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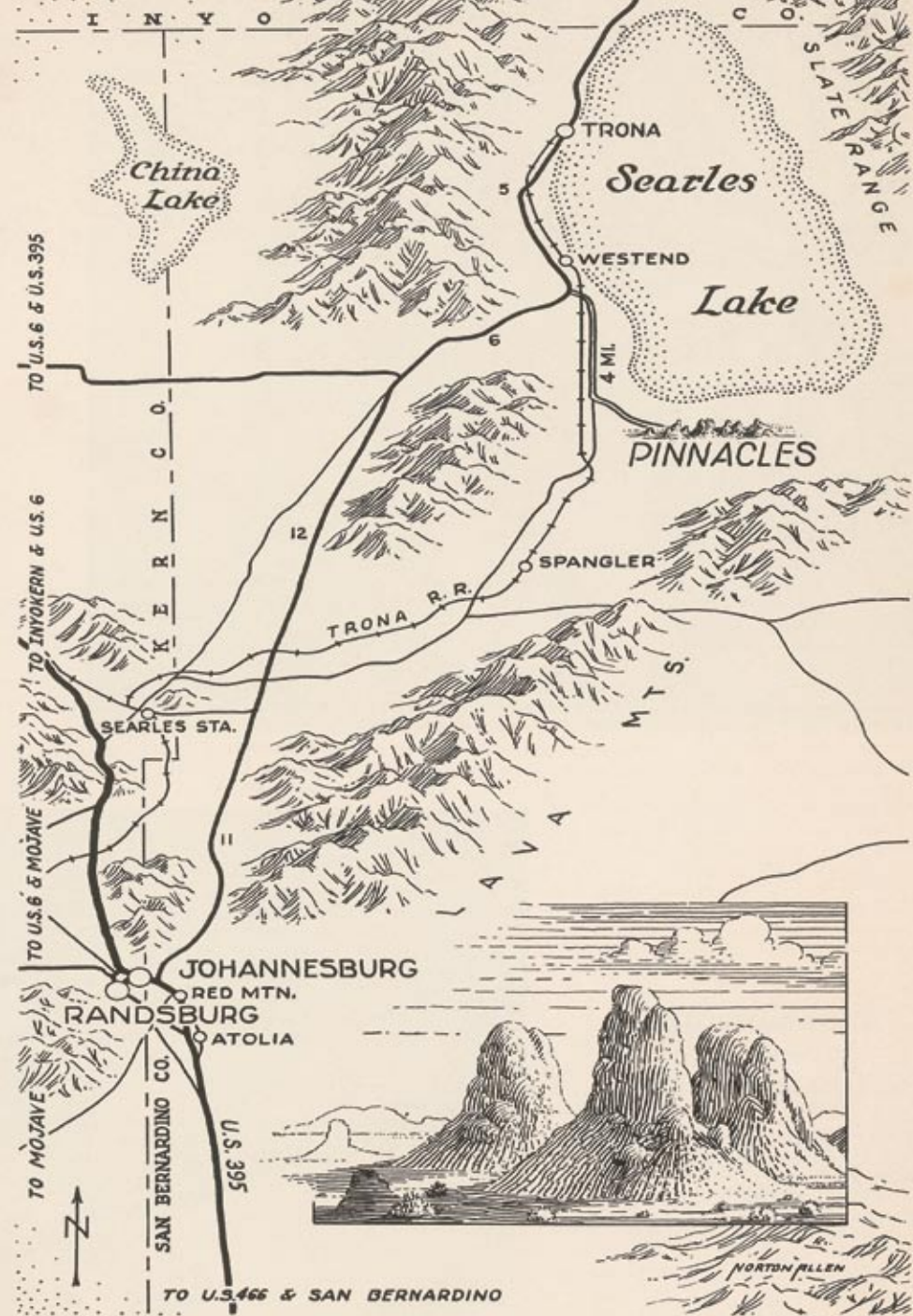
START ENGINE
TO LOOSEN
CYLINDER HEAD

I, FLATHEAD

Ry Cooder

The Songs of Kash Buk and the Klowns

EN
HEAD
OR CAP
WS
UT 3/8-INCH



Part 1. Shakey

He shook it to the left

We'd been out there on the salt flats five or six days. All the guys – Ernie, Billy, Chuy, and me. I felt we done some good racing. The weather was good, the cars were runnin' good, and nobody crashed all week. But it changed. The wind come up, which is one thing you can't stand out there – sand and salt, blowin' up. You can't get anything done that way. Your elapsed times go up and it gets in your teeth when you go to eat.

Then Ernie flipped his car doin' 120, but he was OK, just surprised. "What the hell happened?" I asked him. "Well, somethin' give out," was all he could say. The guys were for pullin' up stakes and headin' for home, but I wasn't in the mood for the city just yet, and work, and all the bullshit. There was a big full moon Friday night, and it turned cold and the wind died down. I like it that way in the desert. A man can take a drink and smoke a cigarette and get interested. The boys allowed as how it was real fine after all – the lake bed shimmerin' all silvery-like and the meteorites shootin' this way and that. Next morning I walked outside the tent to take a look around and there was somethin' new parked over next to my coupe. It looked about the same as mine, hammered down to the limit, track nose, molded pans, all that. But it didn't have no wheels! It sat flat on the ground!

"Hey Billy, come out here," I says.

"No!" says Billy.

"Take a look at this!"

"No, goddamn it, my head hurts!"

"What the hell is goin' on?" says Ernie.

"That's what I aim to find out!" I knocked on the side. The top lifted off, hinged somewhere I guess, and this little dome-headed guy appeared. He spied us. Started in makin' a buzzing sound, like a table saw. But it came out like words!

"Please race with me I am your friend." Crazy shit like that. The guys

checked him out, but they didn't recognize him. Anybody who shows up at El Mirage, we already been knowin' 'em good.

I says, "Well, now, just who are you, buddy? You don't look like a Los Angeleno... are you a Mormon?"

Chuy says, "Commie?"

I says, "What about it? Speak up, don't be ashamed!"

Little guy buzzes, "I am. Not from this system my car is good."

Billy says, "Well, how we gonna race him? Right off, his car ain't got no wheels! What's your fuel type there, buster? Got to go by the rules!"

Little guy goes, "No gas no nitrous got hotstuff you bet!"

Billy says, "He say "no gas"? How we 'sposed to classify him here?"

I says, "What do you care? He came all this way to do some racing with us, so let him do it. It don't have to go down in the record book. I'll race him, I don't mind. He seems like a friendly little feller. Maybe it's all dried up and salty and flat where he's from, maybe he got an itch to come down here and check us out... check out our elapsed times. Anything wrong with that?"

Well, the guys all said no, didn't seem to be anything really wrong in it. He might even be the champ from out there somewhere's, sent down to conquer El Mirage! Haw! Then Ernie looks inside the thing and says, "Boys, there ain't no steerin' wheel! What the hell!"

I says, "Now, friend, this takes a bit of figuring. We need to know for sure that you got this thing under control. Safety first, know what I mean?"

Little guy says, "I just hold it and shake it."

Well, if a fellow says he can hold it in the road while steerin' with his dick, I don't have a problem. Billy didn't like it, but he don't have no sense of humor. Everybody just stood there quiet, then Chuy up and said, "Shakey."

I couldn't find my helmet nowhere's, but I figured it didn't matter, we wasn't goin' for anything serious with some little character from who knows where. How could he know anything about salt flats and flatheads and everything we know about? Then the little guy fires up. Well, boys, I'll tell you. To this very day, I never heard a sound like that! Like our flatheads, all right, but just real loud, you know? Then, the thing lifts up, see, and hovers like about

six inches off the ground, and swings over next to me. The little guy gives it the gas and his machine roars like nothin' I ain't heard before! Ernie dropped the flag, and off we went. Neck and neck. 50, 80, 100! I looked over and saw that the little feller was right along side! He was waving at me! Can you beat that? 110, 120, 130. My rod-bearings was startin' to shake! But he just kept waving! 140, 150, 160! My valves was startin' to float! I had my foot clear down to the floor, that's all there is, there ain't no more! The little guy rolled down his window, and buzzed for me to hear, "Hey buddy how do I get this car out of second gear?" Second gear? You shittin' me? Seemed like he was laughin', like he thought it was funny!

And then he just took off like a shot. One minute there, next minute, gone. When I got up to the mile marker, he was just sittin' there in his car like he'd been there all day! The boys were all standin' around shakin' their heads and lookin' at their stopwatches.

"It just ain't possible!" said Billy. "We clocked him at over a thousand miles an hour!"

"Somethin' ain't kosher here! What the hell!" said Ernie.

"Well boys," I said, "if you say he went a thousand miles an hour, I'm ready to back you up. But there's one thing for sure. We can't never tell nobody. Salt-flats racing, as we know it, would be finished. Wouldn't be any more sense to it. Tellin' you, I got half a mind to quit right now!"

Shakey was feeling good after his run. Your Martian, now, he may not show it like we do, whoopin' and hollerin' and cowboy-carryin' on, but I found you can really tell when he feels good, or when he don't. Anybody made a flat-out mile like Shakey did is gonna want to party. What the hell, he just broke the land speed record like it was nothin'! In second gear! I called around, down to Trona, Ridgecrest, wherever, just to see if I could scare up some girls, you know? Weren't any out where we were, that's for sure.

Long about eight that evening, couple a cars rolled up. Locals. Right off, Shakey took a shine to one of 'em, a young one, 'bout seventeen or so. Cute, kinda skinny and quiet. He says, "What do you do at this party what do I do what does she do?"

I says, "Well, pardner, first you need a drink and somethin' to eat. Then you want to try a little dancin' with your girl there and then we'll see." So Billy broke out the drinkin' and eatin' stuff. What we all like. Lucky Strikes, donuts, and T-Bird wine! Ain't nothin' I like better than a party! Shakey started in eatin' donuts and smokin' Luckies and drinkin' T-Bird all at once! Say, that's some trick! "Goodgoodgoodgoodgood!" The guys got a real kick out of him. The girl wasn't so sure, like maybe she never partied with a Martian before.

'Round midnight, Ernie ran inside the tent, sayin', "Boys, somethin's wrong! I went out to take a leak and I saw something movin', somethin' big! Somethin' ain't Kosher out there!" There was some Bakersfield guys camped about fifty yards away. There was a lot of crashin' and screamin' goin' on, but it was too dark to make it out. I grabbed my gun and started over there. Shakey stopped me, sayin', "It's big ants like we got at home your gun won't help you bring all the T-Bird and nitrous and gas over here." Shakey poured the mixture in his fuel tank and fired up. One of 'em started movin' in our direction. Damn thing was fifteen feet long, and mighty mean lookin'! It reared up on its feet at us! Some party crashers!

Shakey says, "Zippozippozippo!" I got my lighter out. He says, "Tailpipetailpipe!" I lit up the fumes and that T-Bird mixture ignited and sent out a flamin' blast! Smoked that big ant right in his tracks! Whoo boy! The girls panicked and started crying, and that's when the other one of those critters made a move at us. Shakey just revved his motor up and got his mixture goin', and we blasted that one to kingdom come as well! Two big ants down, no casualties on our side!

Well, the worst was over. The Bakersfield boys came over and thanked us for savin' their bacon, but the ants had wrecked their car, a nice belly-tanker, all smashed to bits. I told Shakey, "Now, shake hands with these folks, but not with your steerin' gear!" We were all feelin' a little wore-out and figured it was time to turn in. Shakey tried to ask the little Trona girl if she cared to go for a extra high-speed cruise in the moonlight. She told him, sorry, but she had to get up in the morning and go to school. Her and her friends thanked us for an interesting time and took off in their Ford Falcon.

When we got up the next morning, Shakey was nowhere around. His space cruiser was gone. "Trona," said Chuy, and derved if he weren't right! Last time I came through there, I saw a little road sign that read, "Shakey's 7 Speed Store, 2 miles." Stop in next time you go racing and have a drink with him. Tell him Kash Buk sent you. Try his racing fuel, it's out of this world! Don't say anything about the big ants is all, you know how it is. The cops will start askin' questions, and then some hombre will decide to seal off the area for national security, or some such shit. They want to interfere with everything these days, including what we like to do for fun. You got to do it their way. Me, I don't like bein' part of somebody else's nightmare, you know? I'm doin' all right in mine.

Little Trona Girl

I'm tired. I'm tired of everything. This place, school, my friends, my mother, the police, the heat, the dust. The dust is yellow and it goes everywhere. In your body, in the house, in your food, day and night. I'm 17 now. My birthday was yellow and hot like every other day.

I left the party. My friends were drunk, my mother was drunk. She cried and said, "I love you Roxanne," and passed out on the couch just like every other day. It was after dark when I finally got out of there and went to see Shakey where he lives, in his store. He gave me a rock for my present. It's little but it's heavy. It glows in the dark, he showed me, and it makes a humming sound. When you hold it, after a little while, then it starts humming. He said, "Don't tell anyone keep it with you." The crazy way he talks, I like it now. I can do it too, fast buzzing talk. I told my mother there is a disabled Vietnam vet in town, that he got hurt in the throat, which is why he talks that way. My mother went right out and told her friends about the poor disabled veteran. Anything you want spread around, just tell her. She believed it on account of my dad, who was killed in Vietnam right after I was born. Shakey looks like a vet. He wears a baseball cap and baggy clothes all the time, and

stays off by himself in his store. Nobody wants to bother with him. Strange people are the norm in the desert.

My mother says, "I trust you, Roxanne." That is what she always says when she starts asking me things, like, "Where are you going, what are you doing, what are you thinking, why are you like that." She doesn't trust me for five minutes. Then the policeman comes around. He stops over where my mother works and they talk. He sits in his police car and watches me after school. Sometimes he sits in his car outside our house at night. I have to be careful when I go see Shakey, so I go around back on my bicycle and the cop never knows. But he must know something, because all cops do is wait and watch, watch and wait. There is nothing else to do in Trona.

Shakey hides his space ship around back, behind the store. He's off the main highway just north from town and most of his business is with race car people on their way up to the salt flats. They buy racing gas from him. They all think it's a secret and they don't want to tell their friends. Shakey just makes it up out of cheap wine and some stuff he brought from his home out there. I asked him if he ever felt lonely or homesick.

He said, "Sometimes but not so bad I like it here it looks like home." When I asked him why he came to Earth, he said he got in trouble and can't go back.

Some nights we go riding in his machine. We go way, way up. You can see the Earth for hundreds of miles around. Black desert and tiny lights here and there. Then we come down and I sneak around back home. The cop is gone by that time. Shakey asked what it is he wants, and I told him:

"He wants to do something with me."

Shakey said, "I want to do something with you."

I said, "It's all right if you do."

"Why?"

"Because you're you not him."

My mother's name is Darlene. All she does is drink and worry. I brought Shakey a bottle of the crap my mother drinks, Smirnoff vodka. He poured it into a bucket full of engine parts and the grease disappeared! "Good for

grease don't drink it." Shakey told me the guy from the salt flats, Kash Buk, wanted him to do a special hop-up job on his racing motor and traded an El Camino for the work.

"It's in the shop I fixed it up for you it's a nice car." He showed me how he put a pressurized fuel system in the back, under the shell. Then when I need to move, just push a button on the floor and the fuel kicks in and I got about a thousand extra horsepower. "The roads are bad around here be careful don't use it unless you have to."

I had to make up a story about the El Camino. I told my mother it belonged to a friend from Los Angeles who gave it to me for a birthday present. It had Los Angeles on the paperwork and it's pretty beat-up looking. When you drink as much as she does, you don't care about details. My mother tells people, "Roxanne is a good girl, she doesn't make trouble. We're a Christian family."

Every year they hold the Miss Christian Teen Mojave World Beauty Pageant down in Ridgecrest, sponsored by the Christian Automobile Dealers' Association. The money goes to poor kids in Africa or some place where they don't have all the advantages we have. My friend Grace and my other friend Celeste wanted me to try out for it. "You have tits," they said. This year, the first prize was five hundred dollars. My mother cried and said we needed the money.

I tried to explain to Shakey what a beauty contest is all about. He got very excited and started in buzz-talking so fast I had to tell him to slow down! I told him, I won't win because blondes always win and my hair is black. He said, "Take this stuff for your hair five minutes before then you will win I want to see it!!!" I had to tell him not to come because Ridgecrest is more like a regular place and people are smarter there. Someone might get nosy and something bad might happen. But I could tell Shakey wasn't listening. He just went back to cleaning engine parts and buzzing low, like he does when he's not happy.

The day of the show was Saturday. I drove the El Camino for the first time. Grace and Celeste wanted to come, so we all rode in the front seat. I could feel that the car was really fast, but I did like Shakey told me and didn't use the switch on the way down. They were excited to be going, and

they laughed and carried on the whole way to Ridgecrest. We got to the high school auditorium about two in the afternoon. You had to pay the five-dollar entry fee, then take a number and go change clothes and get ready. I went into the locker room where all the other girls were. One hundred girls! From everywhere in the desert, plus Arizona and Nevada! There were some really beautiful girls, especially the ones from Nevada, who looked like showgirls or hookers. They sure weren't like any high school girls I ever saw. Then a lady with a clipboard came in and said five minutes. That's when I took Shakey's powder stuff.

We all walked over to the stage, and they started calling our names. Suddenly my head started buzzing! One girl looked over at me and then her friend did, and I saw their eyes pop! The girl from Banning said, "My God, honey, you have got the most incredible hair I ever saw! Next to you I feel terrible!"

"Where are you from, honey?" asked Miss Yucaipa. Then the loudspeaker called me: "From Trona, California, Miss Roxanne Lavonne!!! A high school senior, Miss Lavonne lists her hobbies as drag racing and automobile mechanics!!! She wants us to know she is prrrroo-choice!!! While claiming no church affiliation, Miss Lavonne says she believes in exxx-traterrestrial life and hopes to become an aaastronaut!!! And now, from Rubidoux, Miss so on and so on." The judges were sitting in a line in the first row of seats. When the announcer got to the part about "no church affiliation" I saw their faces close up tight. No one even looked at me, so that was it for little Miss Trona.

I went backstage to the locker room to change clothes. That's when I saw myself in the mirror. I got the shock of my life! My hair was still black, but it was so black, it looked blue! Or purple! My eyes, which are also black, looked really strange and deep, with little blue lights. It scared me!

I heard voices coming down the hallway. "Where's that dirty-eyed little half-breed?" A man's voice, very drunk. "I want to have a little chat with her right now, yessir!!! Here comes Frankie!!!"

"Frank Tuttle, you just shut up and go back out there! I'm going to give her a piece of my mind when I find her!" The woman with the clipboard. "Pro-

choice, we'll see about that! This is a Christian organization!"

"Haw!!! A piece is just what I want right now, and I'm the man to get it!!! Stand aside, you old Mack truck!!! Where are you, little Trona bitch!!! Frankie Fuckie's looking for yooooou!!!"

"Don't you manhandle me, and don't give me any more of that 'Home of No Sunday Selling' crap, either! Drinking during the pageant! Breaking into the girls' locker room! I'm going to call a cop!"

"You call the cops, an' I'll tell 'em you birds put all the money in your pockets! There goes your rat's-ass beauty pageant! Hey!!! There she is, hold it jus' a minute there, sweetie pie, I got business with you!!!"

I grabbed my stuff and ran out the side exit. I jumped in the El Camino and tore out of the parking lot without thinking. I started driving around Ridgecrest, just going in circles, and that's when I saw Shakey in the window of the Dunkin' Donuts. So, he came after all. I pulled up and shut the motor off and went inside. He was just sitting there staring at an empty box of glazed jelly donuts, his favorite.

"Hi," was all I said. Shakey looked up and I could tell he was really mad. Or sort of crying, if Martians actually cry. He had donut sugar all over his face.

"It's OK I told you these things are stupid."

"I fixed them good I fixed Frank Tuttle real good."

"What do you mean fixed?"

By now the kid behind the counter was getting curious and I could tell he was listening, or trying to.

"I disabled all the judges' cars and sealed Frank Tuttle up in his Cadillac with glue but my glue their blowtorch won't help him now."

OK, I thought. Frank Tuttle, owner and general manager of Frank Tuttle Ford, Home of No Sunday Selling, stuck in his Cadillac, maybe forever. I looked up and saw Grace and Celeste watching us through the Dunkin' Donuts window. "There's my friends I have to get them out of here you have to go back now will you promise me?"

I got up and paid for the donuts and left. The boy behind the counter gave me some kind of a look. Dumb as he was, he'd remember. Grace and

Celeste started in on me top-speed. They were drunk, as usual. Grace always carries a pint bottle of Amaretto in her purse.

“Roxanne Lavonne, where were you! You left us back there! It’s crazy at the school, the police are there now, a man got trapped in his car and they can’t get him out, the whole thing is insane! Who’s that guy with you, why are you still wearing your bathing suit, your hair is so weird, what are you doing Roxaaaaaaanne!!!!”

“Get in the car. Now.” I made my voice cut right through their yammering, and they shut up. We went left at the light and hit the highway. Grace started up again. “Why did you tell them all that stuff about yourself? You know they hate that kind of thing! Pro-choice! You did it on purpose!”

Celeste, who is a little more on the ball than Grace, said, “What happened back there with Frank Tuttle? You better tell us, also, who was that weird guy in Dunkin’ Donuts? I think I’ve seen him somewhere. You better tell us what is going on here.” I just said, “Nothing. I didn’t win anything, they hated me, it was your idea, so what are you crying about?”

We hit the highway. I saw a car in my mirror. A police car, not your Highway Patrol. I sped up a little and it sped up. So we were being followed. I waited to see if they would follow us past the Ridgecrest city limits, and they did. At that point, I just said, fuck it, there’s no way I am going to get into it with a cop this particular night! I stepped down on the fuel switch and floored it. The El Camino stood up on its back tires and made a sound like a cannon and we really took off. How fast, I couldn’t say, but we got back to Trona in fifteen minutes instead of an hour and fifteen minutes, like usual.

I pulled up at Grace’s house and said, “End of the line.” Grace opened the door and threw up in the street. Celeste had fainted. I dragged her onto the little dried-up lawn and then got back in the car and drove the two blocks to our house. I put the El Camino in the driveway. My mother was asleep on the couch with the T.V. on. There was a note on my bed: “Roxanne, I want the answers to 3 questions. Where did you get the El Camino, who glued Frank Tuttle inside his car, and what ran my cousin off the Trona road in his squad car tonight? You better come see me tomorrow. Officer Rod Bearing, Trona P.D.”

I got as far as “Dear Mother,” and tore up the paper. I used to wonder what I would take with me when it was time to go. I realized there wasn’t anything except some clothes and the one picture of my dad. I kissed my mom goodbye. She just lay there snoring, my poor mom. All Smirnoff, all the time.

I could tell something was off at Shakey’s. The space car was sitting out in the open, still warm. The back door of the shack was open. It was dark inside. Shakey was sitting on the floor next to a pile of engine parts with a gallon jug of T-Bird in his hand. I sat down next to him and showed him the note from officer Bearing. He started talking in a droning sort of way, but slow, like we all talk. The T-Bird jug was empty, so I guessed it was working on him.

“I’m tired of cops. Just when I get something going, there’s another cop. There’s a lot of nice places out there, but there’s always going to be another cop asking questions. Some are smarter than others. This one isn’t so smart, but he thinks the way they all think. They think they know something and then they think they got you, and they never give up. I like it here. The place, the weird light, the salt flats, you. I got to run again? Where to, Twenty-Nine Palms? Pluto?”

We headed south out of Trona and picked up 395 at Ridgecrest. I was driving the El Camino, jammed with Shakey’s tools and bottles and Kash Buk’s flathead motor. The space car was covered up and tied down on a little trailer we borrowed from Art Huck at the gas station. We left him a note. I told Shakey, take a last look, but he was sound asleep and didn’t wake up until we pulled into Denny’s outside San Bernardino. So it was goodbye, Trona. Nice place to visit, but you sure wouldn’t want to live there.

Popular Mechanics

“I’m looking for the manager.”

“You’re talking to him.”

“We want to rent a trailer.”

“When, and for how long?”

“Now, and I don’t know.”
“I only got one left.”
“We’ll take it.”
“Follow me.”
“You got a Kash Buk living here?”
“Trailer number eight. Why?”
“We’re friends of his.”
“Look, lady, I don’t want any more trouble in this camp.”
“We weren’t planning to start any.”
“See, I got a nice little set-up here, longshoremen, quiet types mostly.”
“We like it, it’s quaint.”
“There’s no hot water, suppose your guy there wants a shave?”
“We’ll ring for you. Here’s twenty bucks.”
“I don’t know, just the week?”
“It’s a long way to Long Beach. Please leave us alone now.”

“We all got drinks? Shakey Boy, you got some T-Bird there? Roxanne? Boy, I am one hundred and ten percent amazed! Here’s to young love! Now, let me introduce Shirley. She’s a nurse over at Harbor General and a personal friend of mine. Shirley, you ain’t drinkin’? These are the folks from the desert I tried to tell you about.”

“Well, hi everybody. Yes, and I heard all about you kids! Real nice to see you. But, now, here is the thing. We just had an emergency on my floor. We get the cardiac cases. When they brought in this poor man, he was class three, you understand that? In shock, critical. The cops said he was trapped in his car for four hours. It took four hours to cut him out. During which time, he suffered two seizures. But he made it! He’s a tough man, a Ford dealer, named Frank Tuttle. This is what you wanted to know about, Kash, honey?”

“You just tell it, sweetie.”

“I got the assignment. I need to sleep sometime, so they put Yolanda on from midnight to six in the morning.”

“Baby, you need sleep like I need another leg! Haw!”

“Kash, don’t be funny. But, now, they put a police guard outside, which is unusual on my floor. Then, a man came to see Mr. Taylor. I said, this is a sick man, but he said, that’s all right, I’m just going to ask Mr. Taylor some questions. I said, just don’t tire Mr. Taylor out.”

“Whatdidhelooklike?”

“I’m sorry?”

“Shakey said, what’d the man look like.”

“Oh. About five feet five, portly, wearing a kind of thrift-store suit. And he walked with a bad limp, dragging his foot.”

“Whichfootleftorright?”

“I’m sorry?”

“Left or right foot?”

“Left. He kept his left hand in his pocket.”

“What happened then, sweetie?”

“The man talked to Mr. Taylor for a while. He wanted to know how Mr. Taylor got stuck in his car and who did it.”

“What’d Taylor say?”

“He was too weak to talk.”

“Youmeanhedidn’ttelltthemananything?”

“I’m sorry?”

“Honey, did he tell anything!”

“Well, don’t yell at me, Kash, no he didn’t! The doctors aren’t saying, but I think he can’t talk on account of the seizures. Then the man left. Then he came back with a policeman to get Mr. Taylor and check him out of the hospital. His family came to see him an hour later and they were plenty upset when they heard he’d already left. I said, well, it was a policeman. I’m a nurse, we don’t argue. They said they would sue the hospital if anything happened to Frank.”

“What was the cop’s name, Shirley?”

“Oh, I just ain’t sure now. He confused me so much until I can’t hardly remember right! Well, I got to get over to the hospital. I’m due on in a half hour, nurses can’t ever be late. Sure is nice to meet some nice friends of

Kash's for a change!"

"OK, honey, we'll see you a little later on. Thanks for stopping by."

"When I heard about the ruckus out in Ridgecrest, I thought, 'I see the handiwork of our old pal Shakey here.' The glue, am I right? What'd he do, make a Frank Tuttle style move on you, Roxanne? I know Frank well, known him for years. Used to supply him with hot Ford parts and hand-selected porno from south of the border, down Mexico waaay, as the song says, and..."

"Goddamn it Kash, can't you ever pay attention? We got a bad problem here, can't you see that? We came here to get help, not to hear about you."

"It's the Passenger he knows I got the glue that's why he went to the hospital. If you heard about it he heard about it."

"I talked to a cop buddy of mine. He said they are stumped one hundred per cent out there. It took four paramedics with cutting torches and sabre saws working two hours to get Frank out. They had to go in from underneath, because they couldn't cut through your glue. Haw! They're saying it's gang-related, like always, when they don't know shit. So what's the big problem? It'll blow over."

"The Passenger is here he knows who I am."

"All right, Shakey. Have another drink and let's hear all about this 'passenger.' Got a feeling I better send out for a carton of cigarettes."

"Please tell it slow, Shakey, so we understand everything. Please tell me everything."

"You call me a Martian. That's OK, I don't mind. How would you know? But I'm not from Mars or even close. Real Martians, on the whole, are low-class. Like people from Trona. Sorry, Roxanne, I don't mean you. They don't do very much because it's too hot on Mars. Again, like in Trona. The heat makes them mad, but easy to deal with. Martians are not good workers so they have to import everything. That's where the Passenger comes in. He is a kind of salesman, like Frank Tuttle. Loud, jokey, and crude, but inside, a very tricky man. But Frank Tuttle just sells cars, cars and parts. The Passenger

sells other kinds of things. He specializes in what we make out there where I'm from. Weapons. He has a trade agreement with Mars. They get weapons in exchange for captive Martian people, which he brings back and sells off as slave labor. The Martians work in our factories. They make the guns that go back to Mars so the tribes can kill each other off. The Passenger has agreements like that all over the universe.

"Back home, I'm a nobody. Or I was a nobody until the Passenger found out about my glue. We had an amateur organization for people like me who like to invent new things. If we came up with something good, we could talk to each other and exchange information. We all had secret radio transmitters for that purpose, like a telephone, but more private. Or so we thought.

"I wanted to make a glue that would work on anything, anywhere, anytime. I had a formula that wasn't working out. When it got overheated, it blew up, no good. Keeping it cool was indicated, like with a flathead motor. An inventor friend of mine had been after me to try the mind-altering drugs he made in his kitchen. He guaranteed I would be able to visualize the glue. I tried it and it worked. What I saw was long-chain molecules: the glue would bind material together by re-weaving the molecules like cloth, to make an entirely new thing that would be indestructible, for ever and ever. Simple!

"I gave it to friends to try. They all said it was incredible, sensational, even valuable. I had never thought of that, but they wanted more, so I started making it up in cans in my garage and selling it for whatever they cared to pay. I had a good-paying job fixing what you call vacuum cleaners, so I wasn't worried about making money from my glue.

"Then, a man came to see me. He said he represented a organization that would pay big money for the glue formula. I asked to have time to think it over. He said, just don't take too long. He gave me a week. I put the word out on my transmitter that I wanted some information about this guy, and I got a call back on the second try. The caller wouldn't give his code name, but he asked one question: "Does he limp with his left leg?" I said yes. The voice said, "Get out fast." That was it. The line went dead. Later that night I heard noises around my place, like footsteps. But I was ready. I made a shape on

the bed like a body, a trick I learned from your old movies. I had made my own television receiver, and I watched old movies all the time, also 'Bowling for Dollars,' and 'Destruction Derby,' my favorite.

"It was two guys. Very tough guys in suits. They grabbed at the blankets, but I was hiding behind the door. One threw something at me and hit me in the throat. It hurt me. That's why I keep buzzing when I talk, but it's getting better now. I had fixed up a high-pressure spray can of glue. I sprayed 'em both, stopped 'em cold. I realized at that moment that the gas in the can, what you call nitrous oxide, instantly froze the glue into a hard shell with the two men inside. I hadn't figured on that. It was like watching bugs under a microscope. One managed to draw his gun and fire. Instead of breaking through the shell, the bullets ricocheted all around inside and killed them both. Then I knew what the Passenger was all about. His people must have run tests and found out how you could make military use out of it. Make warfare money out of it. My glue.

"That night I went out to the garage and put the space cruiser together. I'd seen the salt-flats cars on my transmitter, so I knew what I wanted. I made the body out of what you call duck tape, but good duck tape that I got from another inventor friend. I over-sprayed it with glue, two coats. It looks good, you seen it. I installed a hopped-up vacuum cleaner motor I'd been working on. I packed up some supplies and tools and humming rocks, and just took off. That was about three years ago, maybe more. I been running ever since."

"What's wrong with giving this bozo the glue formula? Then he's gone and we can go racing. I want to try out that new flathead! Whoo boy! Look at that intake manifold! Vic Edelbrock is goin' to shit in his pants!"

"No. I say no way."

"Aw, now listen, Roxanne honey! Shakey, look, I mean, let's be sensible here, right? Talk to your girl! What the hell!"

"No, Kash. I get it now. I see it clear. They use Shakey's glue and then, somewhere, there's a girl like me that is taken away from her family and has to work like a slave in those terrible factories making more guns so more girls like me can get killed. No way, no fucking way. Don't you do it. We'll run

again, I don't care."

"Suppose some other friends of the Passenger start lookin' for you, is what I think."

"No. The Passenger always travels alone. His technique is to use local people to get what he wants. Eventually he would show up wherever I went, then start trouble and point the finger at me. Then stand back and let the locals try and catch me and bring me in. I always got away somehow, but he is smart about that, getting people all worked up and angry. He knows what makes people tick. But the Passenger would never tell the big men back home where he was looking or what he was doing. Gives him an edge, an angle to use if he gets in a tight spot. Something to sell to the other side."

"Tricky son of a bitch, maybe a little too tricky. We're not so stupid down here, you know."

Just Along for the Ride

"May I sit down."

"Why?"

"I can help you, for I know many things. I know the strange secrets of men and women who have stepped into the shadows."

"Are you a homosexual?"

"You're a police officer from Trona, California. You've come all the way to Los Angeles looking for the answer to a problem that is troubling you. You're sitting in a bar one block away from Harbor General Hospital. There's a man on the seventh floor who has the answer you are so desperately seeking. He's very sick and may die at any moment. If he dies without revealing the answer, you're finished. If you make him talk and he dies, then it's murder. What will you do? What will you do."

"You tell me. The way you figure it all out, the way you know everything."

"Yes. I will tell you, Officer Bearing."

* * *

“Where do we find Frank Tuttle?”

“He’s in 714, but he’s off limits, and it’s way after visiting hours.”

“We’re moving him. Now.”

“What? I don’t have any orders for his release, he’s been very sick. I’m his nurse.”

“Step aside, this is police business, this man is a police officer.”

“I see that, but there’s already a guard there, and...”

“You say you’re a nurse. We’re moving this man for security reasons.”

“I am a nurse!”

“Shirley, is it? Tell me, Shirley, if you really are a nurse, as you keep insisting, then why are you attempting to interfere with the work of the police?”

“I wasn’t interfering, I just...”

“Don’t you want to help the police?”

“Well, sure, but...”

“Then I can only assume that you have something to hide, something to gain, by endangering the safety of Frank Tuttle, and I can assure you that your behavior will be thoroughly investigated by the proper authorities. Sergeant Smallholtz, bring that wheelchair right in here.”

“Well, take him then, but I don’t understand. I think I had better call his doctor.”

“I advise you to keep quiet. Your government will appreciate it. Let’s get moving, Officer Smallcraft.”

What the fuck what’s happening who’s talking who’s moving me who are these people nurse stop them make them stop look at me help me!!! Doctors where are they never around when you want them you don’t want them when they’re around.

“He’s passed out. Put him in the back seat. Get moving. Drive.”

“We just kidnapped Frank Tuttle. Guess you know the law here. I’m a sworn peace officer, and I just committed a federal crime.”

“That’s right, Officer Bearing. You have only one choice now. Do just as I say.”

“Yeah, but why am I doing it? Am I a homosexual?”

“You have one chance to finally get at the truth. The truth about the girl, the truth about the stranger. The truth about yourself. You’re a long way from Trona, and the world seems different now, doesn’t it. In a single moment everything has changed. You, an officer of the law, have just kidnapped a man and now you are going to kill him because you have no other choice. You are going to kill Frank Tuttle. That is the answer you have been looking for. Yes, Officer Bearing. Inside, you are a killer.”

“What about you?”

“I’m just the Passenger. I know the nameless terror of which you dare not speak. You are so afraid of Frank Tuttle that you are going to kill him. You know that if he begins to speak again, he will tell the story of the girl and the stranger with the glue. A story that must never be told. And he will tell the world the truth about you, and that is the one thing you hate and fear the most.”

“What are we going to do with him?”

“Not we, you. You are going to drive out to Palos Verdes, and then you are going to push this car, with Frank Tuttle inside it, off the edge of the cliff.”

*One chance only one they think I’m out cold door handle can I pull it so weak I’m so weak I feel sick door isn’t locked they forgot Ford Galaxie master locking factory option very popular offered at no extra cost when you order the custom 500 interior front bucket seats center console new this year **Shut up!!! Shut up!!! Think!!!** Be ready cop’s got a gun .38 snubnose bad accuracy at night I recommend the quad headlights for night driving new this year very stylish very safe we are safety conscious here at Frank Tuttle Ford **Shut up, Stop it, Stop that now!!!** Rest get ready something’s happening hard to hear the cop is getting mad the other guy is hitting him that guy scares me going too fast Palos Verdes cliffs they’re fighting struggling it’s dark too fast door handle lift it goddamn lift it Frank Tuttle you stupid fuck and jump.*

No Overhead Casting

Dear Grace, Dear Celeste...

Well how are you, I bet you forgot all about me! I wanted to write to you before, but I couldn't. So now everything is going pretty good for me. I live out here in Long Beach with my boyfriend. We live in a trailer park but it is right near the beach. I got a job on the Nu-Pike amusement pier as a fortune teller. The regular one is getting older, so she is training me. I wear a turban and lots of bracelets, and she says I look like a real gypsy. It's fun. I tell fortunes for people, mostly drunks and sailors, but I like it, it's like a game. My boyfriend's real good with tools, so he works on the mechanical rides and fixes things. Sometimes we go drag racing with our friend, Kash Buk. Grace, I think you remember him(!). Please come out and visit me. We can have fun on the pier. Your old pal, Roxanne. P.S. how is my mom, I'm scared to write her.

Dear Roxanne...

Oh-My-God, we miss you so much. Life in Trona is so bo-ring without you. By-the-way this is Grace writing because Celeste is asleep. So much has happened I don't know how to start. Did you hear about the policeman Rod Bearing that used to follow you around. Well he was killed in a car wreck out there. His car went off a cliff and took him with it. They identified him by his teeth and badge everything else was burnt. Nobody can figure out what he was doing in Los Angeles alone in his police car on a cliff at night. Some people in Trona think he was killed on purpose maybe by "communists." Everyone talked about it for weeks. They brought his ashes home and gave him a police funeral. Otherwise life is the same.

You remember the other Bearing brother Maine. He asked me to marry him. He wants to go into the Hot-Dog-on-a-Stick business. He bought a hot dog trailer to take to fairs and outdoor shows and he wants to spend the rest of our lives on the road selling hot-dogs-on-a-stick. I think he is still upset about what happened to Rod. I told him I better think it over. Nothing is

happening in my life right now but I wasn't planning on selling hot dogs and also I think he is probably "crazy" not in a good way. Well it would be great to get out of here for a while. By-the-way I see your mom sometimes she always asks about you. I think she is drinking more now. Still working over at Kerr-McGee. That's all I know. I have to go now love Grace. Xxxooo

Thud sssh, thud sssh, thud sssh, thud sssh.

"May I sit down."

"Oh. Startled me. Guess I was dozin'. Sure didn't hear you come in."

"Are you Lola."

"At your service. What'll it be, cards, tea leaves, crystal ball, your palm, no extra charge."

"I thought Lola was...younger."

"That's my protégé. She's younger all right, could be my granddaughter, but she's got a natural ability. I know because I had a natural ability. My husband always said so."

"Where is she from."

"Why you askin' for. You ain't no cop... you look kinda roughed up for a cop. You ain't from around here."

"What makes you say that."

"'Cause I got a nose. You been sleepin' outside recently, got sand in your clothes. Been out in the sun a lot lately. Am I right."

"When will she be back."

"How should I know, say, you want your fortune told, or you want to just sit there and yak, my time is valuable mister."

"And I'm happy to pay you for your time. I happen to have a bottle of good rye in my pocket, if you care to imbibe..."

"Imbibe, haw. Sound like my husband. He was a circus man, a barker. Last of the best. No fixin's, just what you brought. Hold her steady now, that's good drinkin' likker."

"Help yourself. Now, tell me, does this protégé of yours have a friend with her, a young man perhaps."

“I hadn’t oughta be jawin’ with you, stranger, but when a guy buys me a drink, and he’s polite to me, well, the ceiling’s the limit. I dunno, never saw her with nobody. Let’s have a drink. Let’s see your palm there.”

“Where does she live.”

“Say, just a doggone minute. What’s this. Where’s the lines at. I can’t tell your future if I can’t find the lines.”

“Better worry about yourself, Lola. Maybe you don’t have any future at all.”

When I took over the mechanic’s job, the pier was in terrible shape. Nobody had touched the machinery in years. The wiring was corroded from the salt air, all the belt drives were worn out, and the gearing on the big ferris wheel was about to go and so was the roller coaster. Metal fatigue, big time. I told the manager what I was seeing, and he said just give it a coat of paint. I told him I could fix everything. You close it down, one ride at a time, do the work and go on to the next and the next. I figured it would take six months, tops. He said it couldn’t be done, that old Pop Cord, the guy before me, had said so. I just said you are going to have some fatalities here, period. He said OK, but no extra wages.

I tore into that pier. I rebuilt everything from scratch. I used truck and marine salvage gears and engines, war surplus electrical wiring and aircraft cabling, and steel mesh that the SeeBees used to make landing strips out in the Pacific. J.C. Agajanian was the king of war salvage and a friend of Kash Buk’s, so I got everything for practically nothing. I hired Grace and Celeste to clean out the junk that had built up inside the funhouse and the Toonerville Trolley and the Mr. Toad’s ride. I gave each of them hopped-up Zippo lighters, good for killing rats and black widow spiders. They had a great time and got real good with the Zippos, as well as making up new props for the fun house. We started in January and finished in June, right on time for summer.

I liked the weather in June. Foggy and cold in the morning, breezy in the afternoon, then fog again in the evening. I was used to getting up early, so I’d walk out and have a cup of coffee with the guys at the end of the pier. Japs, as Kash said. I liked ‘em. Johnny Takasumi, Kenny Shima, and Eddie

Tanaka. They were gardeners. Always laughing and kidding around in Japanese and English and smoking Pall Malls. They liked to come out to the pier in the evening, catch a few runty surf fish, then take off at sundown. Sometimes I would get Roxanne from her fortune-teller job and we would walk with them back to the little shacks where they lived behind the docks. Their wives would have dinner ready – fish, rice, pickles, soup – and this weird drink that was hot. They all ate together and it was great to be around them. They made you feel right to home.

One day, old Lola, the fortune teller, came to see me in the mechanics shop behind the fun house. She said, since I told her to always watch out for a man with a limp, that I’d better know he’d been around the day before asking questions about Roxanne and me. I went over to the fortune-telling shed where Roxanne was and told her to go home, pack an overnight bag, and get over to Tanaka’s house. Stay there till I came for her. Don’t argue.

I went back to the shop. I sat there in the dark and just waited. Thinking of different things, trying to remember what home was like, what it used to look like. I couldn’t seem to find a clear picture any more. I fell asleep. I thought I heard something. Thud sssh, thud sssh, thud sssh. Slow. But then, nothing.

I sat there a while more, then I got up and walked outside. It was getting on toward evening. There was nobody around, just some fishing trawlers on their way in and seagulls following them, yammering. I walked down the pier and along the road toward the fishing dock and over to Tanaka’s. I heard voices from the house. I went up the step to the front porch and looked in through the old screen door. They were sitting around in the little front room, Eddie, Kenny, Johnny, and the Passenger. Drinking and smoking, talking it up.

“Hey Shakey boy, you come! Ha, good! Old flend of you here now, see?”

“Where’s Roxanne?”

“Loxanne eena keetchen wit Kuniko, they make shabu-shabu! Gooood! Come on Shakey!” The passenger was sitting in the big chair with a glass in his hand.

“What are you doing here?” I said.

“He come, ask fo Loxanne! I say, ‘sho, she right here! You flend of Loxanne, Shakey too? come in! We have sake! Sake goood!”

“Yes, it’s good. Your friends are very kind. Such a comfort to the weary traveler. Simple hospitality, a lost art.”

“What do you want?”

“Want? My old friend, look at me. You see before you a broken man, a used-up man. I’m through. I just wanted to see someone from home. I’m never going back there. I will die in this strange place. Long Beach. The ocean, sand, boats, nothing like it back in our world, right? No great body of water, no white sand beaches, no amusement pier, birds, endless blue sky, clouds, the majesty of the setting sun, the...”

“Feesh! Ha, you fo’get to say feesh! We catch ‘em, chop ‘em up, you eat soon now! Eat heavy! Mo sake!”

“Why thank you, if I may. A toast, let us have a toast.”

“Shakey, go eena keetchen! Kuniko gonna geeve you new sake bottarr!”

I went in the kitchen. Roxanne and Kuniko were cutting vegetables. Roxanne didn’t look at me. Kuniko put Eddie’s fishing knife in my hand, saying nothing. I walked back into the living room. The Passenger must have felt me come near, because he turned his head a little to get a look at me. I just drove the fishing knife right through the side of his neck. It went in nice and easy, a good blade. I gave it a turn.

“One good turn deserves another, right, Doctor?” I turned it again, and his spinal cord snapped like an old rubber band.

His head dropped. The big chair held him up. I pulled the knife out and I walked back into the kitchen and gave it to Kuniko.

Kenny and Johnny carried the Passenger outside. Eddie had a table along the back of the house where he cut fish and bait. We laid the Passenger up there and turned on the work lights. First, we cut his clothes away. He was skin and bones. “Been in a bad wreck,” said Kenny. Johnny used to be a poultry butcher, he knew the whole routine. You drain the blood into a bucket, two buckets. Johnny had bone saws. You strip away the muscles and connecting tissues so you can get the bones out. “Glind ‘em up, meex

‘em wit blood, you can glow kabocha pumkin! Eat heavy!”

Then we cut everything up into little chunks, the flesh and organs. It takes a long time, you might be surprised. The chunks went into plastic bags. Eddie put the bags in his bait freezer that said “Nehi” on the outside. We cleaned up. Eddie drove us back over to the trailer park in his pick-up. “Lotta goood chum now!”

Roxanne and I turned in. I slept for three days, the best sleep on Earth I ever had.

It was about two months later. I was doing some repairs on the railing around the pier. I had a load of pipe in the El Camino, and I had to walk to get the pipe and carry it back out. An old party in a wheelchair had been showing up on the pier lately. Just an old man, wearing a bathrobe and a hat and sunglasses. He’d sit in the sun for a few hours every day with a blanket around him. I never talked to him and nobody seemed to know him.

I got the feeling he was sort of watching me walk by with my pipe. It was a real nice day, no fog. On my third trip, the old man made his move. A big .45 automatic came up from under the blanket, and he shot me three times. The first slug tore into my left shoulder and spun me around. The pipe went flying. The second shot went wild. The third was the money. It went in my left side somewhere, and I went down. A .45 has got real stopping power, don’t let anyone kid you. The recoil sent the old guy flying backwards in his wheelchair. Right before I passed out, I recognized him. There was a gap in the railing. One .45 caliber-powered wheelchair, over the side and into the water, thirty feet down. A hit and run. The driver: Frank Tuttle.

Part 2. Roxanne

Unidentified Girl and Dog

Life in Darwin was described in the Kern County Courier, January 15, 1876: "Water is by 2-inch galvanized pipe and retails 3 cents a gallon. Darwin is larger than Bakersfield, considerably. Drinks cost 25 cents, good meal 75 cents, good bed \$1, horse keep \$1.50. Population largely Californian, with some Cornishmen, and the inevitable Chinese."

While not on the main highway, Darwin today is an easy place to visit if you are traveling through Owens Valley en route to Death Valley from the west. You'd best inquire about the condition of the road, however, as it is narrow and steep, and heavy rains may cause washouts. There are no commercial services in Darwin – no gas and no food, although there is a post office with limited window hours and a public telephone.

Darwin is considered to be the center of Panamint Shoshone Indian basketry between 1920 and 1940. Among the finest of all the Panamint basket makers were Darwin residents Mamie Gregory, Mary Wrinkle, Maggie Juaquin, and, to a lesser extent, Rosie Nobles. These Panamint baskets are known for their extremely tight weave and exquisite design and craftsmanship. The owner of the Stovepipe Wells Hotel (1940) relates that he once wrote to Rosie Nobles asking her to make baskets with a design of birds. In due course Rosie sent a message saying, "Bird baskets finished. There are no birds. There are elephants." Why the switch to elephants no one knew. Charlie Walker thought Rosie might have seen some Republican campaign literature.

(Darwin, by Robert P. Palazzo, 1996)

How did we get our white names? All my relatives had white names. Nobody in the family, if they were from Darwin, or Shoshone, or even Lone Pine, used the Indian names. You didn't, in those days. "Unidentified girl and dog" – that's me and my golden retriever, Jack. Named for my uncle, Jack Nickerson, who was called "Death Valley Jack." If a white man took

your picture, you went unidentified because they never asked who you were. They didn't count us in the population census. Our name was Nobles. My grandmother is Rosie, she passed in 1960, a hundred and two years old.

My mother started me in the glass farming when I was ten. I never went to much school. There are many abandoned houses and buildings in this part of the desert because of the mining districts. In those days, all buildings had outhouses. My mother showed me how to locate the outhouse. You find a home site by looking for foundation lines or old lumber. Go to the back and walk ten or fifteen feet. Usually the outhouse was there. Dig down five or six feet and you start to find things: old bottles – medicine, whisky, or stomach bitters. If they were made before World War One, you set them out in the sun and they turn purple in about a year. That's the magnesium in the glass. That's glass farming. Sometimes I find old Chinese coins in the mining camps.

Here in Darwin, the tourists come looking for the Darwin Falls. Americans, Europeans, Germans. They see it in the guidebook, but they don't realize how much work it is to get there. You have to walk and they don't like that, except for the Germans. When the tourists come back from the falls, they are usually tired and disappointed. I can sell them a Coke, and then they look at the glass and maybe buy something.

There are two kinds of people in the world. Those who like beautiful things, and those who think beauty only lies in the money they have to spend because they can't see beauty for themselves. Most of those people don't ever bother to come to Darwin, which is good. I don't tell people that the glass came from outhouses. If you mention outhouses to a white person, it seems painful and horrible to them, almost like sin. Indians don't care. I always had outhouses, they don't scare me!

My Uncle Jack was a mechanic, the only one between Lone Pine and Shoshone Town. He died when I was little, but I remember him well. He had a car, a truck. It was for his business, but Indians never had cars in those days. Jack also smelled different. Everyone I knew always smelled like smoke and fry-bread, but Uncle Jack smelled like car grease. He had so much car grease

in his skin, all he had to do was stand next to you and you got lubricated! Mechanics were considered rough people in those days. He taught me a lot about how things work. It was all he knew, so that's what he liked to talk about. Uncle Jack would take me riding in his truck when he had to go out on repairs, always talking about how he did things and how to use tools. He left me his tools when he died. I still have them. Also his truck, which we drove for years until it died. I built a chicken coop over the back of the truck, and the chickens lay eggs and I take them in to Lone Pine once a week.

A cousin of mine, a girl, wrote me a letter asking for my help with her problem. Her father was a first cousin, I think, who worked at Kerr-McGee, in Trona. He died in Vietnam. Many of our people died there. Her mother is white, a very troubled woman, as I remember. This cousin, her name is Roxanne, wanted me to see her young man. He had been hurt by gunfire and the doctors had to remove his left arm. He killed a man defending her. She felt I could counsel him and help him get back on the right path.

They came up to Darwin and stayed with me for about a month. I saw right away that the man was a native. Not of Earth, but native. The back of his head was flat, like the people up around Ronan, in Montana. As you know, there are two kinds of people, native and conqueror. You are one or the other, whether you know your point of origin or not. This young man impressed me right away. He saw the glass lying in rows behind my house and became fascinated with it. When I arose for morning prayer, I saw him already in the yard looking at the bottles. He would hold them up, turning them this way and that, looking through them.

One day he told me that he could give me a powder that would increase the color. Deeper, lighter, purple or red, depending on how much water and how much powder. And in a few days' time, not months. Then I knew the source of his trouble, and I told him this: "We native people, we Shoshones, believe that it is best to let the world turn and watch the seasons go by. You see like a native brother, you appreciate the inner beauty of things. But you think like a conqueror, how to make nature more desirable. But this creates an imbalance. If my glass was more desirable, then the tourists would want it

more and just buy all of it, leaving me with nothing to sell. Or worse, I might begin to have delusions about money and then my life would change and get away from me. You want to repair Uncle Jack's truck and make it run again, but then the chickens would be homeless, and I wouldn't have any eggs to sell in Lone Pine. Do you understand? You are always in the way of danger because your intellect and your soul are not in harmony. Harmony is peaceful, danger is dissonant. Already you have lost an arm, it could happen again. Please think over what I have said."

I gave them some sage bundles, and I gave Roxanne a basket of my grandmother's. She seemed to like it, it had a bird design, and Shoshone word symbols. The young man gave me an interesting rock from his home place. He asked me what he should do. I said, "Learn to be useless. Useless things are good. Useless people are not failures. Accept the world as it is."

They left in their El Camino. I thought about the young man, what I had told him. Stop defending, calm down, keep small. The things my mother used to say to us, old Shoshone philosophy. It worked for her but I wondered if it would be enough for him. I walked back and looked and the glass bottles lying in neat rows. For some reason, they looked a little pale. Then I remembered something my grandmother used to say. Don't give up your secrets. If they want birds, better give them elephants.

Olancha

Things were finally starting to settle down. Shakey was doing better all the time. He could work a little, tinker around a little, and I had my garden and flowers. The service station was Kash's idea, he staked us. "Big city don't agree with Shakey, he don't have the stomach for it," Kash said. I started in learning to weave baskets like the one my cousin gave me. We got the reeds from the marsh down the road and dried them on the roof of the service station. She taught me the old Shoshone way of weaving that she learned from her grandmother. I got pregnant. When I told Shakey, he seemed happy,

but surprised. Must have been the sage bundles, he said.

Kash was excited to be an uncle. He said if it was a boy, we should consider naming him Kash, if it's a girl, Kashette, accent on *ette*. Also, we should have a last name together and make it all "legal-like." I asked Shakey what his name was back home and he said his people didn't have names, only numbers, and since this is his home now, how about Lavonne, my name. Kash said that was it for sure! Shakey Lavonne is a bad-ass name, western and twangy, he said.

Kash was sort of a sometime guitar player with his little band, the Crowns. Eddie Tanaka always said "Clowns," so Kash took to calling them the Klowns, with a K. He wanted Shakey to join the band, but Shakey said he couldn't play anything with only one hand. Kash kept after him, and finally Shakey built an instrument, a horn contraption. It was made out of junk metal and valves and other car parts, and it looked like bagpipes. He wore it wrapped around his left side and fingered it with his right hand. It made a windy sound, but with a nice tone. Kash called it the "Shake-o-phone."

The wind blows a lot around Owens Lake, mostly west to east. Olancha is on the western side, so it blows away from us. Shakey took the Shake-o-phone around to different spots, looking for the right air flow. The more wind, the better it sounded, but then the dust got in the valves and he had to clean them every time he played it. My cousin heard it when she came down from Darwin with a load of eggs and she said it was the loneliest faraway thing she ever heard, but peaceful in a strange way. She asked Shakey if he would like to bring the Shake-o-phone along to a Shoshone elder meeting. He said sure, if she thought it would be alright, since he wasn't a member of the tribe. She told him he'd be welcome and also it would be good for me to come.

That year the meeting was held in Tecopa Springs, out near Shoshone Town, east of Death Valley. My cousin took Shakey and me around to meet everybody. The chief elder, called "Screech Owl" Williams, introduced us: "I was in the Vietnam conflict with Roxanne's father. She is a cousin on my mother's side. I am very happy to meet her husband, and we understand that he has brought music with him, the music of his people."

Later on, after the families told their news, Screech-Owl asked Shakey

if he would like to play something. He got the Shake-o-phone out and found a place to stand where he could catch a little breeze. Then he started up the droning sound, getting the wind in tune. He went on like that for a few minutes. It seemed to have an affect on the circle, on the people. One very old man started making a tone in his throat with Shakey. "Ahhh," very deep. Others joined. The sound built up. Then Shakey began to work the valves and make notes, in a kind of melody. Not sad, not happy, just a feeling of nature. People were extremely quiet, or singing their "Ahhh" sound. It went on for some time, then Shakey dropped down and tapered off. The singing gradually died away. Elder Williams said some words in Shoshone, and the circle broke up for dinner.

Dinner was fry-bread, cabrito, squash, mashed potatoes, chips, and salsa. Diet Coke. You don't have alcohol at meetings! Shakey ate up like a mad man. "Goodgoodgoodgoodgood!"

Elder Williams and some others came over to our table to talk. They thought we both should have Shoshone names. They discussed different names and their meanings. The meeting was fun. I got a lot of advice about babies. Shakey fixed Elder Williams' camper stove. We ate a lot of fry-bread and goat. People asked to have their picture taken with the Shake-o-phone.

Hot Dog Man

Maine Bearing opened his eyes. The smell woke him up. Sweet-sour. He tried to sit up. There was something cold and clammy under his left thigh. It made him pull away. He looked down to see what the hell it was. A foot-long hot dog. Nobody wants 'em long, he thought. Sitting on the edge of the sagging bed, he looked around. A mess of clothes and bottles – beer and Amaretto. That reminded him. He looked over at the girl still asleep in the bed, the sheets tangled.

Maine put his clothes on, stuffed some things inside an Albertsons' grocery bag and left, closing the motel door behind him. Outside, the sun.

Ninety degrees at seven in the morning. His Ford pickup was right where he left it. No chance of some poor sucker trying to get away with a fifteen year-old F-100 and a used Hot-Dog-on-a-Stick event trailer.

He pulled out of the Pine Cone Motel and swung out onto 395, south-bound. Use a pine cone, go to jail, he thought. "Big Pine 49er Days" was a bust. He added it up in his head:

Concession fee – \$150.

Food supplies – \$100.

Motel – \$80 a day for four days.

Meals – \$50, you couldn't keep eating hot dogs.

Beer and Amaretto – \$20. The girl wanted Amaretto. "Hi, hot-dog man," her come-on line. The girl was fat and soft. Grace was more solid-looking, he thought. Amaretto was Grace's drink, too sweet, it made you sick. The girl threw up later. He sold about \$175 worth of hot dogs in four days. The pizza guy in the next booth killed it. Nobody wanted the extra-long hot dogs, they didn't look right in the fried batter, that killed it.

Maine pulled into Lone Pine about noon. Waiting in line at the cut-rate gas station, he saw Roxanne walking across the highway, headed for the Lone Pine Travelodge Motel. Maine pulled out of the gas line and swung the rig back on to the street. He parked in front of the motel. Killing the motor, he reached under the seat and pulled up his brother Rod's police issue .38 Smith and Wesson, old and worn, but just as bad. He got out of the truck with the gun in the back of his pants, under his shirt. Roxanne knocked at room 110. Maine came up behind her just as the door was opened by another woman, older and heavy looking. He grabbed Roxanne and pushed her inside, the .38 in his right hand.

Across the street a cop was sitting in his Lone Pine P.D. cruiser, facing north. He was watching Roxanne, so he saw the whole play. He saw the gun. The cop called it in. "1012 in progress, Travelodge Motel, officer requests backup." In two minutes there were five police and two highway patrol cars parked in a semi-circle around the motel room, each man crouched down behind a car door, his gun drawn.

Two blocks down, Shakey was in the Lone Pine True Value buying nails. He had an addition to the service station going. He was ready with his nails and caulking tubes when he felt Roxanne's rock go off. He put the bag down and went outside to get a reading, a bearing. Over at the El Camino, he unlocked the console between the front seats and took out a little Zippo lighter. Then he walked up the street toward the motel. The head cop was already on the bullhorn. "OK, we have you in room 110. Who are you, what do you want. We know you have one hostage, maybe two. Let them out now. We will work with you."

Good. Cops like to talk. Bathroom windows in back. One, two, three, four, five. This one. No screens. Lift up, swing in. I hear him.

"I got two women here. This fucking bitch killed my brother. You move and I waste them both. I want a chopper gun ship in the parking lot right now. I will kill this bitch right now."

"What's your name, fella. What's your brother's name. What's the girl's name."

"Fuck names. I want a chopper, I want to go to Trona and get my girlfriend and go to Mexico, you hear me."

"We got a chopper all right, but you got to work with us here, mister. What's your girlfriend's name."

Bathroom door. Easy, slow, there he is. Roxanne, go limp. Move your right foot now. Good.

The cop was talking again. Maine had Roxanne by the arm to one side of the front window. Shakey flipped the top of the Zippo and aimed it at the back of Maine's head. He spun the little wheel. A purple beam shot out and hit Maine right between his ears. It smoked his head in two seconds, reducing it to a black charred lump, which toppled off his shoulders and fell on the floor. It rolled a bit and just lay there. Headless Maine collapsed on the floor next to his burned-up head. The gun clattered against the coffee table next to the tweed couch.

Shakey took the two women back into the bathroom. Using the Zippo like a blowtorch, he cut a hole in the sheet rock wall big enough to fit through. They walked along the back of the building and out onto the sidewalk, past

the police and the crowd of spectators. Shakey put the women in the front seat of the El Camino, and went back inside the hardware store to get his shopping bag.

“Hey, ‘hell’s goin on up there?” asked the man at the cash register.

“Some fracas at the motel. Cops everywhere.” Outside there were more cops now. The one with the bullhorn was still talking to the dead man in the motel room.

“All right, this is the situation. The Lone Pine chief of police is here and he’s going to talk to you. He’s taking over.”

Shakey started the El Camino and pulled out, south bound on 395.
GoodjobsmooththewayIlikeit.

Shakey took the 136 cutoff to Keeler on the east side of the dry lake bed, then the 190 east to Darwin.

“Did he say anything to you?”

“He started in about his brother. He wasn’t making too much sense – “I know you know and you know I know you know,” and like that. Then the cops started talking to him. He wanted to go get Grace, Shakey! He wanted Grace!”

“This man had an appointment with Death. How did you know?”

“The rock, like the one I gave you. It told me Roxanne was in trouble. I heard the tone in my head. Then I saw the hot dog trailer, and I figured it out.”

“I better start carrying it!”

“That’s right. Back home, some of us used them to communicate in times of danger. Nobody knows what you have if you’re stopped, if they search you.”

“Thank you, Shakey. We all have an appointment. I sure don’t want to be early to mine.”

Payment Deferred

Roxanne wanted to stay in Darwin and have the baby there. We all agreed

this was a good idea. No aggravations in Darwin, no interruptions. The cousin had midwife experience. She thought the birth was about two weeks away. I said I would go down and take care of things around the service station. Finish the baby’s room and the little porch, water the plants and the trees, and be back in plenty of time.

The business with Maine Bearing had tired me out. Was it a sign, a warning? Just a stupid fool, but he showed me something. Maybe I been down here too long doing the one-arm mechanic thing. I liked being that guy, it was easy. I saw a picture of Death Valley Jack, from sixty years ago, and I tried to think like him, talk like him. A tough old bird. Indians are tough, but kind. They help you, but they don’t push in at you. Screech Owl Williams said maybe I’m from an unknown extraterrestrial branch of the Flat Head Indian tribe. Flat Head, that’s a good one. Screech Owl knows what he knows – bird calling, wood carving, and how to cook goat in the ground.

My tribe? That’s something else, something he never heard of. The number people. I was 555-8923-bsx000*10*20*50. The last series meant you had a critical skill, so you worked in maximum security. Bsx000 meant weapons classification. You were free to work as long as you produced things they could use. I kept the glue formula a secret, but I made up a small supply and kept it hidden. We inventors had a system of communication, like I said. Not exactly a transmitter, that I made up. I didn’t want to scare Roxanne with the whole story. We used the rocks and we talked to each other that way. I sent a message: I can crash out. I have a way. Who’s going with me, I asked. Five inventors answered back. Six of us, total. We planned it. We crashed out. But five, only five. The sixth stayed behind. He betrayed us to the guards and they were ready for us. They killed two inventors. But I had the glue, and the bastards didn’t know what I had. I sprayed ‘em down and they died trying to get free, like bugs. Good job, smooth, the way I like it. Yes, we made it. We scattered. I never saw any of them again. But I saw the informer again. You know him. The Passenger.

They rewarded the Passenger. They made him a traveling weapons salesman. He had been a third-rate inventor, but now he became a first-rate

sales manager because what he was good at was talking. He loved to talk, and he could sell anything. Weapons? A piece of cake. They already wanted them, he knew that. The Martians loved the new helicopter gun-ship, the Venusians had to have that new bomb-sight. Then he would turn around and sell the same shit to their enemies. He worked it, he sold big time. The Fuller Brush Man from Hell.

But they never knew about my glue. I never told any of the Inventors that I was working on that. I trusted them because you have to trust somebody, but you can't give up all your secrets. Don't give them the glue, it's too destructive in the wrong hands. Better give them something simple and easy to sell, like an implosion bomb that looks like a ham sandwich.

How did the Passenger track me? I never used the glue on earth. I always used stuff that was available here, except for the racing fuel and the job on Frank Tuttle. I lost my head that time. Her rock was going off. I saw him come out of that stage door, I saw him try to catch her in the parking lot. She took off fast and didn't realize how close he was. I caught him as he was getting into his car to go after her. I tried to spray him down, but I missed and I sprayed the whole car. They got him out and he was still alive. Bad mistake. You pay for mistakes like that. I traded my left arm for it.

The Frank Tuttle story got out. They killed the part about the unknown substance, but the Passenger found out. He didn't know where I was, he didn't even know what he was looking for, he just guessed at it and put it all together once he found the cop. A witness said, "El Camino," and the cop went looking for Roxanne and me. He trailed us to Long Beach. Frank Tuttle was in the hospital there. The Passenger trailed the cop. I could have killed that cop many times before. He was bothering Roxanne, he was getting close in his stupid cop way. But I knew the Passenger would use him and kill him and maybe they would kill each other. It almost worked.

What I want to know is, who told the Passenger I was working on the Long Beach pier? The cop was out of the picture, burned up on the rocks below Palos Verdes. Then the Passenger showed up. Then he got dead. Then Frank Tuttle showed up. Somebody told the Passenger and then told Frank

Tuttle where to find us. Somebody knows about the glue. Somebody knows about me.

I got one can left. It sits up on the shelf with the motor oil. There's some other stuff up there: Bardhal, Wynn's Friction Proofing, STP. People come by and they want to try those products. They're scared something will happen in the desert if they don't. The friction proofing is actually good, but I have a formula that's much better. I could fix it so your engine will last a hundred years, but I learned my lesson. The automobile workers would be out of a job. Then they couldn't afford to go driving on highway 395. No reason to come by the service station for gas and a friendly chat. "How's that new 'Shakey's Friction Proofing'? Heard it's real good for desert driving, all that sand...."

The glue can just sits up there gathering dust. But I got a feeling somebody is coming by, maybe soon.

I hear something. Side door. Footsteps. Quiet now. They're looking around, trying to get oriented in the shop. It's dark. They think I'm up in Lone Pine. They're taking a chance coming here, but they want something. Let's hit the lights. Let's see who we got.

"So it's you."

"Shakey boy, you scared me bad!"

"Stay right there. I like you up there on the ladder."

"No, man, let me come down. I want to talk to you!"

"You can talk right there. What do you want?"

"That all you got to say? You owe me, goddamn it!"

"How do you figure that? You cost me my left arm."

"I had nothing to do with that, but it's fair! One arm, you still got the big brain up there! I'm a Jap, you know? Just a Jap! My family is buried up the road in Manzanar! I had a farm in Palos Verdes, they robbed me! I had a job at Disneyland, you know what I did there? I was Goofy! Fucking Goofy Dog, in a rubber suit! You know how hot it gets in Anaheim in a rubber suit, walking around and around, all day long? Shit job! I got heat stroke inside that suit! I fell down, the little kids jumped on me! They kicked me! 'Kill Goofy!' The boss fired me, he said I was drunk on the job! No retirement! No medical!"

“What do you want from me, Eddie?”

“Is that all you can say? What about me! I want what you got, smart guy! I want that stuff they want! Then I can make a deal! You think I’m gonna go back to being a little Jap gardener that stinks like fertilizer for the rest of my life? Fuck that! I want money! I want a Cadillac!”

“What stuff do you mean, Eddie?”

“The glue. Don’t you play dumb with me. If I had your brains, I could’ve done big things. You ever hear of Leonardo da Vinci? If he’d of had tools and equipment, we’d all be somewhere else today. I might be the fucking Mayor of Long Beach. I helped you kill. You owe me something.”

“All right, Eddie. Come on down. I don’t have time for you right now. I’ll give you what you want. But let me ask you something. How did you put me together?”

“You think I’m just a dumb Japonee man, don’t you? I watched you fix the pier, I watched you good. You did a bang-up job, sure, but you worked so fast, it happened a little too fast. So I says, Eddie, he’s got something there. Let’s see what it is. Then I saw the cans. You used a can on the rollercoaster and the ferris wheel. I says, Eddie, that’s good stuff! That’s da kine!”

“Then one day, Johnny and Kenny and me, we were surf fishing and we met a guy sitting on the beach. He was poor and hungry. We took him back home and fed him and gave him sake. He was roughed-up, but a big talker. He drank sake and he talked a long time. He said he had come a long way looking for a friend. He had no place left to look. What friend? A fisherman? No, an inventor, he said. A genius who could build anything out of nothing, who knew a secret worth millions. He said with that secret, you could buy all the surf fishing poles in the whole world, a million times over. You could own Long Beach. You’d be the boss.”

“I know how he talked, Eddie, you don’t have to remind me. You know, I forgot I used the glue on the pier. Guess I was in a hurry. Doesn’t pay to be in a hurry, you make mistakes and the mistakes wait for you in time. But Frank Tuttle? Why tell him?”

“I didn’t. That’s your wild card, I never heard of him. I never had money

for new cars, but now I will.”

“Maybe you will. Tell you what. You got to me when I was tired, and now I have to get along. I got an appointment and I can’t be late. Take the glue formula and beat it. But don’t ever come back. Stay out of the desert.”

“Yah, screw the desert! Nothing but rocks, who needs it? So rong, sucker!”

“So long, Eddie.”

Origin of Species

Well, we had a party up there in Darwin and not just any old party! A cross-species six-month birthday party! Top that! You can’t top it! Indians! White guys from Long Beach, that being me and the Klowns! Roxanne brought little Rosie out and gave her to Shakey to hold. At first she was asleep, but then she opened her eyes wide and fixed a look on Shakey that really told a story. I hollered out, “Purple, just like her dad! Guess it wasn’t the propane man! Haw!” The Indians fell out laughing. Big joke. But it was something all right, something you don’t see every day. Intro-planetary, know what I mean? Like puttin’ a Buick straight-eight in a Model-A, or somethin’!

Later on, after we’d all had a few drinks and heard some old-time soundin’ Indian talk from the boss tribal kat, name of “Screech-Owl,” and after the baby had got herself blessed forty times over, including a few verses from ‘Hey, Good Lookin,’ by yours truly, I took Shakey aside and said I had an update for him.

“Some strange news. I didn’t want to worry Roxanne about it.”

“Fire away.”

“Well, it seems Eddie Tanaka went and blew up the whole dockside. Houses, street, docks, and all.”

“How’d he manage that?”

“Nobody knows. Four square blocks and there’s nothin’ left! Cop I know said it reminded him of Hiroshima, only Long Beach-size. Rogers, over at the hardware store, allowed to me as how Eddie was askin’ for some chemicals

lately, weird stuff, and sugar. What do you reckon, Shakey, was he workin' on some new kind of bait?"

"Maybe so. Must have done something wrong, added it up wrong. Must have been messing with things he didn't understand. Tough luck."

"Well, yeah! Killed him and his wife. Who'd of figured it? Poor old Eddie, just a Jap."

"Yeah. Just a Jap, after all."

Shakey said he figured on stayin' with the service station. Said he liked the work, it kept his mind off other things. Said the Indian chief almost had him convinced he ought to take a ride up to Montana and check out the tribe up there. I said, pardner, ain't you sort of got your hands full with the Indians you got right here?

He says, sure, but maybe Screech Owl has an idea there. I ain't never had folks of my own, maybe this here Flat Head bunch is family in some way. Flat Head, I says, why shore, that's gotta be it! You're the Flat Head man from Flat Head land! Haw? Shakey shook his head. "I'm a no-place man, just a stranger in your town. Strangers make trouble. Maybe Screech-Owl is trying to get rid of me." He'd had a bit to drink, never could hold liquor. I says, pardner, you got a family now, you won't feel like a stranger no more.

Screech Owl got drunk and wanted to hear the Shake-o-phone. Shakey got it out and stood up on a big rock there and got her goin'. He played it real good, kind of peaceful and sort of happy-like. Rosie seemed to like it real well, then after a while she fell asleep. Last thought I had was, it's a crazy world. Who started it? Must have been a regular guy like me who just wanted to do a little racing and play a little guitar. Hey, good lookin'. What you got cookin'. How's about cookin' somethin' up with meeee.

I woke up early. Everybody was still crashed out, so I took off and beat it back to civilization! Shakey and his folks are real good people, maybe a little square. Darwin's all right, but it just ain't nowhere. I'm a city man, that's the only life I understand. Hot rod cars and country songs, honky tonks and dirty blondes. Or dancing in a small café, where lights are low and hearts are gay. (No offense meant.) Life's a breeze, ain't it just so care-free, down in Long

Beach by the sea.

Well, good bye and good luck, from your old buddy, Kash Buk. I drank some mash, I talked some trash, I read you from the book of Kash.

Part 3. The Book of Kash

Tape Box #1 contains one 30 minute reel, plus typed transcription: A very run-down trailer park in Long Beach, California. "Dwarf 7 Mobile Homes." We are sitting in the kitchen-living room-bedroom of the trailer belonging to ex-musician/meatcutter, Kash Buk. There are photographs of Kash as a younger man posing beside a home-made racing car in the desert; Kash and another man beside what appears to be the carcass of a giant ant. (?) He says he is suffering from emphysema and has to rest and use his oxygen tank frequently. Has the general appearance of a long time smoker and heavy drinker. Tends to ramble on, ignores questions.

This is me, see, right here. The Klowns are here, and here. This is the last picture we ever took, onstage for the last time at The Green Door Lounge, City of Vernon. We got a few other little jobs here and there over the years, L.A., Pomona, Glendale, Van Nuys, but it was mostly The Green Door that we were at.

Vernon is your company town. The bars are company bars, and the cops are company cops. You could start World War III in the streets of Vernon and the outside world would never know or care. We sure tried, a time or two! (*laughing, coughing and gasping is heard for approx. 1 minute, then K.B. resumes.*)

Most of us had day jobs over at Farmer John. Lots of times the guys in the band, myself included, would leave The Green Door at five in the morning and just walk the two blocks to work in the packing house. Occasionally, I always drank too much. That kind of life will take a toll on you, just look at me now. (*Pause in speaking: hissing sound, labored breathing, then K.B. resumes.*)

Need to turn the air up on this thing. Talking wears me out... where was I?

Oh yeah... There was a colored boy, named Otis, who used to like to sing a blues tune with us. I didn't have any problem with that. They always had coloreds working in the packing houses, but different jobs from whites. 'Course, this trailer park was whites-only when I moved in. Still is, other than Mexicans. OTM, as the cops say. Wasn't any of your Chinese, or your Vietnamese, in those days. Not like now, they got their hand in everything, won't give me credit at the liquor store like I used to get. Very tight-assed, considering everything we done for 'em, like letting 'em have free run of the whole goddamn place! I'm the manager around here now. I been here the longest, and I won't have 'em in the park, that's flat. Got to hold the line somewhere. It's a known fact that there is a secret gook plan to take it over and turn it into a gook shopping mall! Over my dead body! (*coughing, labored breathing approx. 2 min.*)

Well, I don't know what it is about bass players. Talk about meatpacking, Curley finally went down on his third stat-rape bust on a minor, that's an automatic 20 years, even in those lenient days. My steel player quit on me. Lonny, the drummer, drowned in the solvent bath, and I lost more fingers on the job than you really should have for playing guitar, and the Klowns was officially broke up. My marriage soon followed. She didn't like having me around the place here all the time, so she took off. Said she wanted a career. She had been Miss Temple City, 1966, you know. I heard she ended up cocktail waitressing again – 'Dago, 'Pedro, L.A. – I didn't hear which. I tried to help her along professionally, but she always had a weakness for preachers. Her whole family was just your typical ignorant hillbillies. So now she's married to one! Christ, what a loser, what a waste. (*labored breathing, 2 min.*)

I asked our Filipino stripper, Chateau Haskell, if she'd like to ride shotgun for a while. She said things looked a little uncertain for me and she wanted something more secure, so she was going to marry this Mexican truck driver. She actually brought him around and introduced him to everybody in the club. He seemed all right, trying to be nice, which is more than you could ever say for Kash Buk and the Klowns.

So, here I am. Do I miss it? The meatpacking job? You shittin' me?

Music? Well, I used to really like old honky-tonk country and western, but that's all gone to hell now. Everybody's a little too pumped up these days, you know? If your shit's workin' that good, you ain't country. You understand me? 'Course you don't. I felt real bad when Junior died, I'll tell you that. He saved my life, over in Korea. He blocked a commie grenade and it blinded him and rearranged his mind. I took care of him after that. We wrote songs together. "Pinko Boogie," "Ridin' With the Blues," and others you probably never heard of.

America? Now you are shittin' me! Look, I been in the military. We have just about out-run our supply lines, you understand? You been in the military? You don't look like you have, don't try and shit ol' Kash Buk, now, I was a sergeant... a white man ain't worth nothin' in this world anymore, and you can write it on my epitaph!

I got a pretty good disability pension from Farmer John since my health's turned up bad. Nothing fancy. I do all right, I get along. It's just me and my dog, Spayed Kooley. Named him after the original, a man I admired, a guy you wouldn't know about. I don't have any trouble with the outside world with him around. One of your Chinese gang-bangers tried to break in here and Spayed like to tore his leg off! Musta thought it was take-out chop suey like we get down the street!

I sure like kids. They always say, "Uncle Kash, sing us a song!" I made up one, I tried to put a meaning to it. It's called "The Dollar Song." (*K.B. begins to sing in a raspy monotone. His eyes glaze over with the effort and his lips stretch back in a grotesque parody of the entertainer*)

Well I got a new dollar, say how'd you get your dollar?

Well I sold my soul just to try to get a dollar

And I bought your soul just to get another dollar

And it opened up my eyes

If it ain't a good dollar then it ain't a happy dollar

And I don't want a dollar if I can't git a dollar

That's a real happy dollar and it better be a dollar

That I don't despise....

(K.B. goes into coughing fit, his face turns beet-red. "Valve!" Gradually calms down)

Two cops came to the trailer. They said I was seen doin' moral turpitude on minors. I said, I drink T-Bird and Gallo white port, exclusive, and never even seen that other stuff. Never offered the kids any. Me and Spayed just like to sit out on the bus bench and visit with the girls on there way home from school. Play a little guitar for 'em, that's all it is. I didn't tell the cops, but I'll tell you this. One of 'em is real cute. She sits up on the bench right next to me and says, "Uncle Kash, can I strum on it? Can I play with it?"

I still get a Christmas card every year from Chateau Haskell, up in Turlock. Chateau Haskell Gonzales. She's got three kids now. Hard to believe, if you knew her. Happy? I can still get my kicks. Any law says you got to be happy? *(Speaking ends: coughing, labored breathing, tape runs out.)*

Tape Box #2 contains two 30-min. reels, typewritten transcription. Subject: Donna Greva Buk Henry, ex common-law wife of Kash Buk. Inter view takes place in cocktail lounge 'Henry's Hot Spot', San Pedro, Ca. DGBH seems very nervous, reluctant. Appears to relax somewhat after making a few tentative starts.

What is that? That thing there! Is that on now? Are you recording what I'm saying? Is Kash Buk gonna hear this? Cause if he is, then you can just turn that fucking thing off right now and get the hell out of here! I don't know how you found me, he doesn't even know where I am. I got a court order to take care of him! See, I know Kash Buk, you don't. You think because you went there and saw him, that he is a poor old sick man on oxygen, in a trailer, with missing fingers, and just that ugly dog to help him? That's bullshit! I need a cigarette, goddamn it..... *(chair scrapes, footsteps, cigarette lighter, exhalation.)*

Look, let me give you an example. You heard about his friend Otis, the colored man? How great Kash was to let him sing in The Green Door, all that? I told Kash to his face that it was a crock to put a colored man on the stage there, that I knew it and he knew it. All it would take was for one of those

big-ass crackers to get drunk enough and mean enough and get an attitude going, and that would be it for Otis. But Kash, see, he liked doing things just to see what anybody would do, what kind of trouble he could start up. Then just sit there and watch. He liked to watch, you get what I'm saying?

No, I see you don't. You seen those fingers he's got missing, and you think, wow, that's tough shit. Told you how he lost them meat-cutting, right? More bullshit! It was meat-cutting, all right, but not on the job. He pulled a knife on one of the Mendoza brothers he thought was making a pass at me in the club. I was working there at the time. Well, Smoky Mendoza just pulled out his great big knife and went to work on Kash and that was that.

I'll tell you one thing. I was Miss Temple City, 1966. Get it? I won and I was hot. They put me on the Rocket to Stardom T.V. show, sponsored by Yeakle Brother Oldsmobile on channel nine. That was a real big deal then. I had to fight dirty Bob Yeakle off with a stick, all right, but I got on the show. I sang country-western songs, kind of like Molly Bee. So who was the back-up band? Kash Buk and the Klowns, hot from Vernon. Kash was tight with dirty Bob.

You really want to hear about this? I think it's crazy to tell you all these things. I wanted to be a cheerleader in high school because all my friends were doing that, but the cheerleader coach said I was too tall. It was the same problem when I was a kid and my mother tried to get me on at the Mickey Mouse Club. You remember that show? They said I was too tall for the other Mouse Club kids, but Jimmy Dodd took one look at me and said he wanted to talk to me privately and maybe something could be worked out. "Why? Because we like you." My mother told him to just fuck off, period. I was real proud of my mom for that. We sure could have used the money.

Anyway, I asked to try out for drum majorette, which is baton twirling and marching, and they wanted someone tall. The coach gave me some lessons and I picked it up real fast. She was, as they used to say, "funny," but not ha ha. When they saw I could march all day with my knees right up to my chest and not get tired, then the head football coach leaned on her, I think, and she let me alone and we had no problem.

Cheerleader practice got out at 5 in the afternoon. One day I heard a

voice call my name, like, “Hey Donna, hey baby....” I walked over to where this guy was parked in an old Cadillac. He said, “Step over here a minute, sweetheart. I’m Kash Buk. Friend of mine here wants to meet you. Shake hands with Junior.” A very fat man was in the backseat. I mean like 400 pounds, with real long hair and sort of grey-colored skin, and you could tell he was blind. I said hello, or something lame. I was afraid to shake hands. The man just sat there. Then Kash Buk, as he called himself, says, “Lets go riding, you like Cadillacs, you like cheeseburgers, my friend here is always hungry.” I didn’t have to be any place and I didn’t like going home, because it would just be my mom asleep or drunk, or my brothers who were always pissed off at me, so I said, sure, why not.

We drove down Foothill Boulevard. All of a sudden, the blind man started mumbling to himself in a sort of sing-song way, like poetry. Kash Buk grabbed a notepad and some pencils and said, all whispery and excited, “It’s working, you got it baby, just write down whatever he says!” I said, “I can’t understand him very well,” and Kash said, real serious, “You just concentrate, girlie! Write it down and get it right!”

That’s how I got started with Kash Buk. See, he thought Junior was some kind of poetic genius, but he needed to be near teenage girls to get his mind going. Then, Kash would take the stuff I wrote down and set music to it and make songs out of it. All he needed to do was keep a steady supply of Luckies, donuts, and T-Bird wine in the trunk for Junior, and me in the front seat with my notepads and pencils. I used to ask to go home first and change out of my gym clothes, but Kash said no way, it was working good, don’t mess it up.

My friend Darlene, who was a cheerleader, said, “How can you stand riding around with them like that? That blind man smells and the other one is some kind of pervert.” I knew then that Kash had already asked her and she wouldn’t do it, and I felt sort of proud that I could do the job. How would you like your whole family telling you how dumb you were all the time? I told Darlene everybody who worked in that high school was a pervert anyway, that’s my theory. Poor Darlene, she ended up married to an Indian, if you can imagine.

But the funny thing is, I got interested in what was happening there. Like, interested in what Junior was saying, and how Kash Buk would work it up. I guess it’s what got me started singing. The more I got interested in singing, the less I cared about baton twirling, which is a pretty lame thing to do, I guess, and no future. A man had started showing up during practice with a camera, wanting to take my picture for the newspaper, so he said. I wouldn’t do it unless he took it with all the girls on the team. He got mad and the coach got mad at me, saying I hadn’t better start up thinking I was the boss. “Too big-headed,” or some bullshit. Kash backed me up. He said the photographer was in business selling dirty pictures of girls, and that some of the teachers were in on it. Of course, it was Kash who entered me in the Miss Temple City beauty pageant. He was tight with one of the judges, but I didn’t know that. I just thought I won fair and square, and it was the best day of my life. I felt really good for a while. At least you didn’t have to do anything bad to be in Miss Temple City.

I entered the Miss Bardhal contest after that. I didn’t win anything, but the man from Wynn’s Friction Proofing came to see me. He asked if I would consider being Miss Wynn’s Friction Proofing. I asked what did you have to do, and he said he would be escorting me around to places, like night clubs and parties, and get the Wynn’s name out there. I realized he was just another poor man’s Jimmy Dodd, so I up and said, since Wynn’s was already known in the automotive field, they should start making rubbers. He said, “Rubber what?” I said, “Not for cars, for screwing. Don’t you use them?” He got out of there fast! And that was the end of my career in the friction business.

One day, my brothers discovered my notebooks. I had started taking them home and organizing the words for Kash so he could work better. But my brothers read them and thought that Kash had written all those crazy dirty lyrics about me. They were in no way about me! It was just stuff Junior had in his head, and that. One day after school, my brothers followed us. They trailed us all the way to Cucamonga. I had to write fast to keep up with Junior, and I never noticed they were right behind us until they pulled up along side Kash at a stop-light. My older brother, Howard, leaned out the side window

and yelled for Kash to let me out of the car, and they were going to teach him a lesson right on the spot!

Kash just reached down under the car seat and pulled a .45 automatic up and shot a great big hole through the car door where Howard was! It almost blew the door off! Fast, he could move real fast, without one word to say. We just kept cruising along, like nothing ever happened, if you can imagine. I told Kash, that's it for me, they'll tell mama, and so forth. He looked at me with those snake eyes of his and said I didn't have nothing to worry about. He was right! After that, my brothers left me alone, strictly. They gave me plenty of room. Most folks did, if they thought you were with Kash Buk and the Klowns. Both my brothers went to prison later for selling dope to junior high school kids. "A chump racket and a bad rap," as Mr. Know-It-All Buk said.

Once in a while Kash would ask me how I was getting along. Checking on my "morale," like the cheerleader coach was always trying to do. Friday was assembly day in school, which I always hated because they watched you to make you pay attention. You couldn't work or read or even move around. Kash had worked up this tricky little song he called "Pink-O Boogie." It was sort of about communists, I guess, but also sort of about pussy. So I told him that a minister, what kind they never said, came to speak to us at assembly. He started out like always, telling stupid corny jokes to show how regular he was, and went on and on and ended up saying to remember always that Communism was bad, and that he knew God and Jesus wanted the United States to win out. I asked Kash what he thought about that. He just drove along for a minute, and then said, "Baby, I am going to read you from the 'Book of Kash.' Let us turn to page one. Listen unto me, all ye motherfuckers!"

"Listen up!" said Junior from the backseat.

"All the peoples of the world, now and forever, only want three things: Drink, Screw, and Eat Cheeseburgers."

"Luckies!" From the backseat.

"Luckies and cheeseburgers are all one thing. Page two! All the governments of the world, now and forever, only want two things: Screw The Little

Guy, and MAKE HIM LIKE IT!"

"But what about God and Jesus," I asked.

"Baby, are you worried about them?"

"I don't know."

"What do you mean, you don't know! If you are, then they got you. But if you are like me and Junior back there, then you have a mind for other things. The secrets and the mysteries of the world. That's what I have been trying to instruct you about."

"But what about the bomb? What about war with the Communists? The minister said it could happen any day now. They showed us how to get under the desks when the bomb hits."

"You're a little slow today, baby, must have been that two-dollar preacher at school. All right then, page three: All the wars in the world, now and forever, are only about one thing. Money. The Little Guy goes out and dies for Jesus, and then that cheeseburger costs twenty-five cents more. There's money in it, but you can't blow up the store. Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition."

"Cheesebugers!" From Junior.

"There you go. Let's pull up."

That was the most interesting part of my life for sure. He showed me how to add things up for myself instead of the stupid stuff I was hearing all the time at school. They were just lying to us all day, five days a week, at school. That's a long time, when you break it down into hours! My English teacher told me I might make a pretty good secretary if I got done-up right and put my best foot forward. Only, he didn't mean foot, you know, 'cause he was all the time staring at my tits. His name was Reeves, Ed Reeves, one of the teachers they fired on account of molesting girls, and that. Real great guys. Rinker, that was the other one, and McMahan, an ex-cop and a real asshole. Great guys, pimping high-school girls right out of the parking lot! It was hushed-up, of course, but Kash had their number! He always told me which one was being checked out by the cops, cause the cops and him were tight. I had bad grades but they let me graduate. They didn't want me and some

of the other girls hanging around school and talking to the newspapers and television. If something bad was going on, the high school big-shots always started looking for me, like I'd be right in the middle of it. Boy, was I glad to get out of there!

Jesus, I'm tired! I need a drink! My husband doesn't want me to drink or smoke anymore, even though we own this bar. He says what sinners do is not our problem. I said, then why are we in this business, and he said God wants us to have money. Don used to be a minister, you know. He had a Christian radio show, live from a bowling alley in Long Beach. You could really hear the bowling sounds on the radio while he talked: "You, the pin!!! Satan, the ball!!!!" Crash! Don said he knew God didn't want me to be a cocktail waitress in a bowling alley because He, God, had other plans for me. Kash always said God couldn't even plan a trip to El Segundo, let alone people.

You know, Kash never had any real money. He didn't really care about it, like money was just bait for squares. I guess he had "potential" as they say, but what he liked the most was get into trouble. The Vernon cops were his best friends until he got mixed up with Shakey Lavonne. Kash found him out in the desert somewhere. He was part Chinese or Indian, I know he wasn't white. He scared me, he had a way of looking right through you with those purple eyes of his! Kash preferred strange people. Then he hired Chateau Haskell and started doing the dirty show. She was fresh out of Sybil Brand, so she had to do anything for a paycheck. I felt sorry for her, but I quit Kash then because I was disgusted and it was only going to get worse. You saw Spayed Kooley? Dogs on stage was the last straw for me, so I left. We weren't really married anyway. A wino friend of his with a mail-order preacher's license married us in The Green Door Lounge so it wasn't legal, as far as I know.

My husband and I own this place free and clear. He tends bar and I wait tables. We feature a trio on weekends, called The Fabuniques. I'll sing if someone asks, but I sing good songs like Wheel of Fortune, or something pop. I don't do western or hillbilly anymore, I'm finished with that. My husband knows all about Kash Buk, and he doesn't hold any of it against me, he's

very understanding. He says I was just young and weak and hadn't accepted Jesus. Don's OK as a husband, he's a good provider.

America? Look at me here: Miss Temple City, 1966. See that? George Barris took that picture of me the day I won, with one of his cars. The great George Barris! He made cars for James Dean! He was Greek. Well, it's all gone now, you know what I mean? No, I see you don't.

Do I miss it? What? Are you shittin' me? You mean you came all the way down here just to shit-storm me after everything I been telling you? "Do I miss it," what a crock.

Happy? Jesus, where'd they get you from? Too bad for you The Green Door is closed, you'd have made a good Klown, mister. Kash Buk could have used you. Maybe. Got any gum?

(background T.V., Cigarette lighter, exhaling, tape runs out.)

Tape Box #3, interview session with Loren 'Sonny' Kloer, ex-steel guitar player for the Klowns. Location is Sonny's tiny bungalow on old chicken ranch property, Hatteras Street, Reseda, in the San Fernando Valley. It's Valley-hot outside, but inside the bungalow is dark and cool. The walls are lined with signed photographs of steel guitarists, some including Sonny as a younger man. Sonny is currently employed as a night dental technician and is eating his breakfast at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. He seems to be in good health, but walks with difficulty, the result of old war wounds. Very cheerful, easygoing.

Well now, how are you boys? Come on in, set right down! I'm just finishing off this breakfast. Excuse me for not getting up, my legs are bad, like I told you over the phone. Help yourself to coffee. You know, I was just thinking, I'm really surprised you found me! I don't play out much anymore, and I'm out of touch with a lot of the guys in music. But why anybody would be spending time on Kash Buk is what I just don't see! Maybe I ought to interview you, get your story. I'd like to hear it! *(Laughter, resumes)*

Look, there's my old Bixby triple neck over in the corner, and my old Standel amp. Both good friends, never let me down. I'm third owner of the Bixby – somebody added an ashtray, and I'm not a smoker, so I use it for

my bar and picks. Steel players have a reputation for being wild, but that's just on account of Speedy West and maybe Jimmy Day, and that was more or less an act. I think you'll find that steel players are careful men, a little bit introverted. We have to be, to get the instrument down and get it right. Plus there is pride in the work, like a brotherhood. But the deal is now, I just can't pick it up and move it around anymore. My legs won't work and it weighs 50 pounds, you know? Case and all? The amp, another 40? That big JBL speaker? I can't do it. But I can still play it! Oh yes! If I walk by, I hit a chord or two, just to hear it. I've gotten better with age.

I started on steel right after I got shot up in Korea. A war buddy of mine got his hands blown off. He had been a steel man, not professional. We were in the military hospital together down in San Diego, and one day he said they were going to fix him up with mechanical hands, but the steel wasn't no more use to him, and would I care to have it? I said sure, I liked the sound it made, and my legs were bad, so a steel guitar was good for me because you sit down at it. Plus, it would give me something to do in the hospital. So, his sister brought it down. It was a nice Fender single-neck 8-string. I found I could hold it in my lap sitting up in bed, so that's how I practiced. They moved my buddy to the next bed over, so he could tell me how to go about it and teach me. I worked on that thing night and day! Drove the nurses crazy, but I learned fast and the two of us got to be known around the hospital as a success story for the other disabled vets to hear about.

I think that's how Kash Buk heard about me. He was in San Diego after the war. Now, I want you boys to understand here that I am going to try and be accurate. There was a lot of, I thought, very loose talk flying around about him and us, the Klowns, a few years ago. I don't want to throw any stones out of school, but I will try and get my part in the story down right for you. First thing to know is, steel players are side men, not front men. We even sit off to the side, behind the thing, and that puts you sort of in a place by yourself. So, when the front man, if it's Hank Thompson, or Spade Cooley, or Kash Buk, is busy cowboy-carrying-on for the audience, you are just going to sit there and concentrate and do your job. All steel players are more or less alike that

way, I think. They are just a bit different from stars and all that.

Like I said a minute ago, it's a brotherhood. Every player is an automatic member and gives respect to one another. I never heard a steel guitar brother, (or sister, let's be fair), ever say they felt bad in life because they couldn't play the instrument the way Joaquin Murphy or John Hughey or Buddy Emmons could. You know, the gods. I don't feel bad that way. I always knew I never was going to be famous or rich playing steel, but I always enjoyed it and took it seriously. There always was and will be lots of guys like me that you never heard of, and that's all right. You got to be dedicated or you won't stay with it. You won't improve.

The same goes for country-western bands. There used to be more western bands out here than you could shake a stick at. All the hillbillies and G.I.'s that ended up working in defense or factories or on the docks, they liked their western music, and there was ten thousand bars for them to get drunk in, and twenty thousand guys like me to play their music the way they wanted it. But known bands? Other than the Capitol Records boys, like Merle Travis and Cliffie Stone, or big bands like Hank Thompson and Bob Wills, maybe Jimmy Rivers was known for thirty miles around, up in the Sacramento area? You ever hear of him? See what I mean?

Kash Buk was a little like that – unknown – except around south L.A., maybe. Vernon, Southgate, Wilmington, San Pedro. On some nights, the Klowns were hot, I mean hot. Other nights, trash. Same with any band, little or big. You heard some stories and some rumors, I know. I'll say this: better Kash Buk than Spade Cooley! We used to drive out to the beach to see the Spade Cooley band just to pick up on what Joaquin Murphy was layin' down. He would tell us some stories out in the parking lot about working for Spade that really made your hair stand up! Poor old Joaquin! I would leave there thinking maybe Kash wasn't quite so bad. Rough, yes; unpredictable, yes; crazy at times, no doubt! But he was nice enough to me and treated me with respect. What else can you ask for in a leader? I liked the way he played. He played real nervous guitar.

But, here's the second thing to know. When Kash brought Donna Grev

around and started featuring her with the band, that's when the trouble began. See, Donna was just a little too hot to handle, even for the mighty Kash Buk! Eighteen years old, going on forty! I didn't think she was such a great singer, but she was an act. Like watching a load of TNT about to explode all the time! She would just stand up there and say, like, "What the hell are you looking at?" if some guy got fresh. She would cuss-out anybody that looked at her cross-eyed, and they loved it! You seen her, right? In that terrible bar down in 'Pedro? Older now, skinny and washed-out looking? Well, boys, that's not the true Donna Grevia Buk, nossir! That girl was sleek, she was wise, and tough as a boot! She carried a handful of rusty hat-pins around in her bag, and she could use 'em like a switchblade knife. Did, in fact, and I seen it. Once on Frank Tuttle, the Ford dealer, when he tried to grab her off the stage, and a couple times on Kash himself. Not that he didn't have it coming, I guess. But she could just flare up like a regular blond flamethrower! We could have used her in Korea! (*Laughter, steps, cane tapping?*) I like coffee, drink it all the time! Better make some more!

I was an original Klown, maybe you didn't know that. I was working in the dental laboratory making teeth, out here in Reseda. There was a big need for false teeth right after the war, and I was making pretty good money. Kash had tracked me down, said he remembered me from the Army hospital. I had gotten some better on the steel, so when he offered me a chair in his new band, I felt confident enough to say yes. He had the gig lined up at The Green Door, down in Vernon. I didn't like going down there, especially at night. Vernon is a terrible place during the day, but it's just like another planet at night! Kash, of course, liked it. It suited him. He thought Vernon had been made just for him, and he could get away with anything! So, I went down there, with my steel and amp and everything. I met up with Kash and the other fellows. Lonny, the drummer, and Curley, the bass player. These were guys Kash knew from Farmer John. My first job, my first band. What did I know? Nothing at all!

We set up and ran through some tunes, like your western standards, and a couple of Kash Buk originals. Those were good, I thought, fast, tough, and dirty. Sounds about like Kash himself, now, don't it? Kash said all the

Klowns had to have names with "Y", like Curley or Lonny. That way, folks felt like they knew you right off and you were their pal. My name is Loren, so he decreed I would be "Sonny," because every western band had to have at least one "Sonny." But the leader had to have a leader-type name that showed he was boss, like in the army. Therefore: "Hank," "Spade," "Kash," and so on. Hard-sounding, like "Sarge," the squad leader. 'Course, if Kash Buk was your squad leader, you'd never get out of there alive!

Three nights a week, every week. We played for the kitty and split it up each night. It got to where I was taking home maybe fifty bucks every week-end and that was good money! Plus my dental job. I traded up and got that Buick you saw outside, used, very low mileage. Dynaflo transmission, so I don't have to clutch it. That Buick's gonna last me the rest of my life. I don't go anywhere except the store and my night job at the dental lab. I've had that same job all these years. I like working nights so's I can listen to the radio and you do the work sitting down. There isn't any western left on the radio, don't get me started! What they call country now is crap, with a capital K! I picked up the Bixby around that time from a fellow that needed a hernia operation. It's a sad day when you need to convert your steel into cash. You spend your money in a minute, but you'll never see another Bixby. It'll be here long after I'm gone.

It's a real shame you boys can't ever see a Klown show any more. That audience never knew what to expect! Like, Donna and Kash would get into fights right on stage. Kash realized the crowd liked it and he encouraged the idea. Donna would start off saying the tempo was too fast, or the key was wrong, and Kash would argue back, saying she was wrong, and "go on and sing, goddamn it," and on and on in that way. He'd get Donna fired up to the point where she might take a swing at him, which she could do, because she was real athletic. She had been a baton twirler, so she had strength. The audience went crazy, and the house made more money. I thought it was a cheap-shot way to do music, but Kash thought he had a good thing going. He thought of himself as an entertainer, the Frankie Laine of Vernon.

But it didn't stop there, of course. He started messing with people, the

public. Looking for trouble, which he always found. One night, a bad drunk jumped up on stage with a gun, saying Kash was trying to steal his woman. Kash had needled the guy into getting so drunk and mad that when he jumped on stage, he lost his balance, and Kash round-housed him with his Fender guitar, swinging it by the neck. He laid that man out and he actually died a week later. I think his name was Jerry. Kash claimed self-defense because a gun was used and the cops went for it. Kash and the cops were tight, he always comped their drinks and other stuff I better not say! Attendance went way up after that story got around.

But, at that point, I gave notice. You're supposed to give the leader two weeks notice to find a substitute, but that whole thing scared me so bad, I just said I'm leaving. I packed up my gear and said adios, Klowns. Donna quit singing with the band after Kash hired Chateau Haskell and started up doing a dirty number. I'm just glad I never had to sit through that! I heard it was pretty bad, even for The Green Door. Donna left him flat soon after. When he lost her, he lost the best thing he ever would find. Or maybe she was just too much to have around in the first place, which is what I think. Either way, Kash started going downhill from that point and I'm sorry about it, because he had musical talent far greater than mine. His writing partner, Junior, had a heart attack and died in the Cadillac. There was some weird story about Kash and Frank Tuttle, but that was after my time. Curley went to prison, which was where he belonged, and poor Lonny drowned cleaning hot dog tanks over at Farmer John, rest his soul. Boys, that's a terrible death. Better to check out while making teeth! We use a cement, a glue, that's pretty bad to inhale all the time, so I keep the back door open. I like the night air.

I heard that folks stopped coming to The Green Door in the 70's, after civil rights was declared. I sure wouldn't go down there anymore! So, The Green Door is gone, like most of the country-western joints around here. The Riverside Rancho, The Country Music Box, Cornell Corners, all those places. Seems like the music has just disappeared.

I have played around town with different bands a little since then, "casuals," you know. If I'm asked, I'll play with someone I don't know, so

long as they will help me out with my gear. Most times, they don't want to hear I'm disabled, so I just don't play out. Dig this: Donna actually called me up after she got married to Don Henry, and asked would I come down and lead this little band she was trying to start up. I went down there and sat in with them, and boys, I don't like to say it, but it was just terrible! I told her, sorry, I couldn't make it work, not even for her. She was calling them "The Fabuniques!" Oh, brother! Plus, Don Henry did not look right to me. Compared to Donna, he's a deep-freeze unit! That's the last time I played out. Mostly, I just play here in the house for my cat, Buddy Emmons Jr.

Do I miss it? Sure, sometimes. Listen, I was a Klown for a while, that's something! Darn sight more interesting than making teeth in Reseda! Most people wouldn't do it, they'd be scared to!

America? I consider myself a steel guitar player. I'm always trying to help advance the steel guitar. That's how we see it.

I feel more content nowadays, I guess you could say. I have definitely had it with crazy people. No more Kash Buks or Donnas for old Sonny! Say, maybe I ought to write a book, you fellows could help me!

Now, where is Buddy? He's a real good old fellow, my pal Buddy. When I play, he always comes in and sits right down. He seems to like it! Hey, Buddy! *(Sounds of an amp being turned on, steel guitar chords, meowing)*

There he is. See, I rigged up a cat door for him by remote control... I just pull this cord... lookit here, Buddy, we got visitors! What do you think of that? *(Meowing, guitar chords, tape runs out.)*

Tape Box #4 contains wire recording spools, not tape. Loren "Sonny" Kloer confirms this must be from his Webcor wire recorder. "It was old, but it was good! I traded a guy a set of teeth for it! I'd set it down on the stage floor right next to me, so's I could turn it on and off. I forgot all about it, forgot I kept the spools. Still sounds pretty good!" A voice is heard on mic. Sonny says, "That's Kash, without a doubt, gol' dang it!"

"All right, ladies and gentlemen, especially you ladies! Welcome to The Green Door Lounge, where every night just might be your last! In other words, let's get to it!!! *(Applause)* Right about now, I'm goin' to ask Sonny to lead

us off on “The Pink-O Boogie,” and you gals know just what it is I’m talkin’ about when I say “Pink!” I mean, when I say, “Pink-O Boogie,” I want you to hold it! And I mean, if you don’t, I will! Then, when I say, “The Pink-O Boogie’s got the thing you Republicans just ain’t got,” then I want you to shake a tail feather! An’ if you don’t, I swear I’ll come down there and shake it for you, or my name ain’t Kash Buk! Hit it!”

(Music starts here, a fast number with breaks, during which Kash Buk seems to be directing the audience. Screaming is heard in the background.)

*There’s a new dance goin’ round, the whole town’s talkin’ about
It’s socially upliftin’, but it sure is wearin’ me out!
My low friends in high places won’t talk to me no more
They can’t take no chances bein’ seen on the dance floor!
Pinko Boogie’s fun, baby, the Pinko Boogie’s hot
Bend over and let ol’ Kash Buk see just what else you got!
Pinko Boogie’s cool, baby, Pinko Boogie’s new
I’ll join the Party, baby, if they let me party with you!*

“Now hold it! I said hold it! Bend over an’ hold it!”

(Screaming in background, the music surging and peaking, breaking glass is heard, gun shots.)

“Pistol-packin’ daddy, lay that pistol down, we don’t want no rough stuff, we’re just Klownin’ ‘round!” (Kash Buk, off mic, “Get that son of a bitch out of here, go get Johnny and tell him to do his fuckin’ job or I’ll do it for him!”)

“All right, ladies and gentlemen, here’s a special number dedicated to each and everyone of you, it’s a little song about v.d. and it’s called “Runnin’ Gun.” Kick it off, goddamn it!”

Loren ‘Sonny’ Kloer: “That’s a night I do remember. Some guy started shootin’ and Kash sent for Johnny Rinaldo, the fixer. “Runnin’ Gun” was our

break-it-up song. It was so fast it stopped any fight that was in progress. Kash was sharp, I must give him that. He reached down from the stage and hit the guy over the head with a beer pitcher and knocked him out cold. Then Johnny took him out back and brutalized him pretty good and dumped him out on Alameda Boulevard, in L.A. territory.

I went out for a little fresh air during the break. Kash always parked his Cadillac next to the stage door so Junior could hear the music from the back seat. I went over to say hello, and that, but I could see Junior wasn’t feeling any too good. He looked a bit more grey than usual, like he was passed out, or something. Kash was worried, like.

“Junior don’t look right. He look right to you?”

“No, Kash, he don’t,” I said. “Might be a good idea to get him over to Harbor General.”

“Can’t. Got to do another show right now.” We went back inside. It was Saturday night, and the place was packed. A drunk started yellin’, “Klowns, Klowns, where’s the fuckin’ Klowns at!!!” Then everyone took it up: “Klowns, Klowns, where’s the fuckin’ Klowns!!!” The Green Door wasn’t a very big place. If you had a hundred and fifty, you were at capacity, from the stage clear back to the bar. Everyone always seemed to know each other. I needed a little extra time to get up on the stage and over to my steel, you know, on account of my legs. But when the crowd saw me, they knew it was show time, sure enough! I always got a big hand. Some times, there’d be one or two guys who wanted to help me out, to steady me, so’s I could get settled. I really appreciate folks like that who try to help their fellow man.

Curley was usually drunk by the second set, which is why I seldom recorded it, so as to save the spool. No sense in using up the wire on Curley! I never understood why Kash carried him. Anyway, here’s Kash kicking off “Ridin’ With the Blues.” That was a song he wrote with Junior, and my personal favorite. When we got to the part about “Pull up your dress and kick off your shoes,” two gals up by the stage front pulled up their dresses, right on time. Of course, they knew the song, and they were just drunk enough to really get into it. The crowd cheered and clapped, so then a couple more did the same

thing! Nice lookin' gals too, I seem to recall! Kash was in a good mood, so he got all of 'em up on stage, which was a little crowded, and we did the song again, only faster. One of 'em banged into me and like to knocked my Bigsby right over! I said, "Lookit here, lady, could you kindly move off me a little?" She turned right around and pulled her dress up again, and you know what? She didn't have nothin' else on! Whoa, daddy! Listen to the crowd hollerin' and goin' mad! (*Screaming is heard.*)

After the tune, Kash hustled the girls off stage, and I noticed him speaking to the one on the end, the one minus underwears. He announced a slow-dance number, titled, "My Dwarf is Getting Tired," about an old side-show buddy of his who had died recently. It's pretty sad, and some of the gals who were fresh from their stage debut started crying just in case Kash was still paying attention. Couples formed up for dancin', which was always my favorite part, since it's more fun to play with folks moving in rhythm, even drunks. I can't dance, myself, but I appreciate someone who can do it well. I like to watch 'em go glidin' by the bandstand.

*A mobile home in Anaheim, it's double-wide, it's new, it's clean
It's a friendly town, I think it's time, it's what we need
We had a long run together, a life beyond compare
But the World is changin', and it's gettin' strange out there
Forty years of motel rooms, cigarettes, and magazines
From Spokane, clear down to Bakersfield
You might have seen us on the highway, so many times before
But my dwarf is getting tired, and my fat man just won't travel anymore"*

That sounds good, don't it? See, Kash had a way about him. One minute he might cut your throat, but then he'd come across with a real touchin' song like that. Seems like his old circus buddy got heatstroke in his rubber Mickey Mouse suit, over in Disneyland. He had to go claim the body since Disney wanted it out of there in a hurry.

*We came down here to say goodbye to an old-time friend of mine
He died inside his rubber suit, out on the street of dreams
It was a hot July Sunday, and he was working overtime
'Cause all the people like seeing Mickey walk by, down in Anaheim
Now, dwarves and fat men just might do the very best they can
But they can't compare with Tomorrowland, it seems
We had some real western times together, but it can't be like before
'Cause my dwarf is getting tired and my fat man just won't travel anymore
No, we won't be seen from Bakersfield, clear up to Spokane, anymore.*

That's all for tonight, folks. See you next week, or in Hell, whichever is first. Drink up and go home, if you got one."

(Scattered applause, crowd noise. "Proud Mary, goddamn it!" "You got the clap from Mary, you sorry-ass hillbilly!")

Wow, see, Kash didn't like anybody to call for any songs other than his, except for "Drink Up And Go Home," which he considered worthy. Also, "Hey, Good Lookin'," his come-on song. The wire runs out, see there? That's the thing about these machines.

"Dwarf" was guaranteed to calm the roughest house, and it always worked. Served to remind folks that their lives were passing by while they partied in The Green Door, which was a desperate place to party your life away, in my opinion. Kash went out to check on Junior, who was looking worse. He said, "I'm goin' to bring him over to Shirley, at Harbor General. You collect, OK? Pay the fellas, and I'll catch up to you later." Which I did. The same two guys helped me break down and get the equipment out to my Buick. Turned out they were both musicians, new in town and looking for work. Sax and drums. We talked for a while and I said I'd sure let 'em know if I heard about anything. By then, it was three in the morning. At that time of night, the packing houses are empty and the big rigs aren't moving around down at the loading docks. Vernon is still as the grave. The little gal that had run into me

on stage was hanging around in the parking lot. "Where's the leader man?"

"You mean Kash?"

"Yeah. Meet him after the show, he said. He had a business offer for me."

"Well, sweetie, I don't know about business, I'm just the steel player. Kash had to take a sick friend to the hospital. You better come back tomorrow."

"He said something about a job. I need a job real bad."

"Honey, I don't know anything, I just play steel guitar. Come back tomorrow."

"Where you goin' to now?"

"Reseda."

"Oh. See you later."

"I sincerely hope so." I got in the Buick and took off towards the 5 freeway. That poor girl, she looked like they look when they get out of the slammer, that look. Sort of dark and different-looking. Filipino, it turned out. I drove north on the 5, then west on 101, Reseda-bound. I like to hear the radio in the car that time of night. "KGIL in the valley," the voices sang. There was something by Harry James, real nice. Good tone, for a straight-ahead white man.

Tape Box #5 contains interview with J.J. Rinaldo, retired lieutenant, Vernon Police Department. J.J.R. lives in La Habra Heights, a comfortable suburb in south San Gabriel Valley. Hilly, shady, quiet. J.J. is 60 years old, in good shape, strong-looking, with a Cheshire-cat grin and a candid manner. An affable man, but a tough man. We are sitting in his den, where mementoes of his years in law enforcement are displayed. Photographs of himself alongside well-wishers such as Senator Richard Nixon, Earl "Madman" Muntz, Frank Tuttle, Spade Cooley. "To a great guy," "Thanks for everything," etc. A framed 8" by 10" glossy of Kash Buk and the Klowns is signed, "From yr. pal Kash Buk, to the sharpest Kat in Vernon."

Call me Johnny. So, what's it going to be? The truth or a lie? I prefer the former, but the latter is also useful. I'm retired now and I don't care about the party line anymore. You have to understand about cops. Vernon is private,

a fiefdom right in the middle of downtown Los Angeles. How crazy is that? Surrounded by the Sheriff's department and L.A.P.D. The Sheriffs are a crude bunch of S.O.B.'s. The L.A.P.D., that's a different animal, a different tribe. Sanctimonious. What did I read the other day... 'anal retentative?' That tickled me! Vernon cops are just gussied-up security guards, but the job had... advantages. I did very well, with outside work, you understand. New Cadillacs every year, over at Bob Spreen, where the freeways meet in Downey. Buddy of mine there gets me a very good deal. Very good!

So, Kash Buk, you say? A colorful character, no doubt about it. In his brief reign of terror, he caused a fair amount of trouble but I enjoyed practically every minute of it. You could always die of boredom, if you prefer. Kash had a highly developed nose for interesting information, like the business about the smut ring over at the high school. He got the inside stuff from his under-age girlfriend and passed it over to me. I went out and leaned on the participating model citizens and showed them how they might avoid a 20-year sentence by paying me to cover their pecker tracks which they were leaving all around town. Shocking! Appalling! Then, Kash gave the girl the word on how to leak the story out and those boys went right down the chute, along with a few of the high school brass who were even more corrupt! Embezzling school district funds! Unbelievable! Unacceptable! I actually received a citation for public service, which was tantamount to a bribe to keep my mouth shut.

Kash didn't much care about the money angle. I mean, he wasn't into things that way. I myself like to be comfortable, as you can see, but Kash Buk was really a smart-ass at heart. It was simply that between his warped sense of humor and my healthy American interest in money, we made a good team. Good times, laughs, kicks. Did he mention about the taco-truck concept? That was bold! It almost worked! See, Kash reasoned that there was a future in down-market food-service units that might cater to the immigrant work force that was building up in the early 60's. Sure, those guys had to eat! Kash figured you could acquire the trucks from a local outfit, fix them up as mobile lunch counters, buy the food supplies at Grand Central, and hire mojado girls to run them. One to drive, one to cook. He got 'em from off the killing floor at

Farmer John, and they were thrilled with the offer. We paid better wages than Farmer John, and the girls didn't have to stand knee-deep in pig blood and guts all day.

But Kash had a special angle. Ha! We were sitting around The Green Door one evening, and he says, "Johnny, we will have the only fleet of 'blow-job-optional' taco trucks on the Alameda corridor. Think about it, pardner." See, he figured you could equip each truck with a hooker who would do blow jobs in the back at ten dollars a pop. Offer that with a discounted cheese burrito, and you would clean up, even with the extra hand on board. I was supposed to come up with financing for the trucks, and of course, protection. Kash would take care of the labor and supplies, operating out of The Green Door Lounge. Everything went smooth until word got out, and then we ended up having to comp the bastard sheriffs deputies, all day and all night, up and down Alameda. Free burritos and blow-jobs to law enforcement! Degrading! Disgusting! We shut it down and sold the trucks... for a considerable profit. I wanted to just run the trucks regular and legal, but Kash said it was his way or the highway. Typical Kash Buk! You had to appreciate him! Beer for you boys?

But when you operate out there on the fringe all the time, it can be tiring and even pointless, I'm sorry to say. Then, one piece moves and the whole damn game board moves. In his case, it was the trouble with Frank Tuttle. Everything would have been sustainable except for that. I knew it right off, and I told him, "Take a lesson from Dick Nixon, a personal friend of mine. Think liabilities. Cut losses. You got too many balls in the air and I won't be able to fix it when it goes south on you, old buddy." Kash just said he was in control, and everything was jake. Jake! So what if a cop gets hit hard? Big joke! Big joke.

I had a job to do, a position. Plus, I wasn't quite in there solid for retirement, you know. That I had to watch. I had to watch those fitness reports. The chief of police in Vernon was actually a Klan buddy of Frank's! The Klan, can you tie that? I went too far out on a limb trying to cover for Kash and his hot-rod buddy from the desert. That cat was bad trouble, you could tell by what came through his face. I told Kash, "You're pushing me, you are work-

ing old Johnny. Get rid of this guy, he's unreliable, he's crazy as a shit-house rat!" Kash just gave me the snake-eye and said, "I got an interest in this boy. I don't care what you have to do, just fix it good. Take the heat off him and let me get him stashed outside of L.A. I'll never ask you again." Sure. So what if an old cop gets hit hard, maybe suspended? Perjury? Obstruction? Big joke.

Kash said those L.B. cops are the lowest form of white man there is. "All they want is tight pussy, loose shoes, and a warm place to shit. Piece of cake, Johnny-boy." So I went down there and ate about a train-load of dirt and paid off every Long Beach cop alive so they would forget all about Kash Buk and his pal Shakey Lavonne. He was the victim, after all, wasn't he? Frank tried to kill him, right? You don't have any beef against this guy, a case of mistaken identity pure and simple, OK? The maintenance man on the pier, for Cris-sakes! They never tied him to the crazy glue story in Ridgecrest. Frank was dead, he wasn't talking, and they lost interest in the case. There was a sudden Cholo-gang flare-up in East Long Beach and the cops started running around like headless chickens trying to get it under control. Manny Mendoza really helped me out that time. He made a few calls and got the brothers moving against the Samoans from Garden Grove. Those guys just naturally loved to rumble and they were only too happy to get into it once Manny told them it would be OK to waste the cops from Long Beach, whom they all hated. At 300 pounds, your angry Samoan is a law-enforcement nightmare, a walking Sherman tank! Then I put the story out to the Long Beach KKK chapter that Frank was actually working with the F.B.I., investigating some spade gang from Watts that was the muscle for a Jewish cartel trying to take over the Nu-Pike. That's why he was under cover on the pier, disguised as an old man in a wheelchair. They loved it! Frank Tuttle, a blessed martyr! End of discussion.

But the chief didn't buy it. He called me in to his office and said, "Frank Tuttle was a no-good son of a bitch. I think he took pictures of my wife. I seen that ass before, I think. But we were lodge brothers and you had something to do with getting him killed. You are scum and a disgrace to this department. Give me your badge and gun. Don't let the sun set on you in Vernon, Rinaldo."

End of career.

The beauty of Vernon was, you just had to scoot across the line and sit tight: “Well, deputies, you’re in Vernon now. Out of your jurisdiction, I think!” End of pursuit. But you had to keep it clean in Vernon, period. Every time I walked in The Green Door, Kash did a routine on me from the stage. Went something like this:

*We start Klownin’ around at nine, you start drinking at ten
The fights break out by eleven, and the cops’ll check back in
They drive around to the back door, we pay ‘em off with a smile
Johnny says, “Boys, take it easy in there, just simmer down for a while
Kash Buk and the Klowns, baby, having a real good time
Gotta use your nickel, baby, cause I ain’t got a dime
Kash Buk and the Klowns, baby, Kash Buk and the Klowns
Get your nickel ready for Kash Buk and the Klowns.*

Ha, ha. That’s how it went. A great guy to know. You got your fingers burned, but you sure got your nickel’s worth, you got your kicks. I miss him. I’m retired now, and it’s dull. My wife plays golf all the time, probably over there right now. I think golf is stupid. Vernon was weird, but interesting. La Habra Heights is flat-out boring.....

(Noises off-mic, door slamming, a woman’s voice calling.)

“Johnny, where are you, I’m home, I finally did it, I’m one game up on Dorothy, I...”

“In here, honey. We have company, come and meet the fellows. They want to hear all about our old friend, Kash Buk. Why don’t you sit here and tell them what you remember. Go on, honey.”

“I won’t go on, you always say that, I’m not going to go on! I don’t remember anything.”

“Sure you do. They came to dinner one year. Was it around Easter time? You made a ham that year, right?”

“Oh, Johnny, for God’s sake, that was so terrible, I won’t talk about it, it’s

none of their business, excuse me, but it’s just not!”

“But you do remember.”

“No I don’t! That terrible woman broke two bottles of my favorite perfume! That’s how drunk she was. She wasn’t even his wife, really. I’m from Uptown Whittier, and we never had people like that in our house when I was growing up. Never!”

“What else happened that night?”

“It’s fine for you, Johnny, you know I don’t like people like that! You’re from Pomona, it’s different.”

“How different?”

“We never had Mexicans or blacks or white trash in our area. That’s what gave my poor father his heart attack, when the Mexicans started coming in to Whittier. It broke his heart! You never understood my feelings!”

“Glad it wasn’t Italians. Tell us about the ham. Go on, honey.”

“Oh, for God’s sake! Your precious friend told me to make cheeseburgers because somebody outside in his car needed cheeseburgers! Needed them! My perfectly good ham wasn’t enough, and you did nothing! Sometimes I just don’t like your brand of humor!”

“What happened then?”

“You know what happened! He took my cheeseburgers outside and fed them to his friend and that horrible dog! While that crazy woman barged right into my bathroom and broke my perfume bottles! You just sat there! And then you lost your job! He made you lose your job!”

“I retired. You’re way off there, honey.”

“Oh, no, I’m not! You got fired and that’s that! It broke my mother’s heart when I had to tell her! I had to change country clubs then, and I’m still not happy at the new one. Excuse me, but I don’t feel very well just now, and that’s all I have to say. I don’t like to talk about it. Well, I don’t! Pardon me, but that’s the truth!”

Anything else you need? How about a beer? She’ll get over it. She never cared very much for Kash and his brood. No sense of humor. Nothing funny about golf, what’s the kick in it? I’m going to sit here and watch T.V. “The Ben

Hunter Matinee.” Old movies. I dig it, sometimes. Ben wants to sell you what he calls “Hi-Lo Shag, Continuous-Filament, Nylon-Pile, Wall-to-Wall Carpet, \$9.99 a square yard.” We tried it here and you know what? “Continuous-Filament” means if one strand breaks, the whole thing comes apart! One piece moves and the whole board moves. I know all these old movie stories forwards and backwards, but I still like to watch the show. Look, there’s Ben Hunter with his toupee. A bad rug.

(Sound of television coming on, voice of Ben Hunter? tape runs out.)

Tape Box #6 contains notes and interview with Manuel “Manny” Mendoza, former owner of The Green Door Lounge, city of Vernon. Manny has the appearance, manner, and vocabulary of an ageing Pachuco hipster. Black silk shirt, white golf pants, the white and gold shoes of a resort entertainer. Once a well respected swing-band leader in the 40’s and 50’s, he lives in a modest mid-century home in downtown Palm Springs, with his Chihuahua dog, “Peanut.” The walls are covered floor to ceiling with photos of Manny in the company of well-known Latin musicians like Perez Prado and Desi Arnaz. In one corner is an elaborate memorial shrine to his wife, Ruth. He greets us at the door, offering a card that reads, “Fugg you, Gringo.”

Here’s my green card! I’m legal! *(laughs, his voice still a rich radio baritone.)* Watch out for dog turds, Peanut is getting older, like me. I still use the toilet. Pretty good for an old wet-back cholo, right? Yes, we have toilets, you are not the only ones! I’m an American citizen, don’t you ever forget it, you pinche gringos! Gabachos! You know that phrase? It’s not polite. You like Chinese food? Monday is all-you-can-eat-day, I always make it. They know me. The food is bad, but it’s cheap. You got a car? Mine is in the shop, five years now. Who cares, I don’t want to drive anymore. These gang-bangers, they will run your sorry ass right off the road. We walk, Peanut and me, since my wife died. The broad drove me everywhere. She was Jewish, from the Fairfax district up in west L.A., but I still miss her every day. Ruthie. Five years gone.... she was a nice broad.

I’m hungry, let’s go. Peanut can ride up front, I’ll take the back. They

don’t mind Peanut in the restaurant, but I have to keep an eye on her! The Chinese like a nice little juicy dog. Good with pineapple! *(Pause. Conversation continues inside Chinese restaurant. Background noise, Manny is greeted often during lunch.)*

Eat only what I tell you. The other stuff, nobody knows. Here comes the waiter, I call him “Who Flung Dung.” Watch this.

“Hola, Who Flung, buenos dias. Here’s my card.”

“Fugg you, gringo? What this mean, prease?”

“A green card. You need it when the I.N.S. man comes! Entiendes, Mendez?”

“I have card...”

“Yeah? Let’s see your card, mister. You want to go back to China?”

“Prease, drink order now.”

“We want ice tea, and don’t pee in it, savvy?”

“Savvy.”

I’m just kidding with him, we do this all the time. You like the food? Eat all you want, six ninety-nine, until three o’clock. We have time. Why the hell you want to know about that pinche redneck Kash Buk? A loser! A schmuck! Worse than a schmuk, a schlemiel! You know that phrase? He makes trouble, you get blamed. A putz, first class. He used to say, “I don’t like Mexicans, Jews, or blacks, and I wouldn’t trust a white man with a nickel.”

I wanted a place for dancing, for cha-cha-cha, mambo, bolero, the Latin stuff. I was a band leader in the 40’s, and 50’s, do you know? “Taco Benders from Hell,” “Killer Vatos From Space,” many others. You don’t remember, but I was very hot in those days. We opened for the great Perez Prado at the Hollywood Palladium. For Machito, for Cugy. But we were very popular on the eastside. La gente del Barrio, tu sabes? No, you don’t know. The People! The working class of the Barrio! Boyle Heights, that’s where I’m from. I’m a spoiled child of the poor. I was “Manny and his Pachuco Boogie Boys.” We played lots of nights over there on Brooklyn, on First, on Boyle. In downtown Los Angeles the Mexican kids were allowed on Thursday nights, only. In “East Los,” every night! Up until the zoot suit thing. After that, cops. The place was

crawling with cops, as if we were all criminals, Nazis, commies. They started raiding the nightclubs, rousting musicians, looking for dope, they would say. High-drape pants, swing music, dancing! Harmless, wouldn't you say?

I wanted my own place, where the average jose could bring his esposa or novia, and have a nice time, relax, no hassles, no L.A.P.D. So, I started with the Club Tres Ases, in Vernon. You didn't need a liquor license or permit over there, just pay the jefe. Johnny hooked me up. You met Johnny? Calls himself an Italian? Don't you believe it! He is a cholo from Pomona, verdad! But what do you think happened? Pinche rock-and-roll! Overnight, the music was gone. They wanted the black sound. But then, you had to have recording stars, like Little Julian, or somebody of the juke box. Big shows: "The Big Union," "The Paramount," in Montebello, "The El Monte Legion Stadium." I couldn't compete. So, Johnny says to me one day, "Manny, I know a guy. He plays that stuff, and he's a cheap cat. Try it." He brought me Kash Buk and the Klowns. Gracias por nada! A criminal! Vato muy loco y bajo! But the man knew something – how to motivate a crowd into parting company with their dollars. This he could do. But he knew nothing about music! What is solfeggio, ostinado, crescendo? I studied: jazz orchestration, theory, harmony. Charles Mingus was a fellow student. We were friends! Kash Buk was ignorant. But he moved in and took over. Insisted on changing the name: "The Green Door Lounge," from a pinche novelty song of the day.

It was not what I wanted. A bad element started coming there. I told Johnny, "This Kash Buk is a cabron from the biggest valley in Mexico." You know that saying? It's very insulting in Spanish. Johnny said, "Better blow. Be smart, Pops, be muy alerta." My wife said, "Let's go see Palm Springs." We came down here and I loved it. She started booking me as a special event act. Weddings, bar mitzvahs, funerals. "Music by Manny," she called it. I got a van, she painted the name on the outside herself! She hired the sidemen, she checked them out, she paid them. Amazing mind she had there, Ruthie. We have been happy down here. Everybody loves Ruthie, she's the most popular gal in the Palm Springs area. I gave up the "Music by Manny" thing when she passed. I couldn't go on. She left me secure, financially. My heart

is broken, but I'm not worried. Peanut and I won't starve. Hey gringos, you like the food? Get dessert, go, all you can eat before three, you have ten minutes! Then we will go home, I'm tired. It's time for our nap. Si mon, ese... *(Restaurant noise, lively Chinese banter, Peanut barking and growling, tape runs out)*

Tape Box #6 contains 7 min. tape interview with unknown female. No notes, no transcript, no explanation, no date or time. Radio is heard in the background during interview. Unknown language, poss. Native American?

Yes? I'm sorry, the museum is closed.

Hi, we spoke on the phone. The Kash Buk story.

Oh, sure, come in.

Thank you. You're my last stop! It's been quite a long trail, very interesting. I've met some very unusual people. This place is very remote.

What can I do for you?

Well, I understand you and your husband are old friends of Kash Buk's, although not in the music business.

That's right.

Is your husband here now, I was hoping to get a chance to talk to him as well.

No.

Well, fine. So just begin if you will by recalling for me how you first met Kash Buk. I understood it had something to do with racing, car racing in the desert? And your husband is a mechanic?

He was.

I understood he is a most unusual mechanic, more of an inventor, is that right? A specialist in racing fuels, an expert in friction reduction, that sort of thing?

Kash Buk was always very good to us. He helped me a great deal after my husband died.

That must have been terrible for you and you daughter. Is she here now? I was hoping to get a chance to talk with her. I'll bet she has some stories, growing up around Kash Buk, wow! But, let me say that I have an interest in your husband that goes beyond my Kash Buk research. I picked up a story from one of his racing buddies that intrigued me. He mentioned a one-armed mechanic who had a secret formula for friction-proofing engine parts that allowed for greater compression and horsepower. Now, I also represent a well-known automotive products company and we are very anxious to learn if this man and you husband are one and the same. We feel there could be real potential for trademarking an exciting new line of engine additives incorporating your husband's formulas. This sort of venture could be extremely lucrative for you, and I'm sure you can appreciate...

Can I get you something to drink, you look a little tired out.

Thank you, maybe a Coke. *(pause in dialogue, 2 min., cont.)*

Here you go. I'll have one with you. Drink 'er down, I think you need it.

Thank you, that's a very good Coke...very good....

Feeling better?

Yes...what were we saying?

You were asking me about this basket.

I was? I'm a little confused.

Yes. You wanted to know about the design.

The elephants?

That's right. A basket is like a story. You weave one reed together with another reed until your little story is finished. You asked about this one because it has meaning for you. You came all this way, but you came to the wrong place. There are no elephants in the desert. You realize now there's nothing here of interest to you. You've already learned everything there is to know about Kash Buk. He's just an old man living in a trailer park, that's all there is to it. Now you are ready to go.

Yes. I'm ready. Thank you and goodbye.

Leave the machine with me.

(radio playing, unknown language, tape runs out.)

Part 4. Rosie

Just Between You and Me

"Weeelll, I'm just a hardrock miner, and that's just what I am

I dine on beans and squirrel meat, and I do the best I can

Sometimes I get thirsty, and I take a drink or two

Sometimes I get hor – Oh, 'scuse me, didn't know you was listenin', didn't see you there! I'm Hardrock Shorty Muncy, jackass prospector ex-trordinaire, please to meet you. I prospected all over these parts and made some pretty well known strikes in my time. Been dead now, 70 years, I reckon. Planted right here. Stayed that way for quite a while too, until the Indians decided to ee-rect a cultural center right over top of me. No one's to blame, I told Pete Augureberry and Shoshone Johnny to leave me unmarked. I know some folks who'd dig up a man if they thought there was a clue or a map buried with him!

But after 70 years, they broke ground on this building and thirty minutes later they found me.

They dug up what they could and put my remains in this here glass box, along with certain of my possessions, including a shovel and a pick and a false map I had left lying around on purpose! So now, the tourists come walking by as they look about the little museum here. There ain't many, cause it ain't scenic here, and it's hard to get to, and there ain't nothin' to buy or eat when you do get here.

There's a gal out front who runs the place. If there's a crowd, she takes them on a tour and gives a little talk about what the Indians liked to eat and what they wore for clothes, and such. Also a bit about the mining days and the miners, the desert rats like me. She sticks to the O-fficial program, but she knows plenty she ain't sayin'. Like, fr'instance, she knows I'm here. She don't say, "Mornin', there, Shorty," but she knows. She told the tribal committee I ought to be "re-interred." They voted and said I wasn't a tribe member, just a white man, so it don't matter. All the same, I thought they ought to collect the bones of my two burros, Molly and Chief Sittin' Jake. Buried right next to me, I know for a fact. My best friends. Shore would like to have 'em in here with me to keep me company like they used to do.

This gal's a real looker, a half-breed, I should judge. She walks around the place by herself, just looking at things. "Who are you, and what were you before?" I ask. She don't answer back, but she knows I'm around. Now, one day a city man came out here to talk to her. He had a little catch-box with him and he asked a lot of questions. I gathered that the gal didn't care for this man. She tried to shine him on and distract him, but he kept askin' things she didn't want to talk about. That was plain. I got riled up! Then she offered him a drink of some kind, and after he took it, they talked a while more and then he fell down on the floor and didn't move. Just twitched a little and lay still. Dead, I could tell, even from here. She never blinked an eye! Like as if she knew just what to do ahead of time. That's a strong-minded little gal! An Indian came in and helped her move the dead man out, I couldn't see where to. That's the derned thing here,

I can't always move around and get the whole story like I used to could. Bein' dead has certain disadvantageous aspecks, just between you and me.

Another dead old-timer on display is Death Valley Jack Nickerson, a mechanic along the Death Valley Toll Road. I never owned a motor-car, but we were on friendly terms. I gather he was some kind of distant uncle to the gal. Most folks in these parts are related in some way. I also gather that she had a husband once, but there's more to that story than I know. She has a daughter, about seventeen. Kind of on-usual looking, a mite strange. Purple eyes! Never had girls with purple eyes in my day. She told her mom I had been asking for bones from under the museum, like she could hear me thinkin'! A few days later the Indian brought a few bones over and put them in the case here with me. Right off, I knew 'em to be Molly's and The Chief's! Now, ain't that nice! Cozy, us bein' back together like old times.

*Sometimes I get thirsty, and I take a drink or two,
Sometimes I get horny, and I take a crack at you!*

"Who was that man, mom?"

"Just a man from the city, Rosie, honey."

"What'd he want?"

"Something to do with Kash Buk."

"Why would anybody care about Kash, to come all this way?"

"It had to do with music, honey. He left."

"Shorty is happier now, by the way."

"Oh, good."

"It's real nice of Howard to bring the bones up."

"He was working under the building and he found them. He said they looked like burro bones. They were right where you said."

"Where Shorty said."

"But, I still don't see how..."

"I told you, mom, I felt him talking to me. How else would I know?"

"I don't know, it must be so. You have a natural ability, as they say..."

"I hear Shorty talking, but he's right here. Sometimes I think I hear Daddy talking, but it feels like he's somewhere else... further off in the hills."

"Yes, in the hills. That's where he's buried."

Cadillac Man

Dear Roxanne

Well, guess who! Yes, and this is yr. old pal, nurse Shirley! It's been years, but I always remember you and Shakey and the good old days in Long Beach! But, now, I am afraid I have some bad news. Kash Buk is very bad off. Lungs, heart, liver, you name it. He can't last long, I'm sorry to tell you. I go there to his trailer every day and Yolanda goes at night sometimes, because he won't leave the trailer park. He says, "No damn doctor's gonna get his greasy mitts on old Kash!" So, you can see he hasn't changed! But, now, I know he wants to see you and Rosie again. Please do this for him. Call me, he doesn't have a phone. Yrs. truly, Shirley xxxooo

We drove the El Camino. It still runs great, but it doesn't have the fuel system any more. I heard all about that story from my mom! We picked up 395 into San Bernardino, then the 10 west, to the 405 south, to Long Beach. Shirley asked us to stay in her place in Signal Hill. She sure was happy to see Mom and me when we finally pulled up. She cried over me, saying I was just a baby last time, and so on. Mom and I were really tired from all that driving and we just had to lie down and rest. Shirley went to the grocery store and brought back stuff for lunch. She likes fatty things. She is very heavy from sitting around hospitals and eating all the time, she said. "Sick people and their families, that's all I see. I don't have a family, so I eat. Look at me!" Mom told her she looked fine, why worry. Shirley said her feet hurt all the time.

We talked about Kash then. "You got to remember, he is just a sick old man now and very weak. Don't expect too much. His mind wanders." I said, I want to hear about Daddy from Kash. Shirley said, don't believe everything

you hear, he can't remember right anymore and he gets confused. We followed Shirley in her Toyota to the trailer park. I was shocked to see it. I had a picture of the place in my mind, but it was nothing like that. You never saw such a run-down looking scene. Junkyards and salvage lots and this pitiful little trailer park with a few old trailers sitting on the oily dirt and scraggly trees here and there. Trailer number eight. You could hear him coughing as we pulled up. Mom started crying. "You better not cry, he won't like it!" Shirley whispered. I said I'd go in first.

It was dark inside the trailer, and it didn't smell very good. Kash was sitting up in one of those Lazy-Boy rockers. He had tubes everywhere. He was pale as a ghost and just skin and bones, but his eyes were strong and coal-black. The little T.V. set was on with the sound turned down.

I walked up to him and said, "Hi Uncle Kash, it's Rosie."

"I know who it is! Purple eyes! Ain't but two people in this world with purple eyes, that's Rosie and her dad! I'm talkin' 'bout Shakey Lavonne, the best pal this poor boy ever had!" He started coughing like he might choke. I sat down next to him, and then mom came in. Shirley stayed outside.

"All roads lead to Long Beach, " Kash said when he saw my mom.

"Our roads are old and worn, as Screech Owl used to say," my mom said.

"Good, that's good. I ain't heard any of that Injun-style talk in a long while. Roxanne, you are lookin' real fine. When I saw Rosie just now, I thought I had made it up."

"We make it up as we go along."

"First-class Injun talk! You been out there so long, you must be the chief-ette by now! Haw!" You could tell he was pleased. Shirley came in and we sat around for a while just talking about nothing, and then Kash said he wanted to go riding. Shirley said we could take her car and drop her off at the hospital, it had been a long time since Kash wanted to go out or do anything. He said, "Ain't never been in no Jap car, ain't startin' up now! I got a Cadillac, it's right outside, that's the only fit car for a man to ride!"

Shirley said, "Kash, that car hasn't been run in ten years. There's nothing wrong with my Toyota!"

“I’ll decide that! Lookit here, Rosie was taught by the greatest mechanic in the Western universe! She can make it run, or my name ain’t Kash Buk!”

We always carried some of Daddy’s tools in the El Camino and even some of Death Valley Jack’s. I said I’d go out and have a look. It was parked under a little shed roof, all covered over with blankets. A 1947 Cadillac Fleetwood, midnight blue. I got in and tried the ignition, nothing. The old car smell, old wool and oil. I got the hood up. The motor looked like new, a great big Cadillac flathead: dark green colored, just a little dusty. I started with the fuel line and the fuel pump. Clogged, but in good shape. Spark plugs: old and full of carbon. Radiator: sludgy, but good. Hoses: cracked and brittle. The main thing with an engine that’s been sitting a long time is the oil. If you’ve left it in there, it goes to acid and eats up the metal surfaces and the gaskets. Luckily, this one had been drained. Somebody was thinking ahead. I got the heads off and that’s when I saw something. The cams, the little cams on the shaft, all ground down so they could move the valves faster. The pistons looked new, but they couldn’t be new. Kash hadn’t run the car in ten years, Shirley said. But more than new, they looked different. I thought the metal looked a little like the inside of the 327 in the El Camino that Daddy built for my mom years ago. So maybe my father had done some work back in the day, I thought, and I’m seeing his technique here. Kash might know about it, or he might not, but I got a sudden feeling that this was a sign, like Kash wanting me to get his car up and running might be his way of telling me something.

I found a Western Auto Parts store in the area. When I told the parts guy I needed head gaskets for a Cad flathead, he did a double take. “This wouldn’t be for Kash Buk, now, would it?” I told him yes, that I was Kash’s grand-niece and I was fixing to get the thing running. The man said good luck, and be sure and tell Kash hello from Ernie Kay Jr.

It was dark when I got back to the trailer. My mom said she was beat and wanted to go to Shirley’s and lie down. I told her she should ride back with Shirley and I would stay with Kash and get an early start on the Caddy. Kash coughed and sputtered but I knew it made him happy. After they left, we sat around for a while watching the television with the sound off. Kash told me

that he didn’t have visitors much anymore, except for Shirley or Yolanda, and he wasn’t used to all that talk. There was this old Mexican guy from Sinaloa living next door. He liked to drop around to visit Kash but he only spoke Spanish, and Kash never knew what he was talking about. He would pull out pictures of his grandchildren to show Kash. “Little Mexican kids. What the hell do you say?” I asked him how about his old buddies from the drag strip, and he said they all got it one way or another. Same answer for the musicians. “People forget. If you don’t show up, they think you’re dead.” I asked him how he liked seeing my mom. He gave me a funny look. “I always had a yen for your mom, no offense. I backed your dad a hundred and ten per cent, you know that.” I told him I wanted to know the facts about what happened to my dad, that we live around Indians and they don’t like to talk about the past.

Kash said he slept in the chair because of the tubes, so I could sleep in the bed. I asked him what there was for breakfast and he said, “Chinese take-out, same as dinner.”

Ridin’ With the Blues

I got started working around seven in the morning. Kash got up out of his Lazy-Boy and sat outside where he could watch me. He was on oxygen and some fluids, which I changed for him. It was a nice sunny day in Long Beach, a good day to work outdoors. I tore into that Cadillac. All new fluids, including transmission and brake system. The brake linings were good, just hard from sitting. A ’47 Cad contains a lot of oil, you’d be surprised. Nine quarts in the crankcase alone. I told Kash my dad used to say, “Big oil capacity equals big cubic inches, equals low-end torque at low RPM, equals a smooth ride.” He said, “goddamn right, just like your old Uncle Kash!”

Then it was in with a new battery, spark plugs and wires, distributor, air filter, belts, water pump and radiator hoses. Hard-to-get items, but Ernie Kay Jr. had a stash of Cad new-old stock in the back of his store. I finished up around five in the afternoon. Kash was dozing in the sun but he really popped

his eyes open when she turned over on the first try with some fresh gas. I fiddled with the carburetor a little and she settled down and just sat there and chugged, mellow and deep. You had to go around by the tail pipe to hear it: boop-boop-boop-boop-boop-boop. Good job, the way I like it.

Kash said, “Your dad really learnt you. My compliments. Let’s hit the highway.” I fixed up Kash in the front seat with his tube contraption on the floor in back. He said, “405 north.”

We hit the freeway, north-bound. The car rode along like a big heavy cloud. Seventy-five miles an hour, no problem. The alignment was right on the money, and the Caddy just steered itself. The big cream-colored wheel was in good shape. After all those years, the sun hadn’t cracked it, and it felt cool and smooth. Kash was so quiet I thought he was asleep. The eighteen-wheelers went streaking by in both directions, the ones with Mexican plates doing eighty at least. There was big rubber scraps all over the divider and off to the side. When a re-tread tire that size comes apart at that speed and hits you, it’s just too bad. “Mexican UFOs,” Kash said, like he was awake and thinking the same thing. That was it for a while. Then it got dark. The neon signs off the freeway came on: Del Amo Plaza, Cormier Chevrolet, and the gas refinery at Hermosa Beach, all lit-up and spooky-looking. It felt like a different world in the Caddy, a different time. I turned on the big tube radio. “KGIL in the valley,” the voices sang. I just drove along and kept quiet.

After a while Kash started talking low, almost to himself. “Junior died in the backseat while I was on stage, drunk. If it had been Eddie Cochran doing our songs, would have been a whole different story, or my name ain’t Kash H. Buk.”

“What’s the H for?”

“Never found out.”

“What is your name? Nobody’s name is Kash Buk.”

“A name has got to work for you. Got to let folks know what to expect, like Roy Rogers, like Dick Nixon, like Spade Cooley. You got to get out in front and declare.”

“Spayed Kooley, your dog?”

“Hell no, I mean the man. You’re too young to know.”

“Friend of yours?”

“Not a friend, but a great man, a guy I admired.”

“But, ‘Spade Cooley’... that’s not a real name either.”

“Spade was just who he said he was, no more, no less. He died on stage. What more proof do you want?”

“I want to know about my dad, that’s what I want. ‘Shakey Lavonne?’ What’s that all about?”

“Show some respect.”

“Don’t shit me, Kash, you made up that name too.”

“Cheeseburgers.”

“What?”

“I’m hungry. Let’s pull up.”

We got off the freeway and pulled into Denny’s Imperial Highway. I eased the Caddy over to the big side windows. Right off, three tables’ worth turned and looked our way, checking out the car and me trying to untangle Kash’s tube stand. Kash was wearing red plaid pyjamas and a jade green bathrobe with cigarette burns all over it. He walked real slow through the restaurant, the people watching us as we came. “Hell’s the matter? Ain’t never seen a old man in pyjamas before? You hillbillies still sleepin’ in the yard?” They all ducked their heads back down into their plates.

We found an empty booth and he stumbled into it pretty hard. I thought he was going to pass out, but then he was OK. The waitress walked up. “Welcome to Denny’s! How are you folks this evening? Coffee? I know you folks are family, and it’s family discount night, everything’s twenty percent off except beer and wine.”

“Two deluxe cheeseburgers and four Millers, pronto. Keep the change.”

“I want the taco plate.”

The waitress hurried off. Outside, people were going in and out of Denny’s and pausing to look at the ’47. A fat bearded guy started up making a speech to his grand kids and pointing to the car. Kash was busy getting ready for his Millers. The waitress brought two and set them down. Kash grabbed one and drained it off in one gulp. “Keep ‘em coming.”

“Where we going to ride to?”

“Don’t exactly know. Temple City is out east, on the 10. It might be interesting for you.”

“What’s there?”

“Lot of things started there. My first wife Donna was Miss Temple City. Me and Junior wrote some great songs out there. Or, we could go look up old Sonny, in Reseda. 101 west.”

“Who’s he?”

“The last Klown, besides me. He was crippled in his legs, so he’s probably still there.”

“Why all these names? Why ‘Shakey’?”

“It suited him, don’t ask me why.”

“I am asking you.” The waitress walked up with the order. “Millers!” Kash barked. Kash drank Millers, I drank coffee. I went to the pay phone and called my mom over at Shirley’s and told her what was up, that we were going somewhere, but it was OK and don’t worry. Mom said, “Shirley says don’t give him alcohol.” I said I wouldn’t.

It was nine-thirty and traffic was good. We rode along. I thought I’d throw something out there. “Seems like the motor had some fancy work done a while back. It’s got that blue color inside, like the El Camino’s got. Really rides smooth and easy, look, we’re doing eighty and you can’t feel a thing.”

“You done good.”

“All I did was get it running again, but I think my dad did a real job on it sometime back. You remember anything about that?”

“He may have, I ain’t sure.”

“Looks like the cylinders and the pistons have been coated with something, or maybe alloyed with some other metal. You don’t know about it? I can’t believe you don’t. Might be worth knowing, if it’s true.”

“Might be better left alone, Rosie,” Kash said. “5 north, 14 east, 18 east, 395 north, El Mirage. Wake me up when we get there.” The Millers hit, he nodded out.

We made Palmdale about 11:30. I stopped for gas and a look under the

hood. The radiator water was clear. I checked Kash, he was out cold, but breathing OK. I took 138, the Pear Blossom Highway. Maybe there used to be pear trees out there, but it’s all red-tile now: “Pear Tree Estates.” Malls: “Pear Blossom Plaza.” Car lots: “Pear Tree Vista Ford.” When you get to 18 east, it opens out a little and you’re in meth-lab country. Unfriendly-looking little houses, all-night liquor and sex stores: “Big Dick’s Hi-Desert Hideout.” On the radio: “The Christian Hour of Power! Tonight’s Topic: Your .45 Automatic -Twice the Power in Half the Time!”

Pretty soon, the dry lake came up in the moonlight. The surface is so hard that it reflects like water and it looks completely white. I pulled into the car park area just off ‘Orphans of the Wild Animal Park Road.’ At that time of night, there was nobody around. No racing in the winter. I turned off the motor and just sat there, looking out. Kash snored on. There was an old car blanket on the floor in the back, probably Junior’s. The seat cushion was deep and wide enough to stretch out. Last thought I had was, somebody else take over the controls for a while. Uncle.

I woke up smelling creosote and thought I was back at home. Then I realized Kash wasn’t snoring. I sat up fast and looked over the front seat. His tubes were laying there loose, the door was open, and he was gone. It was about six A.M., maybe six-thirty. I got out and looked around. It was windy and cold. Nothing but flat sand, the mountains off to the north, the sun coming up low to the east. No Kash Buk. But you can’t really tell what’s out there in a wide-open place like El Mirage, and you don’t leave a trail on the hard ground. I got back in the car and drove out onto the lake bed. I had a crazy thought that he might have been abducted by spacemen during the night, it sure would simplify everything. But then I saw him all right. He was lying on his side with his legs pulled up, like he had been sitting there and just keeled over. I knew he was dead before I got out of the car. His right arm was flung out in front of him and his head was resting on it. I felt for a pulse, like they do in movies, but there was nothing, nothing at all. His green bathrobe fluttered in the wind. He had managed to scratch some words in the dirt: “Kash Buk always took it straight. Let the chips fall where I put ‘em.”

“Good job, Uncle Kash, you pulled it off. Rest your pipes.” It was all there was to say. I wanted birds, so I got elephants.

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Facts, I deal in facts. My car goes faster than yours, the glue works better than theirs. The facts in the case: Yes, I told Roxanne to watch out for people asking questions and here's what to do, here's the powder you put in their drink, or what have you. Don't hesitate, don't even think, just do it. Next time it won't be Eddie Tanaka. Eddie reminded me of another tribe from home, they looked like Eddie, little and slant-eyed like Eddie, but they were tough and fearless and ready to kill at all times. Rebels, ethnic separatists, you might call them. I checked him out and he didn't have their mark, the four-fingered hands. Fact: Eddie was just a Jap, after all. He wanted something and he thought I could give it to him. Yes, I sent him off with the wrong formula. I was in a hurry, the baby was due. You don't think ahead when you're in a hurry. Eddie blew up the fishing dock and it got in the news again. This goddamn business about news, I never could get used to it. Where I'm from there wasn't any such thing. Nobody cared whether you lived or died or went to Andromeda.

I came to Earth because it looked like the last place where I'd have any trouble. So disorganized and chaotic, nobody would pay attention to me. I figured I'd fit right in somehow and just get along in the crude way Earth people have, how they stop and start and stumble around all the time like wind-up toys. I never knew things could get out of control so easy and go wrong so fast. I didn't know my way around, didn't know the facts in the case. I listened to the radio all the time while I was working in the mechanic's shop on the pier. I figured this here is a good way of life, the way they tell it: “Howdy-hi friends and neighbors, y'all come down and get with us, see me first, give me first chance at the deal, pile the kids in the car and come on down to Cal Worthington Dodge! I'll make yuh a deal so good, it'll make yer head

spin. First five hundred customers today get a miracle picture of Jesus for your new car or truck. As it moves, you actually get a blessing from our Lord and Savior!” Real friendly. I recall my first Christmas in Long Beach. Songs, everywhere you went: “Silver bells, silver bells, soon it will be Christmas day.” Real nice. But after a while, I started seeing things differently. Fact: Cal Worthington is not your best friend, the T.V. lied about that. The miracle picture of Jesus was a fake, I checked it out. I could have put together a real good version of that, but guys like Cal don't want anything good, they're in business. Junk is what they got for you, you the public. Fact: “The Public” is a sorry-ass bunch of fools. Well, that's not fair to say, it's just plain folks who don't know any better. Why else would they vote for a crook like Tricky Dick Nixon over and over again, or believe that Cal Worthington has a square deal for you? You tell me. I realized that certain things have power, like the little tune, ‘Silver Bells’. They play it in all the stores at Christmas time and it makes folks spend their hard-earned money. Automatic!

Every time I thought I had Earth figured, it threw me a curve, like in what you call “Baseball.” Roxanne and me went to a game with Kash Buk. He seemed to go hog-wild for it:

“Shakey-Boy, you see that curve? Strike three! Yer out! Haw!”

I said, “But Kash, he should have seen that coming, hell, I did.”

“Look here, the pitcher threw him a curve, it fooled him. That's the game!”

“The man should have seen it. He ain't no good.”

“Shakey-Boy, you gotta understand! If the curve ball don't work, then there ain't no point to it! Game's over! It'd be like you and your thousand-mile-an-hour salt-flats car, for Chrissake!”

I thought I knew Kash Buk, thought I understood him. Just a regular guy who liked to do a little racing and play a little, what he called, guitar. Make a little trouble sometimes. But it turned out he wanted to make big trouble and do it as often as possible. Taco-trucks and all that. “Shakey-Boy, here's what we call dope. It's good, but you can do better!” Yes, I made new dope for Kash. The first batch got him so high, he went into a trance during which the ghost of Spade Cooley appeared to him and revealed the details of the

second coming of Christ. Apparently, Jesus had agreed to walk His water-tank in The Green Door Lounge, one time only, for a flat fee of ten million dollars. The next batch was better. I fixed it so you'd come back in just two days, no side effects, no manifestations from Spade.

"Shakey-Boy, we're gonna be rich! We deal out of the trucks! Look at the people! What do they want? Drink, screw, cheeseburgers, better dope! Give 'em quality, now's your chance!" Pretty soon, the black and Mexican drug gangs got together and sent a delegation to The Green Door. This big guy, Kash called him Artie the Samoan, says, "White-boy dope, uh-uh. Bad for our product. Get out of Dodge." I asked what that meant and Kash just said, "Looks like we're out of business, pardner."

Then one day, another guy came around. We were relaxing in The Green Door, just talking about nothing. It was late afternoon and the front door was open to get a little fresh air. All of a sudden the light dimmed. We looked up. There was a really big man standing in the doorway. Big, like Junior. He walked in slow, three guys walking behind him. You would say he was strange. A mix, you would say. Black and Chinese, maybe, but with very light yellow skin that glistened. All done-up in black silk pyjamas and aviator sunglasses. A head like a melon, a mouth like a frog. Kash was frightened of this guy, I could see it. He tensed up. The man spoke to Kash in a soft hissing voice. "White trash, you are out." He turned to me: "You work for me now." I'd heard that before, so I said, "Working for who, doing what?" He inclined his head a little, smiled just a little. "You're new around here. White-trash will fill you in. I want regular shipments. We pick up, you take ten percent. That's the deal, there is no other deal." He turned and drifted back out into the street. Kash let his breath out and shook his head. "That is Hung Far Low Brown. I never seen him, only heard tell. He came here in person. You got problems, Shakey-Boy. Kash Buk can't help you now. Hung Far Low is the man." The man for what, I asked. "Dope, numbers, hookers, hot car-parts, wet-back labor contracting, slum property management. Ain't nobody get down like Hung Far Low Brown!" I sat there thinking, what's so terrible? A job offer, a chat with your new boss. Ten percent? Tough, but fair. I'd probably make out

OK, plus my pier mechanic's job. It'd be nice to have a little extra coming in. Roxanne needed some new clothes, maybe even some new curtains for the trailer. "What the hell's that half-breed doin,' callin' me white trash?" Kash mumbled.

I deal in science: add it up, get it right. This was a science job. Kash's main squeeze, Donna Greva, had a habit of chewing gum all the time. When she sang with the Klowns, when she was drinking, and even eating. Kash told me she chewed in bed. It frustrated him and hurt his feelings. "She kept chewing gum, Shakey-Boy!" Wrigley's Spearmint was her brand, but she'd chew Beeman's if that was all she could get. More than a habit, I thought. It goes into the saliva glands and then into the bloodstream. Very simple, very efficient. So let's try something along those lines for Hung Far Low Brown. I set up shop in the back of The Green Door. Candy-making equipment and molds I got from restaurant supply stores in Long Beach. I got the gum base from an outfit down in South Gate. "What you gonna do there, fella?" The hick asked. "They got the gum business all locked up tight! Ain't no way for the little man to break in!" I told him it was for a specialized job with a guaranteed market share. The hick laughed and shook his head, "That's what they all say!"

It took a while to get the hang of it. You got to get your gum base up to the right temperature and consistency and hold it there while you infuse your drug component, your ingredient. It's got to be smooth, got to feel good in the mouth. Donna was my tester. I knew I had it right when she put her arms around my neck and whispered in my ear, "Shakey-Boy, you can chew me up and spit me out." I said, "That's all right, thanks, Donna, I appreciate it, no offense, but this is just a routine science experiment." For the drug, I used the stuff I got from my buddy back home, the master. I'd been saving it all these years, partly out of sentiment. I don't particularly like drugs, but this was the stuff that gave me my first big break-through with the glue, so I knew it was good. Our little inventor's circle used it for research purposes only, because it had a clarifying effect. It relaxed you so's you could think better.

I sent my first good batch over to Hung Far Low's, in Compton, by

messenger. A week went by, no response. Two weeks. Pretty soon a month had passed without any word back, then two months. I went along like always with my regular job on the pier. One morning the phone rang in the mechanic's shed. Nobody had that number except the pier manager, Kash, and Roxanne. It was Hung Far Low, I knew his voice right off, and this is what he said: "Brother, you helped me. I've seen my destiny. Crime is an offense to our dignity. Whitey must die. Power to the People." End of phone call, end of job. I never told Kash or even Roxanne about it. Kash never asked, he was too scared of Hung Far Low Brown, but he didn't scare me. Just a man looking for something, searching for the truth. It wasn't long after that when they had First Watts. Think anything you like. We heard about big federal money coming in to reconstruct south Los Angeles, but nothing changed. South L.A. just shut down, and the big buildings started going up downtown. I knew then there was going to be worse trouble later on. I'd seen this kind of thing before, on other planets. Donna begged and pleaded but I didn't make any more gum and I never heard from Hung Far Low Brown again.

You know what happened next. The trouble with Frank Tuttle. At that point, I just said adios, these big-city Earth-types are too much for old Shakey. I've had all I can stand of their low-grade insanity, their primitive impulses, and their goddamn intrusiveness. That's the worst of it, they can't let a man alone, won't let a man live in peace. They'll stab a man in the back with their little sword of justice. They see you dancing on a tightrope and they try to hang you with it.

So Roxanne and me, we pulled up stakes and lit out, looking for a patch of space and quietude. Sure, we found a home at last among Roxanne's people out there in the desert. The Indians, or whatever you call them. Now, those folks know how to be in this world. Why are they so unpopular? Because they aren't good at making money and organizing things? Or is it because you know you gave 'em a raw deal and you just can't stand the sight of 'em? We did all right out there for a while. Rosie came along and that was good. Having one arm wasn't really so bad, and Roxanne had a way of making people think I was a war veteran of some kind. She stopped saying from "Vietnam,"

whatever that was, because then people got scared of me, I could see it by what came through their faces. You don't ever want people to think they might have a reason to be scared of you. Then they'll try and kill you for sure.

Bad Day in Lone Pine

I like this music, they call it, "The Blues." The black people play it. They tell little stories about hard luck and hard traveling and getting into scrapes with society and moving on. I felt I understood it. I heard one tune on the radio, the guy was singing, "Take out some insurance on me, baby..." like he knew he couldn't last too long. I went and told Roxanne – it was one evening when Rosie was somewhere doing her homework with her friends down the road – and I said, "Baby, you and Rosie might need a little help some day if anything happens to me. What do they call it?" She said, "You mean, insurance, that kind of thing?" I said, "That's just what I'm talking about." She got pale and scared-looking. "What's on your mind, Shakey?" I said, "Oh, I'm just thinkin', you can't never tell." She said, "Don't get all country on me, what's the matter?"

"Well, it's like this here. We been doing real good and I know it seems like everything has been running smooth. But I saw something over in Lone Pine today. There was a car-load of guys, city guys, in a black sedan out in front of the tackle shop. One of 'em had his hand hanging outside the back window, and that hand had only four fingers on it. I went across the street to Billy's Cap and Tap, and sat there at the bar and had a few beers and kept my eye on the car. Billy was in a talking mood, and he just started up telling me a lot of things, but I didn't listen 'cause I was watching the car across the street, and he noticed me watching. He said, "That's a bunch of characters from the city, up here on a fishing trip. They're staying in the old motel up on Whitney Portal Road, got the whole place. They came in here last night and sort of took over. Kind of heavy, to tell you the truth. Kind of acted funny too. They looked like foreigners, but they talked regular so nobody took any mind."

"What'd they have to drink?"

“Well, mostly just beer. But, that’s another thing. They all wanted beer at room-temperature! Made me go in the back and get it! What the hell!”

“You’re tellin’ me they all wanted warm beer, all of ‘em?”

“Shakey, that’s just what I’m talkin’ about! Mighty peculiar!”

Right then, two guys walked in from the back. They sat at the other end of the bar and ordered tap beer. I didn’t notice anything special about ‘em. Billy got busy with his glasses and things. I watched the car outside. I thought, if this is trouble from home, there’s one thing I got working, they won’t know about my arm. They’ll be looking for two arms. I just sat there, and the two guys sat there, and Billy went on polishing his glasses. One of the guys in the black sedan got out and crossed the street and came into the bar. He sat on a stool and settled himself and said, “Beer, room temperature.” Billy brought it to him and set it down. He put a glass down and the man said, “Pour it.” Billy poured. The man picked up the glass with his left hand, and that’s when I saw he had three fingers and a thumb. He drank a little, and put the glass down and just sat there with his hands out of sight.

One of the guys at the end of the bar turned and looked at the man. He called Billy over. “Now, Billy, what the hell you doin’ here?” Billy said, “Whatchoo mean, there, Campbell?” “You know just what I mean, Billy, don’t get simple on old Campbell. I’ll ask you again, what you doin’ servin’ warm beer to faggots in this bar where I drink?” The other guy said, “Queers are an offense to The Lord, and I’m a man for The Lord. The Lord don’t like it, and I don’t like it when The Lord don’t like it.” The city man got up off his stool and walked past the guys and down the little hallway. I heard the screen door slam. Campbell said, “Probably gone back there to meet one of his fag buddies, in the head. They’re gonna do some fag shit right in your head!” I could see his partner was getting worried. “Don’t make The Lord come down here, Billy.” About a minute later there was a big explosion. The whole building shook. Glasses rattled and bottles tipped over and the lights flickered. “Jesus H. Christ...” was all Billy could say. The four-fingered man came walking back in, casual. “Pick-up out there belong to anybody? It just blew up. I was taking a leak.” He walked out, crossed the street, and got

back in the big car, and the car drove off, slow. The two guys made a run for the back door. I could hear ‘em yelling and screaming. Then the cops and the fire department showed up. Turned out the guys had been carrying a load of blasting powder in the back of the pick-up. The firemen said that was illegal in an open vehicle, and the cops arrested the two guys. There was assault warrants out on both of ‘em, and the cops found automatic weapons in what was left of the cab, so it looked like a bad day in Lone Pine for Campbell and his God-fearing buddy.

I stayed to help Billy clean up. The cops wrote down our names and addresses and took off.

“Shakey, just what the hell is goin’ on here,” said Billy.

“Off hand, I’d say those loud-mouthed assholes got what was coming and then some.”

“OK, but what about the guy in the suit? Maybe Campbell’s right – warm beer, and all that?”

“Listen, Billy, the best way to live is on the friendly side of indifference. Always mind your manners, you never know who’s coming through the door. See you later.”

I didn’t see any reason to add that they didn’t have refrigeration back there when I left home. This was a different crowd than Billy was used to, with a different sense of humor, and things might start to get strange. But one thing’s certain, Roxanne, honey. This sure ain’t fishing season.

I heard a car pull up. No tricks, I told Roxanne – only one way to play it. I let ‘em in. We all went into the service station office – me, Roxanne, and the five guys in suits. Rosie was sleeping over at her friend’s. The head man lit a cigarette and started talking. They all lit up. Smokers, I thought.

“It is in this way. You have the reason. We need you to help us. With you to our side, we can take it all back.”

“Take back what?”

“Take it back from the bastards.”

“What bastards?”

“You know the bastards, the same ones that enslaved your people. Don’t you want to help us bring them down? You will be a great hero.”

“No. I used to think that way, it’s natural. But I been around for a while now, and I found out one main thing. Bastards are everywhere. You can kill as many as you want, but things get out of control that way. You think it’s funny to jack up shit-heads like Campbell over in town? You’re just fooling around, but he’ll get another pick-up and some more guns, and then one of these days he’s going to see you on the street somewhere and run you over a few times and then let his pit-bull dog piss on you just because you might be a homosexual.”

“What group is that?”

“Everyone has to dislike someone. For instance, I dislike you coming here and bothering me, but that’s all right, I understand. I’m no hero, I got no beef with you or anybody. So why don’t you get out of here and leave us alone. But, I’ll tell you what, I won’t send you away empty-handed.”

“It is the glue?”

“Something even better, something nobody else has got. I got a new product here that will really help you solve all your problems. It’s called gum. You put it in your mouth and chew it, and right away you will see the answers to all the important questions. The gum will show you the way to get the things you want. It’s a miracle. A miracle product, and I got just enough for all you guys, but you must act now.”

“Where is this gum?”

“Let’s take a little ride.” We went outside and I got behind the wheel of the big car. I figured I had one move, one chance. They needed me, they would have to trust me that far. But they were scared of me, scared I might be working for the other side. Roxanne just stood there in the dark watching as we pulled out. Didn’t get a chance to say goodbye, I kept thinking. I wanted to get them away from the service station. I took 190 east. The road winds along out of Owen’s valley and heads up the grade towards Darwin. It’s a steep climb, and pretty soon we were at 4000 feet. I took out a bag full of gum I had in my coat pocket. The original batch. I passed it around. “Here’s

a sample, just enough for you. Try it and let me know what you think, it takes about five minutes. I’ll have some with you.” Five minutes. The car rode along up the grade: a hemi-head Chrysler Imperial, plenty horsepower and plenty low-end torque. I felt the gum kick in. It hit hard. “Da kine,” as Eddie Tanaka used to say. At that altitude, my brain started spinning around like a boomerang. I thought I was back in the Spacecar with Roxanne. *They call me Shakey*. I floored it and the car took off. 50, 60, 70. *Hey Kash, how do I get this car out of second gear?* 80, 90, 100. The heavy car started sliding through the curves, losing traction. The guy next to me grabbed my arm but he was weak and high from the gum. That’s all there is, there ain’t no more, the big tires screamed. I fought the wheel and the wheel won. *Little Trona Girl, will you wait for me*. There was a hairpin turn. I didn’t make it. Don’t think about her when you’re trying to drive.

Epilogue

I like maps. Maps can save your life, or get you killed if they’re not accurate. Shorty’s treasure map is all wrong, I can tell by looking at it. I really like the maps by Norton Allen. He drew many maps of the desert for rock collectors who needed special directions to old mines and mineral deposits. We have the original copies here in the museum. Mr. Allen drew them by hand and they are very beautiful, I think. Howard told me that Mr. Allen worked from information that he collected from old-time prospectors, but he didn’t like to use pre-existing maps because he didn’t trust them. The strange thing is, Mr. Allen was crippled in a wheelchair. He never went to any of the places he drew. It was all in his head, somehow.

I used to ask my mother where my father was buried. I told her we should go. She said the road up there was washed out and she had forgotten just where it was. I made up my mind to find out. The Allen maps are organized very carefully now, I did it myself and it took me a long time, but I learned a

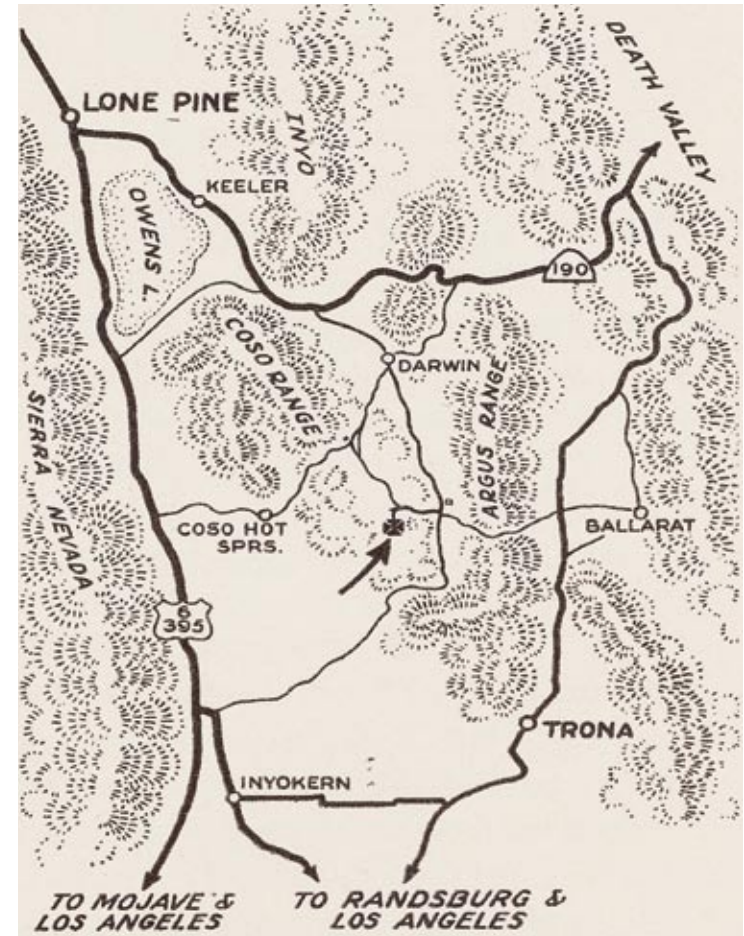
great deal about this area. Howard told me what he remembered about the place. Indians don't like to speak about these things, but he understands I have a right to know something. The topic frightens my mother. I don't like to worry her with too many questions.

I left the museum a little before sunup. I took some apples and water and seeds for wild birds. If you remember the birds, they will always help you out. I learned that from Screech Owl. If you hear birds around you, then all is well. If the birds fall silent, then something is up. If there are no birds around, you may be coming into an unsafe place. The thing to know is, the desert is very micro-environmental. It may all look the same to city people, but we know how fast things can change out here.

Howard said "Telescope Peak, Rosie. Watch for stones piled up on the right, then walk along the slope. There's no path, but you'll notice little stone markers along the way. Then, drop down into upper Surprise Canyon. Two big trees. It's inaccessible from lower Surprise Trail, so no one goes there. A cave, behind the trees." I walked and walked. I was thinking, what if the stone markers are gone, it's been a long time. About halfway up Telescope Peak, I saw the berm that marks the first right turn. From there, it got very rough and steep along the slope, but I thought I was seeing the stone markers. They looked just enough like they had been placed there. Finally, I saw the trees. I had to scramble down some big boulders and I slipped a few times and hurt my knees. For a moment I wondered how I was going to get back out. That's what gets people killed. They get in but they don't realize about getting back out in time and then they're stuck. Don't go in alone is rule number one, but I had memorized Norton Allen's map of Surprise Canyon and I knew the way out lay ahead.

I reached the trees. There were three now. The original two and a sapling, maybe five years old. That meant water, so I looked around and saw a little seepage coming from under the boulders. Then I noticed that the boulders seemed to be collected all around a hump in the earth. That's where the water was coming from. The cave, I thought. The boulders are blocking the cave. Or it's not the cave. I sat down on a flat stone and ate an apple. I put some

seeds out. Right away, a little brown bird came over to eat. I watched the bird eating, waiting for a sign or something. When the bird had finished with the seeds, it just sat still right near me, resting. There was a nice breeze coming up the canyon and it made the trees rustle. Surprise Canyon is very narrow, so the moving breeze makes a sound, a tone. Two notes, up and down, up and down. I thought maybe my father was speaking to me through the wind. I listened carefully.



1. Drive Like I Never Been Hurt

Ry Cooder - vocals, guitars, mandolin, bass
Joachim Cooder - drums
Mariachi Los Camperos arr. by **Jesus Guzman**

*You told everybody that I couldn't drive
You didn't even want me around
You knocked my love and you know that's a lie
'Cause I'm a good man when the flag goes down*

*I'm gonna drive like I never been hurt
Down the road like you never lied
I'll find my way like I never been lost
And you never laughed and I never cried*

*I'll say goodbye to all my friends
That won't take too very long
They'll be real big men someday
Never gonna miss me when I'm gone*

*I'm gonna drive like I never been hurt
I'll be long gone like you never lied
I'll find my way like I never been lost
And you never laughed and I never cried*

*I'm in the road I'm in the right
I got a mind to drive all night
When I get there they'll know my name
My head's blowin' loose all over again
Fuel's gettin' hot sun's gettin' high
Salt is burnin' in my eyes
My brain's still good my tires are fair
If my drag chute fails baby I don't care*

Chorus

2. Waitin' for Some Girl

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitar, mandolin, bass,
Martin Pradler - drums

*I was robbed I was framed
What ever happens now ain't no fault of mine
I got born I got blamed
Guess I should have read that detour sign
I took off I hid out
Jesus promised me he'd show me a sign*

*Take your little world and shove it up you're
askin' me buddy I'm tellin' you friend
You ain't gonna pin that rap on me this time*

*'Cause I'm waitin' for some girl to pick me up
on her way down
She'll know me in the suspect book in the
show-up line in the lost and found*

*I was burned I was fried
There's someone out there waitin' just for me
Dirty blond dirty mind
We're goin' on a tri-state kill-spree
Pedal's down safety's off
Don't you try to take her love from me
I'm warnin' you back out buddy
You ain't gonna steal her love from me this
time*

*'Cause I'm waitin' for some girl to pick me up
on her way down
I'm gonna get my money back startin' with the
drug-store quack
That jerked me out and hit my back and never
shed a tear
That old man's gonna be surprised he'll be
cryin' through both his eyes
When I walk up and say the jerk's right here
We're rollin' through your town tonight skid
marks on your face all right
When she picks me up on her way down.*

3. Johnny Cash

Ry Cooder - vocals, guitar,
Joachim Cooder - drums
Rene Camacho - bass

*I was just a boy in school 1954
I heard Johnny singin' on my Sears radio
I wouldn't do my schoolwork then nor join in
schoolyard games
I'd sit there by the radio so I could hear him
sing*

*Hey porter, hey porter would you tell me the
time*

*I want to get on board John I want to ride
your train*

I don't care where you're goin' long as it ain't

*where I been
There ain't nothin' in this little town that a boy
like me can do
So if you're goin' to Folsom Prison I want to
go there too*

I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die

*I tried to learn the guitar blues to ease my
troubled mind
But Johnny kept a movin' and I kept wastin'
time*

*He was somewhere down Big River but all
that I could see
Was west Pico Boulevard and that's what
tortured me*

And I followed you Big River when you called

*Johnny Cash will never die buddy can't you
see
He's up there with the Tennessee Two for all
eternity
But sometimes in the dark of night his voice
still calls to me
Hey porter hey porter was what I heard him
say
On my Sears and Roebuck radio Pasadena
KXLA.*

4. Can I Smoke in Here?

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitar
Martin Pradler - drums

*Can I smoke in here can I sit down
Am I bothering you are you alone
Is my tie on straight do you rate me polite
Do I need a shave do I seem all right*

*Names don't matter mine's Kash Buk no it's
true*

*Go ahead laugh it's good for you
What's that you're drinking I like your smile
you know*

*Hey mister bartender please don't be so slow
I think we got a lot in common
That's my brand wouldn't trade it for the
World
We're about the same age on the outside
Inside I'm a thousand years old*

*Is this your room I can't do 60 like once I could
Bet you didn't know I was that hot
You didn't know I was that good
You got nothing to fear can I smoke in here*

*Steel player friend of mine lived right down
the hall
These walls are thin nobody heard him fall
Last of the best without a shadow a doubt
Hi-Lo shag's the last thing he saw before it all
faded out*

*What's that you say 'life is like a low budget
movie'
Slow down there honey you lost me that time
'We all took less then it closed'
Truest thing you said all night that's a laugh
You can write it on my epitaph*

*See you in Heaven or next time which ever's
first
I ain't USDA prime God knows you seen
worse
Just tell Saint Peter at the Golden Gate
I won't be late but let me get it straight
Can I get a beer can I smoke in here*

5. Steel Guitar Heaven

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitar
Joachim Cooder - drums
Rene Camacho - bass

*I want to go to steel guitar heaven
That's the only resting place for me
I want to go to steel guitar Heaven
There's a lot of swinging cats I been wanting
to see*

*Like Joaquin Murphy and Jimmy Day
Shake hands with Speedy and shout hooray
That's steel guitar heaven to me
I heard about steel guitar heaven
I'm going when I die
I heard Paul Bixby's been waiting
He's got something new that he wants me to
try
It turns itself on and tells you a joke
Lights you a drink and pours you a smoke
Paul I don't think it's ready!
That's steel guitar heaven to me*

Well, folks, I think the good Lord must love steel players, He's made so many of them
Matter of fact, He's still trying.
But the good Lord knows that the steel player's life on Earth isn't often easy,
So He's set aside a little corner of Heaven, custom made, just for you.
First thing you'll notice, there's always plenty of courteous free parking
And don't it just seem like that old triple-neck ain't near as heavy as it used to be?
Step inside, and you'll find the walls are covered in real knotty pine,
And just take a gander at all that luxurious hi-lo shag, continuous filament,
Nylon-pile, wall-to-wall carpeting. Our Lord chose green-and-gold, my personal favorite.
The tables and chairs are upholstered in genuine naugahyde, and here our Lord chose red, I think it's appropriate.
There's always a lot of cowboy carrying on up on the bandstand, and you're bound to hear some old familiar voices calling, man, look who's here, come on up and sit on in. It's C6th day again.

You can't get fired up in Heaven
Your union card's all paid
There ain't no bosses up in heaven
I heard Spade Cooley didn't make the grade
Everybody's got a story up in Heaven
Some we all know well
All steel players go to Heaven
Some just go through hell
But the Good Lord loves each and every one
When your ragtime cowboy days are done
Come up to steel guitar Heaven with me
That's steel guitar Heaven to me.

6. Ridin' With the Blues

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitars
Jim Keltner - drums
Rene Camacho - bass
Erika - screaming cheerleader
Flathead by **Josh**

It's gettin'-out time down at the high school
We're checking out all the little cheerleaders like you

With your cheerleadin' dress and your cheerleadin' shoes,
Step over here baby shake hands with the blues
Ol' blues like to ride in my Cadillac
Likes to ride up in front likes to ease down in back
Slide over baby this ain't what you think
Ol' blues is gonna drive while I get us a drink

Baby you can ride with me
Hope you don't mind bein' three
Pull up your dress and kick off your shoes
You're gonna have a god time ridin' with the blues

Goin' to take a little ride and see an old friend of mine
Do a little business down on the state line
If it don't feel right we'll bust right through
Hang on baby you're ridin' with the blues

If the police ask better give 'em the slip
Tell 'em you been out on a high school field trip
If your teachers been wonderin' just where you been gone
Tell 'em you're learnin' the blues from now on

So pull up your dress and kick off your shoes
Gonna have a good time ridin' with the blues

7. Pink-O Boogie

Ry Cooder - vocals, guitar
Jim Keltner - drums
Joachim Cooder - timbales
Rene Camacho - bass
Strings arr. by **Jesus Guzman**

There's a new dance going round the whole town's talking about
It's socially uplifting boys but it sure is wearing me out
All my low friends in high places won't talk to me no more
They can't take no chances being seen out on the dance floor

Pink-o Boogie's fun baby Pink-o Boogie's hot
Pink-o Boogie's got the thing you republicans just ain't got

Pink-o Boogie's cool baby Pink-o Boogie's new
I'll join the Party baby if they let me party with you
I like tight action I like loose fittin' shoes
I like slow dancin' to the good ol' country blues
I like the F.B.I Secret Service too
I'd like to see J. Edgar do the Pink-o Boogie with you

Pink-o Boogie's tight baby gone right to my head
Gonna do the Pink-o Boogie till I get cherry red
Pink-o Boogie's fun baby Pink-o Boogie's hot
Bend over and let ol' Kash Buk see just what else you got

Pink-o Boogie's fun baby Pink-o Boogie's hot
Pink-o Boogie's got the thing you republicans just ain't got
Pink-o Boogie's cool baby Pink-o Boogie's new
I'll join the Party baby if they let me do the Pini-O Boogie with you

8. Fernando Sez

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitars
Fernando Ruleas - himself
Joachim Cooder - drums
Rene Camacho - bass
Francisco Torres - Trombone
Ron Blake - Trumpet
Anthony Gil - Bass Sax

I'm recording again and you know why
I need money and that's no lie
Fernando sez my car is trash and he wants cash

My car is old but it's still good
I wouldn't change it baby if I could
I really like that old Cadillac
Fernando sez he won't give it back

Never liked no Jap cars ain't startin' up now
The whole world's gone crazy anyhow
Public transportation gets me down
Might end up in a bad part of town

Fernando sez it's understood
No offense your credit ain't good
You white folks had it it's all gone now
Never had no rhythm anyhow
Fernando sez take a clue Fernando sez you're overdue
Fernando sez take in mind Fernando sez it's cash on the line

9. Spayed Kooley

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitar
Joachim Cooder - drums
Rene Camacho - bass
Strings arr. by **Jesus Guzman**

I got a dog in this fight I got troops on the ground
His name is old Spayed Kooley he's the meanest dog in town
If you think I'm foolin' try bustin' in through the door
He'll tear you a whole brand new one and you won't come back no more

Spayed's a good dog he's really bad
He's the best pal this poor boy ever had

Now Spayed might get suspicious when first you chance to meet
So if you come a callin' you better wipe your feet
Empty out your pockets let him see your hands
Be sure to talk good English so he can understand

Spayed likes mariachis he loves to hear 'em croon
I know he'll be watchin' if the fiddles ain't in tune
When you come 'round to our table you better play it sweet
Or it's adios muchachos down on Olivera Street

Spayed's a good dog he's really fine
So if you want to be a friend of mine
Pledge allegiance to our flag try to sing on key
And you won't have no problem with my dog Spayed Kooley

10. Filipino Dance Hall Girl

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitar, laud
Joachim Cooder - drums
Rene Camacho - bass
Flaco Jimenez - accordion
Strings arr. by **Jesus Guzman**

*When the evening shadows fall I'm dreaming
Of a certain smile a secret rendezvous
When the day is past and gone I'll come
creeping*

*Down the dark end of the street again to you
In a dimly lit café as we go dancing
I try to smile and hide a love that's true
Then they play a lovely tune as we're romanc-
ing
And I can't pretend no matter what I do*

*Dark and different so they tell me
It's forbidden so they say
But I just tell them we're so happy
She's my Filipino dance hall girl*

*Good friends have all withdrawn their saluta-
tions
Good neighbors pause when I come down
the street
Preacher has a look of scorn on Sunday
morning
And there's a frown on every face I see*

*Que sera sera the Bible tells me
Novus Ordo Seclorum so they say
I just tell them adios muchachos
She's my Filipino dance hall girl*

*Then she whispers while we're dancing
In a language soft and low
I just tell her darling I love you
You're my Filipino dance hall girl*

11. My Dwarf is Getting Tired

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitars, elec. piano
Joachim Cooder - drums
Rene Camacho - bass

*A mobile home in Anaheim
It's double-wide it's new, it's clean
It's a friendly town I think it's time*

*it's what we need
We had a long run together a life you can't
compare
But the world is changing and it's getting
strange out there*

*Forty years of motel rooms cigarettes and
magazines
From Spokane clear down to Bakersfield
You might have seen us on the highway so
many times before
But my dwarf is getting tired and my fat man
just won't travel anymore*

*Skinny-looking farmers brought their families
down Looking for a fat time
Had to work all day just to make them spend
one thin dime
Like hot dog contests man you could eat 'em
Might raise a buck or two
Boxing matches you couldn't beat 'em
That midget kangaroo was a little too fast for
you*

*We came down here to say good by to an old-
time friend of mine
He died inside his rubber suit out on the street
of dreams
It was a hot July Sunday and he was working
over time
Cause the people like seeing Mickey walk by
down in Anaheim*

*Dwarves and fat men just might do the very
best they can
But they can't compare with Tomorrow Land
it seems
We had some real Western times together but
it can't be like before
Cause my dwarf is getting tired and my fat
man just won't travel anymore
No we won't be seen from Bakersfield clear
up to Spokane anymore*

12. Flathead One More Time

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitar,
Joachim Cooder - drums,
Gil Bernal - tenor sax,
Jon Hassell - trumpet,
Jared Smith - keyboards
Three o'clock this morning I woke up in a

*dream
Thought I heard a flat-head motor roar
thought I smelled gasoline
A feeling came upon me that I ain't had in
years
Something like a hot dry wind whistling past
my ears
Sayin time time time is all you got
There's a memory that's still burning way
down in my mind
And that's why I'm going out and try a flat-
head one more time*

*I ain't seen my racing buddies in thirty years
or more
One by one I lost them out on the dry lake
floor
We liked to push those flat head cars as hard
as they could go
Just like old Whisky Bob down on thunder
road
I hear their voices calling just across the finish
line
And that's why I'm going out and try a flat-
head one more time*

*I'll get back to you baby don't you have no
fear
'Cause I been there and I wrecked that and
baby I'm still here
But I can't take you with me when I cross the
finish line
And that's why I'm going out and try a flat-
head one more time*

13. 5000 Country Music Songs

Ry Cooder - vocal, guitar
Joachim Cooder - drums
Rene Camacho - bass
Martin Pradler - elec. piano

*I started writing country songs in 1962
Just a dream that I had on my mind
My girl and I got married in 1963
We tried so hard to keep our dreams alive*

*So I bought an old house-trailer out on the
country side*

*You can't write country songs in town they say
We packed up and moved out there and as
the time went by
We found that we liked living free that way*

*I got me an old Cadillac just to have around
Cadillacs and country songs were meant to
be
I heard that old Hank Williams drove one just
like mine
So I thought that something might rub off on
me*

*You can take what you want after I'm gone
It's only just a little place that we called home
sweet home
One old house trailer two rusty Cadillacs and
5000 country music songs*

*I always sent my songs up to Nashville town
In case the boys could use a guy like me
But the mailman brought 'em right back down
and I think it made him sad
You're bound to get you one just wait and see*

*I recall the year Ray Price came through town
His tour bus parked about a mile from here
I sat there in the backseat of that old Coupe
De Ville
Those shoes were just too big to fill that year*

*A song on Bobby Bare would take you any-
where
If I'm still here it wasn't for lack of trying
My wife would tell me Honey I'm feelin' some-
thin' there
Don't care if Bobby never reads a line*

Chorus

*Then late one summer evening she called me
to her side
Saying sing me something in your real old
style
The one I like to hear Bobby Bare passed by
I'll just close my eyes and rest a while*

*Well she liked that big old tree and the honey-
suckle vine
And the mocking bird that sang so tenderly
I just packed up all those song words and my
old guitar
I locked them up and threw away the key*

14. Little Trona Girl

Juliette Commagere - vocals
Ry Cooder - guitar, bass
Joachim Cooder - drums

*Little Trona girl little Trona girl
Little Trona girl will you wait for me*

*Standing in the twilight by the highway side
In my mirror I can see the teardrops in her
eyes*

*Little Trona girl little Trona girl
Little Trona girl will you wait for me*



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