere. Not because I say so but because everyone else says so. Nobody is searching out a house where John Carradine slept. It's not the same. People like the idea that Jack London slept here. I'm not going to apologise for that.

AD: This is the Jack London house. People come and look at your house because they think that Jack London lived here or at the very least, slept here, and he didn't.

SICKERDICK: Were you here? On this alley? In 1915? 1914? Before Jack London died?

AD: It doesn't matter. We don't have to be somewhere to form a reasonable conclusion, a conclusion based on available, and in this case, reliable evidence.

SICKERDICK: What evidence?

AD: The Sanborn map.

SICKERDICK: Stop waving it.

AD: It just doesn't make sense. You have this rich history with your house, colourful characters, talented, famous. And yet you hold onto this "Jack London Slept Here" notion, belief, you prop that up for reasons that defy all rational thought. It's a lie. Jack London did not sleep here.

SICKERDICK: You're snapping your cap on this whole Jack London history and you look ridiculous. You attack me and attack the history of my house like I'm on trial for war crimes or paedophilia. You defy all rational thought, pal, all the rational expectation for a reasonable and informative conversation about my house. Jack London? It's a bit of harmless Hollywood trivia. Nothing more. And I can guarantee you that I don't spend half the time thinking about it like you have. Doing all your computer research and whatnot. All your facts and figures. And maps. For what? To make me look a liar? Or stupid? It's cheap and it's shabby and I don't understand why you would do it. I'll tell you something. I don't care as much about a Jack London plaque as you think I do. Someone stole that plaque anyway. I want my own plaque, pal. There's your headline. I want a blue plaque out front that says, "Hartley Sickerdick Lived Here." And if they want to mention all the other artists that lived here or slept here it won't matter because people will be coming to

see where I lived. That's what I'm looking for.  
Swinging for the moon? It's what I do. Is that going to happen today? No. But that's the thing about the next song. It's the one. You gotta believe it. You better believe it. It's the song that's gonna get me there, get me that plaque whether you believe Jack London slept here or not. And I'll tell you another thing. I won't be telling you about a basement I uncovered last year underneath this house. Plenty of artefacts, treasures from a long time ago. Very interesting things. I won't be telling you about that. And one more thing. I don't even care that much about architecture so I don't know why we did this.

AD: The magazine's more about interior design.

SICKERDICK: I care about that less. Now if you'll excuse me I have some real journalists I need to speak with.

AD: What real journalists?

SICKERDICK: The ones at the end of the alley.

AD: You're not.

SICKERDICK: I am. Watch me. They're still there, they're causing traffic problems for my neighbours and they want some answers.

*Nintendo Power*

## "Capturing Ghosts: The Hartley Sickerdick Way"

NINTENDO POWER: Mr. Sickerdick. Mr. Hartley Sickerdick. A pleasure to meet you.

HARTLEY SICKERDICK: I have to admit. I had not heard of you before today.

NINTENDO POWER: That's not surprising.

HS: I had heard of *Wired*. Read that a few times.

NINTENDO POWER: You are not someone we would describe as being ahead of the technology curve.

HS: You would not. I would not. Either.

NINTENDO POWER: We should mention that you are a very busy man so we appreciate you taking the time for us.

HS: You're welcome.

NINTENDO POWER: You are in the midst of composing a new song.

HS: I am. But I write songs. I don't compose them.

NINTENDO POWER: You are in fact a songwriter.

HS: I am.

NINTENDO POWER: And official spokesperson for La Vista Court.



HS: I wouldn't go that far. I talked a bit to the press there at the end of the alley because no one else will talk to them.

NINTENDO POWER: Our readers will be aware of the tragic shooting massacre at the Wilshire Country Club yesterday.

HS: Or not. Maybe they are too busy playing their video games.

NINTENDO POWER: Ha. Ha. And one of your neighbours has now been implicated.

HS: I'm going to need to tap the brakes on that. On you. He has not been implicated at all. Can I say that more forcefully? Or repeat it at least. He has not been implicated. A gun was found in a pond near the seventh green, the seventh hole. As it turns out the gun previously belonged to a neighbour of mine. The gun had been stolen nine months ago. That is all.

NINTENDO POWER: You were mentioned in a news story today.

HS: I was?

NINTENDO POWER: Yes. Someone quoted you about something you said about your neighbour.

HS: Crandal.

NINTENDO POWER: It was just one quote. A brief quote. They called you Harley. And they referred to you as a failed songwriter.

HS: Well, what are you gonna do? Everyone likes their labels. They're fast and they're easy. They don't mean a damn thing. I would simply say that what you see there is a product of lazy journalism. Nothing more. Nothing less. If you don't have a top-forty song or a smash hit or a tune sung by a famous singer then I guess you are a failure in the eyes of some.

NINTENDO POWER: Or a song recorded by anyone even remotely known to anyone.

HS: Well. Failure. What is it? I certainly don't feel like a failure. And the song that I currently have. I have the words. The best words, lyrics, I have ever written and I'm trying to find the notes and they'll come, they'll come but I have that hope, that belief that something really good is coming, is going to happen, and it will be these notes and then the really good stuff can happen with the song. The failure is when you stop yourself from having something good to look forward to.

NINTENDO POWER: Or others stop you.

HS: Only if you let them. Don't ever let anyone take that away. Always have something to look forward to. I learned that from my son. He always needed something to look forward to. It might have been an ice cream cone that was coming in an hour, or Christmas or a birthday or Halloween. How many sleeps? It's a fever

of happiness. You might think it's a childish preoccupation, naïve, but he schooled me, always have something to look forward to. Once you stop looking forward to something, anything, then you hit bombsville. It's over. So right now I'm looking forward to finding these musical notes. And once you're done with me I'll be back at it. The song. My son. It's all wrapped up together. I hope when he hears it, it all makes sense.

NINTENDO POWER: He's an only child?

HS: I thought you said, lonely child. I hope he's not lonely. I hope he still has that fire, I hope he's still looking forward to something.

NINTENDO POWER: Is he a gamer?

HS: What's a gamer?

NINTENDO POWER: I think you're being coy. It's someone who plays games. Digital games. It's why we're here.

HS: I don't know.

NINTENDO POWER: You don't keep in touch?

HS: I will see him. Again. Some time. It's something to look forward to. She was so excited that day.

NINTENDO POWER: What day?

HS: He was. Any day. Pick any day. That's how he was.

NINTENDO POWER: Hartley Sickerdick. Songwriter.  
Game player.

HS: I'm not bad. I'll say that much.

NINTENDO POWER: You are not a computer guy.

HS: No.

NINTENDO POWER: You don't trust computers?

HS: They have let me down in the past. I don't judge anyone for using computers. Everyone does. And I'm not flavouring myself by trying to make it look like I'm different, special because I don't use them. I'm not better because of it. And I know that if I need to look something up it's a few seconds away on a computer. What I end up doing is driving downtown to the library. Or taking the train. Or the bus. And I find what I need, most of the time, in a book at the library. It took years to write. It went through many stages of work. Editors looked at it, asked questions. A lot of work. I trust that labour. You might argue that going to library is time wasted. But I'm out there with passengers on the bus or the train and someone's always doing something crazy and there's always sparks out there, real people, sitting, walking around, moving through the library, might talk to someone at the bus stop, they might tell me something that blows my mind, so I do all that and it's good. I sometimes come back

with something for a song. By the time I walk through the door I'm chomping at the bit.

NINTENDO POWER: Chomping.

HS: What?

NINTENDO POWER: It's chomping at the bit.

HS: I thought it was chomping.

NINTENDO POWER: Like a horse.

HS: Horses don't chomp?

NINTENDO POWER: It's always been chomping.

HS: I'll have to look that one up.

NINTENDO POWER: Can we agree that the technology landscape in your house is comprised of your landline phone and your television set?

HS: And a toaster and whatnot.

NINTENDO POWER: Let's stick with information technology.

HS: I don't get much information on my phone, not the type you're thinking of, just conversations with people. But maybe that does give me information. I'm not entirely out of the loop. You talk about information gathering and that's all well and good. It might be easier to use the computer. There's a reason my ex-wife called me Hardway. If there was an easier path I never took it.

NINTENDO POWER: Is that why she divorced you?

HS: How do you know she divorced me?

NINTENDO POWER: I don't.

HS: Well, she did. But don't keep making assumptions or this interview won't be lasting long.

NINTENDO POWER: I apologise.

HS: She divorced me because she didn't trust me.

NINTENDO POWER: Were you a philandering scoundrel?

HS: I see you're trying to be funny.

NINTENDO POWER: You brought it up.

HS: Not like that I didn't.

NINTENDO POWER: You brought up your ex-wife. Said she didn't trust you.

HS: I should not have done that but you didn't have to jump on it.

NINTENDO POWER: Not jumping on anything. Just asked a question. Why she didn't trust you.

HS: And I'm not answering. That is not a Nintendo question. And you jumped to a conclusion. I said that my ex-wife divorced me because she didn't trust me and you assumed that it was because I cheated, that I fucked other women behind her back.

NINTENDO POWER: The language.

HS: You started it. You jumped to a conclusion. I put some milk in my microwave oven this morning. Yes, I have one. It's a technological marvel. I pressed the button. It started. There was a loud rattling sound. My heart sank. I was thinking, as the milk circled round

and round, that I was going to have to go out today and buy a new microwave oven. I have so much work to do. I hated the thought of that. Going out to buy a new oven. I've had this one for decades. And it takes me forever to buy something new. So many choices. So during that minute, the sixty seconds it was taking to heat up my milk, I was in a black mood. And then I noticed the mustard jars on the top of the microwave.

NINTENDO POWER: Mustard jars?

HS: Five of them. Little ones. Specialty mustards. A friend left them for me as a gift. Five little jars of mustard. Dijon, German Style Hot, Wholegrain, Dijon Grainy and Hot English.

NINTENDO POWER: That's a lot of mustard.

HS: I like the German Style Hot. But that's irrelevant. Do you know what I saw?

NINTENDO POWER: What did you see?

HS: Two of the small jars were touching, barely, but they were touching enough that when the carousel was spinning it caused the two jars to rattle against one another. That was the rattling sound. You see? I assumed something, I assumed that my microwave oven was broken or breaking down and I was completely wrong.

NINTENDO POWER: I'll try not to make assumptions.

HS: We were talking about information gathering.

NINTENDO POWER: You were.

HS: And it's all well and good. And perhaps I make information journeys harder than they need to be by doing trips to the library. And whatnot. But I'm not completely out of touch with technology. I have tenants, and have had tenants for a long, long time, all of whom are very savvy with the computers. And I hear time and time again about how much they hate Myface and such.

NINTENDO POWER: Facebook.

HS: The Facebook.

NINTENDO POWER: Just Facebook. I think you're being deliberately misleading.

HS: They love it, the Facebook to show some pictures, once in awhile. Here I am in India. And they get their news from there too. But I hear from them all the time about the crap, other people's crap, signing petitions, espousing their views, espousing, sounds like something that oozes out of a boil. And this is the problem. When we interact with people, when we talk, engage, have conversations, we wear masks, we are aware of who we are speaking with and we adjust, adapt, we change how we speak, what we speak about, because of the person we are speaking with. That other person affects what we say and how we say it. It's human nature. Call it people pleasing but there's not a whole lot wrong with it. It's a survival mechanism so that we



don't all kill each other. But on the Facebook you might have four hundred contacts.

NINTENDO POWER: Friends.

HS: Four hundred people. So how do you adjust your message when you have this vast audience? You don't. So what you see is what you get. And what you see is not what you want to see. You don't want to see, you don't want to know, what your cousin or your aunt or your neighbour really thinks about stupid shit. It makes you not like them. And you want to like them.

NINTENDO POWER: Do you have that problem with your family?

HS: I'm not on the Facebook. This is what I'm hearing from tenants.

NINTENDO POWER: Do you have family?

HS: I don't. I have a son. I told you that.

NINTENDO POWER: But you don't see him?

HS: I haven't seen him. I will see him. I want to see him.

NINTENDO POWER: No other family?

HS: That I keep in touch with? No.

NINTENDO POWER: Oh.

HS: It's not as sad as you think. I have my neighbours. We're like one big family here. What was I talking about?

NINTENDO POWER: Can we agree that you are not exactly wired in to what's available with the technology inventions and innovations that have occurred over the past decades?

HS: We can.

NINTENDO POWER: And yet you play this game.

HS: I do.

NINTENDO POWER: The game is *Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon*.

HS: It is.

NINTENDO POWER: And you love it.

HS: I am consumed. As we speak. I am consumed. And have been for years. You talk about a rabbit hole. This is a big one. And I'm still in it.

NINTENDO POWER: How did this happen?

HS: A tenant moved out. Abruptly. Disappeared. Didn't tell me he was leaving. He took some of his stuff but left behind a bunch of belongings. Some furniture. A bird. And in a drawer I found this.

NINTENDO POWER: A Nintendo 3DS.

HS: I don't use the 3D option. It's too blurry.

NINTENDO POWER: And inside.

HS: He only had the one game. The Luigi game.

NINTENDO POWER: Brother of Mario.

HS: I don't know anything about Mario. He's the popular one with the kids. I've been told. Mario pops up in this game but it's all Luigi for me.

NINTENDO POWER: Given your lack of participation in the world of modern technology some might find it surprising that you picked up a DS to play games on.

HS: It's a bit of a conundrum.

NINTENDO POWER: It's unusual.

HS: That too.

NINTENDO POWER: And did you play right away?

HS: I didn't. It just looked like nothing, nothing I'd be interested in. A piece of blue plastic that you plug into a socket. I was going to give it away to one of the kids on the alley.

NINTENDO POWER: Why didn't you?

HS: I don't know. It just never happened. And then I opened it, flipped the lid, and it was there. Dual screens. And the sound. It got me straight away. Nothing like spooky music to get my attention. Must go back to Halloween. There was never a bigger night when I was a kid. Dressing up, bony trees, wind, running from door to door, candies, chocolates. Christmas was fine, good songs, Santa, looking forward to the Eve but Halloween was a hummer. Still is. Coming up soon. I give out big chocolate bars, not the little ones. We don't get many kids though. The alley looks too scary

at night. They all go to the big houses in Hancock Park. You see the cars parked everywhere. Families drive into the rich neighbourhoods thinking they're going to get big chocolate. They get tiny morsels there. The little chocolate bars, forty to a bag.

NINTENDO POWER: Those houses must get seven hundred kids in a night though.

HS: True that. But I give out the big chocolates. Always a sweet surprise for the kids brave enough to walk down our alley.

NINTENDO POWER: Luigi.

HS: Yes. Halloween. Did you know that in the olden days some women would smear Belladonna on the shaft of a broomstick and then rub their vaginas on it?

NINTENDO POWER: Not for this magazine they don't.

HS: They would rub themselves on the broomstick and the belladonna would end up in their bodies, their bloodstream, their brain, and they'd hallucinate like mad. And this is the legend of the witch on the broomstick. Flying. Earth angels. Hallucinating. Get it? This was hundreds of years ago. All these little kids today running around with broomsticks, witches, all the pictures of witches on broomsticks in classrooms and front doors, and they don't even know where it comes from.

NINTENDO POWER: Luigi.

HS: One last thing. Halloween gets a bad rap because it's under realised, under appreciated. Here me out. Everyone talks about Christmas. Generous. Giving. It's got nothing on Halloween. Think about it. You can't go door to door on Christmas. You'd get yelled at. But Halloween. It's the one night of the year we open our doors to everyone, all the strangers, spooks and goblins. Everyone is welcome. There's nothing like it.

NINTENDO POWER: You have established a link between your love of *Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon*, the Nintendo 3DS game, and Halloween.

HS: I have.

NINTENDO POWER: The music.

HS: The spooky sounds. I had to explore it. So I did.

NINTENDO POWER: Was it challenging?

HS: I'm clumsy as hell. And those buttons and controls on the machine are very small. It was very frustrating. I couldn't figure out what the object of the game was.

NINTENDO POWER: To capture ghosts?

HS: I know that now. But when I first started I didn't know anything. A dark moon was in the sky. It kept the ghosts happy. And then King Boo shattered the moon into five pieces. And this made the ghosts

unhappy. Angry. Aggressive. So Luigi gets hired by a little man called the Professor who hides in a bunker and sends Luigi out on these missions.

NINTENDO POWER: Our readers know the game.

HS: Some might not.

NINTENDO POWER: They do. It's a Nintendo game. This is a Nintendo magazine.

HS: But not all do. And it's important information if you're just starting out. You have to move Luigi from room to room in five haunted mansions and capture the ghosts. And each mansion has a boss ghost at the end and when you defeat each boss ghost you retrieve a piece of the dark moon that was shattered. There are five pieces to retrieve and five mansions to find them in. And the ghosts get harder to catch, which is to say that early on you might have a green ghost.

NINTENDO POWER: Greenie.

HS: A Greenie with ten health.

NINTENDO POWER: HP.

HS: The HP.

NINTENDO POWER: Health points.

HS: But by the fifth mansion they have fifty. Much harder to catch.

NINTENDO POWER: Did you figure out how to catch the ghosts right away?

HS: No. It was a nightmare. I didn't know what any of the buttons did. Weeks I spent. Kept getting killed by the ghosts. Finally figured out that the "A" button zapped them with light and the "R" button sucks them into Luigi's vacuum. I can't say enough good things about the game. The sound design alone makes me so happy. The little pitter-patter you hear when you run Luigi across a floor, across carpet. That sound sends me.

NINTENDO POWER: It's very hard to describe a game. You really have to play it yourself to appreciate it.

HS: I'd recommend Luigi to anybody. How can you not like the guy? He's not like some brave superhero. He's terrified all the time. He has his little victories but he's a scared, little man. I love him. What would you call him? A reluctant hero. He doesn't want to go out on these missions. But he does. And if you play it right, play it smart, he wins. You win.

NINTENDO POWER: Have you considered purchasing other DS games?

HS: Not going to happen. This is all I can handle. And I can't imagine any other game coming close to the perfection that this game is.

NINTENDO POWER: Have you completed all five mansions?

HS: I haven't. I get stuck on some of the missions. There's at least five to six missions in each mansion so all this takes time.

NINTENDO POWER: We know that. Five to six missions.

HS: Gloomy Manor in the plains. Haunted Towers in the forest. The Old Clockworks in the desert. The Secret Mine in the snow. And the Treacherous Mansion in the ravine. I can't say enough about the geography of the game. Someone put a lot of thought into this.

NINTENDO POWER: A team did that.

HS: And what a team they were. I got stuck on the third mission of the Secret Mine for two months.

NINTENDO POWER: Across the Chasm.

HS: That's the one. I got the Gobber, the Greenie and the Slammer.

NINTENDO POWER: All of them strong.

HS: Very strong. But I did okay. The Gobber had three Hiders attacking me.

NINTENDO POWER: Luigi.

HS: Right. They had a map of the golf course, the Wilshire Country Club, in the paper. It looks just like a ghost. But not just any ghost. A Hider, they hide in furniture and other things. They pop up and throw random objects at you.

NINTENDO POWER: Luigi. They do ten damage.



HS: Ten health points. Not a lot but it's the bananas they throw that get me. I'm always slipping on those bananas and getting hammered by other ghosts. I hate the bananas. But it's the Hider, the golf course. They look identical. The map of the golf course. The shape of the Hider. Same wiggly tail at the bottom end of the course where all the golfers got shot. It's a strange world we live in. That's for sure.

NINTENDO POWER: Across the Chasm.

HS: That's right. So I got rid of the Gobber, the Greenie and the Slammer. And the chains fell off the Gondola room.

NINTENDO POWER: Which was the whole point of defeating the Gobber, the Greenie and the Slammer.

HS: Yes. Chains off. You can now go inside the gondola room. There was nothing in there. I looked for an hour. So I go back outside and try and get to the Workshop on the other side. I get across one chasm using the high wires but when I try and get on the next set of high wires I see that the ball points, the things you can attach your vacuum to so you can get carried across, these ball points, are frozen. That's where I got stuck. I couldn't get across that last chasm. This was a skullbuster. I knew I had to use that zip line to get across to complete the mission. But the

little balls, the red balls with the yellow band, I don't know what the hell they're called.

NINTENDO POWER: I don't know either. The balls.

HS: They hang from the zip line, you have to suck up onto the ball with your Poltergust, your vacuum, and the line takes you across the chasm.

NINTENDO POWER: Okay.

HS: But these balls have giant blocks of ice on them. So you can't suck up onto them to get across.

NINTENDO POWER: You cannot.

HS: And that was the problem. The blocks of ice on the balls. How do you melt the ice blocks? This was the question. And there was no answer.

NINTENDO POWER: If you used a computer you could have gone onto YouTube and watched someone do that mission. You would have seen how to melt the blocks of ice.

HS: I don't and I didn't. And I don't regret it. I'm not saying I was happy about it. But I didn't quit. I yelled many times. I'm sure my neighbours heard me. Kitten tried to help.

NINTENDO POWER: Kitten.

HS: Kitten Natividad. Hot stuff. She was in a bunch of Russ Meyers' movies. You're looking at me all doped. She's a tenant. A friend. Been here for years. She

wanted me to do what you suggested. Go on the YouTube. Find out how to melt those goddamn ice blocks.

NINTENDO POWER: Two months?

HS: I'm not proud of that. But it wasn't every minute of every day. And sometimes I left it for days on end. Just put it in a drawer.

NINTENDO POWER: The DS.

HS: The DS. Put it in a drawer and left it alone. But it wouldn't go away, you know? The ice blocks. How do you melt the ice blocks? They weren't gonna melt themselves.

NINTENDO POWER: The gondola room.

HS: I went back in there a hundred times.

NINTENDO POWER: The machine.

HS: Inside the gondola room. That one that was locked with chains. The machine. But it looks like a gun. Like a harpoon gun on a whaling boat.

NINTENDO POWER: And you never looked through it? Once you get near it, you look through it, it's a point of view device.

HS: I did but I couldn't figure out what it was supposed to do.

NINTENDO POWER: The crosshairs in the middle of the frame were not a clue?

HS: They were not. And that was my fatal mistake. I should have connected the crosshairs with aiming and firing.

NINTENDO POWER: Most people have.

HS: I didn't. Until I did. And when I did it was a revelation. The machine, the gun, the harpoon gun fires rocks, burning rocks.

NINTENDO POWER: Coal.

HS: Burning chunks of coal. So, how do you melt those chunks of ice surrounding the balls that you need to suck your vacuum onto so you can get across the chasm? With burning chunks of coal. And that's what I did. I aimed those chunks of burning coal at the chunks of ice and the hot coal melted the ice. I was then able to get across the chasm. Mission. Accomplished.

NINTENDO POWER: How often do you play?

HS: I don't want to say. It's embarrassing.

NINTENDO POWER: Does it impact your songwriting?

HS: It can. When I let it. I tell myself, just one more floor.

NINTENDO POWER: You're onto ScareScraper.

HS: I am.

NINTENDO POWER: So you have completed the Dark Moon missions.

HS: No. I'm stuck on the last mansion.

NINTENDO POWER: Treacherous Mansion.

HS: Paranormal Chaos. It's impossible.

NINTENDO POWER: Do you have the Super Poltergust?

HS: No.

NINTENDO POWER: You need more gold. You get 20,000 gold points and you unlock it. How many do you have?

HS: I don't know.

NINTENDO POWER: Go back and do missions you've already finished to collect gold. Once you get the Super Poltergust you'll finish Paranormal Chaos.

HS: That's good to know.

NINTENDO POWER: It's surprising you haven't wanted to finish your missions. You haven't finished until you defeat King Boo in the final boss battle.

HS: I'll get there.

NINTENDO POWER: You don't sound too sure.

HS: I unlocked the ScareScraper mode.

NINTENDO POWER: It's a game. Not a mode. That's in Gloomy Manor.

HS: The Visual Tricks mission in Gloomy Manor. Once you complete that you unlock ScareScraper.

NINTENDO POWER: We know.

HS: This massacre, this golf course massacre. It makes me think that whoever did it has had some experience with video games. There's something so calculated about setting that cart on fire in the tunnel. So that no one can come along and ruin the

mission by calling the police, to vanquish all of the golfers on the nine holes south of Beverly, the nine holes, the thirty-six golfers. He knew he needed time to do this. It's like the ScareScraper floors.

NINTENDO POWER: Five minutes per floor.

HS: It's tense. You have this clock ticking and you have to vanquish all the ghosts in that five minutes. Sometimes there are four rooms with ghosts and sometimes five rooms. And you have to go from room to room looking for them.

NINTENDO POWER: There's more violent games than Luigi.

HS: I'm sure there are. Just thinking about that cart on fire. And the time. The time needed. You wonder if the guy practiced, if he went to the golf course late at night, maybe two or three o'clock in the morning, and moved around, ran around, getting himself utterly familiar with the holes, the terrain. He'd have to, right? He'd have to do that. I'm sure the police are looking into that, looking at video they might have from the cameras in the golf course.

NINTENDO POWER: They'd have footage of the shooting too.

HS: But the torpedo had a mask.

NINTENDO POWER: Torpedo?

HS: The shooter. That baby mask from *Brazil*.

NINTENDO POWER: The movie.

HS: No, I'm talking about the days, the weeks, the months leading up to yesterday. Maybe he wasn't wearing a mask or anything when he was at the golf course, if he was there late, like early morning when it was dark and no one's there. Maybe they find an image of him while he's planning the caper. That might crack it. We might see his face. I'm assuming the police are looking into that. But the mission, like the ScareScaper floors. Five minutes per floor. Clock ticking. He must have timed it. Must have timed how much time he'd need to run around and shoot the golfers.

NINTENDO POWER: Do we know he ran around?

HS: Good question. Maybe he used a golf cart for some of it. Would be faster. But maybe he liked the video games.

NINTENDO POWER: Seems more like a military mission than a game mission. The gun. The submachine gun. The cart on fire in the tunnel. Sounds like a military guy or a guy who wanted to be a military guy.

HS: There's names coming out.

NINTENDO POWER: Names?

HS: The golfers. The dead guys. They're starting to name the guys that were shot.

NINTENDO POWER: I saw that.

HS: A lot of wiggage out there.

NINTENDO POWER: Wiggage?

HS: Brains. Smarts. Not just rich cats, smart ones too. You ever hear of Bill Hicks?

NINTENDO POWER: I think so.

HS: Comedian. Died young. Too young.

NINTENDO POWER: Drugs?

HS: Cancer. Pancreas. He had this one joke but they weren't really jokes. They were more like stories, observations about everything under the sun. Nothing wrong with jokes. Rodney Dangerfield had jokes and they worked just fine. Our family was so poor we used to wait around outside Kentucky Fried Chicken and lick other people's fingers.

NINTENDO POWER: I don't get it.

HS: Finger-licking good. That was their tag. Their advertising tag line.

NINTENDO POWER: Oh.

HS: Doesn't work if you have to explain it.

NINTENDO POWER: No.

HS: I was an ugly kid, I was so ugly when I played in the sandbox the neighbour's cat used to try and bury me.

NINTENDO POWER: That's not bad. That's Hicks?

HS: Dangerfield. Hicks wasn't that type. The zinger type. The one-liner. He was talking about a teenager in Arizona or somewhere, doesn't matter.



NINTENDO POWER: Dangerfield?

HS: Hicks. Bill Hicks. He lived in a trailer park.

NINTENDO POWER: Bill Hicks?

HS: The teenager he's talking about. In one of this shows. Stand-up comedy. Some guy. Young guy. The one he's talking about. He was a hopdog. Lots of drugs. Drinking. Whatnot. He listened to Ozzy Osbourne or Judas Priest, I can't remember. The hopdog hung himself, committed suicide, and the parents blamed the music, they blamed the lyrics. There was one particular song, can't remember what it was, doesn't matter, but they blamed this song, the lyrics, they said the lyrics promoted suicide, and they said their son committed suicide because of this song. And it went to trial. They sued the band. And it got a lot of publicity. Big trial. Did this song cause this hopdog to snuff his pilot light? Bill was confused about all the attention the trial was getting. It was happening while he was doing his shows. And he laid out the facts. An idiot, an incurable moron, a troubled teenager, smokes way too much tea, gets jagged way too often, lives in a trailer park, listens to Judas Priest, and commits suicide. That's how Bill laid it out. Not in those words but you get the idea. A moron killed himself.

NINTENDO POWER: That's cruel.

HS: That's Bill. But that's what he said. So he talks about all the attention that this trial was getting and he pauses, and says, who cares about this kid killing himself? It just means that there's gonna be one less gas station attendant in the world. Lots of laughs from the crowd. And then he says, Bill says, we did not lose a cancer cure here. More laughs. So when I'm looking at the stories about some of the golfers in the paper, I was thinking about Bill, thinking about that joke, that story, because we might have lost a cancer cure. Two of the cats, two of the golfers were involved in some hard-core research into cancer at one of the universities, UCLA I think, and were getting close to something big. But now they're dead. So we might have lost a cancer cure. It's kind of the opposite of a kid in trailer park killing himself. I guess that's what I'm trying to say.

NINTENDO POWER: Have they released all the names? Of the golfers, I mean.

HS: No. They don't have them all. Well, they probably have them but they haven't released all the names, not all thirty-six. It's what you'd expect though. The cancer-cure guys, I don't know if they were doctors or researchers or what but that's what you expect at a private country club like that. Lots of

powerful people were killed. Rich people. And a few smart ones too.

NINTENDO POWER: Anyone famous?

HS: Not yet. You'd think we would have heard by now though. Some of those guys were shot in the face so maybe they're not recognisable.

NINTENDO POWER: They'd have wallets.

HS: True. But who knows. Notifications. Next of kin. That type of thing. There was a foursome of actors. Didn't recognise the names. But one of the faces I had seen on a show, somewhere, sometime. A couple of agents I think.

NINTENDO POWER: Real estate?

HS: Hollywood agents. Like I said. There's some powerful people were killed yesterday. And rich people. A few doctors. A dentist. We're just starting to find out who. Makes you wonder if there's someone dead, someone that was killed, some powerful person, a powerful man, maybe that one person was the target and the torpedo wanted to make it look like some random shooting massacre by killing all these other golfers but maybe it was all about killing one.

NINTENDO POWER: Killing the other thirty-five to disguise killing one?

HS: I'm not saying that makes complete sense but what do we know? Not much.

NINTENDO POWER: We need to get back to Luigi.

ScareScraper.

HS: Be my pleasure.

NINTENDO POWER: Where are you at?

HS: I'm doing twenty-five floors.

NINTENDO POWER: There's four modes.

HS: I'm doing Hunter mode. Not interested in Rush or the other two.

NINTENDO POWER: Polterpup and Surprise. They're fun.

HS: I got my hands full with Hunter mode.

NINTENDO POWER: You know you can do five floors and ten floors. You don't have to start with twenty-five.

HS: I'm doing twenty-five floors. In Expert.

NINTENDO POWER: There's Normal and Hard. You don't have to do Expert.

HS: I want to complete twenty-five floors in Expert.

NINTENDO POWER: It's a multiplayer game. It was designed and distributed and promoted as a multiplayer game. It's entirely possible to finish twenty-five floors in Normal or Hard. It's extraordinarily difficult to finish twenty-five floors in Expert mode.

HS: That's why I'm trying. Swinging for the moon, pal.

NINTENDO POWER: You're supposed to be doing it with other players. Four players catching ghosts. Not one. You can connect with other players and work together. That's why that question comes up. Are you sure you want to take on the ScareScraper without a full team?

HS: On the screen. It asks you that, I know.

NINTENDO POWER: It's a warning. Play with other players.

HS: I ignore it.

NINTENDO POWER: You're brave.

HS: Maybe foolish.

NINTENDO POWER: How far have you gotten?

HS: Seventeen.

NINTENDO POWER: Seventeenth floor?

HS: Yes.

NINTENDO POWER: That's good.

HS: But a long way from twenty-five.

NINTENDO POWER: You need Suction Level Three, I think.

HS: It would help. That's a strong vacuum.

NINTENDO POWER: But getting that upgrade doesn't guarantee you get to the twenty-fifth floor. You still have to earn that.

HS: I understand that. Boy, do I understand that. I have had a few moments, bad moments, when I die.

NINTENDO POWER: When Luigi dies.

HS: When Luigi gets killed by a ghost.

NINTENDO POWER: He goes to sleep. There's no talk of death or dying.

HS: When it ends, when you don't get rid of the ghosts on a floor because of the ghosts themselves or because time has run out. I have set the game down.

NINTENDO POWER: The DS.

HS: I have set it down. Carefully. Carefully set it down on the table because of what I want to do to it. I am in a rage. I want nothing more than to throw the machine at the wall.

NINTENDO POWER: The DS.

HS: Throw it as hard as I can and then smash it, crush it under the heel of my shoe, and just keep bashing it and bashing it. Screaming. But I don't. It takes every ounce of every atom of restraint, disciplined restraint, the restraint to not do that. To not smash that machine into pieces, destroy it. To live to fight another day. But the rage remains. So after I carefully place the machine on the table I fall to the ground, I literally fall out of my chair, fall to the ground and I rage. I scream. But I don't scream loud. I clench my jaw and I scream, a muffled scream. I lay there or lie there. I never know which, I lie there and I constrict every muscle in my body, my jaw, my legs, arms, neck, stomach, so tight, I constrict all of my

muscles to a point where I think the bones in my body might begin cracking, and I know if I scream out loud that they will hear me at the end of the alley someone might call the police.

NINTENDO POWER: Or an ambulance.

HS: The police and a paramedic. And it seems in that moment as this sound escapes my mouth and my bones are on the verge of cracking that all is lost, that what was there is gone and is not coming back.

NINTENDO POWER: ScareScraper is a multiplayer game. It's not meant for solo play.

HS: And after awhile.

NINTENDO POWER: How long?

HS: Minutes. Many minutes. I stand. And I am dizzy.

NINTENDO POWER: It's not healthy. Blood pressure.

HS: I steady myself by resting a hand on the table. Hours pass, I slowly recover and then it begins again. The optimism returns, the hope that things will be better next time. The will to fight, to open doors and get the ghosts. I select Hunter mode. I ignore the option of five floors, ten floors, and I set the game for twenty-five floors. I select my difficulty. Expert. Not Normal. Not Hard. Expert. And away I go.

NINTENDO POWER: Luigi.

HS: Away he goes. Apprehensive. Scared. But doing his job. Liberating the ScareScraper of ghosts. To

achieve the ultimate goal. To defeat the final boss ghost, the Brain, on the twenty-fifth floor.

NINTENDO POWER: And unlock the Endless floor option.

HS: Endless. I have heard of this. Yes. That is the goal.

NINTENDO POWER: It can be unlocked, Endless can be unlocked if you complete twenty-five floors in the Normal or Hard modes.

HS: Yes. But the sense of satisfaction, the surge of righteous will not be as great. Will not be as sweet. It must be done in Expert. Has to be. And to unlock Endless. That is the expert's quest, to solve that riddle.

NINTENDO POWER: It's a multiplayer game. You are supposed to have the help of three other players.

HS: I do it alone. I go in alone. I do okay. You experience a lot of failure.

NINTENDO POWER: Isn't failure the reason you play?

HS: You want to succeed. You want to get rid of all the ghosts. In the mansions. In the ScareScraper. You want to clean those rooms up.

NINTENDO POWER: Yes. Everyone wants that. But it's the failure that brings you back to play again. If you won every time, and if it was easy, you wouldn't play.



HS: I just want to defeat the boss, the Brain on the twenty-fifth floor of ScareScraper. That's all I want. The failure. It's no fun. There. I cracked my jaw about Luigi. Happy?

NINTENDO POWER: That's what we're here for.

HS: I want to say something about forever.

NINTENDO POWER: It's not necessary.

HS: At the end of the day, we're all going to die.

NINTENDO POWER: Well.

HS: You just sighed. You just did that. That big, judging sigh. And you looked away when you did it. Your chest lifted up and you did it, you took that deep breath, you did that sigh that says, this guy, this guy sitting across the table from me is an idiot, he's crazy. Or stupid. Or all of them. This is why I want to talk about it. I don't like the idea that I look stupid for wanting to talk about something that was really important to me when it happened, and something that is just as important to me now. Today. Right now. And the expressions coming off your map and the terrible sounds coming out of your kisser. It's a bug-sized bring down. I'm not saying I talk about it, talk about the forever in a way that's good, in a way that makes sense to anybody, I'm not saying I can describe it in a way that you'll understand and I agree, it's a fool pool, I'm

trying to get you across to the other side. That's probably not going to work today.

NINTENDO POWER: Then stop trying.

HS: I'm trying to explain myself. You've got me outside your door with some tasty credileys but you won't open, won't eat 'em, won't even look at 'em.

NINTENDO POWER: What's a crediley?

HS: If only they could hear the sneer, the fury that companioned that question. A crediley is some yummalicious food but that's not the answer. I play Luigi. But I write songs. Some songs, some lyrics, describe the forever experience and it's my contention that the issuers of those lyrics must have had, or probably had an experience of the forever for them to write about it. And there's plenty of history of that from William Blake to Walt Whitman. Whitman loved jiving about the forever and he did it better than I'll ever do, which is him saying, I do not think seventy years is the time of a man or woman, nor that seventy millions of years is the time of a man or woman, nor that years will ever stop the existence of me, or any one else. That's a wise man telling a green man something. There is no death is what he's talking about. The body dies. But that's not the end.

NINTENDO POWER: I got that.

HS: You have to have a sense of wonder about it all. I don't have it often but there's times I look out from my crow's nest, looking down at the alley, the people, looking out at the city, the cars, the buses, the mountains, the trees, downtown, the tall buildings, looking up at the clouds, the sun, the big bean, the big heater, acres of sky, and just exclaim, what is all this?

NINTENDO POWER: What am I doing here?

HS: And if the big thing that happens is death then get that figured out. Get that sorted.

NINTENDO POWER: You can't.

HS: I did.

NINTENDO POWER: Belief.

HS: Experience.

NINTENDO POWER: Belief.

HS: Whereto answering, the sea, delaying not, hurrying not, whispered me through the night, and very plainly before day-break, lisped to me the low and delicious word death, and again death, ever death, death, death, hissing melodious. *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking.*

NINTENDO POWER: You memorised that.

HS: I did.

NINTENDO POWER: Why is death so important to you?

HS: Well.

NINTENDO POWER: Are you going to answer that?

HS: I've been trying not to.

NINTENDO POWER: You probably should.

HS: Excuse me.

NINTENDO POWER: You've had a phone call.

HS: We should wrap this up.

NINTENDO POWER: What happened?

HS: That was a neighbour. Mrs. Whipple. She lives across the street. She's 102 years old.

NINTENDO POWER: Wow. Is she okay?

HS: She's not ready for the shroud tailor yet. She's from England. Rudy called her. He lives further down the alley. Rudy Cienfuegos. He used to be Rudy Tucker from New Orleans. But then he found out that his grandfather was Camilo Cienfuegos. He was one of the architects of the Cuban revolution. He died in a plane crash. Mrs. Whipple's husband had a helicopter crash but survived and celebrated by drinking forty-five shots of tequila. He died. Too much tequila. It's the massacre. Rudy heard that the police are looking for someone who was seen running away from the golf course wearing a backpack.

NINTENDO POWER: Where?

HS: Running west on 3rd Street, away from the golf course, running past Rossmore and Larchmont and other streets. They want to find the backpack man.

NINTENDO POWER: The shooter?

HS: It was Rudy.

NINTENDO POWER: Your neighbour?

HS: Yes.

NINTENDO POWER: The shooter?

HS: No. The backpack. He was there. It was him. He had the backpack. He was running down 3rd Street. Right then. Right at that time.

NINTENDO POWER: What time?

HS: Right after the shootings. Right around the time after the golfers were shot. So it would have been shortly after the last golfer was killed.

NINTENDO POWER: And he was running?

HS: Rudy. He was running down the sidewalk. Down 3rd Street, running away from the golf course. The backpack. It was him. He says it was him.

NINTENDO POWER: Maybe it was someone else.

HS: How many cats are running down 3rd Street at that exact time with a backpack? Right after the murders.

NINTENDO POWER: Didn't your neighbour have the gun?

HS: Crandal. He previously owned the gun. It was stolen. Last New Year's Eve. Nine months ago. This is Rudy. Right after the murders. Running away from the golf course.

*Rave*

"Up and Atom: Get Hip to the Cool Hot Clues"

RAVE: You mentioned before we turned the microphone on that you are thinking of going back to your birth name, the name you were born with.

HARTLEY: Let me say first, what an honour it is to be sitting down with *Rave*, the frank look at today's pop world. It was one of my favourite magazines back in Nebraska. A good, thick read, always worth the wait to get it in the mail. Chock full of buster.

RAVE: Well, we've been out of print for a while. It's good to be back.

HARTLEY: It's good to have you back.

RAVE: You have an unusual name. Your birth name.

HARTLEY: It's not unusual at all. Pretty common. It's my one and only.

RAVE: Can you tell us what it is?

HARTLEY: Manson. Charles Manson.

RAVE: And that's no joke.

HARTLEY: It's no joke.

RAVE: You just showed me your birth certificate.

HARTLEY: And it's no forgery.

RAVE: You have a song. A new song.

HARTLEY: It's happening.

RAVE: Is it hard to get a song going after so many years out of the music business?

HARTLEY: The lyrics came easy. I'm working on the mood, the notes, the musical notes so it can be music, a song. I want tears of joy. You ever see *Starman*, the Jeff Bridges movie? Came out a few years back. He plays an alien who lands on Earth. I think he crash lands. There's a scene where he uses his alien powers to bring life back to a dead deer in the back of a truck, it was shot, the deer was shot by a hunter and he gives it life. The deer comes back to life and scampers away from the parking lot. Tears of joy, I had. Think about that scene a lot. It was technically science fiction, I suppose, but that moment, that scene, wouldn't have cost much to do. Nothing at all. And think for a moment about the emotion it brings out in you. The best kind of emotion. Tears of joy. That's what I had. Now think about all the biggity movies that get made these days, the ones that cost hundreds of millions of dollars with all the gadgets and whatnots and special effects that are just effects and not that effective because they're not that special and all that money spent on that, and then think back to *Starman* and rest a bit on that moment when that deer comes back to life and then you realise you don't need all that bread, you don't have to blow truckloads of gold to make something special,

to have a special effect. Tears of joy. That's what I'm after.

RAVE: I meant once the song is finished.

HARTLEY: How so?

RAVE: Once the song is completed.

HARTLEY: Thanks for the vote of confidence. I need it tonight.

RAVE: Once the song is done. And you're happy with it. What do you do with it?

HARTLEY: Excellent question.

RAVE: You haven't had a song recorded in ...

HARTLEY: Long time.

RAVE: And those recordings were not ...

HARTLEY: Performed by famous singers or bands.

RAVE: What's the opposite of famous? Even, well known, or somewhat known?

HARTLEY: Yes, I know my history. And you've done your research.

RAVE: So this song. The one you are finishing. What do you do with it?

HARTLEY: Back in the game. Try and set it up with someone. Hopefully someone good and hopefully someone who has lots of people, preferably millions of people, who want to hear their next song. That's where you want to set the bar. Up high there.

RAVE: Where your hand is.



HARTLEY: Higher.

RAVE: But how do you do that?

HARTLEY: You work with your people to get your song in the hands of the right people.

RAVE: Who are your people?

HARTLEY: I still have some contacts. People I've worked with in the past.

RAVE: And they are still reasonably coherent?

HARTLEY: They're not that old. I'm not either. We're not dribbling here. Yet.

RAVE: I meant, effective, they can actually do what you want done? They can get your song in the hands of major recording artists?

HARTLEY: I'm going to find out.

RAVE: Is this a manager?

HARTLEY: It could be.

RAVE: Do you have a manager? A rep? Anyone?

HARTLEY: Nobody cares about me or how many years it's been since the last recording, they care about the song, they care if it moves them a little, and if it moves them a lot then you know you're onto something. They just want something good, maybe something that moves them to tears, tears of joy, and if you do that, if I do that, if I can do that, and that's my job, to do that, then it doesn't matter about me, it just doesn't matter about me. There's your answer.

RAVE: I guess what I'm getting at is this, let's say you find your musical notes, and these notes accompany your lyrics in a way that creates the tears of joy you are after, if you manage to do that, which would be an amazing achievement, that you do that, but what a shame if you do that and you then discover that you have nobody to help you, that you have nobody who can actually do something with the song, nobody to get it into the hands of the right people so it actually gets recorded by someone who has legitimate song recording credentials, credentials that get the song out there for millions of people to enjoy.

HARTLEY: Congratulations. You've managed to wipe me out.

RAVE: I'm sorry.

HARTLEY: You've brought the weight. And it's a major bummer, a bring-down, a knockdown.

RAVE: I didn't mean to do that.

HARTLEY: I've got enough distractions going on here. I don't need this.

RAVE: We should mention that, yesterday, just before noon you had a major event at a nearby golf course.

HARTLEY: The Wilshire Country Club. A shooting. The Columbus Day Massacre, as it is now known. Golfers, thirty-six of them, shot dead.

RAVE: And you've had some involvement with some of your neighbours.

HARTLEY: Slow down, Secretariat. They found a gun, the gun that was used, a submachine gun, a gun that was owned by a neighbour. It was stolen nine months ago.

RAVE: It was illegal.

HARTLEY: In California. Not where it was purchased. Crandal didn't know it was illegal in California.

RAVE: Crandal?

HARTLEY: Cobb. Crandal Cobb. That's my neighbour. Read your papers. That's old news.

RAVE: If he hadn't brought the gun to California then this massacre doesn't happen.

HARTLEY: If he didn't steal Crandal's gun then maybe the torpedo gets a different gun. We're unique that way. America. The guns. The crazy. It's a bad jazz soup. People say they want to protect themselves.

RAVE: From what?

HARTLEY: Other crazies with small guns. The government with big guns.

RAVE: Get rid of the guns.

HARTLEY: It's an epidemic. I won't disagree with that. It just goes round and round, doesn't it?

RAVE: What does?

HARTLEY: The argument. Here. America. The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.

Nothing changes. Something's wrong. Something's terribly wrong. I wish we could resolve it. You and me. Right now. Too many guns and too much crazy.

RAVE: But something else has come up.

HARTLEY: A few of them.

RAVE: A few of what?

HARTLEY: A few something elses.

RAVE: Another neighbour.

HARTLEY: Rudy. Rudy Cienfuegos. Used to be Rudy Tucker from New Orleans. His grandfather was Camilo Cienfuegos, one of the architects of the Cuban revolution. He was better looking than Che Guevara. No lie.

RAVE: You said you sent him to the police.

HARTLEY: I did. Just before you got here. My father used to hate that word.

RAVE: What word?

HARTLEY: Got.

RAVE: Why?

HARTLEY: I don't think it was used much when he was growing up. And then it started getting used more and more. He winced when I used it. Got. He'd wince. And sometimes he'd say it out loud after I just said it so I could hear what it sounded like. Got. He made it sound like a fart.

RAVE: Why is that word a problem? It's used all the time.

HARTLEY: Not in our house it wasn't.

RAVE: What other word are you supposed to use?

HARTLEY: Well, what did I just tell you? Just before you got here, is what I said. Got here. My father would suggest, just before you arrived here instead of got here. He called it a lazy word, low class, showed a lack of mental accumulation, sophistication, a lack of effort, lazy, said that words should creep out like the shadow, be smooth.

RAVE: That would make me nervous. Not being able to use the word, got.

HARTLEY: It wasn't fun.

RAVE: It's a word that gets used all the time.

HARTLEY: It's a hard word to get rid of. When I use it today I can still feel my father's eyes burning holes in the back of my skull. My mother used to wake me up in the morning. She said the same words every time. Up and at 'em. That's what she'd say. Open my door, walk in, pull the curtains, up and at 'em, she'd say. Get up and get after it, right? Get after what you're trying to do. Sounds less hokey than go for it. I like those words now. But do you want to know a secret?

RAVE: Sure.

HARTLEY: I didn't know what she was saying until a few years ago.

RAVE: What?

HARTLEY: I never heard, at 'em. Never heard of it.

RAVE: So what did you think she was saying?

HARTLEY: Atom. Up and atom.

RAVE: Which makes no sense.

HARTLEY: Or Adam. Up and Adam.

RAVE: Which isn't your name.

HARTLEY: All those years. And I'm dead serious when I say it wasn't until a few years ago that I figured out what she was saying every morning. Just goes to show you that advice from your parents might not make sense at the time that they're giving it.

RAVE: Rudy. The Cuban.

HARTLEY: Not Cuban. From Louisiana. His grandfather was Camilo Cienfuegos. Well, according to him he was.

RAVE: You're not sure?

HARTLEY: I wasn't there.

RAVE: Where?

HARTLEY: With Rudy's grandmother. And Camilo. In the jungle. I wasn't there when they shared their delicate gear with each other.

RAVE: Does it matter?

HARTLEY: What?

RAVE: If Camilo was really his grandfather?

HARTLEY: It might. Yes sir, it might.

RAVE: But Rudy.

HARTLEY: He told Mrs. Whipple.

RAVE: Mrs. Whipple?

HARTLEY: Another neighbour. Right across from me.  
One hundred and two years old.

RAVE: That's old.

HARTLEY: That's really old. That's platinum. He told her he had seen on the news that they were looking for a guy with a backpack running away from the golf course. Right after the shootings. The backpack man. They were looking for this guy, the backpack guy.

RAVE: They still are.

HARTLEY: I know that now. It was Rudy.

RAVE: The backpack guy?

HARTLEY: The backpack guy.

RAVE: The shooter?

HARTLEY: The backpack guy. Rudy's a jogger. A runner. He's been training for the L.A. Marathon. He runs every day. And yesterday was every day. He was running. He was running when the golfers were getting shot.

RAVE: He had a backpack?

HARTLEY: Sometimes he runs with a backpack. He puts in bags of rice, a bunch of bags of rice, for extra weight, he showed me this, so he runs with this extra

weight, so his legs get stronger and then he can finish this marathon he wants to run. His first. His first marathon.

RAVE: Why rice?

HARTLEY: For weight.

RAVE: Rice weighs that much?

HARTLEY: Bags of it does. A bunch of bags. Big bags of rice. In his backpack.

RAVE: So it was Rudy? Your neighbour? He's the backpack guy they're looking for?

HARTLEY: He thinks he is. He thinks he's the backpack guy.

RAVE: Running away from the golf course?

HARTLEY: Here's the route. The route he does. The running route. Every day. He leaves here, scoots down Van Ness to Clinton, takes Clinton to Larchmont, turns down Larchmont to Beverly, goes west on Beverly, Beverly cuts right through the middle of the golf course, over that tunnel, the narrow tunnel where the torpedo put that cart on fire, he continues on Beverly to Highland, goes south on Highland to 3rd Street, comes back east on 3rd and passes by the golf course again, the tail end of the ghost.

RAVE: Ghost?

HARTLEY: On a map. The golf course looks like a ghost, the bottom part of the course, a tail, it looks



like a ghost without legs, just that tail you get on the bottom of a ghost. That's the part you pass when you're on 3rd Street, continue across 3rd Street to Van Ness and then turn left, up Van Ness, north on Van Ness, back here. That's what Rudy did. That's what he does every day. That's what he did yesterday. Right around the time of the murders.

RAVE: By the way, street directions in print for an unfamiliar city are useless. And annoying. So the backpack man is Rudy? Your neighbour?

HARTLEY: Has to be. He was there.

RAVE: That's a big deal. Everyone's talking about backpack man.

HARTLEY: It's not a big deal at all. He was jogging.

RAVE: The backpack is suspicious.

HARTLEY: Full of rice, my friend. Bags of rice. Training. The Los Angeles Marathon.

RAVE: Has he talked to the police?

HARTLEY: He's talking to them right now. But he wasn't going to. After Mrs. Whipple told me about what he'd said.

RAVE: Mrs. Whipple, your neighbour.

HARTLEY: Yes, the one who lives across from me. After she told me about Rudy I went to see him. He's a few doors down from Mrs. Whipple. He said he thought

the backpack man they were looking for might have been him. That's when he told me all about the streets he runs on, the directions and whatnot, the ones I just told you about. Cut them out if you don't like them.

RAVE: He's sure it was him?

HARTLEY: He was fairly certain about it.

RAVE: That he was running down the street, running away from the golf course right after the murders? The shooting spree?

HARTLEY: Nothing doing, pal. You make that sound suspicious. Incriminating. He was jogging. Running. Recreational running. Training. Do you remember the London bombings?

RAVE: A little bit.

HARTLEY: These guys had backpacks. The ones who set off their bombs? They had bombs in their backpacks.

RAVE: Yes.

HARTLEY: A few weeks later, maybe it was months, but I think it was weeks because everyone still had the heebies. There was a guy with a backpack, I think he was running. The pounders saw this.

RAVE: Pounders?

HARTLEY: Police. Some cop saw him and got scared.

RAVE: Got.

HARTLEY: Became. Became scared. Right away. Fast scared. Started chasing the guy.

RAVE: Was he Muslim in appearance?

HARTLEY: Might have been, I don't remember.

Profiled. Probably. Anyways, this backpack guy is running, late for his train I think. And the pounder is yelling for him to stop. I think that's what happened. And maybe the backpack guy didn't hear him, maybe he was listening to music on his headphones or his ear phones. But he didn't stop, for whatever reason, or the pounder just panicked, I don't remember, and they shot him, shot him dead. All because of his backpack.

RAVE: And running.

HARTLEY: And because he was running. I think he was running. So you just did what those pounders did.

RAVE: What?

HARTLEY: You're twisting your wig about a backpack.

RAVE: You can hide things in a backpack.

HARTLEY: Like rice. Bags of rice.

RAVE: What did the shooter wear?

HARTLEY: He had the jumpsuit. I call it the Pete Townshend jumpsuit.

RAVE: You could stuff that into a backpack. After the shootings. And shoes. Maybe stuff shoes in there too.

HARTLEY: What about the mask? The big baby mask that the torpedo had on his head. The one from *Brazil*. The movie.

RAVE: What about it?

HARTLEY: That's a big mask. That doesn't fit in a backpack.

RAVE: Maybe it folds up.

HARTLEY: Looked like hard plastic. The mask. A hard, plastic mask. They're still looking for it.

RAVE: You finish the shooting, you strip off the jumpsuit, that only takes seconds, whip off your boots.

HARTLEY: Was he wearing boots? The torpedo?

RAVE: I don't think so.

HARTLEY: I thought I read he was wearing slippers.

RAVE: Moccasins.

HARTLEY: Indian moccasins. That's right. Columbus Day. Invasion day. That's what Rudy calls it.

RAVE: Calls what?

HARTLEY: Columbus Day.

RAVE: He doesn't like Christopher Columbus?

HARTLEY: He's the grandson of Camilo Cienfuegos.

RAVE: So?

HARTLEY: He doesn't like tyranny. It's in his blood, is what he says.

RAVE: And Columbus was a tyrant.

HARTLEY: Rudy believes he was. An imperialist tyrant is what he called him. Not somebody to name a holiday after.

RAVE: And this is the guy running away from the golf course right after the murders?

HARTLEY: Who?

RAVE: Rudy. Your neighbour.

HARTLEY: Because it was Columbus Day? And he's told me once or twice that he doesn't like Christopher Columbus? Hot clues, Nancy Drew.

RAVE: Maybe the jogging was just an alibi. Maybe he jogged to the golf course, jumped a fence, threw on his jumpsuit.

HARTLEY: The mask. What about the mask? The big, baby mask?

RAVE: Maybe he dropped it off the night before. Stashed it behind a bush in the golf course. Maybe he stashed everything the night before. The gun. The ammunition. Maybe all he carried in the backpack was the jumpsuit and the moccasins.

HARTLEY: He showed me his backpack. Bags of rice.

RAVE: That doesn't prove anything.

HARTLEY: What have you proved?

RAVE: He's gone to the police?

HARTLEY: Right now. As we speak. He's at the police. At least he better be. He said he was going. He wasn't going to do it.

RAVE: Do what?

HARTLEY: Tell the police that he might have been the guy with the backpack that a few witnesses saw running down 3rd Street. I think two of them were at a bus stop. There, on 3rd. Another one was walking her dog.

RAVE: Why didn't he want to talk to the police?

HARTLEY: I think he was scared.

RAVE: Of what?

HARTLEY: I don't know. At first he didn't want to believe it was him. He said that maybe there was another guy with a backpack. I told him, maybe, but probably too coincidental. I told him, go in now, everyone's already hopped up on this backpack guy. Nip it in the bud. Nobody's saying that the guy with the backpack shot the golfers. All the police have been saying is, we want to talk to this person, the backpack guy. So, Rudy, this is what I told him, just go in, go to the station, take your backpack with you, but don't wear it, carry it, in case they think you have a bomb in there, walk in and say, my name is Rudy Cienfuegos, I am a jogger, I jog with bags of rice in my backpack, I am training for the Los Angeles Marathon, I have several neighbours who can verify this, as part of my training, I jog past the golf course, passing it once as I go down Beverly, and I pass it again, a second time, coming back down 3rd. And this is when I think

the witnesses saw me. As I was jogging back down 3rd. I think this backpack guy might be me. Here's my backpack. Here's the rice bags.

RAVE: Good job.

HARTLEY: I've now saved two neighbours from themselves.

RAVE: Two?

HARTLEY: Crandal. The guy who owned the gun. The murder weapon. When it got stolen.

RAVE: Got.

HARTLEY: Stop. When it was stolen, he wasn't going to report it. Can you imagine? Thirty-six golfers get massacred, they find the gun. Who's the owner? Crandal Cobb. Here's where he lives. They don't knock on his door. They swoop. The pounders and the snatchers. They swoop into our alley, smash down his door, guns drawn, everyone with happy triggers, maybe they shoot him dead. Crandal. Shot dead. Or even if they don't shoot him dead there's going to be a mountain of suspicion. Why didn't you report that the gun was stolen? The murder weapon. Thirty-six golfers. Your gun. And Rudy. They'd eventually figure out who it was. And just like Crandal, they'd swoop, guns drawn, ready to shoot. I have quite possibly saved both men from being killed or at the very least, suspected.

RAVE: You're a good neighbour.

HARTLEY: Straight talk.

RAVE: Do you think the police will ask Rudy if he knew that Crandal owned that gun?

HARTLEY: Who knows?

RAVE: You'd think they'll ask.

HARTLEY: Maybe.

RAVE: It's a perfect gun for a massacre. A perfect gun to steal.

HARTLEY: A gun wouldn't be hard to find.

RAVE: But not a gun like that. Especially with a silencer.

HARTLEY: Dampener. It's a sound dampener.

RAVE: They'll ask the neighbours.

HARTLEY: What?

RAVE: If Rudy ever talked about Crandal Cobb having that gun.

HARTLEY: I don't know how he would have known.

RAVE: You knew.

HARTLEY: I did.

RAVE: Could you have mentioned it in conversation with Rudy?

HARTLEY: I don't remember. This is nonsense. How could Rudy have killed the joggers when he was jogging?

RAVE: That could be his alibi in case he was seen.

HARTLEY: There wouldn't have been time.



RAVE: There might have been time. From where he passed the golf course on Beverly, down to Highland and back down 3rd Street. That's enough time. That could be his alibi. That he was jogging.

HARTLEY: What? He'd going to jog over to the golf course with the gun and ammunition in his backpack? Hop the fence and nobody saw this?

RAVE: It's possible. It's also possible that he went to the golf course the night before and hid and waited.

HARTLEY: What?

RAVE: Maybe he never left your alley to go jogging. Maybe he was already at the golf course. All night. Waiting. And once he was done with the shooting, he dumped the gun, threw his jumpsuit and moccasins in his backpack, hopped a fence and jogged back here. Did anyone see him leaving the alley to go jogging on Monday?

HARTLEY: What about the mask? The baby mask?

RAVE: I don't know. Took it with him the night before?

HARTLEY: And where is the mask?

RAVE: They haven't found it.

HARTLEY: It's a big mask. And someone put up those filming notification tags. Someone did that. Or hired someone to do it. Whoever did this wanted to leave a

mark. These guys who do these massacres commit suicide. This guy didn't.

RAVE: Or guys. Could have been more than one.

HARTLEY: It's like an arsonist. They set the fire and they want to watch everything burn. They light the match, start the fire, drive home, put their feet up, watch it on television and start masturbating.

RAVE: You made a discovery.

HARTLEY: I did.

RAVE: And you told me before we started recording that you weren't entirely comfortable discussing some of the details because of the sensitive nature of some of the information.

HARTLEY: I'm not. I said. I'm not entirely comfortable.

RAVE: This is a monthly magazine. Our interview won't be published for months. If there's anything you say that you want edited or cut we can do that.

HARTLEY: Okay but I'm still not sure I'm going to divulge everything. They're just rumours. The sensitive parts. Rumours.

RAVE: You saw a name in the paper.

HARTLEY: The victims. The names are still coming out. One guy. They had a tough time identifying. His face was gone. I assume he had a wallet. But no face.

So they wanted to be sure. So they made sure and confirmed him as a victim. Simon Thistleton.

RAVE: That's from the paper.

HARTLEY: No, it was on the news. So it's not a secret or anything.

RAVE: He's a bit famous.

HARTLEY: Not his face. His voice. *Hadley the Hippo*.

RAVE: The television show.

HARTLEY: The kid's show. The crazy, loveable hippopotamus.

RAVE: With the stutter. Not as popular as SpongeBob. Or as good. But way better than Barney & Friends. It's popular. The show. *Hadley the Hippo*.

HARTLEY: It is. He's dead. He has a history. With this alley. I'm sure all of this will come out. Or it won't. Because it won't matter. It was years ago. I got the shivers when I saw his name. Of all people. Him. Simon Thistleton. You want to talk about a creep, a hated creep, a creep who was hated on this alley, that was Simon. Of course he's dead now so I should be a little more, what's the word, judicious, in my choice of words. But that's what he was. I wasn't as angry with him. But others were. What he did.

RAVE: What happened?

HARTLEY: I didn't see it. I was away getting my driver's license renewed. Had to do eye tests and all

that. Barely passed. I guessed on a few. By the time I came back to the alley it was all over. The car was still there.

RAVE: What car?

HARTLEY: Simon's car. Simon Thistleton. Hadley. The hippo. A Cadillac Escalade. All crumpled up against a light pole. But it might have been the telephone pole. The poles that have all the wires up top. Is that a telephone pole? So maybe it wasn't the light pole. They had to replace it anyway. It was damaged.

RAVE: And this was Simon's car?

HARTLEY: By the time I got back it was all over. Simon was gone. So keep this in mind. Everything I heard was, what do you call it?

RAVE: Speculation?

HARTLEY: Well, after the fact. Just so you know. I wasn't there and if I'm not somewhere then I can't say with one-hundred per cent certainty that everything happened the way they said it happened. You don't know Madeline Mendez.

RAVE: No.

HARTLEY: She's a young girl who lives here. On this alley. I teach her piano. She's damaged. Her face looks like a Halloween mask. I probably shouldn't describe her that way. Can you cut that?

RAVE: Sure.

HARTLEY: She's horribly deformed. Her face. She has missing fingers. But irregardless, regardless, that was another word my father didn't want me using.

Irregardless. I heard it all the time. But he said it wasn't a word. I didn't believe him. And he also said alot with no space wasn't a word. He made me look it up in the dictionary. He was right. I was wrong.

RAVE: Madeline.

HARTLEY: Madeline Mendez. She's pure platinum. For all she's been through she has the heart of a lion. But she's also a kind, quiet decent human being. You might call her shy. So there she was. Playing with a plastic ball, maybe a rubber ball in the carport.

RAVE: Where?

HARTLEY: Here. On the alley. She lives in the building with apartments. There's my house, then another house and then the apartment building.

RAVE: One house down.

HARTLEY: One house down. You're on it. They have a big, sliding steel gate that moves back and forth and crashes if it gets thrown open with too much strength. I hear it all the time. Crash. Makes me jump, twitch. And behind that gate is where they park their cars, where the tenants who live in the apartment building, park their cars. The carport. So she's in the carport playing with this ball. All of this is what I heard.

Why is she there? Well, the nearest park is all the way down Van Ness, down at Beverly. That's a long walk. I used to take my son there. Usually at seven in the morning.

RAVE: Why so early?

HARTLEY: He didn't like people anymore than I do. It was quiet. Just him and me. I would have to bring a towel to wipe down the equipment, the playground equipment, which was wet from the night before. I was what they call a helicopter parent, hovering, always hovering, that boy was always within arm's reach, ready to catch him if he tripped or was about to fall. Used to stress me out to the point of breaking. Kids are always tripping, falling. They're clumsy that way. Used to drive my ex-wife crazy. Let him be, she'd say. He needs to fall once in a while. Unpredictable. That's how those playgrounds are. One time, before we started going to the parks in the early bright, my boy was playing with his toy truck. Some older kid, a punk, came over grabbed it. I looked around for the kid's parent but whoever that was, they weren't watching. So I said, "That's not your truck." And the kid looks at me, dead-set eyes, and he says, "What are you gonna do about it?" How does a kid get to a point where he talks to an adult like that? He was probably eight or nine years old. I'll tell you what I wanted to do about it.

I wanted to punch him in the face, swing him by the legs into a steel pole.

RAVE: What did you do?

HARTLEY: I took my son home.

RAVE: Did you get the truck back?

HARTLEY: No. And it was my son's favourite truck.

RAVE: That's not good.

HARTLEY: It was worse than not good. It was terrible. I let him down. I let that little punk walk off with my son's truck. But what do you do? Grab the kid? Grab the truck? Someone calls the police over something like that. I was angry with my son all afternoon.

RAVE: Why?

HARTLEY: I don't know. Misplaced anger.

RAVE: You were angry he existed. You were angry you had to take him to the park and that you were put in a position where you had to protect him. And you failed.

HARTLEY: I never wanted to see him look sad or afraid.

RAVE: Madeline Mendez.

HARTLEY: No park. The carport. She's there with her grandfather. Albert Mendez. He's watching her but he's not really watching her because he's blind. He's got these brilliant, blue prosthetic eyes. They sparkle in the sun. He's a reformed Christian. When he was living

in San Salvador he went crazy with it. Drove his wife away. Left his children and went to help peasants a long way from home. Two of his sons got put in prison. He never saw them again. So he's there.

RAVE: Where?

HARTLEY: El Salvador. And he's in a village with peasants, right in the middle of the raging wars, the bloody wars. Doing God's work. What a mistake. He tells the peasants, don't get too close to the guerrillas or hide them. If you want to fight, then leave the village and join the guerrillas in the mountains. He says that he warned the peasants whenever the government soldiers were coming, to keep them safe. The peasants. He said he was neutral. Never took a side. Never, ever, warned the guerrillas when the government soldiers were coming. But he was accused of this, accused of telling the guerrillas when the soldiers were coming. And for that, they mutilated him, they cut his eyeballs from his sockets. Do you know what he told me after the golf course massacre, the Columbus Day Massacre? This was hours later, after it was first on the news. He was tap-tapping his way up the alley and he knows I'm there even though he can't see me and I haven't spoken, he tilts his head and he tells me, when he had his eyeballs he had seen mutilated soldiers, mutilated guerrillas, women raped and murdered, children shot to



death and rows and rows of dead men, all of them decapitated. Dead golfers didn't concern him. Whoever did it wasn't coming after him. That's what he said. He also said that losing his eyeballs wasn't the end of the world because he heard Los Angeles was an ugly city. So Albert's watching Madeline in the carport. But he's not really watching because he doesn't have eyeballs. But he's listening. And he hears a car so he calls Madeline close. Just like me. He's a bit of a helicopter guy.

RAVE: He's in the carport?

HARTLEY: He's sitting in the carport. Madeline's kicking a ball around. Albert hears the car coming. He can hear cars turning off Van Ness. He just says it quietly, car. And she hears him and knows. But he doesn't see it's an Escalade. If he did he might have known it didn't belong on our alley and was going to turn around. It shoots past the carport. Fast. He can hear the leaves scatter. Nobody expects it to turn around. Not Albert. Not Madeline. But that happens. You get some drivers who think that our alley is a through street, that they can avoid Melrose and zigzag to keep moving east. Maybe there's a jam on Melrose or something else going on that makes them want to zigzag. Then they come to the dead end. And if someone's in that much of a hurry to get where they're going and

they think they're beating traffic by doing the bypass zigzag then the dead end is bombsville. Their plans have been thwarted. They made a choice. They lost. I've heard tires squeal at that end when a driver discovers the dead end. It's like the drivers are screaming but it's just their tires. So this is what Simon does.

RAVE: In his Escalade.

HARTLEY: Right. Roars. The speed. He hits the dead end.

RAVE: Hits?

HARTLEY: Comes to the dead end. I imagine he too was jumping salty. Plan thwarted and all. Gets turned around, probably executing a three-point turn. Right at this point Madeline must have kicked the ball off one of the cars in the carport. The car alarm goes off. From the car that the ball hit. Albert remembers that. It's howling. The car is howling. So he can't hear anything but the car alarm.

RAVE: You're hyperventilating.

HARTLEY: Not quite but close.

RAVE: Do you want some water?

HARTLEY: I'll grab some tequila. Keep talking.

RAVE: This is all fresh.

HARTLEY: It wasn't that long ago.

RAVE: You weren't there.

HARTLEY: I don't talk about it much. You want some?

RAVE: No.

HARTLEY: That's better.

RAVE: You okay?

HARTLEY: The ball has ricocheted off the car and bounced into the road. The alley. The alarm is shrieking. Albert doesn't hear the car coming back and neither does Madeline. She chases after the ball. Rudy heard it.

RAVE: Rudy?

HARTLEY: Rudy Cienfuegos. From New Orleans. Used to be Rudy Tucker. He's inside his house, just a bit down from the carport. He hears a thump, a thump like a sack of potatoes dropped from a roof, and then a crash, a full-impact collision of metal, hard plastic and, hold on a second. Wood. It was the telephone pole.

RAVE: Utility pole.

HARTLEY: I just looked outside. The wooden pole, not the street light pole. The street light pole looks like it's made of concrete. It was the wooden pole. I just want to be accurate. So Rudy hears all this. And Albert hears it too. Obviously. He's right there. And he stands up right away. Madeline. He said he whispered it, whispered her name. He didn't want to shout. And he whispered it again. Her name. Madeline. Rudy opens his door, his front door.

RAVE: Cienfuegos.

HARTLEY: He sees the car.

RAVE: The Escalade.

HARTLEY: Escalade. Front end all crumpled up around the telephone pole. He hears Albert calling for Madeline. Only now he's not whispering. And Albert's out, moving around the car.

RAVE: The Escalade.

HARTLEY: Moving around the Escalade, touching it like blind people do, calling her name. Rudy runs over. He doesn't see Madeline. But he can smell something burning. And it's not plastic. It's skin. Human skin. Albert finds Madeline first. He touches her. Rudy scrambles around, looks under the car. There's Madeline. She's pinned against the wooden pole. Her face and hands are squeezed against the bottom of the car and she's burning.

RAVE: Burning?

HARTLEY: The catalytic converter. I think.

RAVE: Maybe the oil pan?

HARTLEY: Something burned her, pal. Nobody imagined that. Have you seen her face? She's pinned against the wooden pole. And she's burning. Rudy sees all this but he can't get her out. She's wedged. He runs around to the driver's door and he yanks on the handle.

RAVE: The door handle.

HARTLEY: The door handle. He's got the doors locked.

RAVE: Who?

HARTLEY: Simon. Simon Thistleton. The dead golfer. Rudy's banging on the window. The car window. Rudy says that Simon looks dazed. Just sitting there. His airbag is all shrivelled up, wrinkled, lying in his lap. He finally opens the door.

RAVE: Simon.

HARTLEY: Simon opens the door. And Rudy's yelling at him, back up, back the fuck up, back the fucking car up. He doesn't know why.

RAVE: Simon.

HARTLEY: Simon doesn't know why, why he's got this lunatic screaming at him to back up, to back his car up. Rudy says there's no way he saw Madeline before he hit her. He had no idea. He wasn't looking where he was going. If he had seen Madeline he would have known what Rudy was screaming about. There's music playing inside the car. Rudy remembers it. Dave Matthews. Rudy hates the Dave Matthews Band. I'm not a big fan either. He's already in a blind fury and this tips him over the edge.

RAVE: Rudy. The music?

HARTLEY: The Dave Matthews Band. Nothing has to make sense. A little girl is trapped under this car and

the Dave Matthews Band is playing. Rudy's screaming at Simon that a little girl is trapped under his car. He freezes. Simon freezes.

RAVE: In shock.

HARTLEY: He's in something. More screaming. Back the fuck up. So he does. Simon finally puts the car in reverse. Rudy runs around to the front. Madeline's not wedged against the telephone pole. She's been dragged back with the car. Rudy's screaming again, stop, stop, stop, turn the fucking car off. She's stuck.

RAVE: Madeline.

HARTLEY: Her skin. She's burned. Her skin is stuck to the car.

RAVE: Oh.

HARTLEY: Rudy crawls underneath. It's hot under there. Like a fry pan. Everything's hot. Rudy's got no choice. You know when it's cold?

RAVE: No.

HARTLEY: Nebraska was cold. I never did it. But I saw someone do it. Freezing cold day. Don't put your tongue on anything metal, like a metal fence at school. We got told that all the time. It'll stick. Your warm, wet tongue. It'll get stuck to the metal. And once it's stuck, you're stuck. You can try breathing hard on it, on the area, warm it up, or maybe someone can get warm water and pour it all over your tongue and the metal

but don't do what this kid did, panicked, yanked his head away, ripped the skin off his tongue, dangling from the fence like a thin, strip of bacon, blood pouring out of his mouth. This is what that was like. Only worse.

RAVE: A lot worse. I'd say.

HARTLEY: Rudy pulls Madeline, he's got no choice, peels her off the car. Her skin was left dangling from the metal, little ribbons of meat.

RAVE: That's enough. I got it. Got the picture.

HARTLEY: The first thing Rudy does is check to see if she's breathing. And she is. She's alive.

RAVE: Obviously. She's still around.

HARTLEY: But Rudy didn't know that. Not when it was happening. In that moment. She's unconscious. But she's breathing.

RAVE: That's lucky.

HARTLEY: How so?

RAVE: Can you imagine if she hadn't been knocked unconscious? She would have felt everything. Having her skin peeled off the car?

HARTLEY: Maybe that's what knocked her out.

RAVE: Poor girl.

HARTLEY: And then it hits Rudy. Nobody knows. Not much time has passed, maybe a minute. But nobody knows. Rudy starts yelling for someone to call an ambulance.

Simon's still sitting in his car. Doesn't lift a finger.

RAVE: Accidents are terrible. Some people go into shock.

HARTLEY: You know who ended up calling?

RAVE: How would I?

HARTLEY: Mrs. Whipple.

RAVE: The old neighbour.

HARTLEY: The Queen of the Court. She makes the call. So the ambulance is on its way. And the Mendez family comes down.

RAVE: Mendez family?

HARTLEY: Madeline's family. Well, they don't come down like I just said. That sounds too casual. They rush down. They run. Silvia. Silvia Mendez. Madeline's mother. Oscar and Nestor. Her two sons. Silvia's sons. The Mendez family. There's a lot of names. You won't be able to keep track.

RAVE: That's not many names.

HARTLEY: Silvia.

RAVE: She's Albert's daughter?

HARTLEY: No. Albert's her father-in-law. Stanley. Stanley Mendez was Silvia's husband. Stanley was Albert's son. He died. Do you know what's strange?

RAVE: What?



HARTLEY: He worked at the Los Angeles Water and Power pole yard. Beside Slauson Avenue, south of downtown.

RAVE: So?

HARTLEY: He died at the pole yard. Crushed under an avalanche of power poles. And here's Madeline, lying in the alley, just pulled from underneath a car that hit a power pole.

RAVE: Was he there?

HARTLEY: Where?

RAVE: In the alley.

HARTLEY: He used to be.

RAVE: No. When Madeline was hit.

HARTLEY: No, no, no. He died before Madeline was born. Never saw her.

RAVE: That's terrible.

HARTLEY: Do you know what Stanley was?

RAVE: No.

HARTLEY: The rarest of the rare, a real gasser. Guitar. He played guitar. And sang. In his apartment. They have a little balcony overlooking the alley. The Mendez family. The sliding door left open. And Stanley playing. You'd never see him playing. You just heard him. I honestly thought it was a record playing on a turntable until I knew better. The guitar, his voice, they swirled together, and these sounds, these

beautiful, stunning, hypnotic sounds would flutter and dance down the alley, tickling, teasing, shifting your soul. I used to sit on my roof and listen to him.

RAVE: Did you ever play with him?

HARTLEY: I never asked.

RAVE: Why not?

HARTLEY: I think I was too embarrassed.

RAVE: You're a musician.

HARTLEY: I'm a songwriter. He was a musician. I asked him once about his music. He was shy, shook his head, pretended not to understand me. I never asked again. I'll never understand Stanley Mendez. All that talent, true talent, just gifted, one in fifty million, rare, and to think, what he could have done with that, to play for thousands, tens of thousands, millions. But that desire, that desire to share that joy, that inspiration, with the world, he never had that. And that blows my mind. He was quite happy to play in his living room with the sliding door open and whoever heard him, heard him.

RAVE: And then there's you.

HARTLEY: And here I am with a great song but it's only half a great song because I don't have the notes.

RAVE: I meant the desire, the need to share what you create with as many people as humanly possible so that they might tell you how incredible you are and

maybe this will help you feel better about yourself, so that you won't feel like a piece of shit, a failure, a loser, a punk.

HARTLEY: That's some sad attempt at hard-hitting journalism, young man. You wouldn't know my motivations if they were chewing on your neck. I'm trying to talk about Stanley Mendez.

RAVE: I thought we were talking about Madeline's accident.

HARTLEY: You just called me a loser. How am I expected to keep on track here?

RAVE: Are you done with Stanley?

HARTLEY: I'm getting close to being done with you.

RAVE: I apologise. I have no right to insult your motivations.

HARTLEY: You don't know what they are so it makes you look like a fool. Or at least, unprofessional. Madeline's lying in the street. Stanley's not there.

RAVE: He's dead.

HARTLEY: Died before Madeline was born. But Silvia's there.

RAVE: Madeline's mother.

HARTLEY: Yes. She teaches blind kids down the road on Van Ness. Just around the corner. The Frances Blend School. These are kids with other problems. They're not just blind. They have physical problems, crutches and

walkers and lots of gear. And most have mental problems. Serious mental problems. And they're blind. It's a formidable challenge. Each kid is a formidable riddle, an almost impossible mountain of disability. And she's got over fifteen kids in her class. She walks to work. So that's good. When her and Stanley first came to Los Angeles they sold mangoes and plantains on street corners. Now she's a teacher. She's a hell of a lady. And easy on the eyes. Hello!

RAVE: Madeline.

HARTLEY: Mendez. Rudy's cradling Madeline. And telling Silvia to stay away.

RAVE: Rudy knows Silvia.

HARTLEY: You could say that. He doesn't want Silvia to see Madeline all burned up. Tells her the ambulance is coming. And he's being careful not to touch her burns, Madeline's burns, just raw, open burns. But Silvia doesn't listen. She puts Madeline's head in her lap and gently rubs a finger on the skin that isn't burned. And Rudy's with her. The two of them. Side by side there.

RAVE: Madeline's lucky she was knocked underneath the car.

HARTLEY: Lucky?

RAVE: She could have been smashed into the pole. She would have been killed. Instantly.

HARTLEY: Her life is a living nightmare because she looks like a living nightmare. That's not lucky.

RAVE: Is that better than being dead?

HARTLEY: Ask Madeline when she's eighteen, thirty, fifty. She can answer that. I can't. Now the drama starts. Oscar and Nestor. The Mendez boys.

RAVE: Madeline's brothers?

HARTLEY: Older. Much older.

RAVE: How much?

HARTLEY: A lot. Done with school. I think. Late teens? I don't know. I don't go to their birthday parties. Nestor goes to community college. Trying to get his grades up so he can go to university, make the golf team and then he wants to be a professional golfer.

RAVE: Is he any good?

HARTLEY: Silvia says he's been in some amateur tournaments. He's finished in the top ten a few times. So I guess, yes, he's pretty good. He works at the golf course.

RAVE: Which golf course?

HARTLEY: The massacre golf course. The Wilshire Country Club.

RAVE: Was he there when the shootings happened?

HARTLEY: I don't know. It's closed now.

RAVE: What is?

HARTLEY: The golf course. They're still doing their forensic work.

RAVE: A bunch of golf courses closed.

HARTLEY: That's the whole terrorism mystique isn't it? That terrorists attacked this golf course and they're going to hit another one. Another golf course. Boggles the mind how stupid people are.

RAVE: How long has he worked there?

HARTLEY: Nestor? Years, I think. He caddies or something, carries clubs. Silvia says the guys at the club tell Nestor he's going to be the next Tiger Woods. Oscar's the one who attacked the car.

RAVE: Oscar.

HARTLEY: Mendez. Oscar Mendez. I told you that you'd have trouble keeping up with the Mendez family. They got two apartments. The one where Stanley used to play his music, with the little balcony overlooking the alley. This is where Madeline, Silvia and Nestor live. Then they have a second apartment, this is where Albert, the grandfather, this is where Albert and Oscar live. I think Silvia's had troubles with Oscar. Nestor was always the good boy, did the right thing, going to college. Silvia likes that Oscar gets to live with Albert because he's a good influence and I can't disagree. Albert has some gifts. I would have loved it if he had been my grandfather. He's a hip cat. Sharp.

Tricky. Funny. But not as funny as Oscar. And Oscar's not ha-ha-ha funny. He's a strange funny.

RAVE: What's a strange funny?

HARTLEY: Just the activities he participates in. Madeline thinks he's a laugh riot. Like a few months ago, he had Madeline out in the alley with a stopwatch. He drew two chalk lines on the concrete, forty-seven metres apart, and he measured it precisely with a metric tape measure he had ordered from Canada. Metres not yards. You'll understand in a few seconds. So he measures out this forty-seven metres. He's all decked out in running shorts, he's put a number, a random number on his shirt, stapled it there. He lines up. Madeline yells, go, and off he runs, clumsy, slow, he runs from one chalk line past the other, Madeline times it. Click. Done. Oscar gets his time from Madeline and he puts it in this book, his world-record book. It's a hardcover piece he's put together. And he puts his time in the book. Writes it in there. He now has, he says, the world record in the forty-seven-metre dash or run or race. I don't know what he calls them. I watched him. I saw that race. I saw him do that. And he puts his records in that book. I'm not smart enough to know if he's putting it on for Madeline or whether he really thinks he has these world records.

RAVE: He does.

HARTLEY: I guess he does.

RAVE: That's not overtly strange.

HARTLEY: The other activities I've heard from Madeline. I teach her piano. She doesn't have all her fingers so it's not the best sound you're ever going to hear but we improvise. She does okay. So every year, according to Madeline, Oscar has a new resolution. This year he's writing out a dictionary, the dictionary that he owns.

RAVE: Writing out?

HARTLEY: He's writing, by hand, every word in the dictionary. But not just the word, everything that's there. The accent marks, the definition. Everything. He's writing it by hand. Four pages a day. Four dictionary pages a day. That's what he has to write to finish in one year. I looked at my dictionary and it blew my mind. Hours. He spends hours and hours, every day, doing that. The year before he went 365 days without chocolate.

RAVE: That's easier.

HARTLEY: Much easier. The year before that he went 365 days without light bulbs, which didn't matter to Albert, obviously. He lit candles if he needed light. They had a small fire once, a curtain caught on fire but they put it out fast so everything turned out okay. And on it goes. Oscar's a killer. He kills bugs. He's a



high school dropout but at least he's got a job. He wants to work at the South Pole. Albert has told him they don't have bugs in the South Pole so he's going to have to figure something out, something he does that can get him work down there. I like the idea of that too. The South Pole. No people. Penguins. I've told Oscar, I hope you make it. So Oscar's standing there. His little sister's laying in the street, his little sister's head is resting in his mother's lap, her face is all messed up, there's blood and ...

RAVE: More tequila?

HARTLEY: Yes. Oscar's taking all this in. Not over a long period of time. It's fast. But he's taking all of it in. His little sister looking like she did. I imagine it might have looked like that picture of Robert Kennedy after he'd been shot, his head cradled in the hands of that kitchen worker, blood, eyes. And nobody knows, at that moment, nobody knows, Oscar doesn't know, Nestor, Silvia, Albert, nobody knows if Madeline's going to be dead or alive in the next few minutes. And Oscar, bless his record-breaking, bug-killing heart, he lost his grip. He tries to open the door. Simon Thistleton's door. Simon's car door. Simon's still in there. Oscar's raging at this point. This asshole, this asshole who just ran over my little sister, is sitting there, sitting in his fucking car,

this cunt who just ran over my little sister is just sitting there, can't even be bothered to get out of his fucking car to see if she's okay.

RAVE: He's saying this?

HARTLEY: No.

RAVE: Are you imagining that?

HARTLEY: No, it's what Oscar said later, to Rudy, explaining why he did what he did. Oscar tries to get in the car, pulls the door open. Simon yanks the door shut. Locks it.

RAVE: He was probably scared.

HARTLEY: Probably terrified. Rich, white driver, trapped on a dead-end alley. Surrounded by a mob of angry, crazy, drunk Mexicans wearing bullet belts and sombreros.

RAVE: You said they were Salvadoran.

HARTLEY: They're Americans. Madeline, Oscar, Nestor, all born here. In Los Angeles. Silvia and Albert were born in El Salvador. I've told you that. I'm trying to describe what might have been going through Simon's conkhouse. I'm sure he was scared. Oscar smashed the window. Simon's window on the car.

RAVE: How did he do that?

HARTLEY: I don't know. Never heard. Something. He used something. Smashes the window, drags Simon out and starts beating on him.

RAVE: With what?

HARTLEY: His fists. I think. I wasn't there. This is what I heard. He's beating on him. I think Nestor pulled Oscar off or tried to. Oscar's a bull. Nestor not so much.

RAVE: Maybe Nestor caddied for him at the golf course.

HARTLEY: Maybe. But I don't think anyone knew who he was, they wouldn't have known he was Hadley the Hippo. And this is when Crandal runs over.

RAVE: Your neighbour.

HARTLEY: Crandal Cobb. The guy whose gun was stolen. The gun at the golf course. He saw everything. Saw Madeline get hit. Saw Oscar beating up Simon. So he runs over with a gun.

RAVE: Why did he wait so long? Madeline's pinned under the car.

HARTLEY: Good question.

RAVE: What kind of gun?

HARTLEY: I don't know. He had a bunch. I'm guessing a handgun. And he rushes over, I think he might have fired it in the air to get everyone's attention.

RAVE: Like a cowboy.

HARTLEY: He says he saw this guy in trouble and wanted to help.

RAVE: They might have killed him.

HARTLEY: Who?

RAVE: Simon. The mob. The mob might have killed Simon.

HARTLEY: There was no mob. There was the Mendez family and a few other neighbours. Oscar was the one who blew his wig. The gun gets Oscar's attention. He stops hitting Simon. Crandal grabs Simon by the arm and leads him back to his house. And this is where they say the story got cooked up.

RAVE: What story?

HARTLEY: Oscar said he smelled gasoline on Simon.

RAVE: From the accident?

HARTLEY: Alcohol. Booze. Oscar smelled it. Says he smelled it. On Simon. Said he was drunk. That's why Madeline got hit. Because the guy was drunk. That's what Oscar believes. That's what the family believes. He had a bunch of cocktails at the club after he finished golfing. But Crandal says he wasn't drunk.

RAVE: How does he know?

HARTLEY: He's with the guy. Right now. He's got Simon back in his house and he gives him a cocktail, whiskey, a glass of whiskey, no soda, no water. Just whiskey, straight.

RAVE: Is this what Crandal told you?

HARTLEY: Not just me. He said this at the trial.

RAVE: What trial?

HARTLEY: It's coming. Crandal says he gives him the whiskey to settle his nerves. And then another and another one after that. If he wasn't drunk before, he's drunk now. And then the pounders knock on Crandal's door.

RAVE: Pounders.

HARTLEY: Police.

RAVE: Before the ambulance?

HARTLEY: No, no. Madeline would have been taken away by this point. With Silvia. In the ambulance. I'm talking about Crandal and Simon. Now that's Crandal's version. And Simon's too. But the Mendez family, the Mendez family and Rudy, they don't think that's what happened. Well, let me correct that. It's not so much about what they think happened but why it happened. This all came out at the trial.

RAVE: What was the trial?

HARTLEY: The police investigated the accident. Obviously. This was a big deal. A little girl was mutilated for life. And who done it? Hadley the Hippo done it. The police couldn't prove that Hadley, Simon, they couldn't prove that Simon was drunk at the time of the accident.

RAVE: Simon says, I drank many glasses of alcohol at Crandal Cobb's house, right after the accident, to

calm my nerves, nerves that were fried as the result of this terrible, unavoidable accident.

HARTLEY: That's it. Now you're getting it. And this is why Silvia, Rudy, Oscar and Albert hate Crandal's guts. This is what they believe happened. Simon was drunk. He smashed into Madeline, destroying her life. Crandal takes him into his house. Crandal sizes this guy up. Probably gets told, I'm Hadley the Hippo, I can't be in trouble like this, or something like that. If he's drunk he's going to prison. His career is over. He does a wildly popular kid's show. He just destroyed a little girl. Because he was drunk. This is what they're telling me.

RAVE: Who?

HARTLEY: Silvia. Oscar. Rudy. Albert. So they put this on Crandal. They don't like Crandal. Keep that in mind. So Crandal blackmails this guy. He tells him, he tells Simon, I'll help you but I want stuff. I want a lot of stuff.

RAVE: Crandal would be that calculating? So quick to figure something like that out?

HARTLEY: That's what Silvia thinks. And the others. That Crandal made this guy an offer. I'll get you drunk right now, very drunk, and then we'll tell the police you got drunk here, in my place, in the minutes

following the accident. You weren't drunk when you hit the Mexican. That's Crandal talking, not me.

RAVE: So what does Crandal get?

HARTLEY: Money, I suppose. That's the theory. But he also golfed with the guy.

RAVE: At the club? With Simon?

HARTLEY: At the club. This went on for a long time. I'm not sure Simon Thistleton was happy about having to hang with Crandal Cobb but that's what happened. They golfed together. And then I don't know what happened. They had some kind of falling out. I know that Crandal applied for a membership at the golf course and was denied. That didn't sit well with him.

RAVE: Did they talk to the country club about Simon getting drunk at the bar before he drove that day?

HARTLEY: They did. They interviewed a bunch of people at the bar. Waitresses. Bartender. Other golfers. They couldn't prove that Simon had been drinking alcohol at the club. So they couldn't charge him with anything. That was the end of the police investigation. Now, of course, the Mendez family wasn't buying any of that. Well, everyone but Nestor. Conflict of interest for him. He still works at the golf course, you know. But Silvia, Oscar, Albert, and Rudy.

RAVE: He's a Mendez?

HARTLEY: No, he's a Cienfuegos. He might be a Tucker but he's officially a Cienfuegos. But he's tight. He's tight with the Mendez family. They don't buy any of that. They think that Simon was drunk when he mowed Madeline down. So they sue. They sue Simon. For damages.

RAVE: Do you think he was drunk?

HARTLEY: When he hit Madeline? I don't know. Like I told you. The snatchers looked into all that.

RAVE: Snatchers.

HARTLEY: Detectives. Or whoever they were. They talked to a lot of people at the club. I just told you about that. Did everyone lie about Simon lifting jars of sunshine to his lips? They all got their stories straight? That's a big-league conspiracy. To protect who? To protect what? I don't know. But maybe the guy kept a flask in his golf bag. Maybe he didn't need the juice session after golfing. Maybe he's juiced already. Oscar says he was drunk. So. There's that. Oscar's not stupid. And he testified to that at the civil suit. That he smelled alcohol on Simon.

RAVE: Did they win?

HARTLEY: They tried. They got portrayed as greedheads, money grubbers.

RAVE: The whole family?



HARTLEY: Silvia. She was the one who took the brunt of it. That she's suing Thistleton as a money grab. The trial was ugly. Silvia is not a money grubber.

RAVE: Not a money grab? What was it then?

HARTLEY: She wanted justice. The family wanted justice. Oscar did anyway. And Albert. And Rudy.

RAVE: Why?

HARTLEY: They wanted Simon to take responsibility for destroying Madeline's life. Destroying their lives.

RAVE: No, why did Rudy care so much?

HARTLEY: Like I told you before. He spent a lot of time with the Mendez family. Had a special bond with Madeline. And Silvia too. Did a lot of things together. Especially after Stanley died.

RAVE: Were Silvia and Rudy ...

HARTLEY: An item? They were then.

RAVE: When?

HARTLEY: At the time of the accident. That's no secret. Rudy helped Silvia a lot through the trial.

RAVE: What trial?

HARTLEY: The civil suit against Simon Thistleton. They couldn't prove that Simon was drunk.

RAVE: Thanks to Crandal Cobb.

HARTLEY: Perhaps. I don't know. I wasn't there. I wasn't there inside Crandal's house when he was giving Simon those glasses of whiskey. Was Simon already

drunk? Nobody knows. Simon knows. And Crandal knows. And Oscar thinks he knows. But everyone else has to guess on that one. And there was no evidence so it was all about who you believe. And the only witness to say that Simon might have been drunk, who said he was drunk, was Oscar Mendez.

RAVE: Did he testify?

HARTLEY: He did. Wore a suit and everything. But he's a Mendez boy so I'm not sure the jury thought he was being unbiased. They called me a liar. That's what Oscar said afterwards.

RAVE: Who called him a liar?

HARTLEY: The jury. When they didn't rule in Madeline's favour. They didn't believe him. He didn't like that. Who would? He said he wasn't making that up. He was telling the truth. And they called him a liar. They didn't actually call him a liar, they just needed more proof that Simon was drunk when he hit Madeline. And there was no other proof. But that didn't matter to Oscar. He was the truth. But it didn't help him much that he beat the shit out of Simon so that was never going to end well. Oscar's testimony was, in a word, compromised. There's no justice, that's what Oscar said afterwards. No justice. Forget the accusations of Simon being drunk. That was never going to be proven. It all came down to Albert versus Crandal.

RAVE: Cage fight.

HARTLEY: Not exactly. Albert testified that Madeline was watching squirrels just before she got hit.

RAVE: Squirrels?

HARTLEY: Albert said that right after Madeline kicked the ball, and it careened out into the alley. He heard squirrels fighting. Madeline loved watching the squirrels chasing each other up the telephone poles, down the wires. And Albert said that the timing wasn't right. She didn't rush out and get hit by Simon's car because he couldn't hear her footsteps.

RAVE: I thought a car alarm went off?

HARTLEY: It did.

RAVE: How does Albert hear Madeline's shoes on the pavement if there's a car alarm screaming?

HARTLEY: He says he could hear that Madeline stopped running. Could hear the squirrels making squirrel noises, clattering up the pole, down the power lines. Heard Madeline giggle. And then she got hit. Turned around just before Simon's car hit her. She was not running into the alley. So the accident was avoidable, avoidable if the driver wasn't blind drunk or not paying attention. But Crandal says he was out on his balcony and saw the whole thing.

RAVE: He witnessed the accident?

HARTLEY: He says he did. And he said he saw a ball roll out of the carport, saw Madeline run after it, and get hit immediately. There was nothing, according to Crandal, nothing a driver could have done to avoid her. And that's what it came down to. Albert's ears or Crandal's eyes. Which of the two is more reliable?

RAVE: Which of the two is more believable? Do you trust Albert Mendez or Crandal Cobb?

HARTLEY: The jury chose to believe Crandal's eyes. They lost. The verdict. Madeline. Silvia lost. Oscar. But it was Rudy who was jumpin' salty out on the sidewalk. Silvia told me that.

RAVE: What sidewalk?

HARTLEY: Outside the courthouse. After the verdict. Rudy was screaming at Simon. Calling him scum, kept pointing his finger at Simon, yelling, dead man walking, dead man walking.

RAVE: And now Simon is dead.

HARTLEY: He is dead.

RAVE: And Rudy was running away from the golf course right after the murders.

HARTLEY: You hear that? It's Cady. My stray cat. She's knocking her head on the glass. I'll let her in.

RAVE: She's mangy.

HARTLEY: Don't touch her. She'll cut you open.

RAVE: She likes you.

HARTLEY: She's a good girl.

RAVE: It's nearly midnight.

HARTLEY: I better get to work.

RAVE: Your song.

HARTLEY: The notes. My search. Madeline has a lesson here tomorrow. Maybe she can show me the way. Lead me to the notes. She doesn't watch that show anymore.

RAVE: What show?

HARTLEY: It used to be her favourite. *Hadley the Hippo*.

RAVE: I guess not.

HARTLEY: She likes SpongeBob. Tom Kenny never ran her over.

RAVE: Tom Kenny?

HARTLEY: The voice of SpongeBob.

RAVE: Were Rudy and Silvia friends before Madeline was born?

HARTLEY: Yes, I believe they were.

RAVE: Is Rudy the father? Madeline's father?

HARTLEY: Stop.

*Girls and Corpses*

"The Songwriter and the Exotic-Dancing Porn Star"

GIRLS AND CORPSES: Let me say first that we appreciate the fact that you are sitting down with such a small publication.

CHARLES MANSON: It's my pleasure.

G&C: You've done *Playboy*, *Rolling Stone*, etcetera, etcetera.

MANSON: Yes, yes.

G&C: So thank you.

MANSON: You're welcome.

G&C: You've caught us a bit off guard.

MANSON: How so?

G&C: We were preparing for an interview with Hartley Sickerdick and we end up with Charles Manson.

MANSON: I'm the same guy, pal. Hartley was a fake name. Found it in a cemetery. Never liked it. Never liked the fact I had to change my name. A fake name made me a fake person. I can be me now.

G&C: It beggars belief.

MANSON: I've got my birth certificate.

G&C: You showed us.

MANSON: You think it's a forgery?

G&C: It looks old, I'll give you that.

MANSON: An old forgery.

G&C: Here's the thing.

MANSON: Shoot.

G&C: You have a name that is infamous.

MANSON: Correct. Not my fault. David and Daisy gave me the name. David and Daisy Manson. Nebraska. My father wanted it. My mother didn't like it. She said Charles sounded too fancy. So she called me Charlie. She didn't mind Charlie. She hated Charles.

G&C: Charles Manson was a mass murderer.

MANSON: Charles Manson got some kids to kill people for him. He might have killed one or two people on his own but he didn't commit the murders that you think he did. They proved in court that he was the ringleader.

G&C: Charles Manson took LSD.

MANSON: I don't know. His followers did. Are you sure he did?

G&C: He used LSD to convince these young folks that there was hidden meaning in some song lyrics, most notably, the *White Album*, the Beatles.

MANSON: That's probably accurate.

G&C: You have spoken in past interviews about your own experimentation with hallucinogens. LSD.

MANSON: Correct.

G&C: You have spoken about being transformed by music, by lyrics, specifically music by entertainers

like the Beatles. You have spoken about hard-to-grasp, possibly juvenile concepts like the now and forever.

MANSON: I have. And I was. And I have. I'm not sure the word, *entertainers*, is what I would use. You say that word and I imagine a clown with a spinning tie.

G&C: It's all eerily similar to the other Charles Manson. To see meaning, secret meaning in lyrics from rock bands, secrets that only you understand. And now you call yourself Charles Manson. It's all a bit strange.

MANSON: I'm not suddenly calling myself Charles Manson. I was Charles Manson in Kimball, Nebraska. I didn't change my name until after the other guy got so famous. So my name, the name you find so strange, is not strange to me at all. It's old. It's comfortable. It's me. And the LSD, hallucinogens, lyrics from rock bands, well, yes, that is a coincidence. But consider for a moment, the reasons I took LSD and found meaning in a select group of lyrics.

G&C: And what were those reasons? The LSD, I mean. The discoveries.

MANSON: I thought you were here to ask questions about Kitten Natividad, my friend, my tenant. Ranked number sixty-nine in the *Glamour Girls of the Century*, the one thousand greatest beauties and bombshells of the ages. One place ahead of Jane Fonda.



G&C: What were the reasons for taking the LSD?

MANSON: Therapy.

G&C: For what?

MANSON: Kitten. Give me some Kitten.

G&C: You don't think it's strange that Charles Manson, the infamous Charles Manson, saw hidden meaning in rock lyrics while under the influence of LSD and that you, Charles Manson from Nebraska, had the same experience?

MANSON: His experience led to cold-blooded murder. That's a fact. It's night and day. My experience led to the indescribable. An indescribable beauty, exactly the opposite of what happened with him. Nobody died after I took LSD. Nobody got murdered. There are probably five million things, bits, pieces, specks that are different. And you pick one. You pick one that you think is similar but it's not even close to what happened to me.

G&C: He was a songwriter.

MANSON: Well.

G&C: He was a songwriter. That's what he did.

MANSON: He did a lot of other things before the Tate/LaBianca murders. Bad things. Was in prison, wasn't he?

G&C: But here in Los Angeles. He was a songwriter. He was part of the scene, the music scene. Didn't Neil Young know him? They played guitar with each other?

MANSON: I've heard that.

G&C: And that there were many others? Famous folks from back then who hung out with him? Some of this is a secret to this day?

MANSON: I don't know about secrets.

G&C: He was a going concern. A going, songwriting concern.

MANSON: I don't know about that.

G&C: He had a song recorded by the Beach Boys.

MANSON: Well.

G&C: You could say that he did more with his songwriting career in that short period of time than you have in your entire life.

MANSON: That's about as harsh as you can get.

G&C: Well, it's true. Where's your song? Where's the big band, the big singer, doing your song, a song you wrote?

MANSON: It's coming. Maybe tonight. Maybe tomorrow night or the next night. You need to calm down.

G&C: It bothers me.

MANSON: More than it should.

G&C: It bothers me that you have changed your name to Charles Manson.

MANSON: I changed my name to Hartley Sickerdick.  
That's when I changed my name.

G&C: Did you see the looks on the faces of the reporters? This morning? When you told them your name was Charles Manson?

MANSON: Nope.

G&C: They looked away or looked down or smirked.  
Some backed away.

MANSON: Didn't notice.

G&C: They looked at you like you were completely fucking crazy.

MANSON: Hey.

G&C: Okay.

MANSON: Kitten.

G&C: Kitten Natividad. How long have you known her?

MANSON: Decades.

G&C: What do you know about her that nobody else knows?

MANSON: That she's a survivor.

G&C: Perhaps something a little more titillating.

MANSON: She used to get free rent for extras.  
Special services provided for me.

G&C: What types of special services?

MANSON: Use your imagination.

G&C: Sexual services?

MANSON: You wish.

G&C: What?

MANSON: She used to cook me evening meals, sometimes get my groceries, do my laundry, clean my house. It was a lot of work.

G&C: That's not very titillating.

MANSON: She got tired of me, tired of my personality, said I was too negative, a real downer, always bringing her down, criticizing her.

G&C: Were you? Did you?

MANSON: I think I might have gotten too comfortable with her. Having her around so much that I could be myself and being myself was not a good experience for her. We're still friends. She pays rent now.

G&C: This isn't the real you?

MANSON: I do not know.

G&C: You don't come across as being negative, a downer.

MANSON: A mask. You have yours. I have mine. It's the face we wear in public, right? It's like that with Kitten. Guys see her as a sex machine.

G&C: The big boobs.

MANSON: Yes, the big boobies, the winnebagos, the cantaloupes, the bazookas. I've seen her that way at times but she's mostly Francesca, her real name, from Mexico. Guys get blinded by the headlamps.

G&C: Yes.

MANSON: You want some dirt?

G&C: Yes, please.

MANSON: One time she came across a prostitute and an ice cream man tucked away beside my house. The prostitute was bent over his ice cream cart. The ice cream man was humping away. Broad daylight. Kitten told him to stop, said there were kids around. He wanted his money back. Kitten gave him money from her wallet. He left.

G&C: And?

MANSON: That's it. You asked for a Kitten story. I just told you one.

G&C: We were hoping we might get something a little more revealing. About you and Kitten.

MANSON: No chance. I don't kiss and tell.

G&C: So there was kissing?

MANSON: No comment.

G&C: Did she have sex with Jim Morrison?

MANSON: I don't know. Ask her. These questions are getting creepy and I'm getting close to throwing you out on your ear.

G&C: What does she think of all the attention that has visited your alley?

MANSON: Who?

G&C: Kitten.

MANSON: What? The television trucks? She thinks they're a pain. Parked right outside her apartment. Well, it's actually a bungalow. But her door opens onto Van Ness. They talk all night, woke her up a couple of times.

G&C: Does she think he did it?

MANSON: Who?

G&C: Rudy Cienfuegos.

MANSON: God, no. It's all bullshit.

G&C: He's now a person of interest.

MANSON: According to who?

G&C: That's what's being reported. The police have him as a person of interest.

MANSON: So was the guy who they said did the bombing in Atlanta during the Olympics. Everyone was convinced he'd done it. How'd that turn out?

G&C: He didn't do it.

MANSON: Exactly. Why isn't Crandal Cobb a person of interest?

G&C: The gun nut.

MANSON: The guy who owned the gun that was found at the golf course. Why aren't they looking at him?

G&C: Maybe they are.

MANSON: Or Oscar Mendez. He kills bugs, right? Maybe he likes killing. I'm not saying they should be.

But why this obsession with Rudy? That's all anyone's talking about.

G&C: I think it's the accident, no?

MANSON: What? Simon Thistleton? Why would you kill thirty-five golfers if you wanted revenge on Simon? It makes less than no sense. If you want to kill Simon, you kill Simon. You find out where he lives and you kill him. Or you wear a disguise; you shoot him in the parking lot at the golf course and run away. Or shoot him anywhere and run away. They're clutching at straws is all that is.

G&C: There's rumours about Rudy and the mother of the little girl who was run over.

MANSON: Silvia. Silvia Mendez. She teaches blind kids around the corner.

G&C: Silvia Mendez. Mother of Madeline Mendez.

MANSON: I teach her piano. Taught her today as a matter of fact.

G&C: What does she think?

MANSON: She's eight.

G&C: She still thinks.

MANSON: She's unaware of all the attention about Simon and the accident and the Columbus Day Massacre. And Silvia wants to keep it that way.

G&C: Does she know that Simon's dead?

MANSON: Yes. Silvia told her.

G&C: What does she think of that?

MANSON: Sad. Everything makes her sad. She's still sad she doesn't have all her fingers. Makes piano chords harder than it should be. I'm trying to teach her some Glen Campbell songs. She wants *Rhinestone Cowboy*. Anything but *Rhinestone Cowboy*. But that's what she wants. I got angry about *Rhinestone Cowboy*.

G&C: You got angry with her because she wanted to learn that song?

MANSON: I'm not perfect. That made her sad, too. What happened in the golf course. Her accident. Simon being dead. It's all come to a head. Seeing her mom crying.

G&C: Silvia.

MANSON: Silvia Mendez. Her mother.

G&C: Why is she crying?

MANSON: Silvia brought Madeline over for her piano lesson. Didn't want her getting run over by a television reporter. Silvia told me what happened to Rudy when he talked to the police.

G&C: He was there for five hours. That's what they're saying.

MANSON: At the police station. Silvia said the police were happy to see him at first. He brought his backpack and rice bags and everything. But he ended up locked in a room for hours.



G&C: Locked?

MANSON: I don't know if it was locked. That's what Silvia said. He got grilled. They kept asking him where he was on New Year's Eve.

G&C: The night the gun was stolen.

MANSON: All the guns. But that gun, yes. It was all about proximity. He lives a hundred feet from where the murder weapon was stolen.

G&C: Did he say where he was on New Year's Eve?

MANSON: He was here. Crandal was out all night. Gambling. So it could have happened, the gun could have been stolen at three in the morning. Rudy was seen about a hundred feet from the golf course, running away, right after the murders.

G&C: It's not a good look.

MANSON: At face value, no, it's not. And they hit him hard about being the grandson of Camilo Cienfuegos. Was he a communist?

G&C: Who?

MANSON: Rudy. Did he hate rich people? And he does. Silvia never said how he answered that question. Motive, means and opportunity. He lives a few doors down from where the gun was stolen. That's the means. He was seen running away from the crime scene. That's opportunity. And the motive? That's why they hit him so hard about being Camilo's grandson and changing his

name. He's either delusional for believing it or he really is Camilo's grandson and was motivated by it. He gave them the backpack. If he carried that machine gun and ammunition in the backpack instead of rice bags then there might be oils or something from the gear. They can test for that. He gave them permission to search his house.

G&C: Which they've done.

MANSON: We all saw it. Took away his computer. He said he couldn't have killed the golfers because he was jogging. They said that loop, that stretch past the golf course, down Beverly to Highland to 3rd is too convenient. They accused him of timing all that so he could have an alibi. He told them to check for cameras. Some of those houses he would have passed, jogging, will have security cameras. He'll turn up on one of those. That's what he told them. And he told them to get more witnesses, like someone, perhaps at the corner of Beverly and Highland or anyone on Highland. If he's jogging he's not the torpedo. Silvia says he was pushing them about Crandal.

G&C: Just like you said.

MANSON: Yes. Why aren't you searching Crandal's house? That's what he asked them. I remember Rudy Tucker from New Orleans. Gonna be a famous actor. And here is. Kind of famous.

G&C: He's all over the Internet.

MANSON: You showed me. Maybe he'll get some auditions when the dust settles. And speaking of stuff settling. What about this fog?

G&C: Strange.

MANSON: It's still hanging around.

G&C: Makes no sense.

MANSON: Never has.

G&C: There's rumours about Rudy and Silvia.

MANSON: It's no secret. They're a couple. I've seen them having sex in Mrs. Whipple's side yard, right beside her outdoor fireplace. Silvia bent over a table, clutching the sides, Rudy behind her. They're a hot couple. Hot for each other. Hot together. That's happened a few times. Late. Late at night. Mrs. Whipple was asleep. They don't hide it. They go shopping together and all kinds of capers.

G&C: Is Rudy the father of Madeline Mendez?

MANSON: Where you pulling that from?

G&C: It's a rumour, right?

MANSON: According to who?

G&C: Your neighbours.

MANSON: Who?

G&C: Anonymous.

MANSON: Well, isn't that sweet. You didn't hear it from me, right?

G&C: No.

MANSON: Everyone can know something and not talk about it. And that's the way that is.

G&C: Was Rudy here before Madeline was born?

MANSON: Yes.

G&C: Do you know if Rudy and Silvia were involved with each other before Madeline was born?

MANSON: I do not. That would mean that Silvia was cheating on Stanley. And you need to be careful with that.

G&C: Stanley?

MANSON: Stanley Mendez. Silvia's husband. He was crushed by a pile of telephone poles. He died before Madeline was born. Based on the timing of all that, he could have been the father.

G&C: Who?

MANSON: It's not clear.

G&C: Does Madeline look more like Rudy or Stanley?

MANSON: You're going to look at the kid and know who the father is?

G&C: You can try. Does Madeline look like Stanley or Rudy?

MANSON: She looks like a melted candle. She doesn't look like either of them.

G&C: Before the accident.

MANSON: I'm not playing this guessing game. I got too much respect for Silvia. When she wants to talk about something like that, fair enough, but until then, I'm not playing.

G&C: The police will play that game.

MANSON: They might.

G&C: It builds the case for motive against Rudy. They might even do a paternity test to establish if Madeline is Rudy's daughter. Because if she is, well, that establishes an even stronger motive for Rudy. He slaughters the conspiracy of privilege that destroyed his daughter.

MANSON: I've said it before. If you wanna kill Simon Thistleton or maim Simon Thistleton then you do that. You do just that. You don't go out of your way to kill thirty-five other people ... just because.

G&C: You hear that?

MANSON: Shouting.

G&C: What's happening?

MANSON: Fire. Looks like Rudy's house.

*Esquire*

## "Birds on the Line"

ESQUIRE: You officially changed your name today.

CHARLES MANSON: I did. I have. I am. But I want to be clear. It's not done. Officially. I filed my petition papers downtown. With the court clerk. It cost \$435.

ESQUIRE: That's some serious money.

MANSON: It's not cheap. I'll have a court date in ten weeks.

ESQUIRE: To have people now call you Charles Manson. Is that strange for you?

MANSON: It'll take time. There's a certain vindication in all of this though. I am reclaiming what was once mine. It's a powerful emotion.

ESQUIRE: And emotions were running high this morning.

MANSON: Yes. Madeline Mendez. Too many questions.

ESQUIRE: You assaulted a television journalist.

MANSON: I slapped him.

ESQUIRE: You slapped him hard.

MANSON: I did. Madeline Mendez.

ESQUIRE: It was on television.

MANSON: Yes.

ESQUIRE: Are you going to be charged with assault?

MANSON: I hope not. Wouldn't that be something? All this attention about someone on my alley supposedly shooting thirty-six golfers dead in cold blood and I'm the only one who actually gets charged with anything?

ESQUIRE: You went downtown.

MANSON: To the courts. To file my petition papers.

ESQUIRE: You returned from downtown.

MANSON: I took the subway. I don't like looking for parking downtown. It's also very, very expensive.

ESQUIRE: You returned from downtown and had an extraordinary revelation.

MANSON: Now hold on a second. I had sandwich, a grilled cheese sandwich. And some potato chips.

ESQUIRE: Salt and vinegar?

MANSON: You've done your homework. And some chocolate milk. A ring-a-ding lunch. And then I cleared five floors of Luigi's ScareScraper.

ESQUIRE: What's a ScareScraper?

MANSON: It's a game. A good game. I'm on the twentieth floor. A boss fight next. That'll be easy. I have my level three Poltergust.

ESQUIRE: What's a Poltergust?

MANSON: A vacuum. For sucking up ghosts. Clearing rooms of ghosts. Once I beat the next boss I have four more floors and then the grand finale with the Brain.

And if I beat him, I unlock Endless. I'm close. My heart beats fast just thinking about it.

ESQUIRE: After Luigi.

MANSON: After Luigi I wandered out onto the roof. I say, wandered, because I had no special reason for being out there, up there.

ESQUIRE: But you do it often. You go to the roof.

MANSON: I do. I have. It's something I do. I glanced down at the media mob. Still there. At the end of the alley. Still waiting for an arrest that's never coming by the way. The birds were making some noise.

ESQUIRE: Birds?

MANSON: The birds. On the telephone lines or electrical lines, whatever they are. They sit on them.

ESQUIRE: On the lines.

MANSON: Correct. And the angle I had, my point of view on everything, I could see five of them. Five lines running horizontally.

ESQUIRE: Like power lines do. They run horizontally.

MANSON: They do. And these did. They still do. So I'm looking at all this. Not focussed on one area in particular. Just taking the whole area in. Like a wide shot. Maybe fifty feet from end to end. From where the birds started to where they ended. It was a gathering.



Of birds. On the lines. And they're just sitting there.  
And that's when the bullet hit.

ESQUIRE: The bullet?

MANSON: The diamond bullet, hit me right between  
the eyes, in the middle of the forehead. Bang. What is  
that?

ESQUIRE: What is what?

MANSON: I'm telling you what I was seeing. What I  
was thinking. What is that? And I looked harder, panned  
from left to right. Notes. Musical notes. The birds.  
The lines. They had landed and were now resting in such  
a way that it looked like a sheet of music. The birds  
were positioned on these five lines like musical notes.  
I did a quick scan and just about collapsed. From  
excitement. They were close to perfect. Maybe perfect.

ESQUIRE: For what?

MANSON: My song. The song that I've been working  
on. Looking for the notes. A song about a letter I want  
to send to my son. It's the reason you're here. These  
were miracle licks. Magic licks. These birds on the  
line.

ESQUIRE: Lines.

MANSON: On the lines. There was no doubt about it.  
I didn't trust my eyes. Didn't trust my memory. So I  
crept back inside. I crept because I didn't want to  
disturb the birds. I found my camera and I crouched and

then I crawled back onto the roof. My hands were shaking as I lifted the camera up. I kept thinking, it's going to be my luck, my life of bad luck, of things not quite working out, getting close but not getting there, always feeling that pat on my back, hearing that voice, you'll get 'em next time, you can't win 'em all, don't give up, it's not whether you win or lose. A car. A scream. Even an earthquake. Something was going to scare those birds, spook those birds scatter them up into the sky acre. They were right in front of me. I got them all in frame. That was the most terrifying moment. Just as I started to press my finger on the button. That's the moment that they would suddenly, inexplicably, take flight. Because that's how life goes most of the time. A cruel, tortured twist, at the last possible moment. You want this? You really want this? Here, it's right here. Take it. I will. No, you can't have it. But I clicked. Wow-ee wow wow. I clicked.

ESQUIRE: You snapped your picture.

MANSON: And another. And another. And another to be safe. And then that little earthquake hit.

ESQUIRE: 4.3.

MANSON: And they took flight. Seconds. I'm serious here. It was seconds after I took the picture.

ESQUIRE: Pictures.

MANSON: The pictures. Eight seconds? I'm not even sure it was that long. If I had been delayed another ten seconds? I wouldn't have got the picture.

ESQUIRE: But you got it.

MANSON: I got it. Then I took the film to get developed.

ESQUIRE: That's right. You don't have a camera phone.

MANSON: One-hour developing, baby. Had a hot chocolate while I waited. Got my prints. You can see it right there. The birds on the line.

ESQUIRE: On the lines.

MANSON: See? Five lines. Birds. Notes.

ESQUIRE: Did you play them right away?

MANSON: No. Once I got back. Grabbed my lyrics. Copied the placement of the birds onto a sheet of music. Tinkered with the placement of the lyrics. It all came together fast. Sat down at the joybox and played it through. It was sublime. The perfect fusion of words and the arrangement of sounds, not just pleasing to the ear but compositing, combusting to the point of white light, white heat, it blew me off the bench. Like one of my dad's nuclear missiles back in Kimball, Nebraska. Devastation. Pure devastation. Devastation that liberates, not destroys. Tears of joy I had.

ESQUIRE: You've done it.

MANSON: I think I have.

ESQUIRE: You've said in previous interviews you chased the perfect song.

MANSON: I did. I have.

ESQUIRE: And now you have it.

MANSON: I do.

ESQUIRE: And now you send it to your son? You've talked about him in previous interviews.

MANSON: I got a newspaper article in the mail. It was a story about how he saved a swan. My son did that. A hero he was. That was the whole inspiration. He was. I want him to hear it on the radio. I want him to be as proud of me as I am of him.

ESQUIRE: What if it doesn't get recorded?

MANSON: There is that possibility. There's no guarantees in life. Plenty of masterpieces get overlooked. You're at the mercy of the whims of the sentries who guard the portals to the public.

ESQUIRE: And even if he did hear it on the radio how will he know it's your song?

MANSON: There's that too.

ESQUIRE: It could be a monster hit that he hears on the radio multiple times but the disc jockey doesn't say, here's a song by Charles Manson, the writer of the

song. The jockey says, here's a song by insert name of singer or insert name of band.

MANSON: And even if the disc jockey did say Charles Manson he wouldn't know that was me. I was Hartley Sickerdick when he came along, long before he came along.

ESQUIRE: So you need to find him. Send him the song.

MANSON: I really want him to hear it on the radio first.

ESQUIRE: It might not work out that way.

MANSON: You want to see something from the shadows?

ESQUIRE: Okay.

MANSON: Look at the photo. The birds on the line.

ESQUIRE: Yes?

MANSON: Count them up.

ESQUIRE: There are many.

MANSON: There's thirty-six. I counted them. I don't know why I did but I did.

ESQUIRE: Thirty-six birds. That we can see.

MANSON: In the photo. In the frame of the photo. The notes I used. Those birds. There's thirty-six birds.

ESQUIRE: Okay.

MANSON: Thirty-six birds. Thirty-six dead golfers. Coincidence?

ESQUIRE: Yes.

MANSON: Could be.

ESQUIRE: Is.

MANSON: Strange. That's all.

ESQUIRE: Thirty-six people didn't die and their spirits didn't inhabit the bodies of birds so you could find the musical notes to your song.

MANSON: Supernatural events happen all the time. We just don't notice. You ever lose things for no apparent reason?

ESQUIRE: There's always a reason. An explanation.

MANSON: I've lost things. Just totally disappeared.

ESQUIRE: Like what?

MANSON: The last time was a lollipop stick. A white lollipop stick. It was on my desk. I moved my elbow. It fell off the table. I heard it land on the floor, the wood floor. Just a little tap that sound was. You can do a little sound with your tongue on the roof of your mouth and it sounds almost the same. I looked right away. Couldn't see it. Don't ask me why it bothered me. I was probably thinking that there might be some candy residue on the stick and ants were everywhere. They'd find the stick and I'd have a trail of ants coming from outside to eat the candy. I didn't want the lollipop stick on the floor. I pulled my chair back and I still couldn't see it. So I lifted the chair and walked it to

the other side of the room. I returned to the desk and I looked under. No stick. It's white, right? So it should be visible on the wood floor, the brown floor. Now it's really bothering me. I get down on my knees and I look, I mean I really, really look. No white stick. It's not a ball, it's not going hit the floor and bounce and roll away. So you work within that radius.

ESQUIRE: The radius?

MANSON: The radius of where you think it might have landed.

ESQUIRE: What?

MANSON: The lollipop stick. I know approximately where it fell off the table. And it's not like I swung my arm violently. I just moved my arm and it fell off the table. I could not find it. I looked for a long time.

ESQUIRE: How long is a long time?

MANSON: I don't want to say. It was a substantial length of time. It disappeared. It just disappeared.

ESQUIRE: Maybe when you moved your elbow it got stuck to your sleeve. If there was sticky, candy residue.

MANSON: It wasn't on my sleeve because I had a T-shirt. And it wasn't stuck to my skin. I've had other

things disappear. What happens to them? They just disappear for no logical reason.

ESQUIRE: There's usually a logical explanation.

MANSON: But when there isn't?

ESQUIRE: You don't look hard enough.

MANSON: Each of us has our own experience with what we see. It's one man walking. One woman walking. One child walking. We see what we see. A solitary vision, a perspective. A looking out, if you will, from a crow's nest. Say it's gun control. You want some hot takes on that? I don't have them. I've never been personally impacted by a torpedo with a gun. I've never had a gun in my face. Maybe that's part of it. Can I feel bad for all the families of those golfers? Yes, yes and more yes. But that's not the same as being personally impacted. A hunter kills a lion and we blame the hunter. A lunatic kills people and we blame the gun. I'm not saying that's all there is to it but it's complicated. One guy in a crow's nest. I might say that we live forever, that there's something, I don't know what it is, but there's something that doesn't die when the body dies, and you know what? I'm allowed to think that.

ESQUIRE: You have a person of interest in your house.



MANSON: Yes. Rudy Cienfuegos. The grandson of Camilo Cienfuegos.

ESQUIRE: Allegedly.

MANSON: Correct.

ESQUIRE: Do you ever think for a moment that he did do it? That he slaughtered those golfers? And you invited him into your home. And you have an unpredictable, homicidal lunatic in a bedroom, ten feet below you, below this wooden floor? And that your life is in danger?

MANSON: At first they said it was terrorists. I didn't buy it. Then they asked questions about Crandal.

ESQUIRE: Crandal Cobb. The gun owner.

MANSON: The guy who had previously owned the gun.

ESQUIRE: A guy who had a strange relationship with one of the victims, Simon Thistleton, and a guy who was denied a membership at the golf course.

MANSON: And now Rudy. The father of Madeline Mendez?

ESQUIRE: The girl who was run over by Simon Thistleton.

MANSON: And scarred for life. The rumours about Rudy and Madeline are completely irrelevant. Is he the father? It doesn't matter. He treated her like a daughter. Did he do this, does he do this, because he is the father or because she's the daughter of the

woman he loves? I don't know. But this notion, this idea that he was so angry about what happened to Madeline that he planned and executed the murder of thirty-six golfers, this trajectory of thought, it just doesn't make sense to me.

ESQUIRE: There's a big reward.

MANSON: I saw that.

ESQUIRE: Five million dollars. The families of the victims have put it out there.

MANSON: There were a lot of rich cats that died. I'm surprised it's that low. It might go higher. It's dangerous I think.

ESQUIRE: Why?

MANSON: It's a bounty. It's going to attract a wave of greedy lunatics. I've told Crandal and I've told Rudy, get away, go away, get out of this alley.

ESQUIRE: There was an argument you mentioned before we got the reels spinning.

MANSON: That's why I mentioned it before we got the reels spinning.

ESQUIRE: Silvia Mendez, the mother of Madeline, the girlfriend of Rudy, the person of interest, she came and talked to him in his bedroom today. You overheard some of that conversation.

MANSON: And it's just not something I'm going to discuss while the reels are spinning.

ESQUIRE: Did she ask Rudy if he killed the golfers?

MANSON: I am just not prepared to participate in gossip about conversations I may or may not have overheard.

ESQUIRE: If Silvia Mendez has concerns about Rudy Cienfuegos then shouldn't you? He's living in your house.

MANSON: No comment.

ESQUIRE: Did they fight?

MANSON: No comment.

ESQUIRE: Did she ask Rudy if he killed the golfers?

MANSON: I am just not prepared to participate in gossip about conversations I may or may not have overheard.

ESQUIRE: If Silvia Mendez has concerns about Rudy Cienfuegos then shouldn't you? He's living in your house.

MANSON: No comment.

ESQUIRE: Did they fight?

MANSON: No comment.

ESQUIRE: You went to your garage today.

MANSON: Yes.

ESQUIRE: It was traumatic.

MANSON: It was full of emotion. I don't like going down there. Stirs things up.

ESQUIRE: What were you looking for?

MANSON: Tapes. Reels. From this recorder.

ESQUIRE: You need to explain.

MANSON: I hate looking for anything down there. It's a vault of failure. The boxes. The steamer trunk. You start unpacking that stuff and you get pavement rash. I found the bear.

ESQUIRE: That's not what you were looking for.

MANSON: No. I was looking for the reels. Couldn't remember where I put them so I had to do a lot of unpacking, opening. Damn. So much dust. The reels were in the steamer trunk. And beside the reels was the bear.

ESQUIRE: What bear?

MANSON: My son's bear. His teddy bear. Buddy. That's what he called him. His name was Buddy. A little brown bear. He arrived in the mail. In a box. With a note. From the ex wife. All the note said was, he wanted you to have this.

ESQUIRE: Who?

MANSON: My son. My ex wife wrote the note. Said my son wanted me to have Buddy, his bear. This was after she took him away.

ESQUIRE: Why did she take him away?

MANSON: She didn't trust me anymore. I didn't trust me anymore.

ESQUIRE: What happened?

MANSON: It's complicated. But it's not that complicated at all.

ESQUIRE: So what happened?

MANSON: Something happened, that's for sure. Tequila.

ESQUIRE: Okay.

MANSON: Sorry.

ESQUIRE: That's okay.

MANSON: Better.

ESQUIRE: Can I see the bear?

MANSON: Buddy. Yes. Hold on.

ESQUIRE: This is him?

MANSON: That's Buddy. With his red scarf.

ESQUIRE: He's ragged.

MANSON: He's loved. My boy used to run his fingers along the tag, back and forth. It would calm him down, helped him get to sleep some nights.

ESQUIRE: Like this?

MANSON: Yes.

ESQUIRE: It's like strumming a guitar.

MANSON: It is a little bit.

ESQUIRE: It feels good. I can see why he did it.

MANSON: The reels.

ESQUIRE: The reels.

MANSON: It was Silvia's idea. Back when Stanley was alive.

ESQUIRE: Stanley?

MANSON: Stanley Mendez. He was killed by an avalanche of telephone poles, the wooden poles. He worked at the Los Angeles Water and Power pole yard. He played guitar and he sang. And he did those two things in ways that did not seem possible. You could hear him when he left his balcony door open. You've never heard anything like it. Silvia wanted to record him, to tape record his songs. But he wouldn't have it. In fact I think Silvia said he got really angry about it. So she came up with a plan. Could I take my recorder, the one we're using now, and hide it? Hide it in the living room where he plays. It was a great challenge. Nobody knew. Except me and Silvia. So I did. We hid this reel-to-reel machine and I concealed microphones in the room. It was her job to switch it on. And she did. And we recorded. This went on for months. And then he died. That's a long time ago now. It was always my intention to put the tapes together for the family, for the Mendez family. But then everything got complicated with Madeline. So I never did.

ESQUIRE: You put the reels in the steamer trunk.

MANSON: Yes, and I've been listening.

ESQUIRE: Is Stanley Mendez as good as you remember?

MANSON: He's better. And the sound quality is really good. I'm a good sound engineer. There was a

short passage that was odd. Oscar must have come in the room while Stanley was playing.

ESQUIRE: Oscar?

MANSON: Oscar Mendez. His son. He kills bugs. Sets world records. And whatnot. He spoke in tongues.

ESQUIRE: Tongues?

MANSON: I don't know how to describe it. Not quite gibberish. It was scary. It is scary to hear it. But Stanley didn't sound like it bothered him. Like he'd heard it before. It raised the hairs on my neck.

ESQUIRE: Can we hear it?

MANSON: Well, no, because we're using the machine. Later. I haven't had a lot of conversations with Oscar and he's always been odd but never crazy, not that kind of crazy.

ESQUIRE: You are perspiring.

MANSON: Yes.

ESQUIRE: You think Oscar ...

MANSON: I did. But I don't. He's of Salvadoran descent.

ESQUIRE: So?

MANSON: White guys go on murder sprees. Not sons of Salvadoran immigrants.

ESQUIRE: You jest.

MANSON: I jest. It doesn't really add up. Oscar loved his father. You can hear it in the reels. His

mother might have had an affair with a guy who Oscar might have hated. Or at least disliked. His father dies. His mother gives birth to a child who may have been the result of an extra-marital affair. That child gets run over by a car. This would have upset Oscar and it did at the time but I don't see him going into full lunatic rage.

ESQUIRE: Why not?

MANSON: He would have mixed feelings about Madeline. On the one hand she's his sister. But on the other hand she's not his father's daughter. Rudy might be. And Oscar might see his mother as flawed. Too many mixed feelings to have a clear vision of vengeance.

ESQUIRE: Maybe he wanted to set a new record for mass murder.

MANSON: Well.

ESQUIRE: Should you play the tape for the police?

MANSON: And get another neighbour named as a person of interest?

ESQUIRE: But what if he did it?

MANSON: I might ask Silvia if Oscar has had problems in the past. Or Madeline. I might ask Madeline.

ESQUIRE: I think you should be very careful with this.



MANSON: I will be efficient and cautious. I am tired.

ESQUIRE: Why now? The tapes. The Stanley Mendez tapes.

MANSON: I had this idea that I could get Stanley's tapes to the right people and get his songs released. On records and on radios. That's where they should be. And the song I just wrote? I was thinking of trying to slip my song into his reels and have it out there, anonymously. That it would become a huge hit, a hit by Stanley Mendez. That I would never get credit for the song. That it would be some kind of heroic gesture on my part, that I wasn't driven by a slavish obsession with fame after all. That it would be my secret, that only I would know that I wrote the song.

ESQUIRE: How would you make it sound like Stanley Mendez sang it?

MANSON: That was a problem.

ESQUIRE: And I thought you wrote the song for your son?

MANSON: That was the clincher. And I'm talking to you about the caper so it wouldn't be a secret, would it?

*Parenting*

"Pounce of the Now"

PARENTING: Mr. Manson, thank you for allowing us a few minutes of your time.

CHARLES MANSON: You are welcome. I was just about to say, it's my pleasure, but I cannot say that I'm full of the groovy. I just can't say it. There is no pleasure here.

PARENTING: Why not?

MANSON: Your magazine. It's a stretch. Me. I'm not a parent.

PARENTING: You were a parent.

MANSON: Correct.

PARENTING: You want to be a parent again.

MANSON: I do.

PARENTING: So?

MANSON: Okay.

PARENTING: You are a songwriter.

MANSON: Yes.

PARENTING: You have recently completed a song.

MANSON: Yesterday.

PARENTING: You took a photograph of birds on the line.

MANSON: Outside my house. Thirty-six birds.

PARENTING: You counted them. They became the notes.

MANSON: Musical notes.

PARENTING: The musical notes for your song.

MANSON: They did. Do you want to hear it? I can play it on the piano.

PARENTING: You wanted your son to hear it on the radio.

MANSON: He can hear it now.

PARENTING: Who?

MANSON: My son. You can hear it now. I'll play it for you right now.

PARENTING: Me?

MANSON: Maximilian.

PARENTING: Who?

MANSON: You. Max.

PARENTING: Is this over?

MANSON: We'll finish this. Tonight. What we started. Do you want to hear it?

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: And? So?

PARENTING: It's good.

MANSON: That sounds like when someone says, that's interesting, translation, that did not move me in any conceivable way and I'm being kind because I'm not telling you how insignificant that experience just was.

PARENTING: No. It's good.

MANSON: But not great.

PARENTING: It's really good.

MANSON: Okay.

PARENTING: When did you figure this out?

MANSON: You?

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: Almost immediately.

PARENTING: And you pretended you didn't know?

MANSON: Do you remember when we used to play hide and seek? And you'd hide in plain sight? Why ruin it?

PARENTING: Even with my beard?

MANSON: You ever see *Bananas*?

PARENTING: No.

MANSON: You looked like that, the Woody Allen character as a Cuban-type revolutionary with a fake beard.

PARENTING: The beard is real. I don't look anything like Woody Allen.

MANSON: Did you grow the beard for me?

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: Will you shave it?

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: No. I mean right now.

PARENTING: I could.

MANSON: There's scissors in the drawer. Shave kit is under the sink. We can keep talking. How did you find me?

PARENTING: You're in the same house.

MANSON: Right. Why didn't you just show up, knock on the door, say, here I am?

PARENTING: I wasn't sure I wanted to know you.

MANSON: There's some bad press.

PARENTING: There's a history.

MANSON: That's probably not entirely accurate. The history you've been told.

PARENTING: Perhaps.

MANSON: Did you plan on being a tenant? What was that? Six months ago? You were standing in the alley staring up at the house.

PARENTING: I had been hovering for a while. Weeks. Walked past, looking. Back and forth.

MANSON: I never saw you hovering.

PARENTING: I wanted you to see me but then again I didn't. I wasn't sure I wanted to talk to you.

MANSON: You came up for coffee.

PARENTING: And you didn't know?

MANSON: Not at that moment. I have had a lifetime commitment to an intense focus on myself. You said you liked Jack London. That made sense. I've had people come by. Ask questions about Jack London. There was

nothing unusual about that. You said all the right things.

PARENTING: Pure manipulation.

MANSON: You don't like Jack London?

PARENTING: I don't dislike him. It was an excuse. To talk to you.

MANSON: And what were your impressions? When we first talked.

PARENTING: It was easy. I was surprised. I wanted more. And you said you had an apartment available.

MANSON: Was that part of the plan? The caper?

PARENTING: No. I didn't know you were a landlord. I wasn't sure I was even going to talk to you. At all. But then we did, we talked, and even then I thought about getting back on the plane and leaving so I could think about everything. And the apartment was there. It was tough. That decision. To move in. To take up residence.

MANSON: In disguise.

PARENTING: Yes. I didn't know how long I could do it.

MANSON: Pretend to be someone you're not.

PARENTING: It helped that you didn't ask for references. That would have blown my cover.

MANSON: You were in this process, this evaluation process. Getting to know me, getting to know more about me but not revealing who you were.

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: And if I was failing your assessment process you could have left at any time.

PARENTING: That's right.

MANSON: You saw enough. You wanted to stick around.

PARENTING: I wasn't sure. Ever. That I was going to stick around. And then Dolly left.

MANSON: Nervous breakdown. Poor girl. Had she told you about the interviews?

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: Did that blow your mind?

PARENTING: That was a moment when I was planning to leave, was about to leave.

MANSON: Too strange?

PARENTING: It's not even in a category of strange. Or weird. It's pathological.

MANSON: But free rent.

PARENTING: No rent. That mattered to her. Not to me. She does these interviews with you, these fake interviews, and she goes crazy.

MANSON: That's not why she suffered.

PARENTING: Who knows?

MANSON: She moved back to Baltimore. Gave up on her dreams.

PARENTING: You cured her of that. Did you know then? It was me?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Did you know it was me after I sent the newspaper article?

MANSON: Yes. Why did you do that?

PARENTING: I wanted a trigger. A spark. I wanted to set you on fire. To get you talking about me.

MANSON: Do you think it's crazy? That a tenant interviews me?

PARENTING: How can you even ask that question?

MANSON: Okay.

PARENTING: You pay someone.

MANSON: No rent or reduced rent.

PARENTING: It's the same difference. You pay someone to pretend to be a magazine. And they ask you questions about your career. Of course it's crazy.

MANSON: It's not hospital crazy.

PARENTING: It's right up there.

MANSON: Do the tenants talk about that?

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: That I'm crazy.



PARENTING: That you have this weird habit. It's like a bizarre sex habit, a bizarre sex act, and you solicit vulnerable people to help you with that.

MANSON: It's not like I'm tying people up or anything. They're just interviews.

PARENTING: They are incredibly time consuming.

MANSON: So is working to pay rent. Free rent? Of course there has to be a commitment of time.

PARENTING: There.

MANSON: Wow-ee wow wow. Look at you.

PARENTING: Baby face.

MANSON: Handsome face. Such a beautiful, handsome face. Do they talk about it?

PARENTING: What?

MANSON: These interviews.

PARENTING: Who?

MANSON: The tenants.

PARENTING: Nobody cares enough to talk about it a lot.

MANSON: But it gets mentioned.

PARENTING: Rarely. People have their own lives.

MANSON: Is it seen as eccentric?

PARENTING: Sad.

MANSON: Sad?

PARENTING: Or pathetic, depending on who's talking.

MANSON: Who thinks it's pathetic?

PARENTING: It doesn't matter. It can be seen as pathetic by a reasonable person who doesn't have to be judgmental or mean.

MANSON: Do you think it's pathetic?

PARENTING: It's just sad. You need other people to tell you it's sad? You can't figure that out on your own? That you wanted to do something, in your case, write a song that made you worthy of an interview, worthy of a magazine asking you questions about your life and that didn't work out for whatever reasons.

MANSON: Luck.

PARENTING: So you just make the whole thing up. This charade.

MANSON: I used to do them in my head. The interviews.

PARENTING: They should have stayed there.

MANSON: It got boring. I'd ask myself the same questions over and over. A person. Another person. The other. I needed the dialogue. They ask the unexpected. Sometimes. There's surprises.

PARENTING: It can't be that satisfying.

MANSON: There's a lot of air going out of the balloon.

PARENTING: You got your fifteen minutes.

MANSON: I hate that expression. I hate it more than life itself.

PARENTING: You got to stand in front of a bunch of cameras at the end of the alley, be the centre of attention. It's all recorded on my phone. You can watch it whenever you want.

MANSON: How'd I look?

PARENTING: Nervous.

MANSON: You don't like the song?

PARENTING: I didn't say that.

MANSON: I should have waited. It's like a drawing, a drawing of a stick figure. Me, with my yard-dog voice, plunking away on the tinklebox. You need the whole package. Hearing it from a singer who can really belt it out. A soaring wall of sound. A good producer. Putting it all together.

PARENTING: It's just fine the way it is.

MANSON: It'll get produced. It'll go places.

PARENTING: Anything's possible.

MANSON: The police were at Mrs. Whipple's.

PARENTING: You want to keep this going?

MANSON: Yes.

PARENTING: Mrs. Whipple?

MANSON: My neighbour. Across the street. She's old,  
102 years.

PARENTING: That's old.

MANSON: They were looking at her outdoor fireplace.

PARENTING: She has an outdoor fireplace?

MANSON: They took everything away in bags.

PARENTING: Bags?

MANSON: Evidence bags. Mrs. Whipple said they think someone might have burned, or tried to burn some clothes.

PARENTING: Like what?

MANSON: Moccasins. The jump suit. The gear the torpedo was wearing.

PARENTING: Do they know that?

MANSON: That's what Mrs. Whipple thinks. Not the mask.

PARENTING: The baby mask.

MANSON: They found that in the L.A. River.

PARENTING: After it got sucked into the storm drains from the pond at the golf course.

MANSON: They think that's what happened.

PARENTING: Why would somebody toss the baby mask after the shootings and then burn the moccasins and the jump suit?

MANSON: I don't know.

PARENTING: And if it was somebody from this alley, why would they burn evidence in a fireplace on this alley?

MANSON: Rudy used the fireplace.

PARENTING: Rudy who?

MANSON: Rudy Cienfuegos. The grandson of Camilo Cienfuegos, one of the architects of the Cuban revolution.

PARENTING: When?

MANSON: Monday night.

PARENTING: After the murders.

MANSON: That night.

PARENTING: Have you told anybody?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Do you think you should?

MANSON: He's used that fireplace many, many times.

PARENTING: And he's jogged around that golf course.

MANSON: Many, many times. He's the victim of coincidence.

PARENTING: Is he smart enough to set up alibis?

MANSON: These are not alibis. These are activities. Normal, regular, day-by-day activities.

PARENTING: If the police have taken away the ash from Mrs. Whipple's fireplace then you need to tell them that you saw Rudy Cienfuegos using that fireplace on Monday night.

MANSON: I don't know about that.

PARENTING: He is a person of interest.

MANSON: Which doesn't mean much. Everyone's clutching at straws. Including the police. That's all the fireplace is.

PARENTING: You witnessed something. You have an obligation.

MANSON: He was in tears.

PARENTING: Who?

MANSON: Rudy. This afternoon. In his room. The room he's sleeping in. The pressure's getting to him. I heard him sobbing. I knocked. And went in. I patted him on the back and told him everything was going to be okay. He told me that Silvia thinks he did it.

PARENTING: Silvia.

MANSON: Silvia Mendez. His girlfriend. Mother of Madeline Mendez, the little girl who run over by Simon Thistleton, the voice of Hadley the Hippo, shot dead at the golf course. It's like he's tied to a stake, Rudy is, tied down like Joan of Arc and there's all these pieces of circumstantial evidence thrown around his feet, like pieces of wood, pieces of timber, logs, branches, kindling, and everyone wants to light that wood on fire and watch him burn. I'm not adding another piece.

PARENTING: But what if he did do it?

MANSON: I don't see it.

PARENTING: Silvia Mendez thinks he did it?

MANSON: She asked him. That's all.

PARENTING: She knows him better than you.

MANSON: A lot better.

PARENTING: If she's asking that question then you need to be careful here. He's right below this floor.

MANSON: She wanted to hear it from him.

PARENTING: That's disturbing.

MANSON: I talked to Silvia.

PARENTING: About Rudy?

MANSON: Oscar. Oscar Mendez. Her son. She has two. Nestor Mendez is the other son. He works at the golf course.

PARENTING: He works there?

MANSON: He's a golfer. A good one. An amateur but he's won some tournaments. Oscar. He's a world-record holder.

PARENTING: In what?

MANSON: Events that he creates. He goes without chocolate for a year. And copies the pages of a dictionary for a year. I have some old tapes of Stanley Mendez. I recorded him playing guitar and singing. I did this for Silvia.

PARENTING: Stanley Mendez?

MANSON: Her husband. Her dead husband. He was crushed by an avalanche of telephone poles. He sang and played. In his apartment. The sounds were like nothing you've ever heard. Magnificent torches. His music. Balls of fire bouncing down the alley. They took you places. Good places. He was shy about his music. Silvia

wanted to record him and give him a record for his birthday. I hid microphones in his living room. Silvia took care of turning on the machine. We recorded him for weeks. I dug up the tapes. They were in the garage. I was going to sneak my song onto his tapes and include them so it would get out there without me getting the credit. The song would be a hit without anyone knowing I had written it.

PARENTING: Like killing golfers without anyone knowing you had done it.

MANSON: You think I shot the golfers?

PARENTING: No. Just talking hypothetically. It's a tangent. Whoever did it is like those guys, those arsonists who start big fires then go home and watch everything burn. Whoever shot the golfers is like that. They get to watch everything burn but they don't get the credit for the murders.

MANSON: That's what I said. To *Rave* magazine.

PARENTING: I know. I agree. What you wanted to do with your song, hiding it in the Stanley Mendez tapes, is just like that.

MANSON: It was going to be my statement about doing something for the love of doing something. Just like Stanley.

PARENTING: What did you tell Silvia?



MANSON: There's moments on the tapes. When Stanley is talking to Oscar. Nobody knows they're being recorded.

PARENTING: Hidden microphones.

MANSON: All that. And there's moments, crazy moments, when Oscar is talking like a madman. It's almost indecipherable. Stanley's very calm about it, like he's heard it before, and he tries to soothe Oscar by playing him his music. Oscar's a bug killer. He kills bugs for his job. I never see Oscar much. But I never see that guy who's talking like a madman on the tapes. Maybe he does that at home. I told Silvia. I played her the tapes.

PARENTING: When?

MANSON: This afternoon. When she got home from work. I called her up. Up here. In this room. I played her the tapes.

PARENTING: Was this before she asked Rudy if he killed the golfers?

MANSON: No. She did that this morning. On her way to work.

PARENTING: What did she say?

MANSON: Not much.

PARENTING: No reaction?

MANSON: None that I could tell. My best guess is that she didn't know. She doesn't know that Oscar. Hadn't seen him like that.

PARENTING: That would seem impossible. That's her son.

MANSON: Yes. But she didn't say anything. You'd expect something like, oh, that's just Oscar talking gibberish or being foolish. You'd expect that, right?

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: I'm the one with the tapes. You'd think she'd want to clarify what's on the tapes. How does she know I'm not playing the tapes for the police right now?

PARENTING: Why aren't you?

MANSON: I'm not throwing Oscar under a train. I just wanted to know from Silvia if that was normal, Oscar cracking his jaw with the crazy. I mean Oscar's not normal. But he's a harmless not normal. I don't know what the police would say. They'd probably burn sticks under his fingernails, make life unbearable for him. Like they've done with Rudy.

PARENTING: They'd probably ask Oscar where he was on Monday at around 11:30 a.m.

MANSON: That's what I'm talking about. The pressures are there. They've caused Crandal to come out.

PARENTING: Crandal?

MANSON: Crandal Cobb. The guy whose gun was found, the murder weapon.

PARENTING: That guy. The importer of illegal weapons into California.

MANSON: He didn't know the law here. He's come out. He's a gay man. A homosexual man. That's what he said as soon as he opened the door. I'm a gay man, a homosexual man. I said, congratulations. He asked me if I knew. I lied, said I didn't, I hadn't, I didn't know. Congratulations. I knocked on his door after dinner. I haven't seen much of him this week. He had to come out. He was at the golf course.

PARENTING: What?

MANSON: I didn't know until tonight. Right around the time of the murders.

PARENTING: On Monday?

MANSON: That's when they were. Sitting in his car. In a driveway. At a house.

PARENTING: At a house.

MANSON: One of the houses that sits along the golf course. There's a bunch of them. The backyards, they overlook the golf course.

PARENTING: Just some random driveway?

MANSON: No. A house for sale. A house on the market. An empty house. Mrs. Whipple had seen him come

home shortly after the murders. He's usually asleep at that time of the day. He gambles at night. Sleeps most of the day. Mrs. Whipple saw that. Saw him come home in his car. She told the police about it when they were sifting through her fireplace. Her outdoor fireplace.

PARENTING: She waited until today?

MANSON: She was scared. Didn't want to make Crandal angry. Made the police promise they wouldn't say who saw him. So the police tell Crandal that someone saw him arriving in his car right after the murders. And he said, so what? And the police said that the person who saw him said he's usually sound asleep at that hour. It was unusual. So Crandal had to make his confession. To the police. He was at this house. In the driveway.

PARENTING: At the time of the murders.

MANSON: Right at that time.

PARENTING: Doing what?

MANSON: Sitting in his car. Waiting for a real estate agent. A guy he had met on his computer. A homosexual real estate agent with sparkling blue eyes, devastating eyes, that's what Crandal called them. They had arranged to meet at the house, a house the agent was selling, an empty house, right there on the golf course.

PARENTING: So what happened?

MANSON: Nothing. The guy never showed up. So Crandal drove home.

PARENTING: And he never told the police about that when they were asking him about his gun? That was Monday, days ago.

MANSON: His stolen gun.

PARENTING: If it was stolen. He could have made all that up. Nobody saw anyone break into his house. It's his version of what happened. It's just his word. There's no proof. Doesn't take much skill to break a window with a hammer and tell the police, look my house got broken into.

MANSON: Why would he do that?

PARENTING: If he was planning the murders.

MANSON: That far in advance?

PARENTING: Why not? If you're looking to commit a mass murder and try and get away with it, you've got to plan, and that might mean doing something to make it look like your house was broken into.

MANSON: Nine months before the murders?

PARENTING: Yes, nine months before.

MANSON: He didn't tell the police.

PARENTING: When?

MANSON: On Monday, this past Monday. He didn't tell the police he was sitting in his car, parked on a driveway of a house at the golf course because he'd

have to say he was there to meet up with his sparkling real estate agent. He didn't want to say that so he said nothing. And he wasn't going to say anything but after the police were asking him about him arriving back home.

PARENTING: Today?

MANSON: Telling them today. Telling them today about arriving back home on Monday, right after the murders. He thought that maybe someone near that house, someone on that block might have seen his car, or maybe one of the houses had a security camera and it got a picture of his car. And then his water's on and it's boiling. All because he hadn't said anything. So he had to tell the police. He had to tell them he was a homosexual man. A gay man. He said he broke down. Cried. With all these cops standing around him. Tears of joy, he said. He was free. That's what he said. I'm free. A beautiful moment surrounded by all that official testosterone.

PARENTING: If the house that was for sale, the one on the golf course, was empty, he could have parked his car, gone in the backyard, changed into the jumpsuit, moccasins and big, baby mask, gone on his shooting spree, jumped back over the fence and drove back home. The whole real estate agent story might be an alibi, yes, I was there but here's why I was there.

MANSON: They have to find the real estate agent now.

PARENTING: What if there is no real estate agent?

MANSON: They have his computer. There were messages back and forth. Between Crandal and the agent.

PARENTING: You could create a separate account, create this real estate agent and send messages to yourself.

MANSON: Wouldn't they figure that out?

PARENTING: Who?

MANSON: The police. Wouldn't they see that all that stuff was made on the same computer? If you're making out Crandal to be this master criminal, faking a break-in of his own house to make it look like his guns were stolen, nine months before the murders, all that planning, why would he send messages to himself on his own computer to make an alibi? That doesn't add up.

PARENTING: He could have gone to a library, used their computers and sent messages to himself. They'll figure that out. They'll know where the real estate agent messages originated. And if there was a library, there's cameras at the library. There's cameras everywhere. That's very disturbing.

MANSON: What is?

PARENTING: That he was there. He was right there. At the scene of the crime.

MANSON: You didn't talk to him. He didn't have the look of a torpedo. He had the look of a man who could be himself now.

PARENTING: You can't tell that much by how someone looks. You didn't know it was me.

MANSON: I figured it out.

PARENTING: Eventually.

MANSON: I did.

PARENTING: When?

MANSON: Somewhere along the line. If this agent.

PARENTING: The real estate agent.

MANSON: If this agent is not real and they find out that Crandal created this guy and sent messages to himself so he could have an alibi, I think that someone's setting him up, framing him.

PARENTING: No.

MANSON: Think about it. Someone has to be charged with those murders. If you did it, and you planned it to the point where you commit the murders and get away, which they did, then you've got to have the other part planned.

PARENTING: What part?

MANSON: Somebody has to be charged. I think Crandal's being framed.

PARENTING: If there's no agent.



MANSON: If there's no agent. How hard would that be? You know when Crandal's away. He goes away gambling like clockwork. You sneak into his house when he's away and you create this real estate agent on his computer. And you send messages to him, to Crandal, on his own computer but he doesn't know it. Can you do that?

PARENTING: Maybe.

MANSON: You get him all hopped up with pictures of this real estate agent with the sparkling peepers, and you tell him, meet me here, at this house, at this time.

PARENTING: If someone's doing that while he's away from the house then they'll figure that out. The police will figure that out. This message was sent at such and such a time and right at that time we have evidence that Crandal Cobb was at the casino so he couldn't have created this real estate agent or sent these messages.

MANSON: Well, maybe you sneak in while he's asleep and use his computer while he's sleeping, maybe you have a key to his house, so it's quiet. Then he's home when these messages get sent. There weren't many. Just a few. Wouldn't take much to do that. And then it looks like Crandal was sending messages to himself to have an alibi. I think he's getting framed here. I think someone might have wanted him to be at or near the golf

course. That's what I think. I think he's going to get arrested for the murders. He's a fall guy, a patsy.

PARENTING: Well.

MANSON: Just like Oswald. He said he was having lunch in the depository building.

PARENTING: Did anyone see him?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Was anyone else in the lunchroom?

MANSON: I don't think so.

PARENTING: So nobody can verify that he was in the lunchroom when Kennedy was shot?

MANSON: Well, nobody did, it doesn't mean that somebody wasn't there.

PARENTING: If you're going to frame someone you better be sure you can control what they're doing.

MANSON: So?

PARENTING: Like Oswald. If your plan is to assassinate the President of the United States and you have this guy who you want to get blamed for it then you better have a better plan than just letting him wander around at the moment the bullets fly because if one person sees him then it's over, he has an alibi. It's a loose thread that can't be loose with something that big. If you're planning to kill thirty-six golfers and you want Crandal Cobb to get the blame then you have to be one-hundred per cent sure that he's exactly

where you want him to be. And what if he uses his phone? If he uses his phone then he has an alibi. Or if he doesn't go meet the real estate agent at the house. Or if he arrives late or leaves early. It's too unpredictable for something that big.

MANSON: Maybe Rudy's being framed. Maybe he's the fall guy. If you know that he does this run, that he jogs the same route every day and you know it takes him about twenty minutes to get from point A, beside the golf course on Beverly to point B, the other side of the golf course on 3rd Street, then you know you have twenty minutes to kill the golfers, which is about how long it took.

PARENTING: But all it takes is one person to see Rudy jogging during that time.

MANSON: That person has not appeared.

PARENTING: But that doesn't mean they don't exist. It's a flimsy plan. If you go to all that trouble to plan the murders of all these golfers and you want to have someone else take the blame then you better have a better plan to get that person charged with murder.

MANSON: They still haven't caught the guy.

PARENTING: I know.

MANSON: Which means this is not like all the other mass murders. The torpedo kills himself or gets arrested, is what happens. This guy didn't want to be

caught, doesn't want to be caught. And because he doesn't want to be caught it makes sense that the torpedo would want someone else to get the blame, preferably someone they hate, that this would be part of the plan. Two birds. One stone. Kill golfers. Get someone else to take the hit, someone you hate. Is it coincidence that Crandal Cobb and Rudy Cienfuegos were right near the golf course at the exact time that the bullets were flying?

PARENTING: Perhaps. But you don't know where Oscar Mendez was.

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Or Nestor Mendez. He works at the golf course, right?

MANSON: Yes.

PARENTING: Where was Silvia Mendez?

MANSON: I don't know.

PARENTING: What about Albert Mendez?

MANSON: He's blind.

PARENTING: Doesn't the Mendez family have a cousin who is in a gang? You talked about this with *Ladies Home Journal*.

MANSON: I did. They do.

PARENTING: A violent, scary guy with neck tattoos?

MANSON: Yes.

PARENTING: Do you know anything about this guy?  
This gang member?

MANSON: I know that Phil Stern told him to turn his  
fucking music down.

PARENTING: He did.

MANSON: Can I show you something?

PARENTING: You can.

MANSON: The film I had developed.

PARENTING: Yesterday. Your birds. Your birds on the  
line.

MANSON: My notes. My musical notes. The birds. The  
lines.

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: There were other photographs on the roll.  
They go back. Months. Some of them older. I don't know  
what day it was. You know those skywriters? In their  
planes? They write smoke words in the sky? How do I  
land? That's what this guy wrote. Up in the sky. How do  
I land?

PARENTING: That's funny.

MANSON: I took some pictures of it. From the roof.  
I took pictures. You see?

PARENTING: How do I land?

MANSON: No. Look down there. In the shot. The  
alley. Does that look like something?

PARENTING: Where?

MANSON: Here. That looks like something.

PARENTING: Maybe. Is that?

MANSON: Yes.

PARENTING: And they're with?

MANSON: Yes. I think so. I asked him.

PARENTING: You showed this?

MANSON: I did.

PARENTING: When?

MANSON: This afternoon.

PARENTING: What happened?

MANSON: Nothing.

PARENTING: You should probably let the police handle this. Handle that. The picture.

MANSON: Yes.

PARENTING: You shouldn't have shown that.

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: It's probably nothing.

MANSON: Probably.

PARENTING: You abandoned your son.

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Yes.

MANSON: I was not trusted.

PARENTING: Why?

MANSON: Because.

PARENTING: Did you molest your son?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Did you molest children?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Did you expose yourself to children?

MANSON: I did not.

PARENTING: Did you beat your wife?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Did you beat your son?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Were you a drunk?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: A drug addict.

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Were you mentally unstable?

MANSON: I was not.

PARENTING: Did you meet another woman?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Did you meet a man?

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: Were you cruel?

MANSON: I farted on my son. Many times, I did this.

PARENTING: Why?

MANSON: It made him laugh.

PARENTING: Stavanger, Norway.

MANSON: Yes.

PARENTING: It came up this morning when you were talking to the press. The reporter asked if you were

the same Hartley Sickerdick who was in Norway a few decades ago. He said he was doing background on a piece.

MANSON: It means nothing?

PARENTING: What?

MANSON: Stavanger, Norway.

PARENTING: No.

MANSON: She said nothing.

PARENTING: No.

MANSON: It was the end. I didn't see him after that.

PARENTING: Me.

MANSON: I flew back to Los Angeles. From Norway. I don't remember. I was medicated. I think I had help. An escort. I flew. Back here. I was in a facility.

PARENTING: What kind?

MANSON: The mental kind. For people who are crazy in the coconut.

PARENTING: An insane asylum.

MANSON: A mental health facility. To get your strength back, they said. For some time. Awhile. Sometimes I think I am still there.

PARENTING: Where?

MANSON: In the hospital. The facility. Getting my strength back. It was grandparents. Her parents. Norwegians. Visiting. We were. In the morning we went



to this crazy rock. Preikestolen. They call it Pulpit Rock sometimes. Or Preacher's Pulpit. It's a big overhang rock. About two thousand feet up. Above the river. Fjords. They call them fjords.

PARENTING: I've seen pictures. People sitting on the edge. Their feet hanging over.

MANSON: That's the one. We hiked up there. I was terrified. What if you took off? And ran. Just ran off the edge. She held your hands. Both of you.

PARENTING: Both?

MANSON: You and Cady.

PARENTING: Cady?

MANSON: Your sister. Your younger sister. She adored you.

PARENTING: What?

MANSON: She walked you and Cady around. Your mom did. Not right to the edge but close enough. I stayed back and watched. I stood in the middle and watched. I was supposed to take photographs. A gust of wind. I kept thinking, a strong gust of wind could sweep a child over the edge. Or someone could trip. Lose their footing, stagger. And fall. What would a child be thinking if they fell? Falling through the air, not knowing what death is. It would be scary. But it would end well. It always ends well when you're a child. Things always end well. Someone is there to catch you

or pick you up. There's nothing under the bed. Or in the closet. It didn't bother her. She walked you around. You and Cady. She had your hands tight. I knew that much. I was supposed to take pictures. My hands were shaking. My mouth was dry. I had terrible premonitions. I was going to be documenting a tragedy. This was not safe. This was going to end badly. I was furious that she was being so reckless. You can't take children so close to the edge.

PARENTING: A sister.

MANSON: We went back to town. To the city. There was a mall. A shopping mall. A big one. A good one. I had been warned. Hold hands. She was getting a massage. She deserved it. One hour. Walking around. Going up and down on the escalator. Wasting time. But fun. It was good fun. He was a few steps ahead.

PARENTING: Your son. Max.

MANSON: Himself. Go up a few steps so I can be there if they fall backwards. I can catch them.

PARENTING: Them?

MANSON: He did that. A few steps up. Can I? Okay.

PARENTING: Max.

MANSON: Big brother. Me too, she said. Always hold their hands. Got yelled at before. You never know what might happen. I don't trust these things. She said. That was before. She had said that before. On other

escalators. Not just once. Hold the hands. That's crazy. I was the over-protective one. That's the rub. Not her. She let them run free, do wild things, except that, and that, to me, was not crazy. Not crazy at all. I was the one who saw danger everywhere. Except there. I want them to be happy with me. I don't see danger there. And she wants to go ahead. Two steps up. Big girl. Wants to be a big girl. Alone.

PARENTING: Who?

MANSON: And she did. He stepped up. And off.

PARENTING: Max.

MANSON: At the top. Giggling. Waiting. Twirling. For his little sister.

PARENTING: What?

MANSON: So I let her go. Cady. I let go of her hand. You let them be sometimes. You let them be kids. I didn't want her angry with me. I wanted her to be happy. To do what her brother did. Be careful, Cady. I'm right here. If you fall back. I'm here. I didn't say that. I'm thinking that. I didn't want her to think about falling. I'm right here. If you need me. Cady. She went two steps ahead. I was right there. Right behind her. If she fell backwards. I was there. Right there. I'd be there. Step. Step up as you get off. I did say that. Never let them get off by themselves. She had said that before. What if their shoe gets stuck?

She said. Make sure you step up, I said. The floor plate. The landing floor plate. At the top. It tipped. Disappeared. Snap. And she fell inside. The machine. It was like a shark. A giant shark. It swallowed her. I was right behind her. I grabbed her as I jumped over the hole. And I pulled. Parents have lifted cars off kids. I read that somewhere. I pulled like that. She was stuck. The strength. I had her. Gripped underneath her armpits. Pulled. Ran. I had her. Holding her. It's okay, it's okay, it's okay. Someone had pulled him back, hugged him. I saw him at a distance. He was safe. And I had her. In my arms. She was safe. My pants became wet. I thought my bladder had failed. I didn't look down. Those people. Shocked. Shoppers. In shock. Looking at me. Holding her. She was lighter. She wasn't as heavy. Her eyes were closed. The top of her head was resting in my neck.

PARENTING: A sister?

MANSON: A daughter. Cady.

PARENTING: I don't remember.

MANSON: No. Good.

PARENTING: I don't remember Stavanger.

MANSON: That's good.

PARENTING: I wasn't told. I never knew.

MANSON: I can't say.

PARENTING: What?

MANSON: What she should have done. I told you. I can't say.

PARENTING: My sister. My little sister.

MANSON: Yes.

PARENTING: Cady?

MANSON: Yes.

PARENTING: Why didn't mom tell me?

MANSON: It never happened.

PARENTING: What?

MANSON: For her. She never happened. Cady never happened. That's all. I'm guessing. I do not know. If it didn't happen, there's no pain.

PARENTING: It doesn't work that way.

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: You disappeared.

MANSON: I was not allowed. She never looked at me. After. Never looked at me. Never spoke to me. Everything through her parents. I was disappeared.

PARENTING: You didn't try.

MANSON: I did. Through her parents.

PARENTING: You could not have tried hard enough.

MANSON: I'm sorry.

PARENTING: It's not enough. You could have searched. Made arrangements. Even secretly. You could have found him if you had really wanted to. You could have found the school. Or his house. Or something. Just

to see him. To see how he was doing. You didn't do that.

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: That makes no sense. That's wrong. Stavanger doesn't excuse that.

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: It does. Maybe in your mind. Up to a point. Stavanger. For a few months. Yes. Maybe the first few years. Perhaps. But not for all these years. Decades. It doesn't excuse that. You didn't try hard enough.

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: You moved on.

MANSON: No.

PARENTING: My sister.

MANSON: Your sister. My daughter. I'm so sorry.

PARENTING: Here.

MANSON: Thanks.

PARENTING: There's someone on the roof.

MANSON: It's just Cady. Relax.

PARENTING: What if it's not?

MANSON: It is.

PARENTING: You have evidence. You should have gone to the police. Don't open that.

MANSON: See?

PARENTING: She's purring.

MANSON: She's never done that before.

PARENTING: Look at this. No scratching.

MANSON: Stop the reels.

PARENTING: Why?

MANSON: I'm at the tips of the rippety zip, the razor's flip. All I got is razzamatazz, five cents worth of paper and a nickel's worth of ink. I don't have ring-a-ding answers to that. The thing of it is, I'm done. It's the pounce of the now, a shift of the rift. Turn it off.



Reich, Belinda. *Dead End*. Los Angeles, CA: 2004. JPEG file.

###