

VOLUME I:

Chameleon:

1946-65

Edinburgh & Sedbergh

I.

I was a good boy. Admittedly, I hit my older brother over the eye with a spade when I was three, but then again he was always teasing me so he deserved it. I mean I *was* sorry that he had been born with a club foot, but no need to take it out on me. Unlike my brother I was fit and healthy and unlike him, I didn't lie and I certainly didn't steal things. Yes, I was the good one or at least so it all seemed at the time.

In fact, I had more in common with my brother, and my sister for that matter, than I realised. By the time we left home - and we all fled - we were all emotionally scarred in ways that we didn't yet understand.

But at the age of twelve, immersed in schoolwork and sports like my friends, home life seemed to be losing its place as the key influence in my life.

THE EDINBURGH ACADEMY: SCHOOL REPORT: JULY, 1959

CLASS: 2A

STUDENT: *Ian A. Brown*

Class Master: *'I feel that he suffers from over-conscientiousness, and I find it hard to believe that lack of effort is at the root of lack of success in any subject. For me, at any rate, he had worked with an admirable spirit and has made good progress. As a class ephor he has taken his duties most seriously and performed them very well. A good all-rounder and a most rewarding boy to teach.'*

H.D.D.

(Hamish Dawson)

I wasn't quite sure what 'over-conscientious' meant. Was it possible to be excessively concerned with what was right - upright to the point of uptight? I didn't know.

I liked Hamish Dawson, or 'Doughey' Dawson as we called him. He did not seem to be a licensed psychotic like the French teacher who beat you with a leather strap if you pronounced a word wrong, or the Science teacher whose favorite weapon was the rubber tubing from a bunson burner. Nor did he seem to have the highly strung and explosive temperament of the music or art teacher. He was enthusiastic and caring. He seemed interested in what he was doing, and committed to teaching. He wanted and expected the best from us, and for the main part he got it because we respected him. He was an idealist who wanted to go beyond the mind and make his mark on young hearts and personalities. In the Easter holidays, he had taken a small group of students on a camping trip to the Cairngorm mountains in the Highlands. I enjoyed the way he challenged us, even his insistence on snowline skinny-dipping. I trusted him.

It was a Monday afternoon in April, 1959. I had just finished an athletics session at New Field. As I was walking in, Doughey Dawson appeared at the door to the Master's changing room and beckoned for me to come over. As I approached, I could see the angry expression on his face. He ushered me into the Master's changing room and closed the door.

"Where were you on Saturday?" he said accusingly.

"I, er....", I stumbled for words as I felt the force of his anger sweep over me.

"You missed the athletics practice."

"I know. I'm sorry. I couldn't come, I was playing in a golf tournament."

"Golf!" Mr. Dawson's eyes narrowed and his voice had a hard quality to it that I'd never heard

before. “You should have been here practicing. How can I turn you into a good athlete if you don’t practice?”

“But sir, it’s the only Saturday I’ve missed,” I protested. “Besides, you told us that the sessions were voluntary.”

“That’s not the point, Brown. I work hard for you. Believe me, I don’t have to be there on a Saturday. I could be at home giving some time to my family. I give you boys my best. I expect you to do the same.” He turned away for an instant, one hand on the back of his head. Then he spun around. “I’m going to beat you, Brown. Take down your shorts.”

Doughey Dawson proceeded to beat me on my bare buttocks with his hand. I had been beaten many times on the hand with the leather strap, as had everyone else, for routine minor infringements, but this was something else. Bare hand on bare bum was unusual, to say the least. It was the unfairness that hurt more than anything else. The man who had called me ‘over-conscientious’ then beats me for not being conscientious enough, or so it seemed. It wasn’t fair. It wasn’t right. It *had* been a voluntary session.

The next day after English class, Doughey Dawson apologized to me – an almost unheard of thing for a teacher to do. But the damage had been done.

It was 1959. My brother had been moved to another school because my parents couldn’t afford to keep both of us at The Edinburgh Academy. My sister was about to leave home and move to London to study at The Royal Academy of Music. My father had just been politely but forcibly retired from his job with The Scottish Council of Social Service. And my mother had, unknown to me at the time, had a breakdown, and admitted herself briefly to Craighouse, the Edinburgh ‘mental’ institution. I knew about her anxiety and depression – I’d lived with it all my life - but I had no idea that her problems went deeper than that.

We tried to give the impression of a ‘normal’ middle-class family. On the surface, the impression was convincing enough. We lived in a three story house on Kingsburgh Road in Murrayfield. We were all at good schools. My sister and I took music lessons. It seemed normal enough. Certainly the neighborhood was normal enough. Murrayfield was a ‘good’ neighborhood, an upper-middle class neighborhood on the west side of Edinburgh. On its quiet street were large, solid, gray-stone houses with fair-sized gardens, front and back. The inhabitants of these houses were a mix of professional people, elderly folk, and retired officers from Her Majesty’s Armed Forces. We occupied the first and second floor of number 30 Kingsburgh Road, while the third floor was rented out to a succession of U.S. Air Force couples (there was a Base close to Edinburgh).

For several years, my grandmother had been living with us. ‘Grandsie’, as we called her, would invite us into her room to play cribbage, halma and chess, or to watch games of bridge. Her presence seemed to improve the atmosphere in the house for a while. My father could no longer be overtly cruel to my brother in the way he had been when Robin was younger. He couldn’t beat us, and he couldn’t shout and act like a tyrant out in the open. He was answerable to my grandmother so he had to mind his behavior. During the years that my grandmother was with us, a succession of relatives came to visit. Some of them were colorful characters from the States (my grandmother had been born in the U.S.A. of immigrant parents before returning to her roots in Britain). There was Uncle Andrew with his wonderful cowboy stories and loud ties, Uncle Bernard who bought a kilt but refused to wear a sporran with it, and dear old Auntie Grace who would secretly slip me her winnings from the bridge table.

Then in 1959, my grandmother died. I was not too aware of what was happening, until one day we were taken to visit Grandsie in a nursing home. When I saw her, I was shaken. She looked ashen and haggard. She didn’t appear to recognize us. When finally she did, her face contorted and she cried out, “take me home, this isn’t my home, I want to go home ... TAKE ME AWAY FROM HERE!!” Her voice was rasping and desperate. I was overwhelmed. Where was my Grandsie, my friend and companion? This distant, angry voice now screaming “go away, go away, GO AWAY ALL OF YOU!” seared my memories. I wanted to go to her. I wanted to say, ‘Grandsie, it’s all right, you’ll be all right, I love you, we all love you.’

But we were quickly led away, her screams echoing in the distance. I never saw her again. I was aware of my sadness at her parting and my confusion about how she had changed. What I was not aware of was that for weeks before being moved to the nursing home, Grandsie had been accusing my mother of trying to poison her. Nor was I aware of the paranoia that lay embedded in my mother's psyche. I had been shielded from it; school, sports, summer camp - there had always been a concerted effort to get us out of the house.

I didn't know what a 'normal' family was, but whatever it was, we were not it. The worst times were always at home. Despite whatever improvements took place during the period that my grandmother lived with us, my mother seemed always to be either depressed or over-anxious. When my father was around, an atmosphere of tension filled the house. He would rarely talk with my mother, and when he did, his tone was hard and his manner offhand. I never ever saw them kiss or hug. In fact I never saw them touch at all. They never laughed together. This was especially hard to understand because I had seen both of them laugh heartily while away from each other. Once in a while, my mother would get together with her friend Sheila. In no time, my mother would be laughing hysterically, a kind of deep bodily release, akin to the rhythmic expression of grief, rage, or orgasm. I saw my father laugh most when we visited my Aunt's house. He would always bring some special treat to give to Auntie Margaret and her children, Elizabeth, Alec and Edmund. He became a transformed man. Suddenly, he was a generous, caring, fun-loving man. The drinks and cigarettes would come out, and soon he was talking and joking, relaxed and jovial.

I didn't understand or like a lot of what I saw or experienced at home, but at least my friends and school provided some insulation. My two best friends were Colin Crabbie and Anthony Ferguson. Like me, they had both entered The Academy at the age of 4. My relationship with each one had grown from that point on.

Colin was the second son of a magistrate. He lived in a large house in Morningside. Colin was feisty and rebellious. He showed this on the rugby field where we played on the same team. Outside school, he challenged me to explore new boyhood frontiers. When we were ten or eleven, we gained permission from our parents to camp overnight in the border country south of Edinburgh. We were both quite indignant the following morning when my father turned up to 'rescue' us from the pouring rain. Colin and I also shared an intense interest in our budding sexuality. We would often look at each other's appendage and compare length and shape. Seeing each other get erections was exciting and mysterious. On occasion we touched each other and even tried to masturbate. What we were doing did not seem unusual or unnatural. In class at school, there was much clandestine 'feeling up' that went on furtively under the desks.

Some boys, of course, were against such activity. There was no way that Anthony, for example, would agree to such exploration. Anthony was more gentle, more 'yin' than Colin. His father was an architect. There was a sensitive, creative side of Anthony that appealed to me. We were also on the same wavelength when it came to humor. In the holidays, we would go to the Monsigneur News Theatre on Princess Street and watch Sylvester and Tweety Pie cartoons and Charlie Chaplin shorts. My laughter was like my mother's, only more frequent. I also liked being able to make Anthony laugh. I had developed an ability to improvise different accents and characters and Anthony seemed to find me amusing. He invited me out to the family cottage in Gullane several times. Gullane was a seaside town about twenty miles from Edinburgh, with wonderful sand-dunes and surrounded by golf-courses. My happiest childhood memories are of being in Gullane, with Anthony, and on family camping trips there when I was very young.

There was some kind of stability to my life at school and in my relationships with Colin and Anthony - up until 1959, that is. In 1959 everything began to change.

For over a year, my mother had been going on about music scholarships to boarding school. I had been learning the 'cello for over three years and had progressed quickly. My mother pointed out to me that both Colin and Anthony were leaving the Edinburgh Academy the following year to go to boarding school.

It was true. Colin had started talking about going to somewhere called Sedbergh, and Anthony had mentioned a school named Glenalmond.

“Why do you want to leave the Academy?” I asked them.

In both their cases, they responded that they weren't sure that they *did* want to leave, but that their fathers had gone to boarding school and that was why they were doing the same. In my case, my father had not gone to boarding school. Not only that, it appeared he didn't want me to go. More than a couple of times I heard him say to my mother, “why do you want the boy to leave The Edinburgh Academy - he seems quite happy there?” But his voice was one of grumbling dissent rather than forceful opposition.

I didn't want to leave the Academy. On the other hand, like it or not, my two best friends were leaving. The point, as far as my mother was concerned, was that the two boarding schools that happened to offer music scholarships were Sedbergh and Glenalmond, so that if I did get a scholarship, I would not be separated from *both* of my best friends. It was very difficult. First, I felt I was being asked to choose between my home base and being uprooted to unknown parts. And then, on top of that, I had to choose between Colin and Anthony - or so it seemed.

The more I thought about it, the more the dilemma seemed to attain other complex dimensions. It seemed to me that I was being asked to choose between England and Scotland, between being English and Scottish. Over the years, of living in Edinburgh and attending The Edinburgh Academy, I had developed a growing awareness that my cultural identity was something less than well-defined. Why was it that my parents had good B.B.C. English accents, and yet when I stepped on a bus, I felt like a foreigner? Sure enough, my mother *was* English, but my father was the real thing – albeit a Lowlander. Why didn't he, at least, have a Scottish accent? Why didn't Colin or Anthony have Scottish accents? Why was it that my brother Robin, who was fifteen, had started developing a Scottish inflection in the past year or so? These were questions that I could not answer at the age of twelve, but they gave rise to contradictory and uncomfortable feelings.

For example, I felt vaguely disloyal if I returned from Murrayfield Rugby Stadium and told my mother how great it was that Scotland had just beaten England. I also didn't like feeling like an outsider. I never felt like that in the protective confines of Murrayfield, but if I cycled down to nearby Roseburn to get some groceries for my mother, I could immediately tell I was being treated differently, either with a kind of forced politeness, or sometimes with an edge of disdain. And that was Roseburn. On Saturdays, when my father took us to Rankin's Fruit Market on Dalry Road, a stone's throw from the Heart's Soccer Stadium, I felt even more out of place. Why wasn't I Scottish, dammit! I wanted to feel Scottish *all* the time, the way I did at International Rugby matches.

Later that year we lost a second member of the family from the household, only this time under different circumstances. My sister succeeded in getting a Caird scholarship and by September had moved to London. The house suddenly seemed very empty. My mother now had two less people to worry about and her attention became more firmly fixed on me and my future.

My sister and I had been receiving our musical training from the Waddell sisters, or more grandly, Dr. Ruth Waddell and Dr. Mamie Waddell. These two were something of a legend in Edinburgh due to the quality of musicians they had turned out over many years. I had started learning the 'cello at the age of 10 with Dr. Ruth. By the age of 12 she had me entered in the Edinburgh Music Festival Competitions. In May of 1959 and 1960, I was awarded Certificates of Merit. The adjudicator in 1959 was David Martin, and in 1960 was Frederick Grinke, who was at that time Joy's violin teacher at The Royal Academy of Music. In November 1959, I took the Grade V Theory and Practical examinations for The Associated Board of The Royal Schools of Music, both of which were prerequisites for either the Sedbergh or the Glenalmond music scholarships.

In addition to the work necessary to prepare for these exams, 1960 marked the year of the dreaded Common Entrance examination. As this was the exam necessary to enter the Public School system, it was irrelevant to the curriculum and standards of The Edinburgh Academy. Consequently, it was deemed necessary for me, and several other boys including Colin, to go to what was called a 'crammer' - a very appropriate title. The avowed purpose, the *raison d'être* of Basil Patterson (the crammer that I attended) was to get you through exams, whether Common Entrance, O levels, A levels, Civil Service or whatever. To this end, they would *cram* into the anxious student's brain as many of the facts they deemed necessary to pass the examination.

That last year at The Edinburgh Academy was intense: work, practice, preparation. The Golden Age of Play was over. Living in the here and now seemed like a thing of the past. Goal-oriented education was beginning in earnest. There is a photograph taken of me at this age where I am sitting playing the 'cello in the back garden at 30 Kingsburgh Road. Standing behind me is my Mother. I am looking conscientious while somewhat confused. Mother is looking purposeful and determined. My father may have been the Major, but my mother was Sergeant-Major - the one who gave the orders on a day to day basis.

In the end, I won a major Music Scholarship to Sedbergh in February of 1960 and passed Common Entrance by the skin of my teeth later that year. Winning the scholarship was what decided the question of whether to go to Sedbergh, Glenalmond, or remain at The Academy.

SCHOOL REPORT: JULY 1960 CLASS IIIA

STUDENT: Ian A. Brown

Class-Master: 'In spite of a lowly position in class he has worked well and achieved his immediate ambitions. He has been a great asset to the school orchestra and will be much missed. I wish him well in his new sphere.'

Rector: 'A fine musician. A promising athlete and a good citizen - we shall miss him a lot. He will not find the academic ladder easy to climb - he must be prepared for a hard, continuous struggle. I wish him success in it.'

And so it was goodbye to The Edinburgh Academy. In fact the last goodbye was to Doughey Dawson. Even though I had not had him as a teacher that year, and had cut my ties officially with The Academy, Hamish Dawson saw fit to invite me on an Arduous Training Camping trip to the Cairngorms. For my part, I was keen to go. I had not forgotten the beating incident, but on some level, I had forgiven him. I was also grateful for the many positive things he had given me.

I had a good time there. I loved the Highlands - the wildness, the smell of the heather, the unbounded freedom of movement. Shortly after returning from the trip, I contacted Mr. Dawson for one last time in order to give him a farewell present of a Parker pen - an idea suggested to me by my father.

This was his letter of reply:

Dear Ian,

How very kind of you to send me such a very delightful present. I am both pleased and very proud to accept it, and this is appropriately enough my first letter using it!

I hope you enjoyed yourself in the Cairngorms - although one could hardly say that the weather exactly welcomed us! - and I do hope that you will be able to join us again whenever you can in future years.

And now a new chapter for you begins. I suppose, as an elderly schoolmaster, I ought to be giving you pages of wise advice and counsel, but somehow I don't think I will! For a start, I don't feel that you are in all that much need of advice, just go on working and playing as honestly and well as you always have for me and I don't think you will go far wrong. I shall look forward to hearing of your successes as time goes by.

Do give my regards to Robin and your parents, and once again my sincere thanks for a kind and much appreciated present,

Best wishes for the future,

Hamish Dawson

Ironically, and yet true to a future pattern, the new chapter was beginning just as the old one was getting interesting. In my last year or two in Edinburgh I had developed a more secure base, and in the world of sports (rugby and cricket in particular) and music. Within the impersonal and hurried atmosphere of The Edinburgh Academy on Henderson Row, I was beginning to emerge as a recognizable figure. I had gained some status, attained some measure of identity. I also had a more clearly defined circle of friends. Now I was going to be leaving all that and stepping off into the complete unknown. I knew nothing of Sedbergh. I knew nothing of Yorkshire. I knew nothing of boarding schools.

* * *

Whatever hazy picture I did have of Public school came from two sources. The first was, of course, my friend Colin. His father and brother had both been to Sedbergh so he was able to give me some information. The other source gave me a very full, and colorful picture and yet one which later turned out to be something of a pastiche. I am referring to Frank Richard's 'Billy Bunter' books.

The Bunter books had to do with the exploits of a bunch of public school boys at Greyfriars School. Here is an extract from Bunter's Last Fling:

'By this time, the Owl of the Remove really believed that that butterscotch had been his. The trifling fact that he had first taken it from Smithy's own cupboard now passed him by like the idle wind which he regarded not. He had been about to devour it, peacefully, well out of Smithy's way, when that beast had suddenly pounced upon it and grabbed it!

'Look here, Smithy, that's my butterscotch you grabbed. It isn't yours. I never took it from your cupboard, and, oh, lor'!

He suddenly became aware that Wingate, the captain of the school, was present, and holding that packet of butter-scotch.

'Oh I say!' The Owl was prepared to make his protest about the unlawfulness of Vernon-Smith having grabbed back his own butterscotch, but he was not prepared to do battle with the captain of the school for it!

'I - I'll call again -' He began to edge out of the study.

'Wait a moment, Bunter.' Wingate's voice halted him.

'What's this about Vernon-Smith grabbing a packet of butterscotch from you?'

'Oh, lor'! I - I'm not a sneak, Wingate.' The Owl cast a wary eye at Vernon-Smith.

'I - I wouldn't think of telling you that Smithy took my butterscotch I - I didn't find it in his cupboard in the first place. It - it came from Mrs. Mimble's - I mean, Uncle Clegg's.'

'Is this your butterscotch?' demanded Wingate, holding out the packet.

'Oh, thank you, Wingate. I'll take it - and not say any more about Smithy grabbing it - if - if he's given it back to you.'

'You may have it as far as I'm concerned,' observed Vernon-Smith.

'You may cut!' said Wingate, suddenly, to Bunter. 'Take that butterscotch and go.'

This world was foreign, yet one I could relate to – at least in my fantasies. Like Bunter, I craved food much of the time - to the point where sometimes I wondered whether perhaps I had a tape-worm. Like me, the good guys, in the Bunter books, were honest, conscientious, and all too predictable. They were't anti-hero types, like Marlon Brando, James Dean or Elvis. As I read the Bunter books in preparation for the world of Sedbergh, I applauded the fair-play of the good guys like Wharton and Cherry, I laughed at the buffoonery of Bunter and the eccentricities of such characters as Hurree Jamset Ram Singh and Fisher T.

Fish (the resident ethnic weirdos), Lord Mauleverer (the resident Wooster), and I tut-tutted the illicit activities of such undesirables as Vernon-Smith (the me-first manipulator) and Coker (the school bully).

I drank in all the stuff concerning study feasts, fagging, school matches, visits to the Bun Shop, waiting for postal-orders, sleeping in dormitories, and so on. I marveled at their use of language and wondered uneasily if I would be an outcast at Sedbergh because I didn't speak that way. In the world of Bunter, people would say things like, 'I say, jolly decent of you old chap,' 'What a simply ripping idea!'. People at The Edinburgh Academy never spoke that way. Even my father, who was an ex-Army officer, didn't speak that way.

On the other side of things, I noticed that there was never any mention of girls, or boys with their hands up each other's trouser legs. And of course there was little talk of parents because here, and this was the strangest thing for me to imagine and try to digest - here was a world without parents.

And so the summer months passed. New clothes were bought. The school list was checked off. My new trunk was packed and sent off. Final goodbyes to old school friends were said. Anthony and I promised to write to each other and get together in the holidays.

And one day in September, 1960, it was time to go. Time to say goodbye to my mother. Time to pack my case and 'cello into the back of my father's old Vauxhall. Time to be shipped off to another world.

Sedbergh, England
(1960-65)

2.

Standing outside the low gray-stone building called Powell House, my father gave me a 'Soldier's Farewell' - the first of several he was to give me over the next fifteen or so years. It had taken us most of the day to drive to the village of Sedbergh: through the beautiful gentle border country; over the rugged and remote Shap summit; and then, by degrees, from the bleak yet magnificent country of Westmoreland, to the rolling hills and dales of West Yorkshire. This was a country of gray skies and somber hills and wild peat and bracken moors, the setting for Wuthering Heights.

I felt as desolate as the land we'd been through.

My father held out his hand:

"Well, good luck. Your mother and I expect great things of you. Work your hardest and keep your nose clean. You're on your own now. Goodbye."

And with that my father turned on his heel and limped off stiffly to where the car was standing. As he drove off, I wished that he could have hugged me, or maybe just put his hand on my shoulder or something.

A world without parents, a world without my particular parents - my mother's anxiety and depressions, my father's anger and frustrations, gone like vapor trails from a passing plane. As it turned out, there *was* a surrogate mother and, in a way, a foster father as well. The first position was filled amply by Miss King, or 'Faggot', as I was soon to call her. She was the matron of Powell House. She was responsible for the administration of such things as laundering, dispensation of first aid, and cleaning of the house. As such, she was in charge of the 'scivs' - the not so charming title for the maids. However, I was soon to find that Matron had considerable control over our lives. For instance, I discovered that getting a second helping of pudding had much to do with her mood that day or whether you, in particular, were in her favor or not. I was also later to find out that Faggot could, if she wanted, monitor our rate of sexual activity by checking out the fresh stains on our sheets.

But the real power and authority was wielded by the Housemaster. John Valentine Begley was the Housemaster of Powell House. Shortly after my father's departure, he gathered the new boys together for a welcoming speech. There seemed to be about ten of us. I observed that, of this number, about six or seven were still small, smooth-faced and high-voiced - in other words, prepubescent. Of the remaining, I, and a boy with a broad chest and wide shoulders, were the biggest and tallest. It was also not hard to notice that I was taller than the Housemaster himself. This was not so much that I was tall - I was about five foot five inches at that age - but rather that he was little, very little in fact. Little enough, it turned out, to be nicknamed 'The Little Man'.

"Well, first of all I'd like to welcome you all to Powell House! You are now members of Sedbergh School, a school with a fine tradition and a fine reputation. You are also now members of this House - Powell House. This is your new home. Within these four walls you will eat, sleep, study and work. For the next five years you will be part of a community within these four walls - a community of approximately sixty people. Any community has a structure, or a pecking order if you will. If you are not already aware of the fact, you should realize very quickly, that you are all at the very bottom of that pecking order. At the top, we have six, or is it seven this year, prefects. They have privileges. You new boys at the bottom do not have privileges - *those* you have to earn. What you do have, is duties. In your first year, you will all be fags to the prefects. As such you will have a number of duties. These will be explained to you by the prefects. A community also has rules. You will be expected to obey these rules. If you do not, you will, of course be punished."

At this, Mr. Begley paused to cast a withering eye over the gathered neophytes. It was a chance for us to catch our breath, and take fresh stock of the man and what he was saying. Not only was he little, he was also kind of grotesque. His head was much too large for his body and his huge nose was out of all proportion to his face. His eyes seemed as cold and unfeeling as a snake's. But the strangest thing of all was the way he spoke. He talked out of the corner of his mouth like some cultured English hybrid of Humphrey Bogart.

"Life will not be easy at first," Mr. Begley resumed. "You will be kept very busy and you will have little or no time to yourself. You will have many adjustments to make. Some of you, those who went to prep. school, know what life in a boarding school is like. Others of you will be experiencing this for the first time. You will have to learn to become self-reliant, learn how to face up to and deal with problems on your own. However, let me say this; if you ever feel in dire need of help, you can certainly come to me and I will assist in whatever way I can. That's all I have to say for the moment. Now go and see Matron. She has some things to tell you."

As it turned out, our territory was even more tightly defined than Mr. Begley had implied. Our living space within the four walls of Powell House was called the Junior Dayroom. This was a room that consisted of bare wooden floors, three long tables and wooden benches to go with them, and forty or so lockers along one wall. That was all. No carpeting, no curtains, no armchairs, and no radio or record-player. This was very definitely not the cozy world portrayed in Bunter's books. The dormitory in which we slept was also a model of spartan simplicity - one long room with a row of beds on either side, plus windows which had to be kept open at all times (including at nights and even the dead of winter).

We were the surfs and this was our habitat. The extent of our private property was two small lockers, one for food and the other for books; one peg and one small locker in the changing-room; and one bed in the dormitory. We were the surfs, and the lords of the manor were the prefects. We met them the day after arriving.

The Prefects of Powell House had their first official meeting with us in the House library. With the exception of the Head of House, a fellow called Tad Hardwick, they seemed like a swarthy bunch to me. The purpose of this meeting was akin to a slave-market. The lords of the manor got a chance to look over, discuss, haggle if necessary, and finally choose their slaves. One's marketability as a slave had primarily to do with two factors - physical attractiveness and sporting potential. By the expressions on their faces, it seemed clear that they thought we were deficient in at least one of those areas. It was true. There were no androgynous beauties amongst us. The pick of the bunch, according to the prefects, were two boys called John Aitken and Geoff Grime.

In due course, I was assigned to my master-to-be. He turned out to be the biggest and hairiest and ugliest Prefect of them all. His name was Woodeson, or more affectionately 'Woody'. I was to serve Woody in two ways, first by being his boot fag and secondly by being his study fag. This meant that I was responsible for keeping his shoes, his rugger boots and his size twelve Army boots spotless and shining, as well as cleaning out his study every morning. In addition to being a boot fag and a study fag, I was also a clothes fag to another prefect, *and* a bell fag along with all the other new boys.

'The bell' was located high up on one of the walls in the Junior dayroom. From this bell, wires extended that ended up attached to little buzzers on the desks of each prefect. Needless to say, when the bell buzzed in the Junior dayroom, one of us fags had to go a-running. One buzz meant Woody and Tad in number 1 study. Two buzzes meant study 2, and so on. Unlike the other kinds of fagging, bell-fagging threw us new boys into direct competition with each other. There was no saying who had to answer the bell and this 'free enterprise' was revealing in terms of how each of us handled it. A prefect usually buzzed for a bell-fag for one of two reasons; either to take a written message (often folded and 'knotted' in origami-like fashion) to a prefect in another House, or to cook up some soup or beans (a privilege extended only to seniors and prefects).

I was in awe of how the Prefects lived. Their studies were little dens of comfort. Carpets on the floor, curtains on the windows, Playboy pinups on the walls, a divan on which to recline, coffee and tea ... cookies and cakes in the cupboard, and luxury of luxuries - a record-player and a stack of records. Every morning as I cleaned number 1 study, I was exposed to this other world of my elders and betters. I didn't feel resentful. I accepted the system, the hierarchical pecking-order. I had never known anything else.

One day the Prefects told us that they had organized a Fell-stomping competition for the new boys.¹ The purpose of the fell-stomping competition was to see who could 'stomp' the most miles over the fells in a given period of time. The deeper pedagogical purpose was probably to get us new boys out exploring our natural surroundings as soon as possible while challenging us to test our powers of endurance. I had arranged to team up with Ralph Blacklock, the boy with the broad chest and wide shoulders who I had first marked out during Mr. Begley's welcoming speech. Blacklock and I decided that we were really going to show everyone that we were a force to be reckoned with. So one fine autumn day in October, we stomped twenty miles up and down, over and around the surrounding fells. When we returned, we proudly announced our achievement.

"Hey guess what folks? Blacklock and I just clocked up twenty miles!!" I felt I had some information worthy of attention, an exploit with which I could better my initial image of being the boy with the lowliest position in the whole House, due to the fact that I had barely scraped through the Common Entrance Examination.

"Side off Brown," was the immediate response from several people. At this moment the door to the Junior Dayroom opened and in walked a boy called Iain Bilsland.

"Hey Billy, have you heard the *big* news? Brown and Blacklock have just stomped twenty miles."

"Oh come off it! You don't believe that, do you?" Bilsland spoke with a sneering, disbelieving voice. "They couldn't have done twenty miles in the time they were away."

"Are you accusing me of lying?" I stood there in shock and outrage. Blacklock and I had been very careful in measuring how far we had gone. We had taken a map, charted our routes and then calculated the mileage. We had also busted our asses and finished up with a set of aching muscles. It was outrageous that he should even think of such a thing, let alone say it. At the age of thirteen I was a good boy. I was honest and conscientious - Hamish Dawson had said so. I never lied. I was George Washington personified.

Bilsland looked around at the other people in the day-room and smiled. He was enjoying the fact that I was so upset. In a mocking voice he said:

"What does it sound like to you?"

"Well I'm not. Ask Blacklock." A couple of new boys sniggered.

"Well of course. What would you expect him to say?" Bilsland was good at this kind of thing. I wasn't. I was trusting to the point of being gullible. I trusted and expected to be trusted. I believed others and expected to be believed. Of course I couldn't prove that we had walked twenty miles.

That was the beginning of my war with Bilsland and also an extremely unpleasant period of unpopularity. Bilsland was one of four boys who had come to Sedbergh in the summer term. As such, these four were superior to the ten of us who had come in the Winter term. Bilsland was determined to press home this 'superiority' in every way possible. For instance, he made sure that us new boys kept all the buttons on our school blazers done up. A first-termer was supposed to keep all his buttons done up whereas a second-termer gained the right to have one button undone. For some, this seemed just too trivial, but for others like Bilsland it was just another means to exercise power. I didn't like Bilsland. He seemed to be lacking in inner integrity. He didn't play fair.

Originally I had expected support from Blacklock over the fell-stomping incident but soon it became clear that Blacklock did not want to get into Bilsland's disfavor. Maybe he felt compromised by the fact that they were both from Sunderland and that they were both in the same class. Or maybe he just did not want to risk unpopularity by opposing Bilsland.

¹ In Yorkshire there is a local language. For instance, fells are hills, tarns are lakes, becks are streams and ghylls are ravines.

Like Bilsland, I too was a promising rugby player. In my first month at school, I had impressed quite a few people with my play. Possibly Bilsland felt threatened by me. I was as big as him and people saw us as equals in the sporting arena. On top of that, I was a scholarship boy, even though it was 'only' music. Whatever the case, following the fell-stomping incident, Bilsland was determined to put me down at every turn. A week or two later, an opportunity presented itself.

I had just rushed back from rugby practice and was stewing happily in a hot bath.

"Turf, Brown!" Bilsland had spotted me immediately, and no sooner had he whipped his clothes off, than he delivered the standard Sedbergh command for 'get out the bath'. In the pecking order, anyone senior to you, which for a new boy meant *everyone*, had the right to order you out of the bath so that they would not have to wait around. In practice, this meant that the best, and sometimes only chance of getting a bath was either before everyone got back from the compulsory afternoon's rugby or much later after the majority had finished. My pattern was usually to try to beat the rush. On this day I had been successful and was sharing a bath with a boy called David Roberts.

Normally, in a situation like this, I would have turfed obediently. However on this particular day, Bilsland's command had caught me in a state of blissful, rock-hard underwater erection.

"Oh have a heart Bilsland! I just got in." I tried to keep a pleading tone out of my voice.

"I said TURF Brown, now!!" Bilsland was not in the habit of being gracious, even at the best of times. He was certainly not going to do me any favors.

I squirmed in the bath. I often got erections in the bath. My experiences at the Edinburgh Academy had already shown me that I had an active (overactive?) libido. Besides I also happened to be in the bath with David Roberts. The sight of his firm muscled body had stirred sensual feelings in me on previous occasions and now, for the first time, I had been sharing a bath with him, knee to knee, thigh to thigh.

"Oh come on Bilsland, just another couple of minutes." I thought of calling him 'Billy', but that would have been stooping too low, too much like the suck-up behavior of some of the other new boys. Instead, in a last desperate attempt to save my honor, I resorted to mind over matter. I engaged in a rapid visualization of shrunken penises. I tried inventing Presbyterian-like postulates such as 'the road to hell is paved with swollen members'. And of course I exerted my not inconsiderable will-power to its fullest extent - 'you *will* shrink, you *WILL* shrink right now, you will *not* feel horny, you will *never* feel horny ever again'. All to no avail.

"Do you want to get duck-boarded, Brown?" Bilsland moved forward threateningly. I had never seen anyone duck-boarded but I had heard about it. It involved filling the bath to overflowing and then forcing a wooden duckboard down over the top of the bath such that the victim's head became partially or completely immersed.

"Go on, get out Brown!" Roberts gave me a kick. He didn't have great respect for Bilsland but he was becoming impatient. I was overstepping my limits as a new boy. There was nothing for it. Time was up.

Bilsland got a lot of mileage out of this incident. The most immediate result was that he nicknamed me 'Poker', a title that caught on. In no time at all, word of the incident, accompanied by my new nickname had spread and I became Poker, to all and sundry. The deeper and more lasting outcome was the beginning of a period of unpopularity that was to last several months. Bilsland spearheaded the baiting. Whenever he saw me, he would make some caustic remark like, 'oh, here comes Poker ... what have you been poking into today, Poker?' I watched disgustedly as boys, who previously had been friendly now succumbed to social pressures and jumped on the bandwagon. It wasn't as if others didn't go through their period of unpopularity. They did, although the period and intensity of ostracism differed greatly. The important thing that differentiated one person from another was how they dealt with it. If they seemed unconcerned and didn't let it get to them, then often their period of unpopularity would be brief and uneventful. If, on the other hand, someone seemed to be affected or even, *God forbid*, *hurt* by the collective attitude, then this admission of vulnerability was often exploited. To some extent this was the case with me. I did not want to be called 'Poker'. I showed that it *did* upset me.

At first I tried to confront Bilsland the only way I knew how. There was provision within Sedbergh's unwritten code for gaining satisfaction from someone who had been offensive or abusive. The tradition was to challenge the cad in question to a bout of fisticuffs in one of the fives courts. I tried this but somehow Bilsland deflected the challenge without losing face. In the wake of not gaining any satisfaction through confrontation, I began increasingly to withdraw. I kept away from the Junior Dayroom as much as possible, to the point where I didn't help my standing with the other new boys due to the fact that I was neglecting my bell-fagging duties.

I became depressed and miserable. I didn't feel that I had any allies so I kept to myself, saying little to anyone. In spare moments that arose, I secluded myself in one of the music cubes and played the piano, or else went out to practice place-kicking on my own. I felt rejected and desperately insecure. I had done nothing to deserve this. It wasn't fair. In order to protect myself, I began rejecting those around me and started to look for support and understanding elsewhere.

I had hardly had a chance to speak to my old friend Colin Crabbie since coming to Sedbergh. We were both in the same class. I was the lowest form in the whole school and there was only one boy separating Colin and I from the bottom of the bottom form of the school. Although we saw each other in class, we were in different Houses and consequently were living quite different lives. On a couple of occasions that we had spoken briefly, I had got the impression that Colin wasn't all that happy either. We both seemed to have a desire to re-establish our friendship and give each other support. One day in November we had the chance. The Headmaster called an extra-half. This meant an unscheduled free afternoon. 'Free' is the word. There was very little that was free or unstructured at Sedbergh, especially when you were a new boy. This was a chance to get away from it all - a chance to get away from Bilsland, the Junior dayroom, fagging, schoolwork, even the ritual daily rugby practice.

Colin and I met outside Lupton House. As it was a beautiful day, we decided to go to Cautley Craggs. We made our way through the village, along the narrow Main Street past the Bull Hotel, left up the winding lane to Fell Gate. From this point on, it was a gradual climb along the side of Winder and then up through the short-cropped grassy terrain to Calf. From there, it was only a short way to Cautley Craggs. We were hardly through Fell Gate, before we got into an animated discussion.

"Stupid sods!" The object of this remark were the overlords of Lupton House. Colin had been sounding off about the unscrupulous behavior of the prefects in his House.

"They're always telling me to nip off. Stupid sods!!" Colin seemed to be adopting 'Sedberghese' more quickly than me. 'Nip off' was a reprimand for being uppity.

"How are you getting on with the other new boys, and the second and third termers?" I asked, more interested in comparing our experiences in this area than in hearing Colin rattle on about the soddishness of his Prefects.

"O.K, I suppose. How do you mean anyway?" Colin seemed a bit taken aback by my question.

"Well me, for instance. There's this creep called Bilsland who's being a real bastard, and he's ... well he's kind of turned a lot of people against me ..."

"Well, tell him to sod off. Tell them all to sod off. Tell them they're a bunch of wankers," Colin interrupted impatiently.

I had to laugh. Colin frustrated me with his lack of empathy but on the other hand, his bullish nature impressed me. I doubted myself too easily. I was too vulnerable to what others thought of me. Colin, by contrast, was self-confident to the point of arrogance. There was another marked difference between Colin and I. He was not afraid of authority. He was able to walk that fine line between being rebellious in a pugnacious and yet somehow endearing way, and actually overstepping a limit and being seen as 'The Rebel'. Conversely, I had been taught very effectively by my parents never to answer back, never to push back, and never *ever* to get angry. The single most powerful lesson in this came from my father on one occasion when I was about 7 years old. I had just witnessed my father being particularly unpleasant to my mother. My father told me to accompany him to pick up the car from the garage. As we left the house, I looked him straight in the eye and threw him a look of genuine anger and contempt. My father almost had apoplexy.

“Don’t you *ever* do that again!” he said, his voice quivering with rage.

What I had been taught, again very effectively, was how to be flexible, conciliatory and obedient. I was very gentle and very tame. I can remember as an eight or nine year old, seeing myself as an elephant, bigger and more powerful than the other boys. But I wasn’t just an elephant, I was a *kind* elephant. My role was to use my strength to help others rather than help myself at the expense of others. I was a tame elephant - almost a circus elephant.

Colin and I were opposites in this regard. He was sure of himself, or at least appeared to be. Unlike me, he felt he had a right to be at Sedbergh. He belonged there, His father and his brother had been there before him, and so he had a tradition to uphold. He was going to succeed at this school and any present problems that stemmed from being a new boy were just a temporary aberration. It would pass. Meanwhile, tell ‘em all to ‘sod off’.

By the time we reached Cautley Craggs, my spirits had picked up greatly. Colin was right. I shouldn’t get so caught up in my feelings. I should be free to think and say and do what I wanted! The inward mantra of ‘sod off’ that I was adopting already seemed to be working wonders.

Cautley Craggs should be in the Encyclopaedia Britannica or the Guinness Book of Records - somewhere that would list it as one of the seven wonders of the world for a thirteen year-old. The purpose of going to Cautley Craggs was to descend its scree. In screeing, the idea is to descend a great distance at great speed in a minimal amount of time. What is needed is a long steep slope of small stones that have eroded away from a cliff face. The scree that plunged down from Cautley Craggs was one of the best anywhere.

Colin and I stood at the top of the scree, poised for a moment gathering our breath. Then down we went whooping with glee, taking great strides in a mini-avalanche of loose stones. In what seemed like no time at all, we had descended almost a thousand feet of scree and were picking our way more carefully through the large boulders at the bottom. Exhilarated, we decided to flop down and eat the sandwiches we had brought with us.

It had been a long time since Colin and I had engaged in any sexual exploration. Now the drive was there again. So much of it was just curiosity. Both of us were emerging from the cocoon of puberty. I wondered if his cock had changed much or if he had a crown of pubic hair yet. We took off our pants and lay in the sun on the soft, peaty ground. At first we fondled and caressed as in the past. Then a new kind of urgency took hold. We both started rubbing each others’ cock between forefinger and thumb. Suddenly Colin pulled away. “I don’t want to do this anymore,” he said pulling his pants up. I didn’t question him. There was an unspoken understanding between us. Something had changed. Whether it was in us, or between us, or both, something *had* changed. It didn’t feel natural any more. As we made our way back to Sedbergh along the winding country road we didn’t talk much. There was a sadness that accompanied the loss of some kind of childhood innocence.

The meeting with Colin had been important on several levels. For a while to come, I felt defiant. My fighting spirit had returned. Before, I had reached such depths of depression that I had even thought of running away on a couple of occasions. Now I dispelled such notions. I wondered about my other old Edinburgh Academy friend, Anthony. I decided to write to him:

Letter to Anthony, 9/11/60

‘Dear Anthony,

I thought I’d smuggle this letter out from the wild wastes of Yorkshire and let you know how I am. This place is a prison. I hope for your sake that Glenalmond isn’t as bad. Here we have to get up at 7 o’clock and then guess what? the warders make us take a cold bath!! I kid you not. Right up to the bleedin’ shoulders mate. The dirty, rotten swines. And then I have to clean my prefect’s study - sweep the floor, clean the dishes and mugs and wipe the tables. And then it’s time for early morning prep. Then, if we’re lucky, we get some breakfast. The Faggot (that’s what we call our Matron) serves up lumpy porridge, and fried bread and great big leather-jacketed sausages all swimming in a pool of grease.

Then it's off up the hill to school from 9 to about 10-30. At this time we get a short break. Usually I come whizzing back to Powell House to do Woody's shoes and rigger boots (Woody is Woodeson, one of the Pres, and I am his boot fag). Then back for more classes. At 12.45 we have lunch. There's usually a bit of time after lunch but this is taken up bell fagging or clothes fagging. At 2.00, it's time for rigger practice. This goes to around 3-30 and then we have to rush back, get a quick bath and be in class by 4-15. This is if it's a Monday, Wednesday or Friday. If it's Tuesday or Thursday, we don't have afternoon classes.

Supper is at 6-30. There is another short gap after supper (more fagging!) and then we have 2 hours prep. from 7-30 to 9-30. Then it's evening prayers and a hymn and by 10 o'clock we're tucked up in our little beddy-pies in a freezing dormitory (they like keeping the windows open in this place).

The motto of the school was explained to us the other day. How good's your Latin, me old mate? Try this for size. 'DURA VIRUM NUTRIX'. This apparently means ... wait for it ... 'a hard nurse of men'.

That's about it! Oh, and I haven't even told you about our outfits. We have to wear blue open-necked shirts (hairy and uncomfortable), blue blazers, blue socks and blue short trousers. No-one, not even the prefects, wear long trousers, except on Sunday when it's allowed. Believe me, a November wind blowing up your trouser leg in these parts is no fun.

Anyway this letter is to tell you that I've just about had enough and I'm seriously considering busting out of this joint. If things are as bad in your part of the world I suggest we meet up, rent a helicopter and fly off to the north pole. On second thoughts, how about the south pole. Hmm on third thoughts, how about the Bahamas?

*Seriously though, I am a bit fed up and would like to hear from you. Do write me old fruit, and reserve some time to play squash with me in the holidays (can't wait!). All the best,
Yours, Ian'*

I did eventually hear back from Anthony. It was a warm letter but hardly equal to the support I felt I needed.

My period of unpopularity wore on. I even got to the point of trying to express my feelings to my parents, but I didn't get much sympathy or understanding from them. By the end of my first term it was clear to me that I couldn't turn to anyone outside Powell House for friendship or support. I was just going to have to weather the storm on my own and, if possible, make friends from amongst my peers. As my father had said, I was 'on my own'.

3.

There were various ways of escaping social reality at Sedbergh. In the winter term, my main outlet had been seeking refuge in the music cube. I'd been playing the piano by ear for a couple of years and I was beginning to sound quite good. In the Lent term I became engaged in various musical activities, all of which, in one way or another, helped me find my niche. The most other-worldly of these activities was being in the chapel choir.

I was a treble. This seemed a bit abnormal as, with the exception of my vocal chords, the rest of my body was well on its way through the transition of puberty. By the beginning of the Lent term in January 1961, I was about 5 foot 6 inches tall and weighed around 9½ stones.

I liked being in the choir. It was spiritually uplifting. There in the school chapel, one could enter a higher and wider and better world. In that echoing realm of four-part harmony, I could regain some sense of perspective and revitalize my belief in certain higher ideals. Every Sunday morning a small, select band would arise early and make their way up to choir practice. We were the righteous. We were the pure ones. Conscientious to a man, we didn't mind making the sacrifice of losing an hour or two of sleep. Just because Sunday was the one day in the week that one could sleep in, didn't mean that you had to indulge yourself. Those slugabeds didn't understand. They couldn't possibly understand. Their world was lazy and undisciplined: how to make things as easy as possible on yourself; how to appear big amongst your friends by telling them about how much you smoked during the holidays, or how you smooched around with this or that girlfriend; how to get cheap laughs by poking fun at others; how to pull rank and abuse your position of power or authority. By the time we returned from choir practice we were walking tall. When you *know* you are morally superior, you are invincible, impervious ... impervious to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, impervious to the demands of your tyrant overlords, impervious to the knave-like baseness of the Bilslands of this world. Why even think of saying something like 'sod off' to such low-lives? Rise above it all. Rise above it. Fly like an eagle!

Of the others who had escaped the decadence of Powell House life, there were two in particular that I started to get to know better in the Lent term of 1961. One of these two fellow trebles was a boy called David Lungley. I didn't know what to make of Lungley. He looked like something between an Albino and a rather skinny angel. He had very blond, almost white hair, and pink-rimmed eyes. When he sang in the choir he seemed fragile in his innocence and yet he radiated a strength and beauty that somehow struck me as being connected with purity of spirit. If his soul was a bell, it would sound with a clear, true note. On the other hand, he was innocent to a fault. His angelic qualities became something of a liability in the worldly cesspool of the Junior Dayroom. Lungley was completely ingenuous. He appeared almost totally disinterested in the multitude of power games that were manifest in every sphere of activity at Sedbergh. It was this openness and innocence, coupled with the fact that he was the most completely undeveloped of the pre-pubescent boys that led to merciless teasing. Even though he was of the same term as Bilsland, contemporaries of mine started to tease him. Lungley however, seemed to be able to cope with everything that was thrown at him. Unlike me, he seemed to have a certain kind of emotional invulnerability. He would get piqued by the teasing but he wouldn't appear to get hurt or to withdraw. Instead, he would defiantly stand his ground, defending himself with a high-pitched, squeaky voice, a process that would invariably lead to still more ridicule.

But like me, David Lungley was an outsider. He didn't live in England, let alone the North of England, as did many Sedbergh boys. His father was a tea-planter in Kenya and Lungley had developed the same fierce independence of spirit that characterise so many transplanted Brits. It was his independence that first gained my respect. He had not acted like a sheep and blindly followed Bilsland's example in baiting me. I felt he was someone to be trusted. Despite his manner and appearance, he was his own person.

The other place that David Lungley showed his real mettle was on the rugby field. Given his diminutive size and his mediocre playing abilities, it didn't seem he had much going for him. But what Lungley did better than most people twice his size was the thing that required the most courage, namely tackling. Over the Winter and Lent terms, my respect turned into admiration as time and time again I observed the David and Goliath replay. Spindly-legged David would hurl himself at some burly boy thundering towards the line and down he would crash, felled like an ox.

I couldn't help but contrast Lungley with Bilsland. At the age of fourteen, I did not have a sophisticated mind. In my naivete, things tended to be either black or white, with not much room for shades of gray in between. People were good or bad, nice or nasty, fair or unfair - simple as that. Bilsland and Lungley were galaxies apart. They were polar opposites, the one dressed in black, the other in white. It was a case of Lungley and I against the forces of darkness.

The other member of the treble trio from Powell House was a boy called Geoff Grime. Apart from the choir, the only thing that the three of us shared in common was the fact that we were all, in one way or another, the objects of ridicule. The campaign against David, although ongoing, was not serious or orchestrated. My affair certainly had a malicious thrust to it but only at the hands of a few, primarily Black Jacques Bilsland. Also, it had been relatively brief and was beginning to wane by the end of January. What happened with Geoffrey J. Grime was on an altogether different scale.

At first it was just little things that bugged people. Grime was fastidiously tidy. His two lockers in the Junior Dayroom were immaculate. Likewise his appearance; he would groom his hair to a dark sheen with a perfect part at all times. If a spot of grease turned up on his shirt or trousers, you could be sure that it wouldn't be there by the next day. Grime carried this meticulousness into his fagging duties. Fagging was one of these activities where there was an agenda and a hidden agenda. The agenda was clear enough. We were expected to spend so much time and so much energy each day performing various chores for the prefects. We were meant to be conscientious in carrying out these tasks, if not enthusiastic. The hidden agenda was that amongst the fags there was a code that contained various unwritten rules. For instance:

- (1) Thou shalt do thy assigned duties (but thou shalt not work overtime without a very good reason).
- (2) In the area of bell-fagging, thou shalt give the appearance of competing (while in fact cooperating with thy comrades by neither doing too little or too much).
- (3) Thou shalt behave politely and with respect towards the prefects (but without becoming deferential).

The problem was that Grime broke this code. His obsessive neatness was one thing. That was his private domain. How he operated in the public domain of fagging was altogether different. It was O.K. that Grime did his assigned duties more effectively than anyone else, but it was not O.K. that he worked overtime to achieve this. Squeezing in ten minutes of polishing your prefect's shoes before early morning prep was going too far. Likewise in bell-fagging. Here too, Grime tended to transgress the code. He tried to give the appearance of cooperating while in fact competing. Points were awarded for the number of bells you answered. At the end of the week, when the points were added up, Grime always seemed to have many more than anyone else. People began to question how Geoffrey Grime, more often than not, managed to be at the prefect's study a full two or three seconds ahead of anyone else.

At first his technique was straightforward. He would stand by the door of the Junior Dayroom and rush out the moment he heard the bell. However as the competition from a few other like-minded fags increased, Grime became more enterprising. He would hang around in the lobby. As it happened, the lobby was strategically situated half way between the Junior Dayroom and the prefects' studies. The result was that Grime could both hear the bell down the passage-way and get a considerable head-start in answering the bell over anyone else.

And finally, with respect to being polite to the prefects without being deferential, here too Grime was clearly at fault. Geoffrey J. Grime was a suck to beat all sucks.

In addition to this, Grime exhibited various other traits that contributed to an overwhelming negative image. If he had a present of a cake sent from home, he wouldn't share it as generously as other boys. If he lent some money he would start chivying to get it back within a few days. He would tend to be nosy, trying in a smarmy sort of way to join in on a conversation. In time, this set him up for countless cases of being told, 'fag-ends Grime!' 'Fag-ends' in Sedberghese meant 'butt-out' or 'mind your own business'.

On a more serious level, Grime seemed to be a chicken on the rugby field. In this, as in many other areas, he was the opposite of David Lungley. Although about the same build, their reactions to the combative aspects of rugby were diametrically opposed. Whereas Lungley would dive at the opponent's legs with all his force, Grime would make a half-hearted attempt or actually avoid the tackle altogether. To top everything off, Grime had developed something of a reputation as being a 'grasser'. At Sedbergh, as in any other community, grassing or informing to the authorities on one of your own was considered despicable behavior.

In the Lent term, the backlash to Geoffrey Grime and his behavior began to surface. In the same way that I had looked for support, so Grime - realizing the dimensions of the storm that was brewing - began in earnest to seek protection. While I began increasingly to solicit the friendship of David Lungley, Geoffrey Grime began to solicit mine.

In mid-March the choir made a trip to the Royal Society of Choral Music Festival at Ripon Cathedral - a legitimate trip away from the first year oppression of the Sedbergh gulag! This was the pay-off for all those early Sunday mornings. 'Getting out' or 'getting away' had a very specific and very restricted definition at Sedbergh. We were not allowed into the village of Sedbergh or any of its shops unless we had a pass signed by the Housemaster. We were not allowed to leave Sedbergh itself unless on school business, for medical reasons (e.g. a visit to the dentist in Kendal), or due to an excursion with visiting parents. The greatest freedom to be had at Sedbergh was on the fells, hence the great reverence with which they were held.

But this was real escape. Escape from the numbing routines. Escape from the raw cold of the unheated dormitories (as we sat in our cozy, heated bus) - like travel through space. Escape from the atmosphere and gravitational pull of the self-contained and tightly controlled planet of Sedbergh.

Running was the topic of discussion on the bus to Ripon. Running was a major ritual at Sedbergh in the Lent Term. I had already been on countless slogs through the wind and rain. It was yet another means of natural selection in an overlapping series of rites de passage. Everyone survived but only the fittest were rewarded. Running, Sedbergh-style, was punishing and painful, and at times brutal. You were expected to 'gut' yourself on the sado-masochistic nightmares known as House Runs. Of course the more conscientious you were, the more you gutted yourself, and consequently the more painful was the experience. In House Runs, the fittest were rewarded by being able to luxuriate in steaming hot baths while the weakest were still fighting for breath somewhere out on the bleak, sodden fells. The more lasting rewards were enhanced status and prestige. In House Runs each person in the House was timed individually. After the run, a prefect would post up the times for all to see. Needless to say, the punishment for the inadequates was ridicule and opprobrium.

"You know you might have won the Three Mile." Geoff Grime, who was sitting behind David Lungley and I, leaned forward earnestly as he said this. Whereas House Runs were, as the name implied, particular to each of the seven houses at Sedbergh, the Three Mile and the Ten Mile were organized on a school level.

"Oh come on, speck off!" I said a bit impatiently. Grime had been becoming obsequious lately.

"No really. I always thought you were better than Bilsland."

I liked to think that what he was saying was true. The facts were as follows: Bilsland and I had continued our rivalry into the Lent term, only it had become concentrated into a running duel. We were both regarded as specs (best bets) for the Three Mile. Bilsland was a better runner than I - certainly a more natural one. However, on a couple of occasions, I had recorded faster times than he. On one occasion I did a particularly fast time. Bilsland, true to form, suggested in a sidelong way that I must have cut the course.

Anyway, this duel fizzled out about three days before the day of the race. I sprained my ankle quite severely and as a result wasn't able to take part in the race. Bilsland brought honor to Powell House by finishing second. He also did himself and me a favor. From this point on, he did not seem so threatened by me and gradually the more unpleasant aspects of his behavior subsided.

"Didn't you feel you were better than Bilsland?"

David Lungley noticed my expression of distaste and interjected:

"Did I ever tell you that my father nearly won the Ten Mile when he was here?" This piece of information grabbed both of our attentions and so quickly and successfully diverted the conversation. To win the Ten Mile was *the* ultimate honor at Sedbergh. To win was to become an instant hero, to create a memory that would stay etched in people's minds - boys, teachers, parents, townspeople alike would discuss and recall each year's race. No wonder David had an air of invincibility about him, his father had won the Ten Mile!

The road to Ripon lay eastwards from Sedbergh. The bus followed the twisting gray fell road up onto the treeless wastes of the moors between Ingleton and Hawes. It seemed like the roof of the world up there. The leaden sky merged into mile upon mile of dull brown desolate moorland. Near Hawes, the master in charge of the choir mentioned that we had just crossed the Pennine Way, the long hiking trail that stretched all the way from Derbyshire up to the border with Scotland. As we passed through Hawes, he pointed out the Quaker meeting house founded by George Fox. I had expected more desolate moorland the other side of Hawes. That had been my experience of Yorkshire to date. I had seen the fells and I had seen the moors, but I had not seen much of the dales, so I was unprepared for the softness and beauty of Wensleydale. We were now in an enchanting, world of tree-lined slopes, tiny hamlets, and narrow gray-stone bridges. The road followed the gentle river Ure along the valley floor through Aysgarth and West Witton and past Walden (fitting name) to the cathedral city of Ripon.

The long bus ride had made Geoff Grime feel queasy. From Hawes onwards, he had been curled up in his seat trying to catch some sleep and settle his stomach. This had given Lungley and I a chance to talk. Over the past few weeks, I had noticed that deep feelings of attraction towards Lungley were being stirred up. I didn't understand them. I couldn't explain them. I knew they were different than anything I had felt before, with Colin for instance. It was just that David seemed to represent so many things that I respected and admired. He was courageous. He was honest and open. And above all, he had treated me fairly. I felt grateful to him. I wanted him to be my friend. I wanted to be close, intimate. Now as we sat close together on the bus I felt that I could bring up something that had been gnawing away at me.

"You know, sometimes I want to call you David ... but I feel I'm not allowed to. I don't mind calling you Lungers ... it's ... it's just that everyone calls you that ... well, not everyone but ... you know what I mean ... those people that think you're O.K."

"Well you can call me David." He said this quietly and undramatically with almost a quizzical look in his eye as if to say 'but of course ... what's the big deal?'

"Oh, that's great. I wouldn't have to call you David in the Dayroom. It could just be when we're together." *He* might not think it was a big deal to get on first name terms but I certainly did. There were not that many boys in their first couple of years at Sedbergh who were addressed by their first names. It was either last name, or as one gained acceptance a cozy variation on your last name like 'Billy' or 'Lungers'. At the Edinburgh Academy, my nickname had been 'Bruno'. I had tried to get some people to call me that at Sedbergh but without any success.

The fact was that I was desperate to get rid of the name 'Poker'. It was like an albatross around my neck. It made me feel that everyone saw me as a base kind of character whose chief claim to fame was that he walked around in a state of almost continual erection. It was this delicate matter that I now pursued with David.

"You're lucky even to have people call you Lungers. I really hate being called Poker. You know I was thinking ... people from Scotland are often called Jock, and I'm from Scotland ... so I think I should be called Jock."

"I like that. 'Jock' ... yes, I like that." He smiled and gave the short, shy laugh that usually accompanied his smile. Lungley was always so affirmative. It helped give me confidence to push the matter to its conclusion.

"You see, I was thinking that if some people start calling me Jock then maybe it will catch on, and people will stop calling me Poker. So anyway, I wanted to ask you if you would call me Jock."

"Well, it'll take me a bit of getting used to but ... yes, I don't mind doing that. Actually, I think it's a good idea. Maybe Grime would agree to do it as well."

Along with his other qualities, the thing about Lungley that I liked was that he delivered. He was a problem solver. I felt elated.

In Ripon Cathedral, we sang John Ireland's 'Te Deum'. It sounded wonderful. I had felt high before going into the Cathedral, now I was floating. Afterwards, Lungley, Grime and I wandered around the streets of Ripon in the free hour before setting off. Grime had recovered from his queasiness and had taken every occasion to tag along with Lungley and I.

On the way back we stopped for tea at a famous pub called The Wensleydale Heiffer in Aysgarth. It was there that Geoff Grime cornered me and dropped his bombshell.

"Are you doing anything special this Easter holidays?", he asked.

"No, not really," I responded, totally unaware of what was to come.

"Then how would you like to come to stay with me for a week in Blackpool?"

For several moments there was silence. I didn't know how to respond. I felt flattered and confused at the same time. I *did* want acceptance. This I knew. I hadn't yet been invited for a meal, let alone stay at someone's house. On the other hand, I didn't like Grime. It was that simple. As with a lot of other people, he rubbed me up the wrong way. Admittedly we shared certain things in common. We were in the choir together. We were in the orchestra together. We were in the same form. But these were not the important things. What was important was that I felt I had a duty to be nice to him. I knew what it was like to be lonely and ostracized. I could see him sliding into a similar or even worse state of affairs. I felt it was my duty to stand by him, even if I didn't like him. "Crikey! That's quite an offer. Thank-you ... er, yes I'd love to come." The kind elephant spoke, and somewhere, Ian Brown - whoever and whatever he was, shriveled and muttered, 'why can't you ever say "no"?'

The rest of the trip back to Sedbergh was hell. I felt at one and the same time beholden to Grime for his grand gesture, inwardly angry at him for putting me in such an awkward situation, mad at what seemed like weakness on my part, and uncomfortable with David Lungley because it felt like I had betrayed him. It felt like just as I was on the edge of perhaps getting rid of the 'poker' albatross, I had stumbled into replacing it with the 'Grime' albatross.

The Lent term ended a couple of weeks later. I spent a week in Edinburgh and then took the train to Blackpool. I remember very little of my holiday with Grime, except that I felt uncomfortable much of the time and that I didn't enjoy myself despite the fact that his family were wealthy and determined to give us a good time.

* * *

Returning to Sedbergh in May, after the Easter holidays, was to be witness to a striking transformation. Gone were the predominant brown and gray colors. Gone, too, the wind torn starkness. The Lent term was aptly named. Not only had we paid penance with the toil and pain of running, but so too had the surrounding countryside paid alms to the ruthless God of Winter. Now all was soft and welcoming: a green garden of delights with blossoming foliage, fells awakening with fern and moss and heather, a spring

sun and daffodils softening the gray-stone buildings with pale yellow light. Near the Chapel, the rhododendron bushes were giving their first hint of pink and red magnificence, and in the garden of Powell House, Mr. Begley's roses were responding to the first signs of summer.

Within Powell House, the atmosphere was also considerably changed. There were now five or six new boys below me. Now *they* were the ones at the bottom of the pecking order. They were the ones who had to take the brunt of fagging duties and turfing obligations. It gave me a secure feeling to realize that these were people only beginning a fifteen-stage survival course of which I had already completed two stages. In the Junior Dayroom, the new joint heads were Iain Bilsland and a boy called Mark Hudson.

Hudson was the only boy that I'd met to date who had any resemblance to the characters in the Bunter books. He had an air about him that somebody like David Lungley didn't. Although Lungley personified many of the most essential Public school virtues, you would never have known it by looking at him. He seemed too shy, too retiring, too weedy. He just didn't have the right image. Mark Hudson, on the other hand, was able to project exactly the right image. He looked you straight in the eye, he spoke confidently, his posture and movements were assertive. He possessed just the right degree of cocky arrogance. In this, he was like Colin Crabbie – 'leadership material'. He displayed qualities of fairness, discerning judgment and decisiveness. Mark Hudson would not have had a problem saying 'no' to Grime. He was Harry Wharton, Bull, Bob Cherry and those other good guys in the Bunter books all rolled into one. He had 'class'. To his credit, he also had a sense of humor. There was even a bit of Billy Bunter himself in Hudson's make-up. Hudson could play the fool. When he wasn't in the role of leader, he would deflate himself with self-deprecating humor. Hudson's physical appearance seemed to reflect this duality. His face was that of a leader - firm jaw, steady eyes and relaxed mouth. His body was that of the jester. He was roly-poly and was possessed of two enormous floppy ears, hence his endearing nickname of 'Jumbo'.

The Junior Dayroom under Hudson became a relatively benign place. Bilsland played second fiddle to Hudson. He knew that he did not have the popular support that Hudson enjoyed. The truth was that Bilsland had coerced and manipulated to get the support that he'd had before. Now that he had gained authority, both by acquiring it due to his 3-mile success, and being granted it in his position as joint head of the dayroom, he became an easier person to be around. In his new position, he was also more or less obliged to stop calling me Poker, or at least change the attitude and tone of voice with which he delivered it. In fact, during the course of the summer term, the term 'Poker' began to die out, partly due to the change in Bilsland's attitude but mainly because slowly, one by one, people began to follow David Lungley's example and call me 'Jock'.

My period of unpopularity was over, and in the summer term, the pendulum began to swing the other way. I was regarded as a hot prospect in the cricket world. My ability as a fast bowler helped me gain acceptance. In particular, it helped me gain status with certain older boys who had come a year before me. A couple of these older boys played on the Colts team. There were two sets of teams at Sedbergh, in both cricket and rugby, that had prestige. One was, of course, the first teams of the school - namely the 1st. XV and the 1st. XI; the other was the Colts XV and the Colts XI. The difference between the two had to do with age. The Colts teams, as the name implied, were the up and coming first team players, usually between 15 and 16 years old. If a player was exceptional then he might get onto the 1st. XV or the 1st. XI the year after he played on Colts, but as a rule, most players would play one year on the 2nd. XV or 2nd. XI before gaining the glory of being on one of the first teams.

Dave Roberts and Roger Hollinshead were both batsmen, and both expected to get onto the 1st. XI, maybe even in the following year. During that summer term, they were my heroes. I had heroes on the 1st. XI too, but they were not so immediate to my world. Hollinshead and Roberts were junior stars, but because they were from my immediate world of Powell House, they were accessible. As I watched them play in Colts matches against other schools, I would dream about the adulation I would receive if I were in their shoes. After all, I was expected to get on Colts the following year. As I showed what I could do as a fast bowler, they both began to welcome my attention. Apart from the gratification of a younger boy's idolization, they could benefit by having me bowl at them in net practice.

Dave Roberts, the boy who had impatiently told me to obey Bilsland in the 'Poker' incident, was now prepared to share jokes with me. With Roger Hollinshead, the change was even more marked. Hollinshead and I had shared the same desk in the School Orchestra since I had arrived. In my first term, he would scarcely deign to say hello, and we would sit there side by side as if a brick wall was separating us. Now, I noticed that he was not only prepared to play with me in the nets, but also to make small talk at orchestra practice. This acceptance by these two, albeit limited, had an interesting ripple effect on other people's behavior - Mark Hudson, for instance.

Mark Hudson desperately wanted to be a good cricketer, but as far as being a batsman was concerned, he just didn't have the right stuff. Although he continued to strive to improve himself, he sadly recognized his limitations and dealt with them by vicariously living out his fantasies through his heroes. The result was that although Hudson had the same heroes as me, he had a different kind of relationship with them. He put the likes of Roberts and Hollinshead higher than I did and they put him lower than they did me. What this meant in terms of the internal politics of Powell House was that even though Hudson had higher rank than I officially, I gained status and acceptance amongst certain key people who were on a higher rank than him. These sorts of alignments counted for a great deal in the ultra-hierarchical world of Sedbergh and Hudson was a politician at heart, eager to align himself with those in favor. In this, he was the antithesis of David Lungley who seemed too inner-directed to get hung up on such matters as status and power and prestige. Whereas Lungley was guided by principles, Hudson was guided by expedience. In short, it was expedient for Hudson to be friendly with me.

While things were getting better for me they were getting rapidly worse for Geoff Grime. His unpopularity was spreading beyond the boundaries of the Junior Dayroom. Whereas I'd really only had one antagonist in the person of Bilsland, in Grime's case there were now a whole bevy of antagonists. He was castigated for his suck-up behavior, he was ridiculed for his fastidiousness, and he was fast becoming seriously ostracized from life in the Junior Dayroom. Certain people went out of their way to make life hell for him. In particular, two boys - Ralph Blacklock and Andrew Booth - ganged up on him. The former was my old fell-stomping partner, the latter was a stocky red-headed boy whose sarcastic expression bordered on the malicious. His nickname was 'Butch'. These two, and especially Butch Booth, were masters of the art of baiting. Although others engaged on the level of pranks, like giving Grime apple-pie beds or hiding his prize clarinet, the most damaging form of bullying came from the psychological terrorism of people like Blacklock and Booth.

As this campaign against Grime escalated, I found myself in an extremely uncomfortable position. On the one hand, what Blacklock and Booth were doing went right against the grain and to some extent I spoke out against it. On the other hand, although not desiring to bait Grime, I did not feel like going out of my way to defend him. I did not regard him as a friend. I did not like him. I didn't even respect him. There were times when I wanted to, and did rebuke him. What made all of this so much more complicated was the fact that I had accepted his invitation and stayed with him. I had made a mistake and I knew it. The price I was now paying was guilt, to the extent that I was not helping Grime enough, and resentment, to the extent that I felt it my duty to be loyal.

In June, something happened that illustrated my ambivalence. Grime and I were both in form I Ib. Our form master was a man called Dick Dawe. One day, Mr. Dawe set us the following essay topic: 'with whom would you most like to be marooned on a desert island.'

This topic was not so extraordinary in itself. What was definitely unusual was that he wanted us to choose from *solely* amongst our class-mates. Not only was this task forcing us to break the unwritten code of keeping your feelings to yourself, it was also forcing us as a group to give our teacher privileged information. He would be in possession of intimate facts that we as a group were unaware of ourselves.

The fact was that the last person in the world with whom I would want to be marooned, was Geoff Grime, with the possible exception of Iain Bilsland. Apart from anything else, with his tidiness and my messiness, we would be at each other's throats in no time - the resident, desert-island Odd Couple. However, as I wrestled with my choice of whom to pick, the ultimate choice seemed inescapable. Whether I wanted it or not, I *had to* pick Grime. It was my duty. It would be just too disloyal not to. And so, reluctantly, I did. I

then had to give the reasons why I had picked him. This, needless to say, was even harder than the choice itself.

But even though I was prepared to be marooned with Geoff Grime in an imaginary situation, I was *not* prepared to be marooned with him in the real world of the Junior Dayroom and Powell House. A few days after writing the essay, I was approached by Grime, one afternoon as I was coming in from cricket practice.

“Hello Jock. How’s the bowling going? You look pretty good out there. Listen, I wanted to ask you something. My parents are coming up this weekend. Would you like to come out for Dinner on Saturday evening?” Grime had a disturbed, almost pleading look. But I wasn’t about to make the same mistake twice.

“No, I’m sorry ... I can’t come. With all this cricket and everything, I’m terribly behind with my work and exams are coming up.”

We both pulled away simultaneously. In my case, because my excuse was getting lamer by the second. In Grime’s case, presumably because he felt rejected. I had betrayed him. When Grime’s parents did come up to Sedbergh that weekend, they must have complained to Mr. Begley about what their son was telling him, because suddenly the whole affair exploded into the open.

The first we knew about it was one evening at the start of prep in the Junior Dayroom. Mark Hudson announced half-way through prep that Mr. Begley was going to come in and see us about an important matter. When it was noticed that Grime was not present, it became clear what ‘the matter’ was going to be. At around 8 o’clock, Mr. Begley walked into the Dayroom. He looked serious at the best of times but now his expression was truly grim.

“I think everyone knows why I am here, and if you don’t, you should do. It has been brought to my attention that for some time now, there has been what amounts to a campaign of bullying against Geoffrey Grime. The boy has suffered to the point where he has told his parents and now they are considering removing him from this school. This is a disgrace. I am shocked and horrified to find out that this has been going on in my own House. You can rest assured that I intend to get to the bottom of this matter. I intend to find out who the culprits are and to punish them accordingly.” Mr. Begley paused and cast his eye round the room. At that moment, it seemed as if he was not only omnipotent but also omniscient.

“I want all those who consider themselves, *in any way*, guilty of playing a part in this campaign against Grime to stand over here to my right. Those who consider themselves innocent can stand to my left. You have precisely one minute to make up your minds where you are going to go.”

My mind raced. At first thought, there didn’t seem to be any problem. Of course I was innocent. I hadn’t bullied Grime. In fact, quite a few times I had told people like Booth, Blacklock and Hordern to lay off their baiting. But then nagging doubts crept in. Was I really innocent? Could I, in all conscience, say that I hadn’t played *any* part in the campaign against Grime? There had been times when I had got impatient with him and had said something unpleasant. There had been times when I had remained passive and silent while someone was castigating Grime. And worst of all, he had tried to befriend me, and I had basically rejected him. There wasn’t any time for a counter-argument to these thoughts. My blood froze as I heard Mr. Begley saying, “time up”. I found myself moving robot-like to the Housemaster’s right. As I crossed the dayroom, I passed Butch Booth. He was going the other way. I couldn’t believe it. That was just too outrageous! And then as I surveyed the two sides, I saw in disbelief that there were fewer people on our side than the other. Booth was not the only coward. I felt nauseated.

We, ‘the guilty’, were given a Housemaster’s beating. In Sedbergh’s system of punishment, there were only two things worse than ‘a Houseman’s’. These were ‘a Headman’s’, and of course the ultimate, expulsion from the school. It was not the last time I had a Houseman’s. However, the next time there was no question as to my guilt.

Following the Houseman’s, each of us had to take a slip of paper signed by Mr. Begley to the Headmaster, explaining why we had been beaten. In addition, Mr. Begley ordered us to formally apologize to Grime. I half expected Grime to express surprise at seeing me as one of the self-confessed guilty ones. I half hoped that he might exculpate me by telling Mr. Begley that I was innocent - no such luck.

I encountered considerable reproach from both Mr. Begley and Mr. Dawe for several weeks. Mr. Begley told Mr. Dawe that despite the fact that I had stayed with Grime in the Easter holidays, I had ended up being guilty of bullying him. Mr. Dawe told Mr. Begley that to make matters worse, I had written an essay for him saying that I would prefer to be marooned on a desert island with Grime, rather than anyone else.

Then there was the consequent situation in the Dayroom. Here the fallout was contaminated and ugly. The atmosphere was a maelstrom of shock, outrage, resentment, guilt, anger, suspicion and distrust. All these elements swirled around causing people to avoid the Junior Dayroom as much as possible. There was also an avoidance of Grime tempered by a forced politeness when contact was necessary.

There was one person who expressed surprise that I had confessed and that was David Lungley. He said that he felt I had been over-conscientious.

For my part, my feelings towards Lungley had grown to the point where I was infatuated with him. In Sedbergh terms, I had a 'crush' on him. I was drawn to him. His integrity shone out. He let me see more clearly, see myself more clearly, see others more clearly. He was solid. He was secure. He was true. I didn't understand my feelings. I couldn't articulate them. All I knew was that I wanted to be close to him. I wanted to touch him. During prep, I sat beside him. Under the table I would edge my knee against his. This gave me an indescribable thrill.

To what extent my feelings were sexual, or emotional, or spiritual, I don't know and don't care. They seemed good and they seemed right. One day in July, shortly before the end of term, I persuaded David Lungley to come up to the dormitory with me. Lungley was willing but as usual appeared naively innocent. When we reached the dormitory, I told him that all I wanted to do was lie on top of him fully clothed. So we lay there, half cuddling, half moving. It was a beautiful moment. My feelings were so overpowering that even when a Junior Dayroom boy called John Spedding walked in on us by mistake and asked us what we were doing, I just said "you wouldn't understand" and paid no attention to him. When he asked if he could stay and watch, we both agreed and continued to cuddle.

Somehow, after that, my feelings towards David Lungley lost some of their urgency. The feelings of attraction had come to some kind of fruition.

With the end of the summer term, came the end of my days as a fag. As was the custom, the prefects held the Fag's Feast. In this traditional ritual, the prefects assumed the role of servant or fag, and the fags got to stuff themselves on the goodies that the prefects had prepared and served. A sociologist would have found it an interesting ritual to examine – a reversal of roles that allowed the slaves to realize their Walter Mitty fantasy and actually become the overlords while, even more delectably, the overlords suddenly, at the wave of a wand, become the slaves. It was a balancing mechanism to hold the fagging system in check, to prevent it from becoming tyrannical. It was a way of returning some esteem to the new boys while reducing the prefects to size. It made them human in our eyes. It made us feel that this was an expression of gratitude on their part.

As I crammed myself with eggs and beans, sausages and bacon, toast and tea, life at Sedbergh approached the Bunter ideal. As far as my own personal overlord was concerned, I harbored nary a grudge. As he served me my third plate of trifle, I even forgave him for the time he had beaten me for not keeping the study clean enough. Old Woody wasn't so bad. After all, he'd finally made it onto the 1st. XV and that, in itself, was sufficient absolution for anybody.

Despite the fagging, despite the Booths and Bilslands, despite the Grime affair, despite House runs and everything, life in my first year at Sedbergh had not been completely unbearable.

4.

For the first two terms of my second year at Sedbergh, 1961-62, I was head of the Junior Dayroom. This was the first time in my life that I had been given direct authority over other people, and I soon found that it was not a position in which I was comfortable. I was not a leader like Mark Hudson, or if I was, I hadn't had much practice at it. In my family I had been raised to take orders not give them. 'A good soldier never asks questions', my Father would tell me again and again. I was taught to accept hardship without complaining and to accept authority without questioning. I felt unhappy and reticent in a role where I was the one who had to give orders, make decisions and judgments, and punish and reward where appropriate. Another thing my father often said was, 'a popular sergeant-major is usually not a good sergeant-major'. That may have been true, but it missed the point. I wanted desperately to be popular. I wanted acceptance. I wanted to fit in. I had no experience telling someone what they could or could not do.

I felt particularly exposed in my new position due to the fact that my main friend and supporter, David Lungley, had been moved up to the Senior Dayroom along with Hudson and Bilsland. However I had returned to Sedbergh determined to create an identity for myself. There had been an element of neediness that had guided me in my relations with Lungley, and even Grime at one point. I wanted to rid myself of this, to be more self-reliant. As the term progressed, I began to feel that perhaps the separation between Dave and I wasn't such a bad thing. We were in fact separate in other ways.

I was in the final stages of attaining my full height and adult weight. Along with this, my voice had finally completely broken. My days as an over-sized treble were over. Meanwhile, in the case of Lungley, puberty seemed as elusive as ever. The result of all this was that I left the choir whereas David Lungley stayed on as the perennial treble. The truth was that I felt Lungley was beginning to be a bit of an embarrassment. Six months earlier I had been able to rationalize it. Sure, Lungley was still 'a little boy', but what the hell, even though I was bigger, I was still a treble just like him. Besides, he was a misfit and so was I. But most important of all, despite his size, he had a lion's heart. And so I defended my 'little' friend, to myself and to others. Now, I found it harder to think in this way. It seemed as if we were growing apart. Let's face it, at an age fast approaching 15, he was something of a freak to be still so undeveloped.

In that winter term of 1961, it did seem to me that I was beginning to be able to stand on my own two feet. During the summer holidays I had asked my mother to buy me a kilt. This was part of a conscious campaign to develop my 'Jock' image and rid myself once and for all of my former odious 'Poker' identity. Although I couldn't or wouldn't reinforce my Scottish identity with the appropriate accent, at least now I could give the name 'Jock' more credibility by wearing a kilt. There was only one other Scotsman in Powell House and he didn't have a kilt so I had cornered the market so to speak. In December, I further bolstered my Scottish identity by being confirmed into the Presbyterian church. Most boys at Sedbergh got confirmed into the Episcopalean Church but I decided to assert my differentness by becoming a 'Presby'. I was now also able, once again, to join the masochistic ritual of rising early on a Sunday morning and trundling off to Chapel, only now it was for the purpose of taking communion rather than going to choir practice. By doing this, a small part of my vast surplus of guilt feelings was assuaged.

In addition, I continued to build support and gain acceptance through doing well in Rugby. In particular, I began to experience the glow that came from the enthusiastic praise of the new boys. Although I wasn't on the Colts Rugby team that year, there was a good chance that I would be on the following year, as well as be on the Colts Cricket team in the summer. I could hardly wait. That's when I would show everyone what I was really made of. My father was always saying to me 'in Life, you've got to prove yourself ... again and again *and* again'. The first two terms of my second year at Sedbergh were ones of anticipation. I was going to have my chance to prove myself and already I could sniff the sweet smell of success.

One day in November, an event took place that marked the first faltering steps into that garden of delights that greeted those who managed to find their way out of the maze called Puberty. On that cold gray day, just about a week before my fifteenth birthday, I received a letter. This was no ordinary letter. It was a letter from ... *a woman.*

At this point some background information on, 'the History of Relations between Ian Brown and The Opposite Sex' would be in order. It's a brief history.

ENTER DR. FREUD

Brown: Take it away maestro.
Freud: Oh dank you, dank you. Now den, lie back on dis here couch. Tell me Herr Brown, vot ist your earliest childhood memory?
Brown: Pooing in my little blue wooly panties.
Freud: Ja, and vot happened?
Brown: I felt bad because I knew my Mummy didn't want me to.
Freud: Ah.... iz dat zo? (scribble, scribble) And vot odder dings kanst you remember about your Modder?
Brown: Well...., she used to play Elephants with me on the stairs.
Freud: Vell...blow me over! Vot iz dis 'Elephants'?
Brown: She liked climbing up the stairs on all fours with me underneath her.
Freud: Vell, bless my yid! (scribble, scribble)
Brown: The problem was that she still wanted to do it when I was five or six years old. I mean I was too big. I didn't fit under her any more.....if you know what I mean.
Freud: Indeed, indeed! Now den, vot about sexual activity?
Brown: What do you mean?
Freud: Sex ... you know, exploration of die privaten parts
Brown: Well, when I was little, say between the ages of 5 and 9, I used to play around a lot with my friends.
Freud: Like vot you do?
Brown: Oh, the usual things. 'Doctor and Patient', 'Forfeits, that kind of thing. We would take our clothes off and explore each other.
Freud: And after dis?
Brown: Well, to tell you the truth, I had more sex at the age of seven or eight....at least as far as women were concerned, than I did for the next twelve years put together.
Freud: You kid me, ja?
Brown: No. At first, like when I was 10 or 11, I wasn't that interested. And then when I got interested, it was hard to meet them. Most of the time I was at boarding school and during the holidays, I was either away at some camp or else stuck at home. My parents never met anyone, you see.
Freud: Vos der anyvon?
Brown: Yes, there was a girl called Libby Croombe in Edinburgh that I was crazy about. She liked me too but she always played hard to get. I could never get near her.
Freud: You ver frustrated, ja?
Brown: You got it, Doc. Boy was I frustrated. At school it was embarrassing. People would come back at the beginning of term and everyone would be talking about all the girls they'd met during the holidays, and who they'd done what with. After a while the thing got to be humiliating. I started wondering if I was O.K, you know what I mean?

Freud: *Oh do I ever? Sometimes I vonder de same ding.*
 Brown: *Well anyway, I did finally meet a girl ... well, not exactly*
 Freud: *Not exactly a girl, vot you mean – a trans-sexual?*
 Brown: *No, no, I mean I didn't exactly meet her. I'd known her in Edinburgh when I was really young but then she moved to Canada with her parents, so ...*
 Freud: *Go on.*
 Brown: *Well, I got this Christmas card from her when I was 13 years old. At first I didn't reply. It seemed sort of silly, and I still wasn't really interested. But then by the following year I felt a kind of pressure to have someone, you know someone to talk about, someone to get letters from. So I wrote her a Christmas card.*

(SCENE FADES....)

For me, at any rate, getting a letter from Miss Pamela Boyd of Edmonton, Alberta was important. It seemed to me, that there was little scope for 'action' at Sedbergh. The only women around, apart from Faggot were the cook, Mrs. Lazenby - a monstrous, hairy woman, and the scivs. The scivs were two peroxide blondes from Newcastle called Gloria and Rita. In my eyes they might as well have been lepers. I imagined them to have scurvy, lice and venereal disease, to say the least.

Pamela Boyd, on the other hand, was my age, a doctor's daughter, and in the photo that accompanied the letter, appeared to be peaches and honey and sugar and spice and very definitely all the things that I imagined a nice young girl should be made of.

Some excerpts from her letter:

(regarding a photo that I had sent her of me in my new kilt)

*'I must agree, it's not such a 'hot' picture. I don't think it does you justice ... it's funny to hear you talk about Rock 'n Roll. That's laid an egg (old-fashioned). We talk about jiving. Has the 'Twist' reached Britain yet?'
 (regarding a present that had accompanied the letter)
 ... the little man I sent is of Danish origin. It is called a troll. It is neither a man nor a woman ...'*

So she lived in Canada. So what? In fact it added to her allure. Besides, none of those other creeps had a girlfriend in anywhere near as exotic a place as Canada. I mean, you couldn't really call Skipton or Grimsby exotic.

As it turned out, Canada was very much at the forefront of my mind for another reason. A few weeks earlier, my mother had informed me in a letter that my sister Joy had just got engaged to be married to a Canadian. I knew nothing of Canada except that it was a vast land of mountains and plains and mighty rivers where it snowed all the time, where most of the inhabitants were either Red Indian or Eskimo, and where the Mounties always got their man. I imagined that my sister's fiancé must be a rugged outdoorsy trapper type, like Hawkeye or Daniel Boone. One thing was for sure; being able to dream about this far-off land was a wonderful antidote to those times when life at Sedbergh seemed just too inbred, and too claustrophobic.

It was a couple of months before I got another letter from Pam.

Some excerpts:

*'I don't sound very enthusiastic about the photo of you, do I? Well I really am. I think you are very good-looking.
Well I suppose I had better admit that I do sort of have another boy-friend. His name is Rodger Rice. I met him at the ski club. He is a very good skier and very good-looking. But please don't get jealous. He is not faithful. I think a lot more of you. I think writing to each other is much more romantic than having a boyfriend near.
P.S. I am not very keen on golf. Perhaps it's because all the girls play it here. I think*

*it's silly ... but I think it's nice for boys to play.
.....P.S. again; you seem to tell me very little about yourself.'*

The effect of this letter was devastating. I came crashing down from my pedestal and went into an orgy of introspective analysis and self-doubt. What did she mean she had another boyfriend. She'd only just started up with me. That wasn't right. That wasn't fair. You can't have two boyfriends. My mother didn't have two husbands. My sister didn't have two boy-friends. I didn't know anyone who had two boy-friends. In fact I knew quite a few people who didn't have any. Like Mr. Begley for example ... well, at least he didn't have two girlfriends. 'A very good skier and very good-looking', she says. Oh that was great, that was! I mean I didn't even ski. All I did was play golf and she thought that was silly. And then after telling me how good-looking 'Rodger' was, she said she didn't mean to sound unenthusiastic about the way I looked. Good grief, and I could have sworn my acne wasn't showing in that photo. Maybe it was the kilt. Yes that was it! She didn't like the kilt. She thought I looked silly in the kilt. And what did she mean by saying that I told her very little about myself? I mean what did she want to hear?

And so it went. Fortunately I found someone to share such burning questions with. His name was John Aitken. We had entered Powell House at the same time but unlike me, he had achieved little or nothing since that time. Aitken seemed to have no particular talents or outstanding virtues, except for one. He was a very good listener. He had, in terms I was later to learn, 'good communication-skills'. The first time I really noticed this was when he began to take an interest in my letters from Pam. Unlike some of the other boys, he didn't make fun of the fact that my love-life was being carried on with someone I barely knew, over 6000 miles away. He wanted to know about Pam and what she had to say. When he saw me hitting a blue period, following the 'other boyfriend' letter, he became empathetic and consoling. He was, as the French would say, 'sympathique'. He was comforting and nurturing. He became my confidante.

With the beginning of the summer term, I found I had neither time nor inclination to indulge myself with thoughts of Pam. The long-awaited summer term! The central question was, would I get on the Colts Cricket team?

Everything was exciting that term. I had finally got out of the lowly Junior Dayroom and was now a member of the semi-respectable Senior Dayroom. As with everything else at Sedbergh, increasing elevation in the pecking-order was commensurate with increasing privileges. So whereas in the Junior Dayroom there had been no material comforts whatsoever, now we were allowed the luxury of a radio and newspapers on Sunday. We no longer had the oppressive atmosphere of a prefect supervising our prep periods. With my entry into the Senior Dayroom I was also rid of the responsibility of authority over others. I felt a giddy kind of freedom. In addition to all this, I was reunited with David Lungley and Mark Hudson.

Ever since I had started playing cricket, I had been a fast bowler. For me, it was the natural form of expression. I was a high-energy person in a low-energy sport. In this gentleman's game, the fast bowler was the one allowed to be a ferocious madman. He was allowed to tear up to the wicket like an express train and then with every ounce of his strength, hurl a tightly packed leather ball at some quivering batsman 22 yards away. He was allowed to do ungentlemanly things like spit on the ball and rub it up and down on the side of his white trousers. He was allowed to grunt and snort and glower, and have his shirt-tails flap around outside his trousers.

My heroes were people like 'Typhoon' Tyson, not crafty spin bowlers like Locke and Laker. For me, spin bowlers didn't work hard enough to be considered heroes. They didn't sweat and strain in the service of their team. Instead, they tried to outwit the batsman. A flick of the wrist would produce the spin, but this in turn would be disguised in various ways so as to deceive the batsman.

The difference between a fast bowler and a spin bowler represented a dichotomy in my values. Schematically the difference looked like this:

SPIN BOWLERS	=	MIND i.e. they were lazy, clever, wily, laid-back
FAST BOWLERS	=	SOUL i.e. they were hard workers, solid, honest,
	=	BODY straight-forward, up-front
	=	'CHARACTER'

In the end, the two opening fast bowler positions were given to a fearsome tank-shaped boy called Iain Thomson, and myself.

That summer was like a dream where specific people and events now seem blurred and softened into a wonderful merging and mingling landscape. Lazy, hot days ... spectators coming daily to gladiatorial combat where instead of blood, they call for 'wickets' ... and the two gladiators respond to them ... the one squat and barrel-chested, the other tall and lean ... they hurl their weapons with full force at their opponents striving to shatter his wicket or at least intimidate and humble him ... one opponent falls to the tall lean warrior ... the crowd roars ... the praise and adulation soothes and strengthens the young man's spirit ... he remembers his mother and his father and how they were never satisfied ... these people wanted more too but at least they spurred him on ... they were not sparing in their support ... and the young warrior resumes his task ... challenging his opponent ... challenging the other gladiator to better his feats ... challenging himself ... the crowd roars again as another opponent is struck down ... they talk amongst themselves ... 'he's in really good form' ... 'you should have seen him last year' ... 'who do you think is better, him or Thomson?' ... 'he's really fast Amongst the crowd are the neophytes, the novice gladiators ... they gather at the edge of the amphitheater and watch in awe ... the tall lean gladiator sees them but pretends not to ... he smiles to himself ... he knows that theirs is not merely adulation but idolization ... he had done the same thing a year before ... young boys, clean-limbed and as yet unshaven ... young boys, energetic, physical, aggressive and yet seductive in their praise ... now they came to watch and to learn ... soon they would be competing in the same arena ... but the fact that they would later be threatening the very idols they were presently helping to create, only added a further tension to the mutual attraction ... a tension that was almost like an aphrodisiac ... so the weeks went by ... as more opponents fell, so did the young warrior's stature rise ... he drove himself harder ... pushed himself to his limits ... he was obsessed ... determined to beat his opponents through sheer strength and speed.

It was a dream: a wonderful, languid, sensuous dream. We had a total of six matches against other schools. In the first four matches I got a total of 18 wickets for only 86 runs. However, daily cricket practice seemed to be producing some wear and tear in my back and neck. The fact that I didn't know how to keep my head tucked in when diving didn't help matters. The result was that I missed the last two games and had to spend several days in the Sanatorium with my back and neck in traction.

It was during this lay-off that Mark Hudson asked me out for the first time. His parents were visiting and I had been asked out for lunch. I felt quite honored to be asked out by Hudson and especially for lunch. What meal you were invited out for was a clear indicator of who stood where on the scale of friendship. Being invited for breakfast was not a big deal. It meant that you were worth being acknowledged as some kind of friend, or else it could be seen as an overture to friendship, or even conversely a signal that a phase-down was under way. Lunch was more significant. It was the number two spot.

'You're close to being my best friend' was the message. Being invited out to dinner was something special. It was usually a gesture of a deeper and more committed kind of friendship.

Mark seemed anxious that I make a good impression. 'Remember to wear you kilt, old boy' he said, and then inspecting me more closely, he added, 'and for goodness sake, brush your hair!' Later, Mr. Hudson picked us up in his white Mercedes and drove us to The White Hart Hotel. Mr. Hudson was a large and imposing man with a lordly bearing. Mrs. Hudson, who was awaiting us in the hotel, was warmer and yet she too seemed aloof. I felt uncomfortable. I was not used to the airs and graces of the English aristocracy. My parents had no social life in Edinburgh save the regular and monotonous visits with relatives. They rarely if ever went 'out' to social events and such times as they did, the occasions turned out to be nightmares of uneasiness, tension and embarrassment. The Hudsons were not, in fact, aristocracy but like the Crabbies they had a lineage at Sedbergh. They were also extremely wealthy due to Mr. Hudson's

position as President of the largest trawling company in Hull. But as far as I was concerned, they might as well have been relatives of The Queen.

“Would you care for a glass of wine, Brown?” We were just starting in on the lamb cutlets as Mr. Hudson posed this question. Mrs. Hudson and Mark who had just accepted their glasses looked at me inquiringly.

“Er .. no thank-you, sir.” I had never tasted wine and was surprised that Mr. Hudson should ask us considering we were under-age. It also rattled me that he should insist on calling me ‘Brown’. It was to be expected with Masters but parents were a different thing. Besides Mark had introduced me as ‘Jock Brown’ and Mrs. Hudson was calling me Jock, albeit infrequently.

“Father, I don’t know if I told you ... Jock is one of our best bowlers on the Colts team.”

Mr. Hudson glanced at the neck brace I was wearing.

“But the poor old chap has done his neck in,” Mark hastened to add. But you’ll be back there soon, won’t you Jock?”

“Mark, tell the waiter to bring some water please.” Mrs. Hudson didn’t appear terribly interested in the topic of Colts cricket. For my part, I marveled at this request and the way in which Mark carried it out so effortlessly. Neither my mother nor my father would ever entrust me to do such a thing and even if they did, I would form a polite question rather than the cool self-assured imperative that came from Mark. I hated the idea of being waited upon. Who was I to have someone twice my age call me ‘sir’ and bow and scrape at my table? I had learned to accept the pecking order at Sedbergh. I understood the rules of the game there. But this was a different world. Although we were at a hotel in the town of Sedbergh, we were no longer in the every day world of Sedbergh school.

I was also having trouble with the way that Mark seemed to want to create the ‘right impression’ with his parents. He seemed to cover up the playful, uninhibited part of himself that I usually related to and enjoyed, in favor of the same rather smug and patronizing attitude that they had.

The lunch continued with the topic of conversation becoming centered around the Hudson’s social life. In the upcoming summer holidays, Mark wondered if he would be allowed to drive the Mercedes in the hills, and whether the Hellyers would be giving their usual bash in August with the marquee and the band and champers and everything. I felt like an onlooker, a fish out of water. On the cricket field or rugby ground I could prove myself in action. On the cello, or increasingly on the piano, I could express myself through the language of music. But in the dining rooms of polite society I was at a loss for words. I felt stifled. There was an urge in me to say something rude or just to reject the whole thing by suddenly standing up and walking out. It made me sick that Mark should change in the way that he did. I thought of the Powell House emblem - the name of the House magazine was ‘The Chameleon’. Maybe that’s what Powell House was all about - a home for chameleons.

5.

Edinburgh: August 1962

As I walked up the steps of 30 Kingsburgh Road, I could feel a curious combination of excitement and depression. At that moment I was excited because I was wearing my Army cadet uniform and I wanted my father to see me in it. I couldn't explain the depressive feelings except that I had felt sad to leave Sedbergh. I even felt sad to see two weeks of army camp come to an end. It had been an incredible term. My neck injury notwithstanding, I had been a hero on Colts. My popularity had increased to the point where I at last felt completely accepted. Six weeks in Edinburgh seemed a barren prospect.

My father was in the back garden sitting in a deck-chair. The fact that there was little delay in his looking up from his newspaper and saying 'hello' indicated that he was in a relatively benign mood. I relaxed a little. Deciding to take a risk, I snapped to attention and saluted my father. I hadn't expected a response but I had hoped that he might laugh or return the salute, or something. My father remained impassive. He wasn't angry. He wasn't even really rebuking me. But I had clearly overstepped a limit.

"Well how was camp?"

"Oh, I enjoyed it."

"Good, good. I hope they worked you hard enough though. What regiment were you billeted with?"

"The Royal Scots."

"The Royal Scots, eh? Well that's a fine regiment. They wouldn't stand for any nonsense. I might have joined up with them myself as a matter of fact. But at that time it was too expensive. I didn't have the money. You had to be rich to afford to be an Officer in one of the crack Scottish regiments ..."

As usual the conversation had turned into a monologue. This particular monologue had to do with why my father had finished up with a second-string regiment like The Royal Berkshire Regiment rather than a crack Scottish regiment. Like the other monologues, I had heard it countless times before. But perhaps it was just as well. How could I honestly tell my father about my experiences? The truth was that I had spent most of my time at Pirbright laughing. We had spent a lot of our time being drilled up and down an outsize parade ground by a couple of outsize Royal Scots Sergeant-Majors. These two were so ferocious that they became absurd caricatures. We could afford to laugh at them, behind their backs of course. We weren't a bunch of working class recruits who had enlisted because being in the Army was a better option to working in a factory or being unemployed. We were public schoolboys. We were officer material. We could afford to see them and the whole endless process of 'quick march - right turn - about turn - eyes left - eyes right - squad halt ...' etc. as a bit of a joke. Make that a huge joke. It was a game. I couldn't take it seriously. I had joined the C.C.F. at the beginning of my second year and most of what I'd seen and experienced since that time, I hadn't been able to take seriously either.

There was one exception and that was the Mountain Rescue unit. I had been impressed with their distinctive blue anoraks and seemingly anti-protocol attitude. They, at least, seemed to have some purpose to justify their existence. I had also been able to see some value to the Arduous Training camp that I had attended in March at Glenwool, Ayrshire. This had been like the expedition with Hamish Dawson to the Cairngorms. Here, there was physical and spiritual challenge, something sadly lacking on the parade grounds of Pirbright. The main challenges at Pirbright had been the assault course, which certainly sorted out the sheep from the goats as far as courage was concerned, and having to deal with a very drunk private while on sentry duty one night. The private had been AWOL and was not about to let two wet-eared cadets ruin his evening.

The enjoyment at Pirbright had not come from the rifles or the tanks or the parade-ground. It came from the comradeship and the hilarity that came from sending up such tight-arsed characters as the two Sergeant-Majors and their absurd routines.

My way of retaining some sanity, and some vitality in the face of deadening routine and overbearing authority, was to make fun of it, to see the melodrama, the cosmic dance behind it all. I was now able to do this at Sedbergh. I had been able to do it at Pirbright. However, in Edinburgh, I felt trapped. Life at home in Edinburgh was a slow, suffocating death. I could not joke with my parents and increasingly there seemed little outlet elsewhere. I no longer had a support group. I still saw Anthony but our main connection now consisted of playing golf and squash together. The only other person that I could call a friend was Colin and although we got together fairly regularly, we spent more time discussing girls than we did parents. Besides, no-one I knew would make fun of their parents in any serious kind of way. For middle-class boys like Colin and myself it was taboo to dishonor or disrespect your parents.

But in the summer of '62, I was only beginning to realize all this. I knew I got depressed, but I didn't know why. I didn't yet understand just how damaging it was to be around my parents for any length of time. As it turned out, it was many years before I did fully understand.

It was a Sunday. I had just returned from church. Since being confirmed, I had made a habit of attending communion regularly although I had admittedly slacked off a bit during the summer term. There seemed to be some negative correlation between ego inflation and the need for spiritual guidance and support. However now after three weeks of being back in Edinburgh, my ego had almost shriveled away and the need was back in full force. The routine on this Sunday morning was no different from any other. My mother was in the kitchen preparing the roast. My father was in the sitting room reading *The Observer* and sipping sherry. The pattern was always the same. I would go into the kitchen and ask my mother if she needed any help. She would always say no and would direct me to go to the sitting room so as to talk with my father. If, perchance, I went to the sitting room first, my father would direct me to the kitchen to see if my mother needed any help preparing lunch. Whatever the sequence, I always finished up in the sitting-room with my father.

As I entered the sitting-room, I saw the familiar and foreboding sight of a Sedbergh School Report lying on the table beside my father. He wasted no time in getting down to business.

"Ah good, you're here. Sit down will you? I've just received your report from school and I'd like to go through it with you." My father looked my way coldly. My father's eyes only came alive when he was angry, and anger seemed ever present with him, on or just below the surface.

"Your final place in form IVc was ...", my father paused as he scanned the Report, "... was 22nd. out of a class of 24 boys. Hmm. You seem to have done alright in English but pretty abysmally in your other subjects, including Physics and Chemistry, I might add. Your Housemaster, Mr. Begley, has the following to say about you: *'He has good qualities, he has talents, and he has a considerable lack of the intelligence needed to make the best use of them. He could become a person of some distinction here, but there is a danger of him becoming only a popular half-success.'* And your Headmaster adds this comment: *'A popular half-success certainly won't be half-enough. I am sure he has it in him to justify all our good hopes of him.'*"

I shifted in my chair. I hated this adult form of ganging up. That's what it felt like. Mr. Begley at Sedbergh was one thing. I didn't mind being accountable to Mr. Begley for what I did at Sedbergh, or to my father for what I did while in Edinburgh. What I objected to was being accountable to my father for what I did at Sedbergh. That was my world. He had no part of it. I resented them talking about me as if I were an object.

"You seem to be doing alright in things like cricket," my father continued, "but otherwise you seem to be floundering a bit. Well, what do you have to say?" He slapped the Report as he said this.

"I'm doing my best, Daddy."

"Well your best isn't good enough," snapped my father. I could see that it was monologue time again. "Listen, I know you work hard ... and God knows, it's more difficult now than it was in my day, but you have to realize that these are the most important days of your life. Next year you have to take your O Level examinations. You can make it or break it depending on how you do in them. You are now at an age where you have to take important decisions. For instance, do you have any idea yet what you want to do when you leave school?"

“Well, I’d like to go to University,” I answered hesitantly.

For God’s sake, I didn’t know what I wanted to do over three years in the future. I’d barely been at Sedbergh two years. It wasn’t as if I knew anything about University. I didn’t. All I knew was that most boys at Sedbergh seemed to go to University after they left, and that University seemed to be The Promised Land, flowing with booze and loose women - a land where one could at last throw off the shackles of being a school-boy and with a shout proclaim oneself a FREE MAN. It was also a land where one could learn great and wondrous things at the feet of great and wondrous gurus. It sounded pretty good to me.

“Your mother and I would be delighted if you ever went to University. However, judging by your academic progress to date, your chances are not that rosy. Besides, the competition for places in University these days is fierce, and getting worse every year. You’re part of the baby boom, you know. I don’t mean to put you off, but I think we should seriously consider alternatives to the idea of University. I have mentioned to you a few times the possibility of your going into the Army. Have you given it any more thought?”

When he said this, my mind immediately flashed onto the parade ground at Pirbright. “Well, yes ... I have thought of it a few times ...”

My father took the opening immediately. “Yes, well I have just received some literature about The Army, and Sandhurst in particular, and I thought you might like to look at it.” My father crossed the room to his desk, picked up a large brown envelope and returned to his armchair. He then proceeded to show me a brochure entitled ‘The Modern British Army’. There were a few pictures of soldiers and tanks in the field but for the main part, the photos were of handsome, smiling young men doing such things as water-skiing, playing squash and attending lavish-looking cocktail parties. There were not, I observed, any photos of parade-grounds. I wondered to myself whether Pirbright had perhaps given me a jaundiced view of what the Army was *really* about. As I perused the literature, my father told me that my athletic abilities and conscientious character would suit me well to a life in the Army. As a footnote, he added that my lack of cerebral brilliance would not prove to be an undue hindrance.

My mind was wandering. I could smell roast chicken wafting from the kitchen. I was starving. I wished to God we could get this business over with. It seemed so serious and stuffy and irrelevant. What was relevant was my stomach, and the fact I was playing golf with Colin that afternoon and the fact that he might introduce me to some girl or other later in the week. What was relevant was that I would be going back to Sedbergh in little over a month. There were a million and one things that were relevant there - at Sedbergh. I was interested in those things that affected me right now, not my ‘future’, after I left Sedbergh.

I was jolted out of my reverie by my father’s stentorian tones.

“So if you are interested in the Army, then I think you should apply for an Army Scholarship.”

“What’s that, Daddy?”

“The Army will pay for the last two years of your schooling if you get one of these scholarships. The deadline for applications this year is October, so we don’t have much time to waste. If you are in agreement, I will put in an application on your behalf.”

“Well, it sounds like it might be a good idea.”

“‘Might’ ... I don’t really think there’s much question about it. Now, turning to the other important matters to be discussed ... ”

My heart sank. My mind was still reeling from our talk about the Army. I felt I was getting snared into agreeing to things that I didn’t know anything about. On the one hand, I wasn’t clear that I wanted to go into the Army, in fact I was pretty sure that I didn’t, but then again on the other hand, as my mother kept saying, ‘why not have as many strings to your bow as possible?’ I could always get out of the thing later on, and at least in the meantime it would keep my father happy.

As it turned out, what my father wanted to discuss next was important to me. In September, I was going to have to choose between doing Arts or Science subjects, and it was the advisability of doing one or the other that he wanted to discuss. For years my father had been saying that the future lay in Science and that Arts subjects were ‘wishy-washy’, so there was nothing new in hearing him repeat this stance. What was new, however, was his announcement that a pre-requisite for entry into Sandhurst was Physics O level.

Now that it was established that I was to be entered as an Army Scholarship candidate, it followed that I should take Physics and Chemistry as my area of specialization for the following year. There were two problems with this. The first was that I had already chosen to do Arts subjects at the end of the summer term. The second problem was that I hated Physics and Chemistry and seemed to have little or no ability at them.

My father was quite upset when I informed him that I had already chosen Arts. In the discussion that followed, I protested my dislike for Science, and my father insisted that whether I liked it or not, I would have to do Physics if I wanted to go into the Army. With my mother's call to come for lunch the matter was adjourned with the understanding that I would in all probability have to switch over to take Science subjects.

Sedbergh: September 1962

Correspondence between Mr. J.V. Begley and Major A.D. Brown

'Dear Major Brown,

The Headmaster has asked me to write to you. In response to your letters, yes I can certainly do Physics next term. He originally opted for Science but then changed to Arts, which I took to be a family decision but which I now suppose may have been his own idea. Anyway the matter will be arranged.

I think he is a pretty good boy but I think he hasn't yet got much conscious notion of how to use his talents, such as they are, to the best advantage. I don't think he is over-bright in the brain-box, though I do think he tries in a somewhat inefficient fashion. Anyway, we'll see. If he is keen on the Army, that may provide some needed stimulus.

One can see the image of what one thinks a boy might be and speculate hopefully on what he might do at best, but it is no use thinking one can mould him or compel him. All one can do is give him a basic orientation and a general impression of what is expected, or anyway what is hoped for and then let him develop, if he will, his own convictions and the will to make of himself the best he can. The ordinary teaching and the natural discipline and environment here will look after everything if the boy himself has it in him to succeed and is sensibly willing ... I see no pressing need for us to get together at this stage.

My best wishes to you and your wife,

Yours sincerely

John Begley'

Edinburgh: Oct. 8th. 1962

Dear Mr. Begley,

I hope I may be forgiven for any apparant indecent haste or undue flap in writing you once again about Ian. I appreciate that it may be felt that I am belly-aching prematurely, but I know a good many young lads with quite good educational achievements who appear to have missed the boat and are now floundering aimlessly in a sea of uncertainty.

I know that Ian is very keen to go to University although a bit vague, I think, about what he wants to study there should he manage to gain entrance. The obvious question arises about his ability to obtain such entrance and pursue higher academic studies. The queue for University entrance is increasing. I know a first class local boy, who was at The Edinburgh Academy, got three Higher and numerous Lower passes in the Scottish School Leaving Certificate, and was unsuccessful in getting a place at Edinburgh University. On the other hand, I do not want in any way to discourage Ian from aiming at University entrance provided that one could be convinced that he might in due course make the grade. His school reports to date do not bear this out, although it may be a bit early yet to come to any conclusions about this.

The suggestion that he might give consideration to Sandhurst entrance was therefore only an alternative and to avoid him being left without a clue in the event of his not making the grade for University. Unfortunately, I do not think that Ian is really keen about the Army although he might be persuaded to consider it as second best, but I'm not even sure about this.

I certainly would not under any circumstances try and push him into a profession against his wishes. For better or worse, he must make his own choice. In any case, he must not get the idea that getting into Sandhurst these days is a piece of cake.

One hopes that he would not have too much trouble with the Selection Boards but the written entrance examination is quite searching. If the Army entrance did nothing else, it might give him an objective and thus perhaps make him take his studies rather more seriously, although I am in fact quite prepared to accept that he is doing his damndest, but perhaps not over-endowed with the essential gray matter, which after all is no fault of his. However, we must just wait and see. I have no wish to push him, or even at this stage suggest any sense of urgency. In due course he will find his correct level. Nevertheless, it would be a comforting thought if he could have some idea, however vague, of where he may be going - or do you feel this unimportant at this stage?

I hope that it will be possible for me sometime in the near future (not this term I think) to meet you in Sedbergh, at your convenience, and have a word about these matters. It is good to know that I can count on your expert advice and cooperation in the matter, and I know that Ian will get the best advice and guidance from you, which will be much more value to him than anything coming from me.

My apologies for this lengthy epistle,

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Douglas Brown'

Of course I knew nothing of this lengthy correspondence at the time. All I knew was that within days of my arrival back at Sedbergh, Mr. Begley called me in for a talk in which he conveyed my father's concern that I do Physics that year. Reiterating my father, he also tried to tell me, in the nicest way possible, that it would be very hard, if not impossible for me to ever get accepted into University. I felt helpless in the face of such an argument. How did I know if I would ever do well enough to get into University? But I *did* know that I wasn't stupid, and I did know I hated Physics. Unfortunately, faced with the combined opposition of my father and my Housemaster, I did not have the confidence to stick to my guns. The matter was decided. I would take Physics. At the same time, I felt an anger building up inside me.

The notion that depression is anger turned inwards is one that certainly seems to fit in my case. In my two worlds, in Edinburgh and at Sedbergh, there was no place for such dangerous emotions as anger. The message that was conveyed in a thousand different ways amounted to something like this:

ANGER (especially at persons in authority) may be felt (although preferably not) however, it may *not* be expressed critically and must *never* be expressed emotionally. This meant that anger had to be deflected from its target, deflected into some harmless form of expression. The great outlet was of course sport. It is impossible to imagine a school such as Sedbergh functioning or surviving without pitches for balls (all kinds) to be squeezed and kicked, fields for more balls to be hurled and struck, courts for yet more balls to be smacked and attacked and generally beaten into submission. The guy that invented the ball deserved a Nobel Peace Prize - no doubt about it.

The other opiates were religion ('Our Fathers Brown and Begley, Hallowed be thy names'), humor and music. I could not get angry with Mr. Begley to his face, but there was nothing stopping me from getting pissed off at him behind his back and there was positive acceptance from one's fellow-beings for humorous caricature and ridicule.

Music was at least as great an outlet for me as humor. In Edinburgh, I had watched my mother head instinctively to the grand piano when she was in one of her deep depressions. She would sit there playing something like Beethoven's 'Appassionata' Sonata, often weeping as she played. I had learned to play the piano by ear, slowly exploring and discovering the incredible range of expression that was available on the piano. In my second year at Sedbergh, I had continued to seek refuge in the Powell House music cubicles. I would play for hours if I got the chance. I would play without stopping in a continuous stream of improvisation. It wasn't that I had any real knowledge of the piano. My understanding of harmony was limited to three chords, my finger technique was basic, and I only ever played in the key of C. What I did have, however, was an acute sense of rhythm and an insatiable curiosity. I gradually discovered that within the world of C, F, and G chords, there was in fact a universe of possible rhythmic and melodic patterns.

Then somewhere around my second year at Sedbergh I discovered how to play the blues. It was like coming home for me, as if the vibration of my soul was identical with that of the blues. By the end of my second year the sounds issuing forth from the Powell House cubicles were beginning to attract some attention.

There was one person in particular who seemed interested in my playing, especially when I was churning through twelve bar blues. His name was Peter Wolf. During the previous summer term, he had hung around outside the music cube listening to me playing. I wasn't quite sure how to take this at first. After all I was two terms senior to him, and I was the hot-shot Colts opening bowler, and he had not as yet distinguished himself in any way. In fact, I found him a bit presumptuous at first, especially when he asked if he could come into the music cube with me so as to watch me. But at the same time, I was flattered by his interest and intrigued when he told me one day that he was going to buy a harmonica so that he could play Blues 'harp'.

During that summer holidays, Wolf not only bought a harmonica but must also have taken a crash course in how to play it. Shortly after the winter term began, he asked me if we could play together. I agreed, and was amazed and delighted to hear the sounds he was producing. Now the ball was really rolling. The word got around that Brown and Wolf sounded 'not that bad' and the corridor outside the music cubes began to become something of a gathering place. As the term progressed, a number of people approached me and asked if they could join in with Wolf and I. One of these people was Geoff Grime. Another was a boy called Robert Stoner. Grime played clarinet and Stoner played trumpet. At first I enthusiastically welcomed their participation but then it became apparent that our jam sessions were sounding too 'jammy', due mainly to the fact that Grime and Stoner had difficulty playing by ear. The blues seemed to work better with just harmonica and piano. However, what occurred to me was that with a clarinet and trumpet, we had the essential ingredients of a traditional jazz band. I resolved that in the holidays, I would buy some sheet music so that this exciting possibility could be further explored.

In my first year, music had been a balm to my loneliness and sense of isolation. The music cube had been a place of refuge. These things still held, but now in addition, music was a way of reaching out and embracing others, and the music cube was becoming a place of celebration, not just consolation.

It was mid-November. The Sedbergh Colts Rugby team was returning from a match against Lancaster Royal Grammar School. I had got on the team as expected and had established myself as in a three-fold role - as the team's full-back, place-kicker, and pub pianist. There was something of an atmosphere of gloom on the bus. It wasn't just the fact that we had lost the game, it was the fact that we had lost it to a Grammar School. Compared with such 'southern' and upper-crust public schools as Eton, Winchester or Harrow, Sedbergh prided itself in being relatively unsnobbish. After all a few local boys attended the school as day-boys. 'Rammy' Leighton, for instance, was the local butcher's son and was a contemporary of mine in Powell House. Sure, their heavy Yorkshire accents were made fun of ("ee ba gum lud", etc.) but only in a friendly way. It seemed as if the locals got integrated into Sedbergh life as well as anyone else. The odd local, here and there, was clearly no threat to the Sedbergh way of life. However a whole team of locals competing on an equal basis was a whole different thing. Sedbergh only had two fixtures with Grammar schools, these being with Lancaster R.G.S. and Skipton Grammar school, but this was regarded as quite a concession in itself. Other Grammar schools such as Kendal Grammar school,

located only ten miles from Sedbergh, had been trying for years to get Sedbergh to agree to a fixture, to no avail. The talk on the bus reflected the general attitude.

“Did you see what their hooker was doing?”

“Friggin pervert!”

“Bloody wogs!”

“Greaseballs! I’ve still got their bloody Brylcreem all over me.”

“Let’s face it, they were lucky.”

“It won’t happen again.”

“We’ll bring our own referee next time, if there is a next time.”

“Bloody wogs!”

“Bunch of queers, the whole lot of them.”

“And did you hear their language? Fucking this, and fucking that.”

“Yeah, and their accents. It was like playing the Beatles.”

“Who?”

“Oh, it’s a new group from Liverpool. They’ve got long hair, like girls.”

“God, some of them had long hair. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

There were four Powellians on the Colts team, the four ‘B’s. Bilisland, Booth, Blacklock and Brown. Colin Crabbie had also made it onto the team. It turned out that there were also two members on the team who were, like me, applying for Army scholarships, one of these two was called Stewart Jeffrey. He was seated beside me as the bus rumbled back from Lancaster. After a while, we got talking about the Army and why we were applying for Army scholarships and so forth.

“I don’t know if I’d want to be stuck in the Army for my whole life.” I was a bit surprised to hear Jeffrey say this. He was awfully hale and hearty and usually I found it hard to converse with him. He was the sort of person who never seemed to have any problems. This was an unexpected admission on his part.

“Why not? What’s wrong being in the Army for your whole life,” I said, thinking of my father.

“Well, there are just too many other things to do, that’s all. For instance, I might just do a short sevice commission and then go to Cambridge.”

“Can you do that?” I asked naïvely. The notion of shifting from one occupation to another was foreign to me. I had been brought up to believe that it was of cardinal importance to ‘stick with it’, whether ‘it’ was a form of work or a relationship or whatever. My father had stuck with the army until he retired, my mother had foregone a career in music and had stuck with my father. Her credo had been, as she put it, to be a good wife and a good mother, both of which implied apparently ‘sticking at it’.

“Of course you can,” Jeffrey replied impatiently. “As long as you get good A level results of course.”

“What are you going to do your A levels in?”

“English and history.”

A thought suddenly struck me when he said this.

“But you must be taking Physics O level if you are going into the Army.”

“Physics O level?! You must be joking! I can’t stand Physics. Why should I do Physics?”

“Well, my father told me that you had to have Physics in order to get into the Army.”

“That’s nonsense! It’s not true.” Jeffrey conveyed complete certainty as he said this. I felt a combination of confusion and anger well up inside me. Why had my father misled me? Why had Mr. Begley misled me for that matter? They both knew I hated Physics. I’d told them often enough. Or was it that they just didn’t have their facts straight. In any event, it was too late to change anything now. I’d already done two months of O level Physics. I couldn’t switch over now.

By the time we got back to Sedbergh, my feelings had reached an explosive point. The thing that my father and Mr. Begley didn’t understand was that grappling with the fundamentals of Physics was, for me, sheer mental agony. All this fiddling around with pieces of wire and batteries and rheostats and potentiometers and calorimeters: all these distinctions between potential energy and kinetic energy, refraction and reflection, A.C. and D.C. I didn’t understand what it was all about and I didn’t care. What was

the point of studying Physics? That was never explained to us. All I had been told was that Science was 'useful', and yet I couldn't begin to relate it to my world or see its relevance. All I knew was that I was meant to be doing Physics O level as part of the conditions of getting into the Army, something that I hadn't even decided that I wanted to do. What my father and Mr. Begley didn't know was that for two months I had been increasingly using up my spare time going to such illuminatis as David Lungley and Peter Wolf, begging them to explain the incomprehensible to me. And now, someone tells me that I could have avoided the torturous process in the first place.

I arrived back in Powell House just as supper was ending. I had to speak to someone. I looked around for John Aitken. He would understand. There were only so many places to look for someone in Powell House. There was, of course, the Senior Dayroom. Then there was the house library, the changing-rooms, the drying room, the music cubes, and the dormitories. After checking the Dayroom and the library, I asked someone if they had seen him. I was informed that Aitken had gone out for dinner with David Lungley. I felt another emotional shock running through me when I heard this. Why hadn't David told me that his parents were visiting? Why hadn't he invited me out? Suddenly, in addition to my anger and confusion regarding the whole business of taking Physics, I felt overwhelmingly vulnerable. It was true that I had been making other friends with people such as Mark Hudson. It was certainly true that I had been admitted into a sporting elite that cut across House lines. But I had never really become 'one of the lads', as David had once suggested. I knew David felt I had deserted him in some way. He was right. Although I had never rejected David and still regarded him as a friend, I had spent little time with him in the last year. In fact, the irony was that I had tried to push him and John Aitken together. They just seemed to have more in common than did Dave and I.

These thoughts and feelings coursed through me as I stood in the passage way. I felt at the interface of anger and depression, a study in red and black. The redness still bursting upwards and crackling outwards, the blackness sucking inwards and pulling downward. Without warning, my inertia suddenly vanished and was replaced by a blind, driving desire to get out. To where I didn't know and I didn't care. I just had to get out. Outside, in the raw November air, I found myself heading up the hill to the chapel. I had done this before. In fits of black depression, I had gone to the chapel and prayed to God to make things better. However this time was different. My anger was too strong. I didn't feel like bowing to some higher authority. I entered the chapel through the vestry. It was pitch dark except for the palest glimmer from the moon. I knew what I wanted to do. Stumbling my way up some steps, I crossed in front of the altar and then after more groping around, found what I was searching for - the organ bench.

For a long time I had been itching to get my hands on this organ. It was, however, strictly off-limits to anyone other than the music masters. A thrill of anticipation ran through me as I turned on the overhead light and then switched on the organ. The sound of rushing air made me breathe faster in excitement. It was almost like the organ was coming alive. I was giving it power and it was giving me power. This mighty organ was going to get a chance to do what it had perhaps never done before. It was going to have a chance to break out of the tight rhythms and formal restrictions of church music. It was going to have a chance to boogie, to let go, to run wild.

For about fifteen minutes, the chapel was a free house liberated from routine and convention. For about fifteen minutes, that organ was allowed to explore its libido and get in touch with certain inner rhythms it probably didn't even know existed. For about fifteen minutes, the organ and I immersed ourselves in a celebration of the spirit, the spirit of resistance. And then Mr. Hind, the head music master, walked in.

Mr. Begley was not amused. After a stern lecture, he decided that he would be lenient - this time. For my part, I apologized and offered no explanation other than I had been seized by a desire to play the chapel organ. I had decided that it was pointless to bring up what I had learned from Jeffrey. My strategy was clear. I would do bloody Physics and I would pass the bloody exam.

There were other sources of pressure that term: my mother for instance. In her weekly letters, she kept expressing concern that I was neglecting my 'cello studies. As she put it, 'it would make me very happy darling, if you could get into The National Youth Orchestra'. Like the Army, getting into The N.Y.O. was

not a simple affair. There were prerequisites. In the case of the N.Y.O. this meant passing the grade VII or VIII examination of The Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. This in turn meant a lot of practice at scales, and arpeggios, and set pieces. At the same time, my mother was also expressing concern over whether I was working hard enough in my O level subjects. Ah, the horizon of conscientious concern did indeed stretch to infinity.

* * *

ENTER DR. LAING:

Laing: And how are ye today, ma wee laddie?
Brown: Well, to tell the truth, I'm a bit concerned.
Laing: I see.....and whit are ye concerned about?
Brown: Actually my mother's the one who's concerned.
Laing: So, you are concerned about your mither being concerned?
Brown: I suppose so.
Laing: And tell me laddie, whit's yer mither concerned about?
Brown: Well, she says she's concerned about my father.
Laing: Oh, yer faither's concerned too?
Brown: Yes, he seems to be.
Laing: O.K. So let's get this clear. You are concerned about yer mither bein concerned about yer faither. Am I right laddie?
Brown: Well, I suppose you could put it that way.
Laing: Awright. The question now is whit's yer faither concerned about?
Brown: Oh he's worried about me not passing my exams.
Laing: Is that right laddie? Ah jeepers, you'd think he'd have his ain problems tae worry about. Anyway, the thing's perfectly clear tae me noo. The fact o the matter is that you are concerned about yer mither bein concerned about your faither bein concerned about you, and frankly laddie I've got tae tell you that I am concerned about you bein concerned about yer mither bein concerned about yer faither bein concerned about you. D'ye ken whit I mean?
Brown: Huh ... ?

* * *

And then there was Pam. After a summer of silence, I had received a letter from her in September. In this letter, she informed me that she had been on her first two dates and then proceeded to tell me about them. My understanding of female psychology was not greatly advanced after reading the following:

'... Les took me to a film called 'West Side Story' ... he is quite a nice boy but I don't particularly like him. He is the goody-goody type with girls, and wouldn't dare do anything against a girl like teasing or laughing ... well, I haven't been with him since ...
'.... the other date was with a guy called Dennis. He got too close to me and tried to kiss me. He is 18 and I don't like him much either. The reason I am telling you all this is because you said all the boys must go around with their eyes closed. Well believe me, they don't. I get all sorts of whistles and toots from cars. It's quite interesting ...'

I didn't know how to take this letter. I wasn't interested in hearing about Tom, Dick and Harry in Edmonton. I wanted her to show some interest in me. What did you have to do anyway to get girls interested in you?

In December, I received a visit from my Uncle Arth and Auntie Doris. There were several things that made this visit noteworthy. Firstly, I had never met these two before. Secondly, my uncle's full title was Brigadier A.E. Cumming, V.C., M.C. Uncle Arth was a war hero whose exploits had been written up in magazines. He had been awarded his V.C. in Burma during the Second World War. The story goes that he was leading a convoy of Allied troops through heavily occupied Japanese territory when they were ambushed. Although shot several times in the stomach, my uncle kept giving orders to his troops, and somehow many of them managed to escape. Later, in the field hospital, when doctors were cutting off the blood-caked uniform of my uncle, they discovered a prayer book in the breast pocket. A few days earlier, he had found it in a deserted house. On the inside cover was the name of a British soldier. My uncle had put it in his pocket with the intention of later returning it to the owner. Through the center of the prayer book, the doctors found a bullet hole. As if this wasn't enough, according to my father, Uncle Arth had nearly been awarded *two* V.C.'s! Apparently, the M.C. that he was awarded in the First World War would have been a V.C. had there been one more witness to the act of bravery. After retiring from the Army, he got a job as chief of police in Nicosia, in Cyprus. There, he had been involved in such incidents as arresting Archbishop Makarios and hunting down terrorists. Such activities had not made him popular and his house had been bombed several times. By 1962, things were getting just too hot for my uncle and aunt who were, by that time, both in their sixties. So in that year, they decided to return to Edinburgh and their roots.

The first thing that struck me about Uncle Arth was how unlike my father he was. I had always taken it for granted that my father was a stereotype of the British Army Officer. This meant amongst other things being pompous in manner, opinionated in attitude, and overbearing in approach. Uncle Arth didn't appear to be any of these things. He was courteous, mild-mannered and seemed to be open-minded. He was slight of build and compared with the ponderousness of my father, he seemed light on his feet. What struck me most of all was that he didn't have any of the most basic habits normally associated with one of his ilk. He didn't smoke, he didn't drink, and he didn't say things like 'bloody good show', 'damned bad luck', and 'by Jove'.

Fate had certainly timed his entry onto my personal stage with some precision. He was certainly a better advertisement for the Army than my father. And he had a V.C. My God a V.C.!! That cut ice with everyone, including people like Begley: a genuine war hero. Modest, unassuming yet with the courage of a lion when duty called. There were very few people that my father would talk about reverentially, but Uncle Arth was one of them. Uncle Arth, *my* uncle. I was impressed. Mr. Begley was impressed and those around me in Powell House were impressed. In the wake of his visit, the Army Scholarship loomed larger and Sandhurst became somewhat more inviting.

6.

Sedbergh: February 1963

It was a Sunday afternoon. Outside the temperature was 16° below. Sedbergh was experiencing its coldest winter in years. The ground was like iron and this had virtually wiped out the Lent term rugby program. In its place, skating had become a major pastime. The Powell House tennis court had been converted into a skating rink and that was where most members of the Senior Dayroom were presently enjoying themselves.

I had been playing fives an hour earlier with Dave Roberts, Nick Gaskell and John Walford. This was a potent combination. Walford still had a lingering crush on me, and Roberts and I both had a crush on Gaskell, as well as having an ongoing physical attraction between us. The resultant interplay of sexual forces followed by a steaming hot bath had got me into a lustful, pining condition. It seemed an appropriate time to get together with John Aitken and discuss affairs of the heart with the implied, and far greater concern for affairs of the groin.

“So what’s she been saying?” Aitken gestured towards some blue Airmail letters that I had just taken out of my locker.

“Well, she’s now calling me ‘*My Dear Ian* - see,’ I pointed proudly to one of the letters. “In fact, in the last one she says ‘*My Dearest Ian*’.”

“Phew! That’s really something. How many letters have you got from her anyway?”

“She’s written three in the last six weeks. She’s suddenly become all luvy-dovey.”

“So what’s she saying?” John leaned forward eagerly.

“Well she says that she’s relieved that I haven’t given up on her altogether and she says ‘most of the girls at school have a boyfriend but me, however I have you and no-one can replace you. The kids at school laugh at me for being so sentimental, but I don’t care ...’”

“Well that’s just because they’re envious,” John interjected. That’s what I liked about John. He was so understanding, so supportive.

“Yes, that’s what I think too. Anyway, let me find the really juicy part. Ah, here it is ... get this, John. She says, ‘I can hardly stand the thought of half the world between us. I just want to see you smiling at me, touching me, kissing me, embracing me, just together. Oh Ian, please don’t let me wait too long ...’”

“Crikey!” John’s jaw had dropped and his eyes were wide in anticipation. It was almost as if he had been invited to witness the real thing.

“She’s not finished. Listen. Where was I ... ‘don’t let me wait too long, please come to me soon so that I can feel your warm breath on my face and feel you beside me, and whisper in my ear, and move around and kiss me hard, and let me hug you hard ...’, but then John, it’s so funny, she says, ‘well what else can I say, I’ve said just about all I’ve ever thought’” ...

By the look on his face, John was obviously on the same wavelength as me. “Well, it’s certainly not all I have ever thought,” he said.

“Me neither. Even so, it’s not bad.”

We both fell silent for a minute as our respective imaginations charged rampant through lurid inner worlds which, unfortunately, had not yet sprouted in Pam’s consciousness, or so she said. But then, as if in penance for such self-indulgence, John said, “but it is strange you know, I mean, you don’t really know each other at all.”

Feeling a little stung by the truth of this remark, as well as experiencing a kind of mental coitus interruptus, I retorted testily, “well, how can we get to know each other if we’re 6,000 miles apart? Anyway,

I discussed that with her in my last letter to her and this is what she says in reply ... let me find it, yes, here it is, ... she says, 'you asked me if I think I really know you, well I don't think so, but it doesn't really matter, I have your photograph and your letters, and I have a good imagination. All I have to do is dream. I know you're a MAN and you're the kind that teases and would shove me about, that is what I like' ... my voice tapered off as I read this last part.

There were some things that Pam said that I couldn't figure out at all. WHY did she want me to 'shove her about'? That's what my father did to my mother. It was the last thing in the world that I wanted to do to a woman. And then sometimes she sounded as if she wanted me to call the shots, and other times she talked about her independence and rebelliousness. For instance, there was the way she talked about her parents. In one of her letters she talked about how she was no angel and how she swore and lied to her parents, and never came home when she was told. I had a lot of trouble with that. In addition to that, I just couldn't figure out what she felt for me. The year before she kept telling me about her dates and what a big flirt she was, now she was all over me, saying that I was the only one. It was very confusing.

But John had hit it on the head. The fact was that we didn't know each other. On the one hand, I liked getting the mushy stuff, but on the other, I felt kind of dishonest when I expressed myself that way to her. There seemed to be only two solutions. Either, I find myself a woman closer to home (and I wasn't doing very well on that one), or Pam and I would just have to find a way of getting together. We had already talked about this in our letters. She had said that she thought I was crazy to even think of going into the Army. Instead, she had suggested that I come to Canada and attend University there. This seemed like a fanciful notion, but it made me feel good that she wanted me closer. On the other hand, it irritated me that she had ridiculed the possibility of my going into the Army. What did she know about the Army? It seemed to me that she was getting pushy. I'd had quite enough of that from my parents without getting it from her. I resolved to give her a piece of my mind in my next letter. John was right. We didn't know each other. It was time to let her know who I was and what I stood for, while trying to get her to do the same for me.

Third year at Sedbergh was a time for rebelliousness. We were in a transition stage. We had completed two full years at Sedbergh, and we would have two more to complete after this one was over. We had paid our dues by fagging and enduring the deprivations of the Junior Dayroom. The Senior Dayroom was a kind of Purgatory where we waited uneasily in a mixed state of relative deprivation and comfort. There was a restless desire to get into the Promised Land of being in a study. We were at the Young Turk stage. We had paid our dues. We were ready for bigger and better things. Some of us had tasted power and prestige but none of us yet had any real authority or clear reward for our labors. We were taut with impatience.

The chief rebel among my contemporaries was Andrew Booth. Booth was the kind of person you wouldn't trust to have high tea with your mother. Booth was short and stocky and had a shock of wiry red hair. With his disproportionately large head and beetle brows, he looked slightly Neanderthal. Andrew Booth was, however, quite definitely not Neanderthal of mind. He was an operator. Everyone knew that Booth would skip runs and go and have a smoke somewhere. Booth had a quality that was utterly foreign to me. He had both the audacity to break rules and the cleverness to not get caught. Even if he did get caught, he was usually able to wheel and deal his way out of the situation. I did not admire Andrew Booth. At times, such as the Grime incident, I felt positive contempt for him. However, in other ways, he did earn my grudging respect.

Of my contemporaries, Booth was the only one who continually and flagrantly broke the rule that stated; members of the Senior Dayroom will not frequent the studies. In the latter half of my third year at Sedbergh, Booth became a virtual occupant of Study 5. This study had built a reputation as being a den of iniquity and dissent. Its occupants were regarded with suspicion and awe by everyone from fags to prefects. The head honcho of Study 5 was R.T.C. Hopper, commonly known as 'Bert' Hopper. Hopper was suave, sophisticated and 'cool'. He was one of a small group that lived in London. As a result, he was 'in touch'. It was he that told everyone about the Rolling Stones. It was, after all, 1963 - the year that a cultural revolution was taking place in Britain. In the North the Beatles had taken Liverpool by storm. The South had its own

insurgents in the Rolling Stones. Hopper not only had the latest Stones records, he had also seen them live. He was like a messenger from the outside world, bringing into the monastic isolation of Sedbergh news of the sweeping changes that were taking place in the outside world. Hopper amazed everyone by coming back at the beginning of term with his hair curling over his ears and swept down across his forehead; small matter that it would soon be cut to regulation length by the school barber. The fact was that *he* had had the balls to present himself in that way in the first place.

Hopper was everything I was not. On Sundays I wore my kilt and black brogues while Hopper donned his drain-pipe, gray trousers and wrinkle-pickers, both just within the bounds of what might be considered permissible. While I read my letters from Pam to John Aitken and dreamed about when I might get to kiss a woman, Hopper dropped out casual bits of information that led people to believe that *he* had intimate knowledge of women. Kissing? You must be joking. He'd been kissing, french kissing at that, since the age of eleven. No, he was into the big time. He had done IT, not once but several times, maybe even many times, and not with just one woman. While some of us were drooling over Playboy pin-ups on our locker doors (not to mention more horizontal situations), and sneaking smuggled-in copies of *Lady Chatterly's Lover* into covers of books like *My Early Life* by Winston Churchill, Bert Hopper had no need of such nefarious activities. He was above and beyond such unrewarding pursuits. Instead, he would hang loose in his study drinking mugs of coffee, listening to the Stones, Thelonus Monk or Zoot Sims, and planning his love-life for next holidays; Casanova in exile.

I didn't give a damn for his drain-pipes or wrinkle-pickers. I didn't care that he smoked or liked the Rolling Stones. I didn't even particularly like him when he was being cool and rebellious. But I *did* respect and envy him for his intimate knowledge of women. I also respected him because he was able to shed his cool image and show that he could succeed on Sedbergh's terms. He was a fairly good all-round sportsman, and an excellent swimmer in particular. He also had a good sense of humor and it was primarily this which was the basis for any interaction that he and I had. Such friendship that existed between us, had evolved during various goofing-off escapades at C.C.F camp at Pirbright, the summer before.

There were two things that connected me to Bert Hopper in the Lent term of 1963. The first was a conversation about wanking. Wanking was the Sedbergh term for masturbation. In the first two years at Sedbergh, the wanking frequency rate was not high although it began to increase in the second year. However by third year, wanking was definitely becoming more and more prevalent, even to the point of being talked about. When I say talked about, what I mean more is 'joked about'. Before I hadn't known whether it was considered O.K. to wank at all. Now, because of the kind of jokes and innuendo floating around, I at least knew that it was a common phenomenon. However I still didn't know whether it was really O.K. I was plagued by a whole host of questions. Why, for instance, was the term 'wanker' used so derogatorily? Like Oram for example; I mean just because he always looked so washed out, people would say things like, 'oh Oram, you're such a wanker!' But maybe wanking did wash you out. I mean, was it really O.K. to wank the night before an important rucker game? Then there was the big question, the one that really plagued me. HOW OFTEN? How often was it O.K. to wank? I mean if you did it often, I mean really often, like once a week, would it damage you in some way?

Two things bothered me regarding this. The first had to do with the fact that in my first year at Sedbergh, I had got kicked very hard in the groin. One of my testicles had got squashed and I had suffered extreme pain for quite a while. Since then I had never been quite sure whether or not there might have been permanent damage resulting from this injury. I mean, maybe I shouldn't be wanking at all, given the sorry state of my beleaguered balls. Maybe I should be saving up my vital essence for the time that it would be needed to produce little kiddies. Maybe wanking would put my balls out of action for good! The other thing that bothered me was the possible fact that at about the time my wanking frequency rate jumped up a little, I began to have the kind of back trouble that seemed to be affecting my career as a fast bowler. Maybe there was a connection between the two; maybe even a direct correlation. The more you wank, the more you put your neck out of joint. I mean I didn't believe in the hair growing on your palms stuff (although I did check once in a while just for good measure) but these other concerns were legitimate cause for worry.

So, anyway, the day came when I just had to get some answers to these questions and concerns. It was one thing to joke about wanking, it was quite another to try and engage anyone in a serious talk on the topic. I didn't feel I had any choice. I *had* to have some answers. And there didn't seem to be any question as to who to speak to. In matters pertaining to sex there was one acknowledged expert, and that was Bert Hopper. When it came down to it, I didn't have the nerve to get into all of the things on my mind. However, I did ask him the key question about HOW OFTEN. Bert Hopper didn't seem taken aback by the question. "Oh, I suppose I do it about once a fortnight," he said casually, and then as an afterthought he added, "sometimes once a week." This news came to me like manna from heaven. My rate had been precisely once a month, not a wank more or a wank less. I knew this because I kept track in my diary. After completing my monthly wank, I would enter I small cryptic 'W' in my diary under the appropriate day. I needed this as a way of disciplining myself against my lusting flesh. It was a case of being 'conscientious' again. But now I felt liberated. If Bert Hopper could wank once a fortnight then so could I. I was eternally grateful.

A week or two after our conversation something else happened that involved Bert Hopper. While in the changing room one day, we happened to get into a friendly fight. Hopper, like several other members of Powell House, would latch onto my Jock persona and make fun of me by getting into an 'och Jock, hoots mon, ye crazy Scotsman, hae ye been chasing haggis this braw brecht moonlecht necht' routine. I would then play the game by acting out the crazy Celt. On this occasion, Hopper took on one of his favorite characters, namely Eccles from The Goon Show. Our conversation, which consisted mainly of, 'You dirty rotten swine' (in the appropriate Eccles voice) from Hopper, and 'I'm gonna get ye laddie!!' from me (in the requisite Glasgow gorbals guttural) quickly developed into a Keystone cop chase around the dressing room. This in turn deteriorated into a battle with gym shoes as weapons. The battle ended abruptly when one of my gym shoes hurtled at high velocity over Hopper's head and through a window pane behind him.

Property damage was not looked upon lightly at Sedbergh, especially when it had occurred in the preceding fashion. I knew that what I should have done was report the broken window to Mr. Begley without delay. It was when someone pointed out that Mr. Begley would be teaching until lunch time that I thought up a different plan. I didn't want to go admitting to him that I'd done something wrong again. I still felt angry with him for his collusion with my father as well as feeling lingering resentment about being hauled over the coals for playing the chapel organ. It occurred to me that in the two hours that remained before lunch, I might just have time to sneak into the village, buy a pane of glass, get back and repair the window. Mr. Begley would never be any the wiser.

There was no time to lose. I borrowed some money and sprinted off to the village. Before leaving, I persuaded someone to move an extension ladder that I'd seen in the back garden round to the front of Powell House, underneath the broken window. Then I went into the village where I managed to buy the glass pane and some putty without arousing suspicion. I arrived back with still over an hour to spare. With the help of a couple of well-wishers, I managed to get the ladder in place. I had just got to the top of the ladder and was in the process of tapping out the broken pieces of glass when a voice from below hissed 'here comes Begley!!'

For the second time in a few months I was caught red-handed. Once again I received a lecture and a warning. However this time, I got the impression that Mr. Begley secretly admired my self-reliance because my punishment was to complete the job that I'd started and, in addition, to clean all the windows at the front of Powell House. Nevertheless, the incident left me wondering what it was that people like Booth and Hopper had that I did not when it came to not getting caught.

Diary Entries:

March 3rd: National Youth Orchestra audition in Kendal:

Some old dear listens to me. She asks me to play scales and arpeggios in impossible keys like Bb and C#. I haven't done enough practice. It shows. Set pieces O.K. but sight-reading lousy. 'Thank-you Mr. Brown, that will be all ... we'll let you know'. It's O.K., I know already. I didn't make it. Failure - I don't mind, didn't really want to be in the N.Y.O. anyway. Just because Joy was in it doesn't mean that I have to be in it. But Mummy will be upset. I feel like I've let her down.

March 14th: Letter from Pam:

'My Dearest Ian,

I guess my ideas about the Army were pretty old-fashioned. They were put into me by my parents, I suppose. What do you mean by 'you move around the world'? Do you mean the world in the right sense of the world? Regarding my vital statistics: why on earth do you use such complicated expressions? I've learned more words from you than you can imagine. No, I don't think it's a rude question. After all, you're only boys!! Anyway here you are; 34-24-36!! Oh yes, I don't think it was some of your friends who wanted to know. You wanted to know too, didn't you?

Up until now I've noticed something missing in you as a boyfriend, but this last letter has shown it up very clearly. You certainly taught me a lesson about love. You put me in my place when I needed it, and that is what I wanted from you. You're boss as far as I am concerned, please stay that way. I've thought about it and I see what you mean. I can't give my views on love because I haven't experienced it really.

Please write soon, and make it a nice romantic one, and use your imagination,

All my love, Pam'

March 26th: End of term Report:

Form: Vb

Name: I. A. Brown

Age: 16.4

Height: 5-10½

Weight: 10.9

Form Subjects:

Chemistry: He is often muddled but with his determination, he has made progress.

Physics: Struggling manfully along.

Mathematics: Quite good, but he does go the long way around!

French: Very slow. I think he works fairly hard but his standard is not yet very high.

Latin: A weak performer, with good results far too occasionally for much hope of success.

English: Very good work.

March 27th: Army Scholarship Interview in York:

Four aging General types interview me. Fusty, stilted atmosphere. Short pointed questions. No visible reactions to my responses. I feel that how I look and how I talk is being studied closely. I'm sure I'm not their type. I smile too much. I'm trying my hardest to be like Mark Hudson or Stewart Jeffrey - upright, self-assured, unemotional. I try to clench my jaw, steel my eyes and modulate my voice in the appropriate fashion. Deep down, I resent putting up a front. I want to be myself, but then what does that mean? I've almost become the Court Jester at Sedbergh. They certainly don't want that.

What the hell am I doing here anyway? Here I am answering questions on 'why I want to be in the Army' and I don't even know if I do want to be in the Army. I hate being interviewed. I don't have a way with words. In action, like on the assault course at Pirbright, I could show them what I'm made of. But in conversation I'm awkward, clumsy.

Some old dodderer with a walrus mustache and a pipe asks me what papers I read. How can I tell them I hardly ever read the newspapers? But I am at least smart enough to know what they want me to say. I answer 'The Daily Telegraph'. 'And what were the headlines this morning?' he asks me. Oh, the bastard! He would have to call my bluff. I rack my brains furiously. I had

taken a brief look at 'The Express' that morning. All I could remember was a lurid account of a murder at The Blue Angel Nightclub in Soho, on the back page. Not the kind of thing you would find on the back page of 'The Telegraph', let alone the front page.

But they're waiting for a response. I stumble out a garbled account of The Blue Angel murder, my tone of voice almost apologetic. The old dodderer with the walrus mustache cuts me off with a curt 'yes well, thank-you ... er ... do you recall any other news worth mention?'. Then it comes to me in a flash. Of course, how could I be so stupid? The Beeching rail cuts, that was what the headlines were this morning. I blurt this out triumphantly but no-one seems impressed, perhaps because I can't remember anything else to say other than 'The Beeching rail cuts'. There is some mumbling between the Generals and then I am told politely that the interview is over and that I will be informed in due course as to the result.

On the train from York to Edinburgh I felt apprehensive. Not only had the Army Scholarship interview gone badly, or so it seemed, but also I was returning to an unknown situation. At Christmas I had been informed that my parents were trying to sell the house at Kingsburgh Road. I was told something about my father retiring, and that with Joy living in London and Grandie dead, there was no need of such a large house - besides, it was too expensive. During the Lent term, I received letters from my mother informing me that the house had been sold and that my parents were in the process of moving into a three-bedroom flat in the center of Edinburgh, not far from the University. I had been so involved with my affairs at Sedbergh that the reality of this upheaval had not yet registered. Now, as the train approached Berwick-on-Tweed and the border, I began to grasp the magnitude of what had happened in my absence. But it wasn't until several weeks later that I really grasped the implications.

* * *

Edinburgh: April, 1963

The first major shock was the discovery that the piano was missing. My mother's concert-size Broadwood grand had vanished. I couldn't believe it. I *had to* have my piano. Apart from anything else, it was my safety valve in the pressure cooker of our house. When I confronted my mother on the matter she explained to me that there just wasn't enough space for the piano in the new flat and that they had had to sell it. No-one had seemed particularly interested in buying it, and in the end it was sold to East Lothian School Board for £20. Now it was probably languishing in some dingy secondary school, being thumped and carved up by a bunch of toughs.

This really was a disaster of the first order. It wasn't just me that stood to lose. My mother needed that piano more than I did. It had been her therapist, father confessor and secret lover for most of her life. I may have been slow or stupid as far as my school subjects went, but I was acutely perceptive on the human level. On that first day, in my new home, as it was supposed to be, it was clear to me that one of the most important props to my mother's sense of emotional and psychological well-being had just been rudely kicked away.

The garden was to my father what the piano was to my mother. At Kingsburgh Road, the times that my father was the most benign and approachable were when he was in the garden, digging or hoeing or tending to the raspberry canes. In fact, there, had been two gardens, a small rock garden in the front and a largish back garden with its lawn and flower beds. The flat at 96 Spottiswoode Street, it turned out, was void of any kind of garden, save a miserable patch of grass that was communal territory for at least twenty different flats.

Then, on top of everything else, the flat itself was dark and dreary, and claustrophobic. The main artery of the flat was a corridor that took on the shape of a large 'L'. At one end of the corridor was the sitting room, at the other, the kitchen. Apart from the bathroom and a couple of closets, both adjacent to the kitchen, the space along the main stretch of corridor was filled with three bedrooms, side by side. This cozy proximity of the bedrooms was

another, unwelcome shock. At Kingsburgh Road, for much of the time my bedroom hadn't even been on the same floor as my parents. Now, it turned out, I was to be sandwiched between my brother on one side, and, my parents on the other.

Wanking was obviously going to have to be done with at least as much stealth as at Sedbergh, the difference being that at least at Sedbergh you were in good company. The gloominess due to lack of natural light was particularly depressing. Both the corridor and the kitchen had to rely on electric light at all times of the day. The windows in the bedrooms and in the sitting room faced north and this together with the grim facade of yet more gray-stone flats on the opposite side of the street, contributed to the overall gloominess.

The only good thing that I could come up with was the location of the flat. Where as Kingsburgh Road had definitely been in suburbia, Spottiswoode Street was close to the center of town. It was less than half an hour's walking time to such places as Lothian Road, Edinburgh University, Princess Street and Morningside where Colin lived. It definitely felt good that Colin was close by. It made me feel more secure. I had somewhere to escape to.

On my first evening in the new flat, after supper, my mother filled me in on what had happened since I had last been in Edinburgh.

"It's going to be very difficult for Daddy, you know."

My mother rarely said 'your father'. This familiarity always seemed strange to me in view of the fact that they never called each other by any name when they were together in the same room. I never ever heard a 'dear' or a 'darling', and the only times I heard a 'Katherine' or a 'Douglas' were when there were visitors.

"Why is it going to be difficult?" I replied.

"Well, Daddy's retired now. He's not going to have his job to keep him occupied." My mother had mentioned this in a letter a few weeks before, but it hadn't made a great impression on me. My father was 63 years old and I'd known he was close to retirement age.

"That's good, isn't it? He'll have lots of time to relax and do the things he wants to."

"Well he's not very mobile these days, you know. It means he's probably going to be in the house a lot. Anyway, what I'm really saying is that Daddy's not very happy at the moment. To tell you the truth, he was retired a year before he expected. That came as quite a shock to him. Apart from anything else, it has given us financial problems. There was a possibility that you would have to be withdrawn from Sedbergh.

"What!?" I just about jumped out of my skin. The thing was ridiculous. I couldn't be withdrawn from Sedbergh, I shouldn't, I mustn't. I could not conceive of anything worse. Besides, how could there be a big money problem? My music scholarship paid at least half the fees. Surely the rest wasn't so hard to pay off.

"It's all right, darling, everything's sorted out now. I wrote to Auntie Mollie and asked her if she could help out. She agreed immediately. By the way, Ian, I would like you to write to her very soon and thank her very much for helping, and also try to tell her about your life at Sedbergh. The other thing I thought I should tell you is that moving house has been a terrible strain on both of us. Daddy feels angry that he has had to do most of it on his own. He's also upset that so much has had to be given away so that we could fit into this small flat. So bear all of this in mind. We are all going to have to make adjustments living here."

I was still thinking about Auntie Mollie. Good for her! She was the one who'd saved me. I certainly would write to her. Auntie Mollie was my mother's step-sister. There were two main things I knew about Auntie Mollie. The first was that she was rich – very rich, the second was that she had always been good to me. Some of my most exciting memories as a small child were associated with visits to Auntie Mollie's farm in the south of England.

In the next few days I settled in. It was true what my mother had said about my father. He did seem to have changed. He was more irritable and more abusive. It was also only too evident that things had been given away or sold. Almost all the contents of the Kingsburgh Road attic seemed to have disappeared: things

that my parents had picked up in their years in Africa and India. Beautiful wood carvings from Nigeria and ornate statues from northern India and Nepal, bric-a-brac of both aesthetic and sentimental value, all seemed to have vanished. It was almost as if my father had been willfully destructive, as if being divested of his job and dispossessed of his house somehow justified a manic rejection of anything that did not seem strictly essential. This notwithstanding, the fact remained that the flat probably had only a quarter of the total space that the house on Kingsburgh Road had had.

One evening, I was having supper in the dim light of the kitchen when I heard the sound of shouting coming from the sitting room.

“Oh dear, that must be Daddy with Robin,” said my mother looking worried.

“What’s going on?” I asked, feeling shocked and afraid by the volume of sound still reverberating down the corridor.

“Your father has been having a lot of blow-ups with Robin recently.”

There was the sound of a door slamming, and then the front door was opened and it too was slammed shut.

My mother put down the plates in her hand and moved towards the door. “Stay here,” she ordered me as she went out of the room. A few moments later there was some more shouting and I heard the sound of footsteps returning along the corridor. My mother entered. She was crying. “What are we going to do about Robin?” she sobbed. “Daddy sees red when he’s around.”

Most of the time Robin seemed to spend as little time in the house as possible. I hardly knew anything of his life. He was a shadowy figure who crept in and out of his room, who had his meals at strange hours, and who had no bearing on my life other than being a source of embarrassment.

It came as a surprise to me the following day when I found a note beside my bed on awakening that said, ‘I will be at Cephas this evening. Can you meet me there at 8 p.m.? - Robin.’

I felt sorry for Robin much of the time, but on a different level, I also needed a brother. I was not used to him inviting me anywhere and it felt good that he had done so this time.

Cephas was a youth club that was run out of a church on Lothian Road. I descended some steps into the basement not knowing quite what to expect. What greeted me was a warm, informal atmosphere. There were tables and chairs, the smell of coffee and cigarette smoke, and people sitting around chatting. Robin was holding forth to two girls, who were listening raptly. For a minute, before he noticed me, I listened to him in wonder. Like Colin, he had recently affected a Scottish accent, only in the case of Robin, the inflection was more working class Stockbridge. When he spotted me, he called me over.

“Ian, I’d like you to meet two of the bonniest lasses in Cephas, Morag and Caitlin.” The girls giggled. “Ladies, this is my little brother, Ian. He goes to a posh boarding school in England, so you’d better be on your best behavior.” I winced inwardly. Robin always had to play a one up ‘I’m better than you are’ or the more devious alternative, ‘you’re *supposed to be* better than me, but you’re not, I am going to show you why’. “Will you excuse us,” Robin continued, “we’re going to sit down and have a coffee and a fag.”

As we got our coffees, I noticed a piano in the corner. I immediately felt more at home.

“Could I play that later? I’m really missing the piano, now that we don’t have it any more.”

“Of course, of course, feel free,” Robin replied, lighting up a cigarette. He looked like a 1950’s ‘angry young man’ rebel with his scruffy hair, long green anorak, and chunky, woolen turtle neck.

“Do you know what happened last night?” Robin suddenly looked serious and intense.

“What, with you and Daddy? No I don’t. I just heard the shouting.”

“He threatened to beat me. I’m eighteen years old and he threatened to beat me!”

“What! Why?” I exclaimed.

“Oh, who cares ‘why’? For everything ... for coming in late, for not having a job, for being a failure in his eyes, for smoking in my bedroom, for having a club foot, for being the son he’s always been ashamed of ...” Robin trailed off, his face twisted with anger and hurt.

“But, things are going to be different from now on,” he continued.

“Why, what happened?” I asked, sensing that Robin was building up to the climax of his story.

“When he threatened to beat me, I told him ‘no way was he ever going to do that to me again’. I told

him that I was bigger than he was, and that I could push him away easily. I told him I wasn't afraid of him any more. Then I left and slammed the door on him."

Robin's eyes cleared and the muscles in his face relaxed. He seemed strong and resolute.

* * *

It was late in the afternoon of the 8th. April that I heard the news about the Army scholarship. I had just returned from North Berwick, where I had been playing in the Scottish Boys Golf Tournament. There, on the floor, was a buff envelope from The Ministry of Defense. It was addressed to me so I opened it, read the brief note, and with a trembling spirit went through to the sitting room to tell my father the bad news. As usual with my parents, I was more concerned with how they might feel than ascertaining how I felt myself. And, as usual, my parents were true to form in being more wrapped up in their own feelings of disappointment than in finding out how I felt. My father was blunt and reminded me that this setback didn't in any way have to stop me from going into the Army. My mother didn't seem to have much of a reaction. She was disappointed in me anyway because a few days earlier, I had got news that I had failed to get into The National Youth Orchestra. In both cases I had felt somehow relieved, although this feeling had been completely buried under an avalanche of guilty 'I've let them down' feelings. Feeling like a failure, I went out the next day to North Berwick by train and got beaten in the second round of the Scottish Boys.

For the rest of the holidays my strategy was simple enough: when at home, work like hell on my O level subjects (especially Physics), so as to prove to my parents that I was doing my damndest not to fail in that area. And when not working, get out of that nasty, horrible, claustrophobic flat and try to have some kind of social life. In fact, I had been invited to a party in mid-April. The invitation had been intriguing:

It read: BRING A BOTTLE / BEAT / BAR BQ.) / BARN / BED & BREAKFAST / BANGERS & BEANS / BIRD & BEER PARTY. The party was being given by Sedbergh acquaintance called Douglas Turnbull. Turnbull was in another House but I had got to know him through Rugby and cricket. I found him a bit obsequious for my liking but we had played golf together a couple of times and I could tolerate him. The attraction was not Turnbull. It was getting away from Edinburgh for a couple of days (the party was in Kelso, in the Borders), a chance to have some fun, and a golden opportunity to meet a woman.

As indicated the party was held in a large barn. The atmosphere was perfect. Oil lamps gave out a subdued lighting. The dance area was encircled by tables, which were laden with food, bottles of beer and punch bowls. Behind these tables, there were ping-pong tables and dart boards. A large number of bales of hay were stacked in one far corner of the barn. A disc jockey had been hired for the occasion and an uninterrupted flow of The Beatles, The Stones, The Animals, Gerry and The Pacemakers, Freddie and The Dreamers etc., surged out of the excellent sound system. Dress was informal. There were a few people in mod outfits but fortunately this was the Borders, not London, and so consequently I did not feel hopelessly out of place in my white shirt, brown corduroy trousers and brogue shoes.

The most noticeable thing of all was the complete absence of adults. Things had obviously been arranged so that we could let go. This was in sharp contrast to the kinds of parties and dances I had been to for the last few years. The previous April, for instance, I had attended The Edinburgh Children's Homes Organization Annual Dance, more commonly referred to as the ECHO ball. This was about as stiff and formal an event as you were likely to find. The ball was held in the stuffy Assembly Rooms on George Street. The dress was Formal, strictly Formal. Formal with a capital 'F'. My mother had rented a dress kilt with black velvet jacket, starched shirt and black bow tie. At that time, I was pursuing the sister of an old Edinburgh Academy friend of mine. I was still a kissing virgin and was measuring my progress, such as it was, by such criteria as holding hands, arm around the waist, and the suchlike. On this occasion, at the ECHO ball I was 'progressing' at a meteoric rate with my friend's sister. We had danced close so that we were touching. I had fondled her hair several times, she had laid her head on my shoulder once, and wonder upon wonder, she hadn't moved away from the insistent pressure of

my erection which she must have felt despite the protective interventions of my dress sporran. Finally we had danced enough, and disheveled and sweaty, we made our way to a couch in the corridor adjoining the dance floor. As we sat down I put my arm around my partner's shoulder. No sooner had I done this, than out of nowhere, an old dowager pounced upon us and declared in thundering tones, "you can't do that kind of thing here, you know." In short shrift, my erection withered and the magic of our evening evaporated. I was left cursing the old biddy and wondering why putting your arm round a girl was so much worse than coming in your pants due to the delightful friction of two sets of loins and one large hairy dress sporran.

But the party in Kelso was going to be different, that much was clear. There were no interfering old biddies, there wasn't even anyone over the age of twenty to be seen. For the first hour or so, I 'mingled' and 'circulated'. At first I resisted the incessant offers of beer. I had tried it before and hadn't liked the taste. Also I couldn't stand doing something because of group pressure. But there was no denying that people seemed to lose their inhibitions after a few beers. Inhibitions were something I could afford to lose. By 11 o'clock or so, the beer was beginning to taste better and better. Earlier I had been introduced to a girl called Ursula Sturrock. She seemed to me like a Greek temple maiden with her long blonde hair and white, low-cut toga-like dress. Admittedly the Aphrodite image faded somewhat when she started talking about her horses but all in all, her words were pre-empted by the visual signals. Ursula was what you might call 'developed', and word had it that horses were not all that she had ridden. At 9 o'clock, she was clearly out of my league, but now, in some mysterious fashion that I didn't fully comprehend (and didn't want to) I found that I had the courage to approach her. It had just been announced that there was going to be a dance competition. I approached Ursula and asked her if she would like to be my partner. She agreed and we entered the dance area along with the other participants.

When we started dancing, I immediately felt a chemistry between Ursula and I. We seemed to know what the other was doing. We flowed together with ease. We were communicating humor, sensuality, curiosity so much more clearly than if we had been using words. Slowly the numbers on the dance floor were reduced, as more and more couples were eliminated by the judges. Finally there were only two couples left, Ursula and I and another couple. I had become almost oblivious to everything except the interweaving flow of the music, my partner's movements and my own inner rhythms. We danced and danced for what seemed like an eternity and then suddenly, the music had stopped and someone was telling us that we were the winners. I remember my prize was a bottle of Old Spice after shave lotion.

Now that the dancing had stopped, all I was really interested in was getting Ursula over to the far corner of the barn and in amongst the bales of hay. Alas, dear reader, wouldst that you could believe the self-restraint of a nice young, upper-class border lass. To the bales she would not go. 'Coming through the rye', maybe, but coming *to* the rye was nay to be, and coming in the rye was out of the question. But she *did* agree to partake of a short walk with me. And 'twas on this very same walk that I had my very first French kiss, an event never to be forgotten.

On returning to Edinburgh the next day, I found a letter from Pam awaiting me. The timing was off. In it she had the following to say: "You asked me what I thought of you. I think you're darned good-looking and would make a very good boyfriend. You're a very good sport about everything and you're very faithful." She then went on to say that, as far as her chances of getting to Britain were concerned, it wouldn't be more than a year and a half away, due to the money that she would be able to save that summer from her job as ward aid in a hospital. I was left with confused feelings. On the one hand, I was still intoxicated with Ursula. A door was open there, or seemed to be. Perhaps not a barn door but at least some kind of chink in the chastity belt. I could catch glimpses of more french kisses and who knows what else. At least, Ursula was real. What had happened in Kelso was not a dream. With Pam, it was just wishing and hoping. On the other hand, I did owe Pam something. We had been writing for a long time. I did want to be faithful. That was very important to me. There seemed to me to be no worse crime than betrayal of trust. Was it wrong for me to see Ursula? Was that being unfaithful? Maybe it would be alright if I saw her but didn't kiss her - but then what was the fun in that? Why did things have to get so complicated when women were concerned?

It was like that film I had seen a few weeks earlier, the L-Shaped Room with Leslie Caron. French girl comes to London. Meets young struggling writer. They make love. She gets pregnant. He doesn't want her to have the baby; arguments, fights, tears. She decides to have the baby anyway. Complicated, complicated, all so complicated.

7.

Sedbergh; Summer term, 1963:

Of the eight other boys who entered Powell House at the same time as me, I have already introduced four of them, these being Andrew Booth, Geoff Grime, Ralph Blacklock and John Aitken. Of the four others, two were 'egg-heads' named Bishop and Chalmers. Due to their combination of academic brilliance and sporting mediocrity our paths seldom crossed. The remaining two boys were called Fawcett and Hordern. The most noteworthy things about Fawcett were his great height, his unending silliness, and his enormous penis.

In his first two years at Sedbergh, Michael Hordern had not distinguished himself in any particular way. He did not seem to be especially bright, and in sports he was hampered by a fairly serious asthmatic condition from which he suffered. Nevertheless, Hordern made up for his deficiencies in other ways. He was a verbal master of offense and defense thanks to his razor sharp wit. Hordern was skilled in the art of ridicule. In my first year, I had disliked him intensely due to his incessant biting sarcasm. Like Andrew Booth, he had earned my deep-seated distrust and disrespect on account of the fact that he had not owned up to his very sizeable part in the Grime affair. Although he shared with David Lungley a defiant spirit, Hordern was guided by expediency, rather than principle, as in the case of Lungley. More recently however, Hordern had found a positive channel for his verbal talents.

In the Lent term, Hordern had been the star of a play called 'The Will' by J.M.Barrie. This play had been produced, directed and staged by my blues-playing friend Peter Wolf. The performance of this play in the House library established that Hordern had considerable dramatic ability and, in particular, a flair for comedy. I had also been in the play and it was during rehearsals that Hordern and I discovered and began to exploit each other's gift for impersonation and dramatic improvisation.

I was able to joke around with others, people like Mark Hudson and Bert Hopper, but for sheer Theatre of the Absurd, it didn't begin to approach Mike Hordern and I. As the year progressed, we developed into the resident comedians, a sort of Laurel and Hardy of Powell House. In the summer term, we were both in the same dormitory, and it was there that some of the wildest scenes were staged.

Setting: Dorm 6, Powell House
Time: An evening in June, 1963, shortly after lights out.
Characters: Michael Hordern, Ian Brown, and a lot of extras.

SCENE 1:

Hordern: *Wank*

Brown: (impersonating Somerset yokel) *Arr, wot's thart oi be hearin ... did oi hear someone say wank?*

Hordern: (becoming Somerset yokel 2): *Arr, thart you did.... and wot's it to you anyway?*

Brown: *Wot's wot?*

Hordern: *Wotts wanking to you?*

Brown: (switching to affected English accent): *Well, I say! That's absolutely none of your business. I mean to say, fag ends, that's what I say to you sir, fag ends!*

Hordern: (switching to threatening cockney voice): *Hey, watch it mate! I don't take no fag-ends from no-one. You toffee-nosed snot, who do you think you are anyway?*

Brown: Well I say! That's a bit uncouth. Nip off old chap!

Hordern: Piss on yer, mate! You want a knuckle sandwich or wot?

Brown: (switching to Bogart impersonation): Hey pal, you botherin ma buddy here? I'm warnin you pal, you'd better lay off him.... (switching back to affected English voice) That's right old boy, you tell him.

Hordern: Oh I see, we've got friends 'ave we? Alright, you've asked for it mate. Let me introduce you to my secret weapon. He's known around these parts as... (dramatic pause)... *The Little Man!* (sniggers from the audience)

Brown: (as Bogart): Oh no! Not *The Little Man ..*

Hordern: You got it matey. O.K. Valentine, tell 'em a fing or two. (switching to impersonation of Mr. Begley) Now I may look small but er don't let that fool you for a second. I have my black belt in Karate, and I must warn you... (dramatic pause) these hands are licensed to kill (laughter from audience) ... to say nothing of this nose! (uproarious laughter from audience)

Worried boy 1: Come on, you'd better knock it off you two. You're making a hell of a lot of noise

Brown: (putting on thick Glaswegian accent): Whit's the matter with ye laddie. We've only jist started

Worried boy 2: Shut up Jock! Go to sleep

Hordern: (sounding like a world weary Shakespearean actor): Oh the poor fools! They just don't understand. Casting pearls before swine, that's what I say. Why bother (sigh), my God it's not worth it. Let them have their sleep I say, 'To sleep...perchance to dream...'

Worried boy 1: Shut up!

Brown: Perchance to wank ...

Worried boys SHUT UP!

I & 2:

(Scene fades)

SCENE 2: (the following evening)

Hordern: (impersonating Mr. Begley in his best authoritarian manner) *There will be no wanking tonight in this or any other dormitory. Does everyone understand?*

Brown: (doing his best Mae West impersonation) *Hmm..... can't say that I do, mister besides, maybe you have something better in mind?*

Hordern: (acting shocked) *Good heavens! How did you get in here? This is a boy's school. There aren't supposed to be any women here, well except the Faggot ... I mean the Matron ...*

Brown: *Well, that's exactly why I AM here honey-bunch. I thought the boys might appreciate me taking over as your new matron* (getting out of bed and mincing over to Hordern's bed.) *Besides, sweetheart, I thought you, in particular, might appreciate it. I mean, I can provide invaluable assistance, if you know what I mean.*

Hordern: (acting nervous) *Well I I don't know. I would have to ask Matron ...*

Brown: *Ask nothing! You're a big enough boy to make decisions for yourself. Mmm ...* (lifting up sheet) *and now that I get a good look at you, you are a big boy, ain't you?*

Hordern: (acting terrified) *Well, I really don't think think this is a good idea I'm afraid I ...*

Brown: (sitting on edge of bed and running hand through Hordern's hair) *Hmm come on, big boy, is that a pickle in your pants, or do you really love me?*
(door opens and ENTER Head Prefect)
Head Prefect: *What's all this noise? Brown, what are you doing out of bed? Get back in bed immediately. If I hear another word from this dorm, there'll be trouble.*

(Scene fades)

SCENE 3: (the following evening)

Brown: *O.K. tonight we're going to be quiet.*
Hordern: *That's right, no noise.*
Brown: *No fooling around.*
Hordern: *No messing around.*
Brown: *No talking like Mr. Begley.*
Hordern: (talking like Mr. Begley) *That's right, no talking like Mr. Begley*
Brown: *No talking about wanking*
Hordern: *What's that?*
Brown: *I said, no talking about wanking*
Hordern: *Wanking?*
Brown: *Yes, wanking*
Hordern: *Ah yes, that's it, no talking about wanking*
Brown: *Right*
Hordern: *Good ...*
Brown: *O.K.*

(silence)

(more silence)

Hordern: *All quiet on the Western front*
Brown: *Un silence profond règnait dans la cimetière*
Hordern: *Come again?*
Brown: *Just something I learned for O level*
Hordern: *Ah yes, O level.*
Brown: *Yuk!*
Hordern: *Blech!*
Worried boy 1: *Shut up, will you! I'm trying to sleep.*
Brown: *Ah sleep ... perchance to dream.*
Hordern: *Perchance to wank.*
Brown: *Tch tch tch, remember now, no more mention of wanking.*
Hordern: *Right. Just ... silence.*
Brown: *That's it, complete hush.*
Hordern: *Complete quiet.*
Brown: *Cessation of noise.*
Hordern: *Nothingness.*

(Silence)

(more silence)

Brown: (demented cry) *Ahhh! I can't stand it! I can't stand the silence. I'm going craazzzy!* (singing in the voice of Mr. Begley) *'oh I've got the little man blues, blue as I can be, I've got the little man blues, blue as I can be'*

Hordern: (also with a Mr. Begley voice) *'Oh there ain't no-one around, who's as little as me'*.

(laughter from the audience)

Brown & Hordern: (both using identical Mr. Begley voices): (singing)

'Oh we've got the little man blues, blue as we can be, we've got the little man blues, blue as we can be, there ain't no-one around, who's...

(ENTER Mr. Begley)

Mr. Begley: *Who's making this noise?*

Brown: *I was, sir.*

Hordern: *So was I, sir.*

Mr. Begley: *You will both come and see me after breakfast tomorrow morning.*

(EXIT Mr. Begley; Scene fades)

It wasn't that we were trying to be malicious towards Mr. Begley or anyone else for that matter. Nor were we trying to be rebels. It was more a case of over-exuberance, what would be called 'high spiritedness'. In my case anyway, it seemed almost as if I needed the trait of over-exuberance to compensate for the already mentioned deep tendency towards over-conscientiousness.

In my third year at Sedbergh, I was at the zenith of my popularity. For the first time in my life, I felt completely accepted and integrated into a community. I felt safe. I could be myself. I could find myself. I could let go and take risks without fear of rejection or retribution. This sense of security led to a wonderful, dizzy state of feeling free. At home I never felt accepted. I was always having to prove myself or improve myself. I was never shown approval for who and what I was at that moment in time. As a result, I had reached a point in my double life where it seemed as if I was the only boy in Powell House who dreaded the end of term at Sedbergh as much as I longed for the end of the holidays when I was in Edinburgh.

Fooling around with people like Mike Hordern was my way of freeing myself in a creative way. Freeing myself from the endless injunctions of my parents. Freeing myself from the voices of authority and the strictures of life at Sedbergh. And freeing myself from the stifling, mental boredom of my academic work, work that involved an over-abundance of memorization, a lack of meaningful explanation, and an almost complete lack of challenge to imagination or intellectual curiosity.

Playing the fool also gave me a sense of identity with which I felt more comfortable than being 'Jock' the Scotsman, or Brown the Sports hero, or even Brown the Musician. I liked the role of court jester, precisely because it didn't tie me down to one particular identity. I could play many roles, be many people, explore many different parts of myself. I could adapt, be flexible, change my colors like a chameleon. There were different 'types' at Sedbergh and I didn't feel that I fitted into any one particular mould. I wasn't the 'Leader-type' like Hudson. I seemed too unsure of myself for that. I wasn't, despite my father's fervent wishes, the classic Army type like Stewart Jeffrey. They were too inflexible and unimaginative. I wasn't the Sporting Jock type like Dave Roberts. They were too aggressive and insensitive. I certainly wasn't the brainy Intellectual type. They were too remote, too abstract, too unemotional. I wasn't the Rebel type with their cynicism and critical nature. I didn't even identify with the Artistic type. They always struck me as being too 'spare', too dreamy and soft and other-worldly. That only left one other category in the usual inventory of public school types, and that was the 'Yob' type. A yob was someone who was regarded as a complete wash out, a good-for-nothing. I was quite clear that whatever else I was or wasn't, I certainly was not a yob.

There were, however, some problems inherent in playing the role of the court jester. One problem, for instance, was feeling that I had to live up to everyone's expectations. Some people started expecting a variety show every night in dorm. There were times when I felt that I was playing the fool against my better judgement. I was somehow getting trapped by the same role that had proven been so liberating. 'Type-cast' perhaps? An incident that took place at the end of June serves as an example. This incident also proved to be the climax of my various skirmishes with Authority.

We were in Chemistry class, waiting for our teacher to arrive. When I say 'we', I mean form Vb. There were in fact four forms in the O level year, Va, Vb, Vc and Vd. This makes Vb sound positively close to the cream of the stream. Unfortunately such was not the case. The reality was that Va and Vb were for those focusing on Arts and Languages whereas Vc and Vd were for the science lads. Thus Vb and Vd were for the second stringers. Form Vb, in particular, was a kind of Terminal City, a kind of academic version of a palliative ward for premature victims of various varieties of cerebral diseases. Not many graduates of Vb were expected to go on to the dizzy heights of taking A levels. About half the class would leave Sedbergh at the end of the year with a few O levels tucked under their belt. Being in Vb was a mixed blessing for me. On the one hand, it only contributed to the fairly hefty conditioning that I had already received about being 'thick'. On the other hand, it allowed me to realize that there were actually people who were thicker than me. This gave me hope.

I needed hope where people like my Chemistry teacher were concerned. Mr. Bennett, the master that we were waiting for, was short and stocky, and played trumpet in the School Orchestra. Mr. Bennett was not popular. The reason for this was that he personified three of the least respected traits at Sedbergh. He was alternately sucky and pushy, depending on who he was with and the circumstance. He was also over-bearingly self-righteous. On top of all this, Mr. Bennett treated me as if I was stupid. Just the other day, he had told me that he thought it be a miracle if I passed my Chemistry O level. Wonderful! Nothing like encouragement.

So on this particular morning, I was not feeling predisposed towards Mr. Bennett, or the science of Chemistry for that matter. As it happened, I was feeling extremely frustrated. For three days my neck had been in a brace. A week earlier, I had injured my neck and back playing cricket. It was a repeat of the previous summer, only this time it was more serious. Once again I had been put in traction in the school sanitarium, and when I had recovered sufficiently to move about, the school doctor had insisted that I make a trip to Lancaster General Hospital so that my neck and back could be X-rayed. Much to my dismay, the doctors there had informed me that I would have to give up fast bowling, as I might otherwise permanently damage my back. As it was, the initial back problems had developed the previous summer and had resulted in increasingly erratic bowling on my part. I, along with several of the better players of the '62 Colts team, had been given a try-out for the 1st. XI, at the beginning of the term. However, due to my poor performance, I had been kept down to play a second year on Colts. For over a month I had had the galling experience of playing with people a year younger than me. People like John Walford and Nick Gaskell for whom I had been a hero the previous year. They, along with many others, had expected me to get onto the 1st. XI. Instead, my arch rival, Iain Thomson had become an opening bowler for the 1st. XI, and meanwhile I had been turning in progressively worse performances as a second year Colts bowler. Now, to cap everything off, I was out of action and being told that I would have to radically alter my style of bowling if I was to continue to play cricket. The whole chain of events had left me feeling deflated and humiliated. It seemed as if my cricket career was on the skids.

The Vb class was beginning to get impatient. We had been waiting for ten minutes and still no sign of Mr. Bennett. Then I made the mistake of asking someone if they had ever seen 'aqua regia' in action. There seemed to be something diabolically exciting about the prospect of mixing together nitric acid and hydrochloric acid. The rest of the class must have had the same sentiments because in no time at all I was being egged on to get out of my seat, go up to the front desk and produce the concoction from the assorted bottles there. Their attitude was, 'if anyone'll do it, Crazy Jock will'. My attitude was 'they want me to play the part of the mad scientist, that's an interesting role – why not. What the hell!'

Within five minutes, the room resembled Frankenstein's laboratory. The bubbling mixture on the desk contained, amongst other things, nitric acid, hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, potassium permanganate crystals, and iron filings. The results were spectacular. Various gases poured over the side of the beaker including the dense brown gas, nitrous oxide. Suddenly, at the height of the reaction, someone hissed 'here he comes'. My role as The Mad Scientist burst like a bubble and there I was, a panic-stricken sixteen year-old.

Throwing a gym shoe through a window or even playing the chapel organ was one thing, mixing dangerous chemicals without the permission of a master was altogether another. I feverishly grabbed the still bubbling mixture and thrust it into a cupboard. Then I slammed the sliding door shut and vaulted back into my seat. At that exact moment I walked Mr. Bennett.

Mr. Bennett wasn't fooled so easily. He knew that wisps of white and brown smoke should not be seeping out of a cupboard in the corner. He also knew that there wasn't any reasonable explanation for the presence of various pungent smells in the air. Scarcely had he entered the room than he headed like a bloodhound for the tell-tale cupboard. He opened the door and with what sounded like a gleeful exclamation seized the incriminating evidence, turned to the class and held it up with a gesture that made me think he was holding up a severed head, rather than a miserable beaker.

"Who is responsible for this?" thundered Mr. Bennett.

"I am sir," I replied weakly. Mr. Bennett looked like he'd just stepped out of The Book of Revelations - the page dealing with The Last Judgment that is.

"Come with me Brown," he hissed his face white with anger. I was then dragged down the corridor until we reached the science teacher's common room. Mr. Bennett opened the door, pushed me inside, and then closed the door and locked it. I couldn't believe it. He had locked me in, like some dangerous criminal or fanatical revolutionary.

I waited, and waited, my imagination torturing me as to the hell that awaited me. Finally, after an eternity of waiting, the bell to mark the end of class rang shrilly outside in the corridor. After a minute or two, I heard footsteps approaching and then there was the sound of a key turning in the lock of my cell. Mr. Bennett walked in grim-faced. He then curtly informed me that he was going to accompany me back to Powell House where he would leave me in the charge of Mr. Begley. If he'd had handcuffs, I'm sure he would have used them. Maybe he thought I would try to make a break for it and take to the hills - live in a cave, knock off a sheep when necessary, live by my wits. Hey, a boy who cooks up bootleg aqua regia is capable of anything.

At Sedbergh, there was no better group catharsis than seeing somebody else in serious trouble, especially when you were completely in the clear. As Mr. Bennett frog-marched me through throngs of Sedbergh boys returning to their Houses for lunch, I sensed more catharsis than concern. I could have been wrong. After all, unlike the German language, our native tongue does not have a word for 'laughing at someone else's misfortune'.

Inside Powell House, I was made to wait while Mr. Bennett related the gory details of what had happened to the Housemaster in his study. At length Mr. Bennett left without a word to me, and I was ushered into Mr. Begley's living room.

"Well Brown, this kind of thing can't go on, you know."

"No sir." You do things that amaze me, Brown. Simply amaze me."

"Yes, sir." I mean you're not too bright Brown, but I do have a fair opinion of your character, I know you try hard and you undoubtedly have certain worthwhile capabilities."

"Thank-you sir."

"But then, just when I've got to the point of thinking that you're made of the right stuff to eventually have responsibilities like being a House Prefect or even a School Prefect, you do something extraordinary. That business of the window, for instance, or trying to change subjects without consulting your father. Then there was this business of your playing the chapel organ without permission, and then your disruptive behaviour with Hordern in dormitory not so long ago. And now this, the most serious indiscretion of all. You are supposed to be going into a study next term Brown, I hope that this won't hinder your chances. In any event, I am going to have to beat you, and you will have to go to the Headmaster with an explanation."

As it turned out, the beating was not hard to take. Nor was the subsequent meeting with the Headmaster who took a kindly you should-have-known-better attitude. Compared to some of my imaginings in the common room, one of which was expulsion, my punishment was mild indeed.

The summer term came to a glorious conclusion with a week of post O level celebrations. These took the form of an on-going orgy of playing the fool. The difference between this and the sessions with Hordern in the dorm was that firstly it was legitimate to let off steam after O levels, and secondly, everyone got into the act.

8.

London: July 1963

I was staying with Joy and Jim in London after two weeks of C.C.F. camp in Warcop, Warwickshire. My friends thought I was crazy to go to camp yet again, but what they didn't understand was that by going to army camp, I would be killing two birds with one stone. As well as pleasing my father (and thus reducing the interpersonal flak when I was in Edinburgh), it also gave me a valid excuse for delaying my return home.

Being with Joy and Jim felt as liberating as being with my parents was oppressive. I had had little chance to observe couples, other than my parents of course, but it didn't take much to see that my sister and her husband were genuinely happy. Not just happy compared with the tension and misery of my parents but also in contrast to the dull neutrality that seemed to characterise the relationships of most, if not all of my friends' parents. With Joy and Jim, there was a vitality and an intimacy that I loved to watch and be a part of for a while.

At Christmas, everything had been so frantic because of the wedding that there had virtually been no opportunity to spend much time with the two of them or to absorb the atmosphere of their flat. Now I had the chance to do both.

I felt immediately at home in their flat. It was bohemian in the best artist-intellectual tradition. In the corner of the large living room was an old upright piano with brass candelabras adorning each end. The walls were lined with row upon row of books with the odd Toulouse Lautrec or Van Gogh print tacked up for variety. The floor was an obstacle course whereby you had to negotiate scattered piles of *The New Statesman* and *The Times Literary Supplement*, stacks of sheet music, overflowing ashtrays, bottles of Burgundy and Blue Nun, almost unrecognisable under their coating of candle-wax. In the corner opposite the piano, was a record-player and a shelf burdened with an eclectic assortment of classical and jazz records. The kitchen was as weird and wonderful to me as was the living room. In the cupboards were to be found all manner of exotic condiments, at least 'exotic' as far as my limited experience was concerned. Such foreign foods as German black bread, jars of black olives, and feta cheese and containers of natural yoghurt all vied for a place on the crowded counter,

Unlike my parents home, where no-one ever visited except the occasional planned visit from a relative, my sister and brother-in-law's flat was shared with a Pakistani student and often frequented by the landlady, a vivacious and hot-blooded creature called Eva Maria. At the time, I didn't know what to make of her. In her personality and behaviour, she was completely outside my range of experience. She seemed to me like a combination of Edith Piaf, Zsa Zsa Gabor, and 'Boubalina' from *Zorba the Greek*.

Out of these disparate elements, Joy and Jim had fashioned their love-nest. Like their surroundings, their relationship seemed to be in direct contrast to that of my parents. The most noticeable difference was the fact that they were always talking. When they fought, they argued face to face. When they played, they teased and made each other laugh. When it was time to debate (which was often), they would bounce issues and opinions back and forth, like some long, hard-fought rally at Wimbledon. There never seemed to be the hostile silences of my parents' house, a repressive silence punctuated by outbursts of vitriolic anger or floods of tears. I loved the openness, directness and honesty of their relationship. I loved listening to them talk although I often had trouble following what they were saying due to the fact that they used words like 'dichotomy' and 'hypothesis' and 'parameter'.

Jim fascinated me. Along with Eva Maria, he was quite unlike any other adult I had met. As I had discovered on our previous encounters, he was definitely not the Daniel Boone rugged out-doorsy type as had been my first guess based on the fact that I knew he was a Canadian. Jim's skin did not have a healthy glow. He had a pallid complexion and his eyes usually looked tired and had dark rings under them. His hair was dark and wiry and he had a perpetual 5 o'clock shadow. At first glance, Jim was not someone to get excited about. What animated Jim, what made him alive and exciting was conversation. I had never met anyone with a mind like Jim's. He

astonished me with his knowledge, the breadth and depth of which was extraordinary. When I told him, for instance, that one of my books for English O level had been Orwell's Animal Farm, he proceeded, (after asking me what I had thought of the book) to give an accurate synopsis of the story, an extremely clear analysis of the themes and underlying message beneath the satire, and a brief account of his own opinion of the book. After the stuffy and curriculum-bound minds of my Sedbergh teachers, and the combination of sophistry and bigotry that characterised my father, Jim enchanted me with his wonderful clarity and conciseness. He was not pedantic or boring in his explanations or expositions and always managed to draw me into dialogue rather than droning on with some erudite monologue.

Jim was mild-mannered and soft-spoken. What did it matter to me that his knowledge had been gleaned more from books and reflection than from 'experience'? My father was always going on about experience, as if this was the sole path to knowledge. He would curtail discussion by saying he *knew* this or that because he had lived it. The problem, as I saw it, was that his 'experience' had made him abrasive, pompous and closed-minded. Jim, on the other hand, was incredibly open. He was always asking questions and seemed continually curious and flexible as regards being prepared to alter a tentative opinion. He appeared to be genuinely interested in hearing about my experiences and would encourage me to venture my perceptions, feelings and opinions.

On the last evening of my stay in London, Joy and Jim took me out for dinner at an Italian restaurant on Haverstook Hill. We had cannelloni and lasagne and drank red wine. By the time we got back to the flat we were all in high spirits.

"Play us a tune, Ian," said Jim. So I sat at the old Heintzman and began to play. Joy made some coffee and Jim settled into the big leather armchair beside the piano. When I had finished, I asked him if he would play.

"Sure," said Jim and we swapped places, after which he launched into 'Ain't Misbehavin' and his whole Fats Waller routine. When he had finished, we all sat down to coffee.

"That was great," said Joy enthusiastically.

"Oh yes, I love your style Jim," I said with admiration.

"Well, I have fun with it," said Jim modestly, "but you know Ian, you should keep playing, you've really got something there."

Our mutual admiration society might have continued had it not been for a sudden question from Joy.

"By the way, when does your train leave tomorrow?"

Edinburgh had been the furthest thing from my thoughts and the sudden realisation that I would be in my parent's house the following day completely shattered my sense of well being and the warm ambience that we had been sharing.

"Oh, er ... I'm going to take the 1 o'clock train."

"Does Mummy know when you're arriving?"

"No."

"Hadn't you better let her know?"

"Yeah, I suppose so."

"Well, don't do it now. Finish your coffee first. I know what it's like to phone the parents. I usually have a couple of stiff drinks beforehand. How do you feel about going back anyway?"

"Not exactly wonderful. I'll get my O level results while I'm there. All hell'll break loose if I don't pass them."

"Oh I'm sure you'll pass them. You have worked hard and you're not stupid," said Joy who always seemed to assume the best for me without always knowing the facts.

"Does your Dad still want you to go into the army?" asked Jim, changing the focus.

"Oh yes."

"How about you?"

"Well I'd like to go to university, if I could ever make it."

“What do you mean? Of course you can make it,” interjected Joy abruptly.

“Why do you say ‘of course’? Some of my teachers think I’m going to have trouble passing my O levels, let alone get A levels.”

“Well, what happened with that whole thing about doing Physics and Chemistry? Did you switch back to English and History?”

“No. Dad said I had to take Physics in order to get into Sandhurst, but it turned out he was wrong ... at least ... look, it’s a long story.”

“What do you mean? You didn’t *have to* take Physics and Chemistry and you took them anyway?” Joy’s voice was both angry and incredulous. “Besides, you don’t even want to go into the army.”

“Joy, let me decide what I want,” I said beginning to react to the feeling of being pushed by her.

“But that’s the point, Ian. That’s exactly what Jim and I want. For *you* to decide what you want, not Daddy or Mummy or your teachers at Sedbergh or anyone else. I mean I’ve just realised that for myself. I damned near had a breakdown at The Royal Academy of Music. I had to leave in order to find out what I wanted. You see, I don’t even know if I ever wanted to go the R.A.M. in the first place, I may just have been trying to please Mummy. She desperately wanted me to go, After all, she’d failed to complete her L.R.A.M. when she was a girl, so she had a real stake in the thing. Anyway she’s beside herself now because I’ve quit and started in on a Social work diploma at The London School of Economics. I’m sure you’ll hear all about it when you’re in Edinburgh. But I had to do it, don’t you see? I had to do what *I* wanted. I mean it’s like getting out of Edinburgh. I had to get away from the parents. I wanted to and I had to. The same thing will probably happen with you and Robin.”

I didn’t know how to respond to this. I was trying to figure out all these questions that had been let loose like a swarm of angry bees in the last year or two. Questions like ‘what do you want to be?’ ‘What do you want to do?’ ‘What kind of person are you?’ ‘What and who do you identify with?’ I was trying to figure all this out and I wasn’t doing a very good job of it.

Robin’s name had been brought up. The conversation continued with Joy asking me how things were between my father and Robin. I told her about what had happened in the Easter holidays. Both Joy and Jim were shocked. Joy then launched into an account of some of the things that my father had done to Robin when we were quite young. She described how, on occasion, Robin would imitate my father as he sang during his ‘matutinal ablutions.’ On one occasion, at 7 in the morning, my father emerged from the bathroom in an enraged state, grabbed Robin, and beat him with a cane. Another time Robin had set fire to some curtains. My father went berserk, shouting at him, slapping him, and then beating him. My father’s shouting and Robin’s screaming must have been heard by the neighbours because, according to Joy, the next day the N.S.P.C.C. (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) paid a visit. Joy went on to say that it was just like a typical abuse case in that Joy and Robin finished up by lying in order to protect my father. In something that sounded reminiscent of my present situation, Joy described how, at that time, she was in the habit of waking up with acute anxiety attacks due to my father’s behaviour, and how she would give a sigh of relief when she heard him going into the bathroom and knew that he would be there for the next hour.

I remembered little of this. I would only have been about three at the time, Robin, six and Joy nine. I did have general recollections of beatings given to both Robin and I, as well as a realisation that my father had treated Robin considerably worse than me. But during my childhood, I had been unable to blame my father for his actions. If anyone was at fault, it was Robin. He was either lying or stealing or flagrantly disobedient. Now as I approached the age of seventeen, I was becoming increasingly critical of my father’s behaviour towards both Robin and my mother, especially when it entered the area of mental cruelty.

* * *

Edinburgh. August 1963

My feelings about being back in the grim Spottiswoode Street flat were softened somewhat by receiving an airmail letter from Pam. At least, that was until I read it.

Excerpt from the letter:

'My dearest Ian,

I am very glad to receive your letter because I didn't know if I had the guts to write you after 3 months. To be very truthful I have just been plain lazy. Also I will be honest with you and tell you I have had a crush on someone who is far beyond my boundaries. I felt guilty about this and couldn't write you a deceiving, romantic letter. However, now I have got over Phil since I haven't seen him since school broke up.

I didn't get the job as ward-aid because I'm too young, but they gave me a job in the kitchen, part-time. I make 98 cents an hour. So far I've made a tiny sum of about \$50. So that's a fat lot of good by way of getting to Britain.....'.

This letter proved to be THE BIG LET DOWN. After reading it I felt pissed off. Hadn't I been extremely patient. With the exception of the one letter where I had reacted to her outburst about the Army, I had been very restrained. I had tolerated her hot-cold, push-pull behaviour. Where one letter would be full of 'mush', as she called it, the next would be about her latest crush. My hopes had been raised when she had said in her last letter that she would be in Britain within a year and a half. She had said it as a definite statement. There hadn't been any 'perhaps' or 'possibly'. And now, after three months silence, she writes a letter in which she says she not only won't be coming but also tells me about crush #92. It was too much. I'd had enough. The thing that really rubbed salt into the wounds was the fact that since my wonderful evening with Ursula at the barn dance, I had been loyal and hadn't even written to her. Admittedly I had thought about her every time I dabbed my face with Old Spice. Granted, the thoughts *had* been of a lascivious nature. But the fact was that I had restrained myself and hadn't acted on my feelings. I had been conscientious. And this letter was my reward. It wasn't fair. How could I trust Pam any more? The hurt I had been feeling started turning into a more vengeful state. I resolved that I would write a last 'Dear Pam' letter and subsequently pursue Ursula with abandon.

Unfortunately things did not work out too well. After dispatching my letter of rejection to Pam with a flourish, I eagerly got in touch with Ursula's home in Kelso only to be informed that Ursula was away in Europe for most of the summer. That news took the rug from under my feet and left me feeling remorse for what had, perhaps, been a hasty action. There ensued a general state of depression about the seeming impossibility of ever meeting a woman.

Meanwhile the tension of waiting for my O level results was beginning to build up. To this point anyway, there had not been the usual blow-ups. My father was clearly trying to avoid any talk of either the army or my subjects at school. However this did nothing to lessen the tension. There was a suspended judgement, like the sword of Damocles, hovering dangerously above my head.

One morning, my father surprised me by asking if I would like to go and see the film 'Lawrence of Arabia' with him. My father rarely went to see a film but more importantly this was the first time that he had ever suggested that we go out together, just the two of us. I had accompanied him to International Rugby matches of course, but that had been when I was younger. And besides, there was a big difference between being invited to see a film and going to a rugby match. I was surprised and somehow honoured that my father had asked me. As it happened, I had already agreed to meet Colin at 8 o'clock at an exhibition game being given by the Harlem Globetrotters. But fortunately my father had suggested that we go to the early evening performance so I didn't anticipate any conflict.

The film, with its stirring sequences of Lawrence, leading his band of Arab soldiers into action across a magnificent backdrop of the Sahara desert, seemed to affect my father deeply. He had often talked of his experiences with the Touregs as well as the times he had spent further afield in places like the 'Mesopotamia', the North-West Frontier, and India and Africa where he had spent most of his army life. Now as we left the Film Theatre, these memories were obviously close to the surface.

"Ah, that's the life," he said as we started walking away from the theatre.

"Yes," I murmured as I noticed with a shock a clock that gave the time as 8-50. The film had been longer than I had expected.

"There's no life like it," he continued unaware of my dilemma. "There you are, thousands of miles away from civilisation, away from the rat race, from the dirt and noise. Out in the wilderness by yourself, or maybe with a companion or two: a few trusted possessions, self-sufficient, a law unto yourself, wonderful, marvellous, great life the army. I loved it. You'd love it too."

Despite my anxiety about how to tell my father that I had to rush off, I couldn't help wondering why my father's portraits of life in the army always seemed to be so void of human company. It seemed very different from Lawrence and his fanatical supporters. But then again, maybe it wasn't so different. Peter O'Toole had been quite remote and aloof as Lawrence *with* his followers but somehow not a part of them. These thoughts were suddenly interrupted by my father's voice.

"How old are you now. Sixteen aren't you? Old enough to drink. This might be a good time to go for our first drink together."

"As a matter of fact, Daddy, I'm meant to be meeting Colin Crabbie at 8 o'clock."

"I see, well that's a pity." My father glanced at his watch. "Good Lord man, it's nearly five to eight now. You'd better get going."

I hadn't known quite how my father would respond. To my surprise, he had seemed reasonably understanding. As I rushed off to my meeting with Colin, I felt pleased that I had been assertive. This was something I needed to be more often.

The next day I bicycled across town to Murrayfield Golf Course where I was scheduled to play in a club tournament. The prize for winning this tournament was a silver chalice or quaich known as the Barr-Simm Quaich. The year before I had won it and had been allowed to keep it at home. Now I was trying to see if I could win it back for another year. I had only been back in Edinburgh for about ten days, and during that time I had not had much opportunity to play golf. And in the Easter holidays I had hardly played at all due to studying for O levels. The lack of practice was telling. I played atrociously and forfeited the quaich.

When I got back to the flat, my father asked me how I had done. "Oh I came about fifth or sixth. I played pretty badly," I replied. "Well, what can you expect if you don't practice!" my father responded caustically.

This was a low blow. I knew it and I knew that he knew it.

"But Daddy, you know I was working for my O levels most of last holidays. Don't you remember, you said that I should play golf less and study more?"

"Don't answer back, boy." My father exploded in anger. "I hope you're not turning into a failure, like your brother - and even your sister now." This was unusual for my father to put down all three of us at one blow. Usually one of us was held up as a success to illustrate and emphasize how the other, or others were failing.

"I think Mummy wanted some help in the kitchen. Maybe I'd better go and help her. I could see that my father didn't really want any kind of conversation. He was gripped by some kind of irrational, volatile anger and had just wanted to sound off.

"Yes go and help your mother. She needs all the help she can get. Go on, get out."

In the kitchen my mother was in the tiny cubicle that served as a kitchenette within the larger dining room. Although it contained both sink and stove, there was barely enough space for one person to operate. I hated this room. It was so gloomy. Why couldn't they buy a 100 watt bulb? I hated the house. It didn't feel like home. I couldn't imagine it ever feeling like home. The immersion heater was so small, you couldn't even have a decent bath. Four inches of hot water and then suddenly it turned cold. Besides, the flat was so cold that whatever

hot water there was, cooled off in no time. It was the same in the bedroom. At night I would brace myself as I tore off my clothes and jumped into bed. I would then work my arms and legs up and down furiously so as to warm up the chilly sheets. It was so cold that I didn't even get excited about the prospect of wanking.

The fact that my father's mood had changed so radically from the evening before was confusing me. I told my mother about what had just happened and also the events that had followed seeing 'Lawrence of Arabia'.

"What is the matter with him? Why's he so mad?" I asked.

"Maybe he was hurt yesterday evening."

"Hurt? Daddy? What do you mean?"

"Well maybe it hurt him when you rushed off to see Colin. I mean he'd offered to take you out for a drink. That probably meant a lot for him."

"But he seemed O.K. He never said anything," I protested.

"Yes, but you know Daddy. He's a soldier. If he was hurt he wouldn't show it."

"Well, it wasn't my fault that I'd arranged to meet Colin. I did that before he invited me to the film."

"Yes darling, but you must remember that Daddy is lonely. You have lots of friends and because of that, if the phone goes, it's probably for you. The letters that come are more often for you than for Daddy. You are often out of the house visiting. Daddy doesn't really have any friends, and now that he's retired, he doesn't really have anywhere to go. You must understand that you mean a lot to him. When you're at Sedbergh, he doesn't have a chance to talk to you, or even to see you. When you're at home, he has that chance, so try not to deprive him of it."

It was always the same. By the end of a conversation with my mother, whatever anger or indignation I might have previously felt had turned into guilt. It was true what she said. Now I thought about it, his face had looked softer, kinder, more open than usual when we had left the cinema. And it *had* meant a lot to me that he'd invited me to go for a drink with him. That was a very special gesture and I had rebuffed him. I had blown it! I shouldn't have mentioned Colin, I should have stayed with my father. I could always have explained the situation to Colin the next day.

Over the course of the next week, my father's mood did not seem to improve. It was getting close to the end of August and the time that my O level results were expected to arrive. The tension was becoming unbearable. The heavy, oppressive atmosphere was worse than usual. The mother had grown up with an epileptic brother, and in so doing had been conditioned to hold in her emotions and keep quiet. My father was not an epileptic but rather an apoplectic, but in any event, the effect was the same as far my mother was concerned. She became servile and deferential. My role, on the other hand, was to be a 'go-between'. When communication broke down, or even at the best of times, my job was to bridge the yawning gap between my mother and father. My mother would send me from the kitchen to the living room with soothing cups of tea and slices of cake. For his part, my father would send me out to the shop to buy a box of chocolates for my mother. This would happen only occasionally as a ritual gesture of atonement. The other way that I acted as go-between was in the role of music therapist. My job was to find suitably calming classical music on the kitchen radio for my mother, and on the living room radio for my father. I became finely tuned to which composers and which compositions might be a harmonious common ground for both my parents. Beethoven's "Emperor" or Chopin, for example, was a sure winner; Bach was 'iffy', depending on which piece it was; and anything 20th. Century was much too risky.

Meanwhile, Colin was also getting anxious about his results. The rush to meet the postman every morning was becoming wearing on both his nerves and mine. One day on impulse, Colin and I decided to go to the Highlands for a week's camping and hiking, this pending our parents' permission of course. Our plan was to climb Ben Nevis. My parents agreed, although I wasn't clear about their feelings.

The trip turned out to be both good and bad. The good came from the release of tension in getting away from home and the wonderful sense of being free to do what we wanted. The bad had to do with my relationship with Colin. It wasn't really 'bad', more just a case of realising that we were drifting apart. Colin, like me, had been

wrestling with his cultural identity for several years. But just as I was beginning to feeling more at home in Sedbergh or in London than in any place in Scotland, Colin seemed to be undergoing a reverse metamorphosis. It bothered me that, like my brother, he was affecting a Scottish accent. It was as if he was consciously trying to engineer the metamorphosis. That bothered me. I would *play* at taking off a Scottish accent but I wasn't trying to become the part I was playing. I almost took it as a sign of weakness on Colin's part that he felt he had to change himself in this way.

Another development that I didn't like was the fact that our relationship had become more competitive. We compared our relative successes at Sedbergh, and we compared our progress with women. As far as Sedbergh was concerned, we were more or less on an even par, but when it came to discussing women it seemed that Colin had a definite lead. At least he hadn't lost his virginity yet.

In the last few days of our trip, I began to panic. I imagined that my results had come and that I had failed Physics and Chemistry. This led to an almost desperate feeling of 'if only'. If only I had firmly rejected my father's position and had taken non-science subjects. Now I was going to fail. It would be humiliating. What would become of me? After all, my parents had drummed into me that these were the most important exams of my life. I knew one thing. I had one last chance to drop my science subjects and switch over to the arts side. It wasn't usual to do this at the end of the fifth form and it wasn't favoured, but it was, apparently, possible.

Colin and I arrived back in Edinburgh in early September. It soon became clear that little if any tension had dissipated since my departure a week earlier. 'Tension' in our household was not just an inner state but akin to an external force, a palpable entity permeating the rooms and the corridor. One thing was for sure. Over the years, I had developed a very finely tuned sense to measure just how much tension was 'in the air'.

On the way home I had resolved to speak to my father at the earliest possible opportunity about my last chance to switch subjects. The fact that things were tense made me want to delay such a dangerous topic. However I wanted to make sure that we talked about it before my O level results arrived. Besides, who could say when this current round of tension would subside? In a very real sense the tension in our house never subsided. Having weighed up these concerns I reaffirmed my intention to speak to my father that same day.

That evening after supper, I tried to set up the situation as best I could. I found some nice classical music on the kitchen radio and asked my mother if she could stay away from the sitting room for the next half an hour or so. I walked along the long gloomy corridor from the kitchen to the sitting room in trepidation, and yet determined to be assertive.

"Daddy, can I talk to you about something?"

"Of course, of course. You know you can always talk to me about anything, anything at all. That's what I'm here for." The blustering and ironic tone of his voice seemed to neutralise the generosity of his words. With some amazement, I noticed the title of the book he was reading. It was called Japanese Tortures in The Second World War.

"Daddy, I know I haven't got my O level results yet, but I'm worried about how I may have done in Physics and Chemistry. I worked really hard in both those subjects this year but they just seem awfully hard for me to understand."

"Oh my goodness me! Not this again." My father sighed wearily as he said this and then continued. "Believe me, I know you are not a born scientist. You don't even have to tell me. It's all there in your reports. But there's no point belly-aching about it. In life, you do what you have to do."

"But that's the point, I don't have to do them. I can switch to English and History."

"Listen, I don't think you understand. How many times do I have to tell you. There are three doors into Sandhurst. In order to go through one of those doors you need A levels, which your teachers seems to think you would have great difficulty in getting. To enter the second door, you need to pass the Civil Service Commission Examination. With diligence, even you should be able to get through this. However, one compulsory part of this exam is Physics, from which you are only exempt if you have already procured your O level. That is why you have just done your Physics O level. The third door is a back door and that is to enter through the ranks, something I assume no son of mine would ever have to do."

"But someone at school told me that if you get two A levels, you don't need Physics."

My father blew out air in exasperation. "Look, the point is that you've already taken Physics for two years now so even if you did go on and take your A levels, it would be absurd to waste what you've learned in two years, little though it may be."

"But Daddy, I may want to go to University and I am sure I would stand a better chance if I was doing English and History than if I was doing Physics and Chemistry."

"You used to tell me that you hated History, that you could never remember all the dates. Anyway that's beside the point. The point is even if you managed to get into University, what would you take?"

"Well, I might take English..."

"English!" The words exploded out of my father's mouth. "Oh dear Lord, give me strength." That was it, my father had finally had enough. He picked up his book on Japanese tortures and slammed it down on the coffee table. "English!" he repeated, turning to look at me directly. "And what the hell kind of a job are you going to do with English? Become some limp-wristed writer or book-worm academic like that character down in London? In a few years you'll be on your own, I hope you realise that. You'll have to get a decent job, make your own way, earn your own bread and butter, and you want to do that with *English!*! I can't follow you. You don't seem to have the foggiest notion of what you want to do. You're always dithering like your mother and your brother. I mean what happened to the army? Have you given up on that? Well, have you? Answer me."

"No, Daddy....I.."

"Well that's something at any rate." My father's wrath seemed to subside a little. He knew that whatever 'assertiveness' I had entered the room with, had been successfully tamed and contained. I felt mind-fucked.

My father's tone of voice became conciliatory and understanding. "You know we all have our failures. Just because you failed your Army scholarship doesn't mean you should give up on the idea of the army. In life you have to learn to stomach your failures you know."

"Yes, Daddy."

That was that. End of debate. It was to be Physics and Chemistry for the next two years. The following day, I received a post-card from Mr. Begley stating that I had passed all my O levels except Latin. What amused me was the fact that he had written 'Fail' beside both Physics and Chemistry, before crossing it out and writing 'Pass'. My parents were temporarily relieved and for a day or two, there was a spirit of celebration. Then, as I prepared to return to Sedbergh, the anxiety seemed to return and with it pronouncements that 'your O levels were nothing, the most important exams of your life, your A levels are coming up, you'd better get working.'

9.

Sedbergh: September 1963

I returned to Sedbergh for my fourth year with a real sense of excitement. There was a possibility that I might get onto the 1st. XV in Rugby. In addition, I had finally made it into a study, despite the beating and ominous warnings from Mr. Begley the term before. At the end of the summer term it had been decreed that I was to share a study with David Lungley, Mark Hudson, Iain Bilsland and John Spedding.

Study 4 was my new home. Study 4 was, in reality, a 12' by 12' box into which were crammed five desks and a low divan, to say nothing of the five occupants and their assorted junk. However after living in a dayroom for three years, with its tiny lockers and stable-like co-habitation, the box felt more like a palace. It was a case of 'small is beautiful'. The study area became a piece of prime real estate. On this co-operatively owned property, the occupants had their individual dwelling places. The dwelling place was, in fact THE DESK – with its accompanying cupboard and shelves, a kind of multi-functional area that incorporated features of a study, library, kitchen and storage space.

The most important and cherished item atop the desk was THE TEA MUG. For three years the only way of assuaging the daily, post-exercise dehydration had been to drink tap water, or else go to The Grubber (the name for the school tuck-shop) and buy some fizzy pop. Now, along with the study, came the glorious luxury of being able to make a cup of tea whenever you wanted to. The tea mug was a very personal possession and definitely *not* to be used by anyone else. The tea mug could differ in colour or design but never differed in size - it had to be large, very large, at least tankard size. Although called THE TEA MUG, it was perfectly legitimate to fill the said vessel with liquid refreshments other than tea. The most usual alternatives were instant coffee, cocoa and soup. There were those who would desecrate (or sanctify, depending on your viewpoint) their tea mug with such drinks as Horlicks, Ovaltine or even.... (blech!) Bovril. And there were those, of course, who on occasion would manage to slip in something a little more potent.

Most of the study rituals centred around the tea mug. There would be the 'tea-making ceremony' where everyone would be expected to take his turn in making the tea. There was the 'tea-tasting' ceremony with its expectations of formal approval of the tea that had just been made and, of course, an expression of gratitude to the official maker-of-the-tea. This ceremony was given special observance after such activities as playing rugby in a mud bath or going on a run through the pouring rain. Finally, there was the 'invitation-to-tea ceremony' in which honoured guests from other studies would be invited in for tea and, if they were lucky, biscuits and cake.

However, over and above the desk and the tea mug the source of greatest pleasure, and often dissension, was THE RECORD PLAYER. In the Junior and Senior Dayrooms, such a luxury had been denied. To be able, all of a sudden, to listen to what you wanted, when you wanted it, was for most people the greatest reward of being granted a study. Inevitably this freedom of choice began to reveal a whole host of personal differences, such as difference in musical taste, varying degrees of flexibility and tolerance for other people's choice of music, and matters of general consideration such as whether to play the record-player if someone else in the study was working, how loud to play your favourite disk, and what to do in the event of an outright clash of wills.

It turned out that in Study 4 there needed to be a good deal of compromising due to the overall diversity of taste. Iain Bilsland, for example, was specific in his taste. He liked Buddy Holly and Elvis, he was passionate about the Beatles and that was about it. David Lungley, on the other hand, liked classical music and folk music, in particular the Kingston Trio, Joan Baez and Peter, Paul and Mary. Mark Hudson liked some classical music and the Beatles but often wanted to listen to comedy albums by people like Flanders and Swan, Tom Lehrer and Bob Newhart. I don't think John Spedding knew what he liked but he seemed not to like classical music and professed to like The Beatles. As for me, I liked just about everything except The Beatles and Bob Dylan. I loved classical music. I

shared David Lungley's tastes in folk music and I brought a new element into the musical pot pourri in that I loved blues and traditional jazz. As far as the Beatles were concerned, I had to learn to tolerate them. Apart from anything else, Bilsland had tacked up glossy publicity photos of John, Paul, George and Ringo on the wall above the divan, so I could hardly avoid them.

Diversity of taste was also evident in how people decorated their desk area. Bilsland and Spedding, for instance, had the wall beside their respective desks completely covered with the most brazen Playboy cut-outs they could find. Their favourites were big breasted women like Anita Ekberg and Jayne Mansfield. I couldn't understand why everyone seemed to get so excited by big breasts. Shapely legs, inviting lips and smouldering eyes – these I could understand. Hey, I had experience! But big breasts? They just made me think of breast-feeding which didn't turn me on at all. Mark Hudson had a more refined and discreet sensibility. He tended more towards the calm sophisticates from Vogue magazine - women like Jean Shrimpton, for example. Lungley and I both shared an intense aversion to following the crowd and so veered more towards the familiar. David, who was still painfully pre-pubescent, didn't have any pictures of the opposite sex. Rather, he had put up some pictures and artefacts to remind him of his home in Kenya. For my part, I produced a collage of golf pictures, a few snaps of Pam and a couple of snaps of Bridget Bardot. Pam was 'my main squeeze', as the Americans would say (although I hadn't seen her for over five years, let alone squeeze her). Bridget, well Bridget.....what can I say? Bridget, with her perfect, medium size breasts, inviting lips, smouldering eyes and shapely legs.....Bridget who I fantasised about squeezing, that is in brief moments of disloyalty to Pam. All in all, what with O levels being over and the comfort of study life, the feeling of rebelliousness of the previous year seemed to have subsided. The first two months of the winter term were spent in a very enjoyable adjustment to this new phase of my life at Sedbergh.

In the world of rugby, it turned out that I did not make it onto the 1st. XV. However, playing on the 2nd. XV the year after being on Colts was no disgrace. Admittedly, it was a little hard to take that both Bilsland and Blacklock were playing regularly for the first team but on the other hand, Colin Crabbie was only on the 3rd. XV. The tremendous desire to get on the 1st. XV had rekindled something of the old rivalry between Bilsland and I, but because we played in different positions, we weren't in direct head to head competition, and this combined with a certain mellowing in our relationship meant that the rivalry was not hostile. Besides, Bilsland had failed his Physics O level which helped balance things out between us.

One of the more unpredictable aspects of being in study 4 was the fact that David Lungley and I were reunited again. For almost two years, we had been separated by either class, dormitory or dayroom. There had also been an emotional distancing due mainly to my increasing popularity with other boys and my success on the sports field.

In the first few weeks of being in a study with David, I felt a bit like a husband returning to his wife after a trial separation. There was cautiousness, hesitancy, and anticipation, along with a few residual guilt feelings. But, as it turned out, within a few months I felt on a much firmer footing. It was almost as if we had gone full circle. The things that had once joined us seemed to re-assert themselves, and the things that had separated us appeared to be receding. David was finally going through puberty, and with a vengeance. He had shot up in height and his voice had dropped what seemed like at least two octaves. One of his first acts at the beginning of term had been to re-join the choir, shortly after which he persuaded me to do likewise. There we were, once again, getting up early on Sunday morning to go to choir practice, only now he was with the tenors and I, with the basses. Then we began to sing together in the study. I had bought a cheap guitar during the summer holidays so that I could take it on rugby trips and consolidate my role as resident musician. With the guitar as accompaniment, we would sing folk songs in harmony, songs like 'On The Banks Of The Ohio', 'It Takes A Worried Man', and 'Tom Dooley'. With David, singing was an end in itself. It was not so much a release of emotion as it was a shared expression of spirit.

The greatest thing that David and I shared in common was enthusiasm. The dictionary definition of 'enthusiasm' is a four part one: (1) *supernatural inspiration or possession; inspired prophetic or poetic ecstasy*, (2) *intense or eager interest; zeal; fervour*, (3) *something arousing such interest or zeal*, (4)

religious frenzy. David and I both got enthusiastic, about many different things. We both got intensely interested, intensely aroused and intensely inspired. On occasion, we perhaps even became intensely 'possessed'. By the standards of people around us, we were probably over-enthusiastic, just as in another context we would be considered over-conscientious. We didn't hold in, or hold back enthusiasm. We weren't afraid of being seen as 'uncool' by letting it out.

For us, music was not a statement or a protest. For example, Dylan's angry or sardonic lyrics were not something which, at *that* time, I could understand, and his hard nasal voice did not have qualities that I appreciated. Neither, in my opinion, should music be something to plan, package or agonise over. It didn't matter whether every note or chord was 'correct'. It wasn't the musical form that was paramount. Rather it was how it was expressed, the spirit with which it was played and sung, the degree to which it animated and joined people together in a celebration. Just as I had not been able to understand how it was possible to be over-conscientious, the notion of being 'over-enthusiastic' was meaningless to me. How could one possibly have too much spirit?

Sharing a study also allowed David and I to have long conversations. I was not able to have serious discussions such as this with anyone else in the study. Bilsland and Spedding had a jokey, unidirectional way of communicating and seemed disinterested in the art of conversing. Mark Hudson and I sometimes had good conversations but they tended to be stunted by Hudson's rather impatient delivery of both opinions and a somewhat pompous erudition. With David Lungley, as with my brother-in-law Jim Moore, a serious conversation was more a vehicle for gaining or sharing knowledge than it was for expressing it. The conversations flowed and developed due to being facilitated by a spirit (the word seems inescapable) of inquiry, rather than being clogged and constipated by a surfeit of opinions and a deficiency of open-minded questions. In addition to all this, David was both ready and able to help me with the complexities of post O level Physics and Chemistry. David was considered very bright by Sedbergh standards and had completed O levels a year before me. In the upcoming summer term he was due to take his A levels.

It was something of a shock when one day it dawned upon me that with the completion of his A levels, David Lungley would be ready to leave Sedbergh to enter University. Sedbergh had only recently become a real home to me. The idea that I was now entering a stage that was effectively the beginning of the end was one I found hard to bear. I was part of an integral community, one that had grown, was still growing, and in my heart one that I wished would continue to grow. However, part of me had to face the hard facts that this was not to be the case. Some of my friends were going to leave before me and the day, when I too would have to leave, was already in sight. In November, I would be 17. I was, as my parents would put it, 'getting on'. This awareness of the eventual breaking up of the Powell House and Sedbergh community, as I knew it, served only to intensify my relationships with friends like David Lungley. I began to feel a new depth of emotion and began to experience an increasing awareness of the importance of my bonds of friendship.

Shortly before my seventeenth birthday, I received a letter from Pam. It was a reply to my cautionary 'last letter' of the summer. She had the following to say:

'My dearest Ian,

Thank-you very much for your letter. I certainly hope it won't be your last. You may not believe this Ian, but this is the honest truth. I have not fallen for anyone else, I don't even have a steady boyfriend. My only excuse for not writing to you is laziness. Ian, please believe this, I have not forgotten you or lost interest.

All I can say is I'll try not to let it happen again. I love hearing from you, please never stop writing to me, just give me a big row when I don't write and I'll come round. That's the sort of thing a stupid girl like me needs.'

All I felt after reading her letter was a sense of relief.

10.

I got up on the morning of the 22nd. November, 1963, feeling every bit of seventeen years old. I was in a study now. I'd put O levels behind me. I was full-back for the 2nd. XV. I felt older, more responsible and more mature.

Birthdays were not a big deal at Sedbergh. There was brief acknowledgement but no presents or cakes except for those received from parents or relatives. The day passed uneventfully. It was a Friday, which meant a full day of classes. This was not so good but the fact that it was Friday, filled me with a T.G.I.F. sense of relief.

Later that evening there was a concert in Powell Hall to look forward to, and the next day there was an away match against Skipton Grammar School. That evening after a supper of Shepherd's Pie and some indescribable and unnameable dessert, I set off up School Hill with David and Mark to attend the concert in Powell Hall. Although we did get to see the occasional film, the major form of entertainment provided by the school was a steady stream of concerts. These concerts were always of the classical music variety and were often presented by top performers such as Julian Bream, John Ogden and Gerald Moore. On one memorable occasion, the school was treated to a performance of Dvorak's 'New World' Symphony, given by the complete Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. How they managed to squeeze the complete orchestra onto the modestly sized stage, no-one knew.

The audience settled and became quiet. The concert was to be given by a Scottish Company called 'Opera for All', and the opera to be performed was 'The Barber of Seville' by Rossini. Opera was one form of music I found extremely hard to digest. It seemed so stiff and melodramatic and unreal. At least in a play (Brecht notwithstanding), it was easy to be pulled through the illusion, to the point of feeling that what you were watching was real. But in an opera, with its cast of barrel-chested men, and heaving-breasted women strutting around like marionettes, the only direction in which I found myself being pulled, was towards uncontrollable mirth. As far as I was concerned, and I was not alone, an opera became a comic spectacle, a hilariously funny unintended exercise in the theatre of the absurd. I think it was the emotional excess of it all that made it so funny. To go from the stoic Sedbergh world, with its tight emotional constraints, into a world where grown people warbled passionately at each other, as they fell in love, lied, cheated and killed each, was the ultimate contradiction, and one which allowed for a worthwhile release. The singers were usually funniest when they were taking themselves and the action the most seriously. In a comic opera such as the 'Barber of Seville', there was the added benefit of seeing the singers getting all puffed up when at the appropriate spots, when WE knew that they were totally unaware that we were laughing *at* them not *with* them. THAT was the real birthday present, 2 hours of anticipated hysteria. By the end of the first act, my expectations had been met, if not surpassed. My stomach was aching from laughter.

In the interval, three of us decided to go outside and take a brief walk over to The Cloisters. We noticed a small group of boys talking animatedly. As we passed them, I heard one of them say, it's true, I'm not having you on, he's been shot and they say he's dead. Kennedy's dead." Immediately, I felt a sense of shock and disbelief run through me.

"Did you hear that?" I asked Mark Hudson.

"What?"

"I heard that fellow saying that President Kennedy's been shot and that he's dead."

Mark's eyes widened. "Good Lord! It can't be true."

The bell sounded for the end of the interval. It was time to go back in. By the time we had returned to our seats, the hall was buzzing with rumours. I could hear confused whispering coming from all sides.

"It's not true. I heard the news and there was nothing about Kennedy."

"Apparently, there were three of them. Cuban terrorists."

"Was Jackie killed too?"

“It’s impossible. He’s too well guarded. Besides he’s got a bullet-proof car.”

“Where did you say it was supposed to have happened? Dallas? Where’s that?”

The whispering was suddenly drowned by a flourish of music introducing the second act. As the singers came onto the stage there was a sense of extreme agitation amongst the audience. The whole atmosphere had changed radically. Before we had been willing captives to our seats, now it was as if we were chained to them. It felt all wrong to be watching this frivolous entertainment, when an event of such magnitude was in question. There was only one thought in people’s minds: ‘was it true or wasn’t it?’

The next hour seemed to drag on interminably. The spectacle that had been so hilarious before was now not even remotely funny. The soprano who previously had furnished us with such delightful fantasies of our matron was now merely irritating as she trilled her way through one aria after another. At last, to everyone’s enormous relief, the opera climaxed and came to an end. There was the obligatory applause and then it was almost as if a starter’s gun was fired. The hall emptied in seconds, as people rushed out.

When we arrived back at Powell House, we were met by John Spedding who immediately informed us that it was true. Kennedy had been shot and killed.

Back in study 4, we tried to come to terms with what had happened.

“Well that certainly is terrible,” said Mark, who always had something immediate to say about everything. “Dreadful in fact. He was a good man, the best President the U.S. has had for a long time. But in a way I’m not surprised he ended up getting shot. I mean, what with his support for the civil rights movement and the whole Bay of Pigs thing, he must have made quite a few enemies.”

Why was it that Mark always seemed to know so much, I thought to myself as I tried to catch the gist of what he was saying. I didn’t know enough to discuss with Mark on this level. Besides, I was more aware of my feelings at what had happened than I was of any thoughts about who or what Kennedy had been or done. I looked at David. He had not said a word since we first heard the news. He seemed completely introspective and appeared to have been deeply affected by what had happened. He must have sensed that I was looking at him, for at that moment, he raised his head.

“Why is it the good people are the ones that always get killed?” he asked rhetorically. “It’s just not right.” This effectively echoed my sentiments. I sensed also that David, like me, felt it somehow inappropriate to get into a discussion about President Kennedy at that moment.

Mark began to rattle on again about how the U.S. was a jungle and how that kind of assassination could never happen in Britain. To my relief, he was interrupted after a few minutes by the sound of the bell announcing evening prayers in the dining room.

I lay in bed, a kaleidoscope of thoughts and feelings flashing around in my mind. Kennedy was dead. In some way, it was as if the Queen had been shot. Not much ‘outside’ news permeated the shell of the Sedbergh microcosm but this had swept in like a tidal wave. The man had such stature. He was tall and good-looking with a dazzling smile and an even more dazzling wife. He had that youthfulness and vitality that for some inexplicable reason seemed to be the preserve of American politicians. I mean how could you compare Sir Alec Douglas-Hume, the British Prime-Minister, with Kennedy. You couldn’t, it would be too embarrassing. British politicians, from my limited viewpoint always seemed old and decrepit, to say nothing of boring and pompous. And then there was what they stood for. Yes, maybe Kennedy had made enemies because he supported causes like the Civil Rights movement, as Mark had said, but at least he stood for something. Why couldn’t some handsome, charismatic British politician magically appear on the scene, stand up in the House of Commons, and say, ‘this is not the fair land, the bejewelled isle that we would have it be it is rather a land scarred and turned ugly by inequality and injustice, an isle besmirched by an unnatural and unholy caste system that results in, amongst other things, public school boys seeing anyone other than a public school boy as being somehow sub-human, uncultured, unintelligent, ignorant, unfit to belong to the same rank or even the same species listen to me, my people, I too have a dream’

My reverie concluded with the thought that it was hard to find heroes in Britain. They all seemed to be the other side of the Atlantic. But I was also left with some angry and confused feelings, a hornet’s nest had been stirred up. There WAS inequality and injustice in Britain, so why were we always going on about

our 'decency' and 'fair play' and wonderful system of justice, bla bla bla? What was that thing I had been reading in Orwell's Animal Farm a year ago? Oh yes.... 'All Animals Are Equal, but Some Are More Equal Than Others.' That just about summed it up.

Kennedy was dead. The world seemed a smaller place in which my world of Sedbergh had almost shrunk off the map, and my seventeenth birthday didn't seem so important any more.

Edinburgh: December 1963

Neither Colin nor I had received an invitation to a New Year's party. As a result, we decided to go out and celebrate Hogmanay on our own. I arrived at Colin's house not knowing what he had in mind for the evening. I was in for a shock. Colin took me up to his room and produced from underneath his bed four large bottles of McEwan's pale ale and a full bottle of Dewar's whisky.

We decided to get a head start on the evening by drinking one of the bottles of beer before setting off. I still had not acquired a taste for beer. I didn't mind it in a shandy on a hot summer's day, but on its own I found it unpleasantly bitter. However, I was determined to get to like it, if for no other reason so that I wouldn't let my father down. He had started to offer me beer before lunch on Sunday and I was sure he would consider me less than a man if I declined.

We left Colin's house around 6-30. Even though I had drunk less than a pint of beer, I could feel that slightly giddy and uninhibited sensation that I was beginning to recognize as the hallmark of being high. As we walked down the road towards the bus stop our raincoat pockets bulging with the three remaining beer bottles and the bottle of whisky, I felt a lightness in my step that was not altogether to do with the McEwan's sloshing around inside me. It felt good to be doing something different, something a little less straight-laced and predictable than going to play golf or squash, or even 'making the scene' at a coffee bar or a party. Who knew what the evening held in store for us? I felt like we were living dangerously.

It was only when we were in the bus that we began to question what we were going to do with all this excess of time and spontaneity, to say nothing of the booze.

"Let's face it, we've got five and a half hours to kill," said Colin unenthusiastically.

"Well, what did you have in mind?" I said, my tone of voice bordering on the reproachful. After all, Colin had taken charge, as he usually did. I had assumed that he had everything planned out.

"For a start, I didn't know it would be so bloody cold." He was right. It *was* bloody cold. Edinburgh was always bloody cold but on this particular evening the knife-edged gusts of wind seemed unusually penetrating, and the raw damp air particularly chilling. The thought of trudging around dimly lit streets waiting for the magic hour of midnight while we slowly froze to the bone did not seem appealing. And for five and a half hours?!

"It's too bad we can't go into a nice warm pub somewhere," I said, not helping to resolve the situation. In fact, we probably could have gone to a pub and got away with it despite the fact that we were underage. It was Hogmanay after all. However, living dangerously did not extend to wilfully breaking the law in our strict code of ethics. Besides, a pub represented other things as well. A pub was the other side of that thin line between adolescent and adult, a line that we hadn't quite crossed yet. In addition, a pub, especially in this part of Edinburgh, was frequented by working class people and there was no knowing how they would take to two middle-class, English-accented youngsters like Colin and I in their midst.

"I've got an idea," exclaimed Colin suddenly, interrupting my thoughts, "Let's go to Poole's and see a horror flick. By the time it's finished there'll only be about a couple of hours to midnight."

I agreed and we got off at the next stop, as we were already descending Lothian Road towards Princess Street. The idea appealed to me for several reasons. First and foremost, we would be out of the cold for two or three hours. Secondly, there was always a vicarious thrill at the prospect of seeing a horror film – something like 'The Pit and The Pendulum' which I had seen while at army camp in Pirbright. In addition, I had been wanting to go to the Poole's Synod Hall Cinema for some time.

The building held memories for me. Opposite the doors leading into the balcony of the cinema there were rehearsal rooms, and it was to one of these rooms that I had gone religiously once a week, between the ages of eleven and thirteen. The purpose had been to play in Dr. Ruth and Dr. Mamie Waddell's orchestra. I had vivid memories of walking down the long corridor that separated the cinema from the rehearsal rooms. It was an incongruous sound environment. From one side emanated the eager but imperfect sounds of a string orchestra, bright young rosy-cheeked Edinburgh boys and girls pleasing their Mums on a Saturday morning. From the other side came a chilling blend of piercing screams, fiendish chuckles, and crashing music. It was drummed into us that the cinema was forbidden territory and that we should hasten down the corridor as quickly as possible, speaking to no-one, especially if they were coming from the cinema. On reflection, that corridor was probably a symbol and an omen - something to do with walking the thin line between high culture and low culture, the tight rope between discipline and desire, trying to steer a course between the piss and the pomp.

We sat down in our cosy retreat from the Edinburgh cold. The first film was 'The Return of Frankenstein'. It had its moments but it was really the second film, 'Dracula's Revenge', that got us going. Or maybe it was the effects of the second and third bottles of beer, which we were surreptitiously imbibing out of paper cups. It was certainly a good combination. Count Dracula's bloodthirsty revenge became less horrifying and more comic by the minute.

It was about 10 o'clock when we left Poole's and set off towards the Royal Mile, that historic street in Edinburgh, known also as the High Street, which connects the castle and Holyrood Palace. We were now in a considerably better frame of mind and more than ready to face anything that Edinburgh's inclement weather might wish to throw at us.

"What are your parents doing tonight?" asked Colin, as he fished a package of five Embassy cigarettes out of his pocket.

"Oh, I don't know." They're at home of course, and mother's probably thinking of going to bed."

"Don't your parents see the New Year in?" asked Colin disbelievingly.

"No, not usually. My father might stay up and watch Andy Stewart and The White Heather Club on T.V." As I said this, I realised how glad I was to be out with Colin rather than sitting at home. The 'White Heather Club' was a T.V. program that featured Scottish Country dancing and Andy Stewart singing traditional Scottish songs. If the intention of the program was to stir up your Scottish pride, it had the reverse effect on me. It was so self-consciously 'Scottish'. So anxious to display the maximum amount of tartan and portray an atmosphere of revelry - one that always seemed to me totally artificial. As for Andy Stewart, the less said the better. Maybe it was just my bias against puffed-up little men again.

"Your father scares me." Colin said suddenly, breaking my train of thought. "He's so ...", Colin broke off, searching for the right word. "He's so intense."

"Well he likes you," I said ruefully. "He's always saying things like, "that Colin's a fine young man. I bet he knows where he's going in life. Tough little fellow, that Crabbie, he doesn't look as if he would stand for any nonsense."..."

"Your father says things like that?" Colin interjected, his eyebrows arched in surprise.

"Yes, he says things like that about other people. He would never say anything like that to me."

"My parents never say anything like that about anyone," his voice and face a curious mixture of reflection and alcoholic blariness.

"My father is always making comparisons to make one of us look bad. Sometimes it's the whole family. Sometimes he'll say something like, "why is it that no-one in this family ever laughs? When I was a boy, we laughed all the time. Aunty Margaret and her family are always laughing, and God knows with all their hardships, they don't have much to laugh about.""

As I was saying this, we reached the High Street and it was time to take stock of our situation. We could either turn left and go up towards the castle or else turn right and begin descending The Royal Mile towards our eventual destination, the Tron Kirk.

“Let’s go up to the esplanade,” I said emphatically. Colin glanced at me in surprise. He wasn’t used to me being the initiator. I was a bit surprised myself. On the few prior occasions that I had got tipsy, I had noticed a similar transformation, one in which I lost my hesitancy and self-doubt and became much more assertive and self-assured. Maybe that’s what Begley had meant about my having leadership qualities but being strangely reluctant to use them.

The castle esplanade was known territory to me which is probably why I had suggested going there. As a boy, my father had taken the family to see the military tattoo once a year, during the Edinburgh Festival. It had always been a moving experience. Unlike the ‘White Heather Club’ and its contrived T.V. studio atmosphere, the tattoo was a spectacular against the magnificent, floodlit backdrop of the castle. The ceremonial marches of the massed pipes and drums stirred genuine feelings of pride.

“Have you ever seen the lone piper?” I asked, as we entered the forefront of the castle esplanade. Colin was busy trying to get his cigarette lit, shielding it under the flap of his raincoat. I was thinking out aloud, at the sight of the castle battlements silhouetted against a wintry sky brought back more memories. The highpoint of the tattoo for me had always been the appearance of the lone piper high up on the battlements. A single spotlight focused on him as he played the traditional lament. It would be incorrect to say that this poignant moment stirred the Scottish blood in me, as in the case of the massed pipes and drums. The lament of the lone piper touched a more universal chord deep within me. The significance extended beyond nationalistic feelings or considerations. For me, it was as likely to resonate with a black man’s feelings as the pain and loneliness of Blues was integral to my white man’s soul.

Colin had run ahead of me and was now standing in the centre of the esplanade. Suddenly he threw his head back and started singing in a raucous voice, ‘Scots wha hae wha Wallace led, Scots wha hae wha Bruce hath bled, welcome to your gory bed and on to Victory’. It was appropriate. I joined in, and followed him as he marched to the top of the esplanade where on the other side of the moat the statues of Scotland’s two greatest heroes stood guard. As I approached Colin, I saw that he had taken the bottle of whisky out of his pocket and was taking his first swig. Suddenly, without warning, he jumped up on the balustrade that rose up at the side of the bridge over the moat. Clutching the bottle with one hand and holding out his other arm for balance, he began the precarious crossing. There was nothing I could do but hope for the best. Thankfully, he made it to the other side. Then, swaying in a most alarming way, he stood at the end of the balustrade facing Sir William Wallace and repeated one more chorus of ‘Scots wha Hae’.

“Och, the mon didna even thank me fer ma song,” Colin said as he jumped down. “Come on, let’s go into the park at the top of the Mound and get into this holy water here.” With his feat of daring-do, Colin had regained the initiative.

As we set off, I felt a combination of affection and frustration towards Colin, I liked and admired his gutsiness and colourful extroversion, but I never felt I could get really close to him.

There was too much competitiveness, too much challenging of ourselves and each other. I needed a friend with whom I could share feelings. At Sedbergh, this was no problem. There was John Aitken, and to a lesser extent David Lungley, Mark Hudson and Peter Wolf. But here, in Edinburgh, Colin was, by now, my only real friend. And it was in Edinburgh that I felt the greatest need to express my feelings. I also had the fear that Colin and I were beginning to drift apart. At Sedbergh, this had already happened, but in Edinburgh I felt more vulnerable because of the lack of other friends.

“What did you think of the game the other day?” I asked, attempting to re-open a conversation.

“What game?”

“Our game, against the Academy team.”

“Not much, we were better than them, that’s all.”

I was referring to a rugby game that had been played before Christmas between an ad hoc Sedbergh team that included Colin and I, and a team from The Edinburgh Academy that was largely comprised of former teammates of ours. For me, at any rate, it had been a strange experience - something akin to an immigrant returning to his roots, wanting both to somehow re-connect himself with his past and yet at the same

time prove that he is different and better for having made the change.

It was shortly after eleven o'clock when we flopped down onto the grass at the top of the Mound. As we had turned off the High Street at Deacon Brodie's Tavern, the sounds of revelry from within indicated that the New Year was not far away. Here, in the shadow of the castle, it was quieter. Behind us was the facade of the Scottish Assembly, and below us lay the Scottish Art Gallery and the glittering lights of Princess Street. I knew it all and yet somehow it all seemed foreign to me. I was beginning to feel cold and estranged from my surroundings.

"Here, have a dram." Colin held out the bottle of whisky.

"I don't know." I hesitated. I had never drunk hard liquor before and it seemed like a big step. My mother's repeated story about how various black sheep in the family had become besotted on alcohol flashed through my mind.

"Come on, what's wrong with you? You look like you need it."

"O.K." I took the bottle and immediately recoiled from the smell. I could feel my stomach rebelling, and I hadn't even drunk anything yet. Thinking thoughts of 'come on Ian, be a man', and 'if Colin can do it, so can you', I steeled my insides and took a quick swig. The part where it passed over my taste-buds and went down my throat was terrible, but the after-glow that spread through my body like wild-fire was wonderful.

"Good stuff, eh?" said Colin as he took the bottle back. "Not as good as Crabbie's 'Green Ginger', of course." The reference was to a famous liqueur that was produced by a company owned and managed by the Crabbie family.

"You know what?" he continued abruptly, as if he was about to announce something to the world. I'm going to get fucked this year, I know it."

Who was I to dispute his utter certainty? "Good for you," I muttered unenthusiastically.

"I nearly had it with this girl Fiona that I met at a party just before Christmas. She brought me off with her hand, and she let me put my finger inside her. God, she was really wet, sopping in fact. Oh, and her tits! She took off her bra and let me suck her breasts. Her nipples got all hard. Jesus, they were ... they were huge!"

Colin took another swig from the bottle as he relived what had obviously been a peak experience. Meanwhile my thoughts were bordering on the murderous. 'And her lips, and her hair, and her shoulder blades, and her left elbow, and her right big toe, and that's right Colin, go on rub it in ... give us the whole list. Think I want to hear about it when I haven't even got to the breast stage?!!'

"By the way, how are things going with you?"

'Curse you, Crabbie,' I thought to myself, 'you must have read my thoughts.'

"Oh, not so good ... have I told you what's been happening with Pam lately?"

"No ... I mean yes, at least, no, but not now, O.K.?"

God, why did I have to be so honest? I just set myself up. I could have just replied something like, 'it's going pretty well,' and left it at that. I could have been mysterious about the thing. If he'd pressed me for details, I could have even lied. But then again, I couldn't and wouldn't.

"Give me the bottle." I snapped out of my own thoughts. I didn't care any more. I wasn't going to listen to Colin's exploits any more. I wasn't going to entertain any more thoughts about what a lonely place Edinburgh was, I wasn't going to think about my parents or the Army, or Physics and Chemistry, or even dear old Sedbergh. I was going to get drunk, really drunk.

Half an hour later Colin and I were standing in the square beside the Tron Kirk. Everything was swimming. All I knew was that I was a part of a jostling, excited crowd. I no longer felt estranged. I was no longer self-conscious about my English accent. I wasn't even aware of myself as a separate entity. I was one of them. I was one of the masses. As the church bells began to strike midnight, I was an integral part of this collective consciousness as it counted off each peal.

"Seven ... eight ... nine ... ten ... eleven ... HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

And suddenly, everyone broke into a huge cheer. Bottles were passed back and forth, greetings exchanged, and then, to my amazement, I noticed men and women, complete strangers, hugging and kissing each other. Even

in my swaying, stupefied condition, I registered that in Edinburgh, this could only happen on Hogmany, and this could surely only happen with the aid of the bottle. But it was wonderful. It was marvelous. I wasn't going to question it. I was part of it. So I joined in, indiscriminately hugging and kissing any woman I saw. It felt like I was going around in a circle. It seemed as if I was kissing some of the same people more than once. But it didn't matter.

Everything was in a whirl. I was on a roundabout. I was on a roller coaster, everything swimming crazily before my eyes. It was as if each time I completed the circle of kissing and hugging, another inner layer of inhibitions and injunctions was stripped away. I was getting carried away, swept away. I had lost my center of gravity. Vague, confused thoughts crossed my mind; 'that old hag I just kissed must have been at least eighty!' ... 'it's so easy' ... 'why can't it be this easy with girls normally?' ... 'my God, she didn't even have any teeth' ... 'where did Colin get to?' ... 'I think I'm beginning to feel sick'. But I couldn't stop. Around I went, around and around. I heard someone say, "oh, not you again, this must be the third time at least." The spell was beginning to break.

Most of the crowd had drifted away. The New Year of 1964 had been born. It had been duly celebrated. It was time to sober up. Only one year to go 'till the next New Year. But I didn't want to stop. I didn't want the roundabout to grind to a halt. I dug into my pocket and took out the bag of coal that I had brought along just in case we did any 'first-footing' (coal, black bun and whisky being the traditional gifts). I was trying to persuade some stranger to take a piece of coal by demonstrating to him how good they were to suck when I became aware of a looming presence beside me.

"You'd better go on home now, laddie." The Edinburgh Constabulary was making its presence felt.

Normally such a bastion of Authority would have had me scurrying into line in no time flat. But in my present state his domed hat and dark blue uniform didn't cut much ice.

'Who are you to tell me what to do?' was my chief thought.

"Oh come on officer, I'm just having a wee bitty fun. Would ye care for a piece of coal?" I intoned in my best Stockbridge accent.

"I'm not joking, son. It's time for you to go home."

"But ... "

"RIGHT NOW!!"

It finally filtered through to my better judgment that the gentleman had really been quite tolerant and that I had better not strain his patience any more. I looked around for Colin and saw him about to disappear down an ally. I shouted to him and he waited still I was close.

"I'm just going for a piss," he said testily.

"I feel sick," I said feeling vary strange sensations in my stomach.

"Well, you'd better go home. I'm off over the Bridges." Colin seemed impatient and irritated. He also appeared to be in not much better shape than me. But whatever his reasons for wanting to go to the east end of Princess Street were of no interest to me at that moment. I just wanted to get home.

We stumbled off in different directions without saying goodbye. I could feel a rising sensation in my stomach. I was by now blind drunk and I had really no idea how to get home. However some strange and primitive homing instinct seemed to take over and I set off in the right direction. Just before I got to the Meadows, I began vomiting. All I can remember from there until the time I reached my front door was a series of dull thuds and vaguely registered pain as I tripped and fell, or else walked into a lamp-posts, this being interspersed with frequent vomiting.

I had only two concerns as I stood at my front door. How to get the bloody key into the lock, and how to get into my bed without crashing over anything and waking my parents.

The next morning, I awoke to discover a series of gory reminders of the evening before. My head was splitting, there were grazes on my face and bloody bruises and cuts on my arms and legs. In addition, one arm of my raincoat was covered with dried vomit. The stench of vomit seemed everywhere. But my some miracle, my parents didn't discover what had happened, or if they knew anything, they kept quiet.

It wasn't just alcohol that made me sick that Christmas. The second time was during a visit to The Cameo. The Cameo was Edinburgh's one and only fine arts cinema. It was located on Lothian Road near Tolcross in a busy commercial part of the city only fifteen minutes walk from the Spottiswoode Street flat. I was now of an age where I could both legally drive and see 'Mature' films. After the strict atmosphere of Sedbergh and my family, it seemed extraordinarily permissive that I could now see 'A' rated films, and positively licentious that I could see an 'X' rated film. Maybe that was the attraction. Anyway, in the Christmas holidays of 1963, I went to The Cameo on two occasions. On each occasion I saw a 'Mature' film, and as it happened, both of these films made a lasting impression on me.

The first film that I saw was 'The Servant'. Although it didn't mean anything to me at the time, the film boasted the wonderful combination of Joseph Losey as Director and Harold Pinter as script writer. The film contrasts the life-style of a young ex-Public school/Cambridge/Guards aristocrat played by James Fox, with that of his servant played by Dirk Bogarde. It is a film about power and powerlessness, domination and submission, and their interplay. At the beginning of the film it is clear who has the power. James Fox not only has control over Dirk Bogarde because he is his employer but also he symbolises power on a wider level because of his elevated position in society, his property and his wealth. He takes his rights and privileges for granted. He expects his servant to do what he is told without question or complaint. He expects him to know his place. There is, however, one problem. Unlike the stereotypical English butler, waiter or valet who always knows his place, and considers it a privilege simply to be worthy of being in a gentleman's employ, this particular servant appears to have designs.

As the film progresses, we see his manner subtly change from an indifference that borders on impoliteness, through various shades of passive aggression to the beginnings of overt impertinence. James Fox, The Master, does not see the warning signs and when eventually, he does realise that he has let his servant get away with too much, he doesn't know how to deal with the situation. All he knows is that his servant somehow isn't playing by the rules. But because the rules were slowly and subtly undermined, rather than being overtly broken, he was never able to pin the cad down. The Master may have the power of position, property and wealth, but The Servant is the one who had a monopoly on personal power. HE is the master when it comes to the powers of persuasion and manipulation. Slowly the audience comes to realise that the servant's designs are indeed sinister. His objective is not merely to protest his conditions but to actually alter them by slowly but surely gaining control over his master.

In the second half of the film, we see him achieving this objective. In a series of schemes that include first getting the maid to seduce The Master, and then eventually seducing him himself, The Servant succeeds in breaking down The Master's finer, upstanding, public schoolboy way of being and drags him into a mire of dissolution. By the end of the film, the roles have reversed and The Servant has become The Master.

The second film was the Marlene Dietrich classic, 'The Blue Angel'. As I discovered, this film had a very similar theme and story to that of The Servant. The scenario went something like this:

Scene 1:

Shots of Herr Professor in his room and on the job in a boy's school. He is clearly another fine, upstanding character; committed to his profession, conscientious in his work, and strict but fair in his dealings with his students.

Scene 2:

Herr Professor hears that one of his boys has been frequenting a night-club called 'The Blue Angel', a den of sin in the red light area of the city. He is morally outraged and determined to go to the club himself in order to rescue the errant youth.

Scene 3:

At 'The Blue Angel'. Herr Professor meets the main attraction at the club, the incredibly seductive and utterly decadent Marlene Dietrich. She finds it delightful that such a quaintly anomalous figure as Herr Professor should have found his way into 'The Blue Angel'. She decides to play a game with him by pretending to seduce him.

Scene 4:

After initial shock and outrage, Herr Professor realises to his dismay that despite her decadence, he really was quite taken with Marlene. In fact, even worse, after a second meeting, he discovers that he is falling in love with her.

Following Scenes:

Herr Professor's infatuated love has now become obsessive. He can't help himself. His visits to 'The Blue Angel' become more frequent. We see him beginning to unravel like a ball of yarn. Marlene Dietrich is the cat playing and teasing, and pulling on the end of the yarn. The Professor starts being late for work, then misses a day, and finally loses his job.

He is now dependent and vulnerable. It is suggested that he work in the cabaret at 'The Blue Angel' as the magician's helper. In reality, this means the magician's stooge, who says nothing, does little, and has to endure humiliations like having eggs broken and spilt on his head.

Climactic Scene:

Throughout the film we have seen Marlene Dietrich's attitude change from coquetry to capriciousness and finally cruelty in the form of ridicule and contempt. Herr Professor's pain and confusion are evident. He is becoming disorientated. The climax comes while we are watching the magician humiliate Herr Professor for the hundredth time with his scrambled-eggs-on-the-head routine. The audience roars with laughter. They love it. The magician roars with laughter. He loves it too. But then his laughter turns to anger. 'That dumb old fool, what's he doing? He knows he's meant to crow three times like a cockerel, after the eggs have been smashed.'

Herr Professor is standing there his mouth open and his eyes lifeless. No sound comes forth. The magician smashes some more eggs on his head. The audience screams with delight. The magician punches Herr Professor and whispers furiously 'crow, crow!' Suddenly Herr Professor starts flapping his arms frantically and starts crowing madly. At first, the audience cheer and laugh but then they realise something is wrong. Herr Professor's crows have become demented, strangled cries. The magician punches him again and tells him to stop. Enough is enough.

But Herr Professor does not stop. He just keeps screaming and flapping his arms. The unravelling is complete. First it was his integrity, then it was his mind. The last few strands connecting him to his sanity snap and he goes mad.

I do not know, and may never know the end to this film. As I watched that scene of the Professor going mad, deep in the pit of my stomach, I felt gripped by an overwhelming nausea. All I knew was that I couldn't bear to watch what was happening any more. I had to get out. As I walked up the aisle, I took a last glance over my shoulder at the screen. I wished I hadn't. There was Herr Professor slumped in a bare room, his face an expressionless blank, his hands and arms rendered impotent in a straightjacket.

I walked home shaken, feeling fragile. Somehow my seventeenth birthday had marked the first stirring of an intellectual awakening. Things that I had felt intensely before but hadn't understood, were beginning very slowly to become more focussed. The events surrounding Kennedy's death had made me feel ashamed of my ignorance of social and political affairs. I found myself beginning to question things more. 'The Servant' and 'The Blue Angel' had both struck a deep chord within me and had had the effect of intensifying this process of questioning.

Why did some people have to be Masters and others Servants? Were black people really 'inferior' like my father said, just 'trouser apes', as he called them? Why should you resign yourself to knowing your place if your place was one of subservience? It seemed clear enough who the Master was in our house. Was that right? Should we all be servants to my father? Why didn't my mother stand up to him? For that matter, why didn't I stand up to him?

Why did some people want to control others in the first place? Why was Marlene Dietrich so cruel to the Professor? Why was he tempted by her? Why did he succumb to her temptations? What was this power that women had over men? Why did they have to play games? Why didn't my mother play games? Was she different from other women? In what way?

Why did that bitch do that to him? He was a teacher. He was a good man. How was it that good people could become victims? Did God allow evil to triumph over good? It wasn't right. It wasn't fair. Why did the idea of someone going mad upset me so much? Why did I go to see the bloody film anyway?

In the days that followed seeing 'The Blue Angel', I tried to get the film out of my mind, but it haunted me. In some strange way, I kept linking the film with my mother without knowing why. The film had disturbed me deeply. I was also haunted by the images of Marlene Dietrich. Was that what some women were like? I didn't know. Women were foreign to me, I didn't know them. I didn't understand them.

Libby Croombe, for instance. She was the girl who had committed the sin of letting me put my arm around her, two years previous at the E.C.H.O. ball. If anyone was my true childhood sweetheart, it was Libby Croombe. I had known her since I was about twelve years old. I had always liked her but from about the age of fourteen on, something remarkable began to happen whenever I saw her. I found myself feeling captivated by her and I would go weak at the knees in her company. Not that this was a new experience. At Sedbergh, with its vigorous crush culture, it happened all the time. It was remarkable because it was my first experience of infatuation with a girl. For the last three years, I had been seeing Libby off and on during the holidays. At first, it was in the formal setting of a dance such as the E.C.H.O. Ball or the Badminton Ball. More recently, I had seen her at a few informal parties and also on the coffee-house scene.

The problem was that I never felt I got clear signals from Libby, or rather, the signals seemed very clear but inconsistent with the ensuing behaviour. Sometimes it felt as if she experienced the same intense kind of magnetic pull that I did. At these times she would express her desire to see me, and I would rise up joyfully, my tongue lolling out, and I would saunter over full of trust and anticipation. Then, after we had seen each other a few times, she would tell me that she had to go away for a while and that I was not to follow her. Then perhaps, I would bump into her accidentally on Princess Street and she would be pleased to see me, and the cycle would start all over again.

If I thought about it, which unfortunately I didn't, I probably would have realised that there was only really one reason that I wanted to pursue someone like Libby, and that was that I wanted more than anything in the world, I needed more than words could say, I desperately craved ... to fuck and be fucked (I really didn't mind who was in control). I mean, if I hadn't wanted to consummate my desire in such a way, she wouldn't have had any power over me. And it was clear who called the shots. She whistled, I came. She patted my head and said good boy. I nudged her thigh with my nose and smiled expectantly. She gave little kisses on my nose, stroked my flank and caressed my ears. I got a whopping erection and got up on two legs. She tut-tutted, smiled and said 'down boy'. I backed off a might confused. She consoled me and walked off with a promise that *next* time I'll let you lick my face, IF you're a good boy ... and, IF I feel like it.

The truth was that I was beginning to wonder if someone like Libby would ever let me fuck her. It seemed hard to imagine. I could imagine Bridget Bardot letting me fuck her, but where was I to meet someone like her? With Libby and Ursula, and even Pam, it was as if the whole thing was a game, a game in which they seemed to know the rules better than I. It even felt as if they were the ones that set the rules.

And like a dog, sometimes I didn't want to fuck, I just wanted to play. When I had been younger, it had been easy. As a seven or eight year old, I had played with both girls and boys. There hadn't been any great distinction. We played fantasy games, we played sexual games and it was all so natural, and simple, and spontaneous. Now, as a teenager, the notion of play had developed all sorts of dark overtones. The games had

become more restrictive, more competitive and more manipulative. Their locale had moved from gardens, and wooded areas, and playrooms to the artificial setting of parties and coffee houses. The emphasis now was on 'image' - who you knew, who you'd been seen with, whether or not you had a car (or access to one), how you dressed, whether or not you could blow smoke rings, where in Europe you went skiing, how 'in' were you in the 'in' scene, etc. etc. These were the kinds of things that were now supposed to be important. I felt awkward in this world and I didn't like the games that pervaded it.

11.

Sedbergh: June 1964

It caused quite a stir when Auntie Molly turned up at Powell House in her Rolls-Royce. At Eton or Harrow, the event might have passed unnoticed, but at Sedbergh the best one saw was usually a Daimler or a Jaguar. It was a Saturday afternoon and the 1st. XI were playing on the school cricket ground in front of Powell House. The cricket ground was the heart of the Sedbergh School property and acted as a natural arena when a match was taking place. On this particular Saturday, the sun was shining and there was hardly a cloud in the sky. As a consequence, there were large numbers of schoolboys and townsfolk on all four sides of the cricket ground.

If I had been playing myself, it wouldn't have been so embarrassing. However, the fact was that due to my continuing back trouble and inability to transform myself into an effective medium-pace bowler, my cricketing days were almost at an end. For the second year running, I had been given a tryout for the 1st. XI, and for the second year running, my bowling had been too erratic for me to be considered in any way a prospect. My demise as a star bowler had been embarrassing and humiliating. Over the course of two summers, I had attained the status of fallen hero, or so it seemed to me. I had begun to develop an aversion to cricket, especially when it came to being spectator to the feats of my former comrades on the Colts team. So when I saw the unmistakable prow of a Rolls-Royce turning into the lane that led from Loftus Hill to Powell House, I felt uncomfortable and extremely self-conscious.

As I disengaged myself from the crowd of spectators in front of Powell House, I could hear comments like, "well, well ... I didn't know that Brown's family were millionaires," and "God, that's a bit showy isn't it, bringing a Rolls to Sedbergh?"

It was ironical. The only person who had any serious money on either side of our family was Auntie Mollie. My parents were always going on about not having money, and since my father had 'been' retired, the burden of paying my school fees (minus what I got for my music scholarship) had been picked up by Auntie Mollie.

I was slowly becoming more aware of the importance of money. Just two months before, Colin had asked me if I wanted to go skiing with him in Norway, and I had told him that I wouldn't dare ask my parents for the kind of money that was needed. At about the same time, I learned that Mark Hudson and Ralph Blacklock were planning to go on a boating holiday on the Norfolk Broads. I felt hurt that I hadn't been invited. When I mentioned this to Mark, he said that he had assumed that I wouldn't be able to come because he knew that my parents didn't have 'much money'. He added that he also understood I was going to have to study flat out in the holidays to have any chance of passing my A levels a year later. I couldn't deny what he said, but it still hurt. But for the main part, my conditioning regarding money seemed to be almost completely negative. My father had instilled in me the notion that to have money somehow implied that you were unworthy. The reasoning was simple. His father had served his King and Country as an Army Padre. As a result, their family had been poor but (he would quickly add) 'smiling, laughing, happy and devoted.' Like his father, he too had chosen the impecunious but honorable profession of army officer. While my father and his father and others of their ilk were risking their lives in the defense of their country during the first and second world wars, that breed of conniving, avaricious, self-seeking cowards known as 'businessmen' were busy making thousands of pounds in profits. Given that I was already a hopeless idealist, it seemed like a persuasive argument.

My mother, on the other hand, had a different attitude. In this area, she took on the role of pragmatist. She would point out that there was nothing wrong with making money, that money bought security, that it had been a relative's money that had helped buy the house at Kingsburgh Road at the end of the war, that it had been Grandie's money that had enabled us to replace the ancient and worn out Vauxhall

with a brand new Austin Cambridge, and that it was Auntie Mollie's money that was keeping me at Sedbergh. My mother's money argument then extended to equating money with happiness. 'Auntie Mollie has money and she is happy. Uncle Dick's family has money and they are happy, ergo ...'

However, the problem with my mother's pragmatism was that on the home front, it seemed to know no bounds and ended up being a kind of compulsive asceticism. My mother carried the doctrine of 'Waste not, Want not' to extreme lengths. The phone was to be used sparingly (each call cost money, after all). Electric lights and fires should be turned off the moment they were not in use. The electric immersion heater should only be turned on for the purpose of having hot water for doing the dishes or taking a bath (this would lead, on occasion, to my mother urging me to have a bath after supper, even if I didn't want one or need one, so as not to waste the surplus hot water left over after doing the dishes). Such modern conveniences as refrigerators and washing machines were unjustifiable inventions because they wasted electricity. Of course, spending money on such luxuries as drink or cigarettes, or seeing films was almost sinfully wasteful.

As in many other areas that concerned my parents, this led to some very basic double binds. It seemed that you couldn't win either way. The situation could be summarized as follows:

FATHER'S INJUNCTION:

- Making too much money – guilty as charged.
- Making money in a dishonorable way – guilty again.
- Making just enough money to survive – O.K. but also cause for endless complaint.
- Making too little money – not O.K. because then you're living off other people of the State, in short, you're a bum.

MOTHER'S INJUNCTION:

- Have money, be happy (but only if you don't use it - unless of course, you're Auntie Mollie, in which case, it's O.K.)
- If you have it, be anxious lest you lose it.
- If you don't have it, be anxious lest you waste what little you have.

By contrast, the message from Auntie Mollie was crystal clear.

AUNTIE MOLLIE'S AFFIRMATION:

- It's good to have money, the more the better.
- It doesn't matter how you make it.
- If you've got it – enjoy it, even flaunt it, don't doubt for a moment that you earned it.
- Never *ever* feel in the remotest way guilty for having it.

As Auntie Mollie made her grand appearance in front of Powell House, that message was writ clear for all to see. The first person to emerge from the enormous limousine was Jeremy the Chauffeur. He quickly opened the rear door and helped my aunt to get out. I hadn't seen her for several years and my first impression was that she didn't seem to have changed in the slightest. For a woman in her seventies, Auntie Mollie gave no indication whatsoever of senility. Her features seemed hawk-like with her hooked nose and alert eyes. There was no trace of softness, compassion or sentimentality in her face. Rather she seemed tough and wiry through and through, her face and body being the outward manifestations of an uncompromising will, and a calm efficiency that could become ruthless if necessary.

There was something about Auntie Mollie that had always scared me. She seemed so totally in control, so invulnerable, so unlike my mother. She reminded me of Marlene Dietrich. Whereas my mother was Earth Mother, the Nurturer personified, Auntie Mollie had a masculine energy that was foreign to my conditioning of what a woman was or should be. One time, when as young children we were staying for a week or two on her farm, she had become angry on discovering that Robin and I had taken some peaches

from a tree. Her severe reprimand had been telling. I never went near the orchard again. Apart from anything else, I felt I had to be on my best behavior with her because, as my mother had stressed a number of times, she was now my benefactor. But for the good graces of Auntie Mollie, I might no longer be at Sedbergh.

There was another reason for Auntie Mollie's visit, according to my mother. Auntie Mollie had recently got remarried. Her first husband had left her considerable wealth from his hardware business, but that was nothing to what she was likely to inherit if she outlived her second husband.

Vincent Jobson was the owner and chief executive of Qualcast Ltd., one of the largest steel foundries in Derby, if not the whole of England. The company's primary finished product was ATCO lawnmowers. Vincent Jobson was probably a millionaire. He certainly had the image and life-style of one. Since marrying him, Auntie Mollie had begun to spend more time on the Jobson yacht off Monte Carlo, or the Jobson villa in Nassau. How this all related to me was simple. My mother had hinted that should I be interested in entering the world of business, old man Jobson might very well groom me for the top.

I couldn't help thinking of what my mother had said that evening at dinner. For one of the few times during my time at Sedbergh, I was in a position to invite some of my friends out. After some soul-searching, I could not decide on only one 'best friend'. As a result of this, and also the fact that Auntie Mollie had to leave the next morning, I had chosen to invite both Mark Hudson and David Lungley to dinner. Now, as we awaited the arrival of the main course, I listened to Mark and Auntie Mollie discussing the pros and cons of social life in Monte Carlo and reflected that Mark seemed much more suitable than I for a top position at Qualcast Ltd.

"Have you met Princess Grace?" Mark asked eagerly.

"No, as a matter of fact. To tell you the truth, we spend most of our time on the yacht. Oh, Vincent likes to go to the casinos once in a while, but for the most part, we just sunbathe and take life easy on the yacht. We do have the odd party, I must admit, but as yet we haven't thought to invite Prince Rainier and his wife."

Auntie Mollie had a twinkle in her eye as she said: "Now, would you boys like some wine?"

"No thank-you, Mrs. Jobson, I don't like alcohol," said David. I felt myself wincing slightly. I had a quick flashback to the first time I was invited out by the Hudsons, and the embarrassment I felt at being the only one who didn't drink. In the social arena, Dave seemed more gauche and had even less finesse than I. The part of him that I admired and respected in a natural setting appeared as an embarrassing reflection of my own sense of ineptitude when in an artificial setting. And being around a table in a restaurant was for me, by definition, artificial. But then again, my own rigid rejection of such social ice-breakers as smoking and drinking was beginning to weaken.

"Well, how about you two?" asked Auntie Mollie, turning to Mark and I.

"Yes, please," replied Mark and I in chorus.

"Of course, I've got all the vices," laughed my aunt as she lit up a cigarette. "I suppose you boys aren't allowed to smoke?"

Now, as I watched her, she reminded me more of Mae West than Marlene Dietrich. It was the way she said 'you boys'. She was so unlike my mother, so self-assured. With my mother and father at a restaurant, it was always the same, horribly embarrassing scene, played over time and again.

Waiter: Would you like to order drinks, sir?

Father: Yes, I'll have a beer, (to me) ... you'll have a beer, won't you? ... yes, he'll have a beer too ... (to my mother) will you have a beer?

Mother: No thank-you, nothing to drink thank-you.

Father: Oh that's right, you don't drink, do you? Well, you must have something. How about an orange juice?

Mother: Very well then, an orange juice would be lovely ... thank-you.

But with Auntie Mollie, there was no embarrassment. I could feel myself relaxing. If there was any embarrassment, it was due to David's intransigence. Why couldn't he be the same as everyone else?

Sometimes I felt that people like him, and my mother, and Uncle Arth for that matter, were *too* pure, over-conscientious in fact.

“Did I tell you that David’s parents live in Kenya?” I asked my aunt.

With a jolt, I remembered once again the dinner with the Hudsons and realized that I was doing exactly the same thing with David, as Mark had done with me. I was treating him as if he were a social liability. It was as if I felt a need to prop him up, to protect him from being alienated. I could feel anxiety beginning to disperse my sense of relaxation.

At least they were now talking about Kenya. David was talking about his father’s life as a tea-planter and how it was funny that he didn’t yet drink because his parents drank like fishes. Good for Dave! He was fine once he got going. There had been no reason for me to be anxious. What was the matter with me?!

“This summer we may be going on a safari”

“Really? Well now, that’s fascinating David. Tell me more.”

I turned my attention to the roast beef before me. The situation suddenly seemed void of tension. From that point on, the evening became more and more enjoyable. Auntie Mollie was full of witty anecdotes and, whether due to the wine or to our company, she seemed to soften as the evening progressed.

Later, as I bid her goodnight, she said, “what nice friends you have, dear.”

Auntie Mollie had to leave the next morning, but we managed to meet one more time for breakfast. As I was on my own this time, the discussion turned out to be more serious and personal.

“How is your schoolwork going, dear?” inquired Auntie Mollie.

I told her that I was struggling with Physics and Chemistry but that I still hoped to go to University.

“Oh, I thought you were going into the Army, dear.”

“Well, I *am* applying to Sandhurst but if possible, I would like to go to University.

“I see ...” Auntie Mollie trailed off as she appeared to be reflecting about something. Then she leaned forward slightly, her expression serious and yet at the same time concerned, and said, “tell me dear, how are things at home?”

“What do you mean?” The question had caught me by surprise.

“Well, what I’m asking is how are things with your parents? How are you getting along with them?”

“Oh, things are fine ... I suppose. I mean, they’re worried about what I’m going to be after I leave school, but that’s only natural.”

Auntie Mollie paused for reflection again, lit a cigarette and then resumed.

“Ilan, I want to tell you something. I know your parents very well. They both have a tendency to get over-anxious, especially your mother. They both care immensely for you and want the best for you. But my dear, you must realize one thing. Despite what they want for you, all that really matters is what *you* yourself want. It is good that you listen to their advice but in the final analysis you must follow your own inclination. Do you understand what I mean? And please remember that I would like to help you in any way I can. Remember that there are other options than the Army, and University for that matter. For instance, the world of business is not as awful as some people might have you believe. I would like you to meet Uncle Vincent sometime soon. He has had an exciting and challenging life in business and also one that has been most profitable. Anyway, he can tell you much more about that than I can. Incidentally, he is also an example of a man who never went to University and is, for that matter, someone who doesn’t really believe in University. Anyway, I must be getting ready to leave now.”

Half an hour later, my rich aunt’s trip to Sedbergh ended as it had began, with her chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce purring down the lane beside Powell House.

By the end of my second last year at Sedbergh, everything seemed to be receding before the furious onslaught of WORK. I had finally discovered why Studies were so named. They were not, as I had previously surmised, a haven for idle leisure. Nor were they a refuge or asylum from work. As the dreaded A level deadline drew ever closer, they began to assume their true character, namely a refuge for studious WORK. Not good healthy physical work of course, but soul-destroying, body-atrophying mental work. I had even begun to use the school

library at such times that there were too many distractions in the study. A couple of years before, or even a year previous, studying for O levels, this would have been unthinkable. At that time I regarded those who used the library as a species of mole who would forsake the sunlight outside world in order to burrow their way into a musty, book-lined underground. I was now becoming a kind of mole myself. My determination to come to grips with the Physics and Chemistry A level syllabus was beginning to become an obsession.

I began to be enveloped in a world of spectrometers, galvanometers, potentiometers, micrometers and thermometers; a world governed by Hooker's Law, Dalton's Law, Newton's Law, Ohm's Law and Faraday's Law; a world influenced by the Doppler effects, Van der Waall's equation, and Huygen's secondary wavelets; a world ridden with stress and strain, with solid friction and surface tensions, with interference and self-induction, and with forced vibrations and changes of state; a world threatened by susceptibility and permeability, by choking coils and inadequate resistances, and by turbulent motion and terminal velocity.

I was so lost in this world, so confused that all I could do was engage in that primitive mental process, still so prevalent in our school systems, called MEMORIZATION. But this was memorization on a grand scale. The lists were endless. Lists of elements, compounds, numbers, formulas, valences. Lists that included words like ethylene dibromide, acetic anhydride, and magnesium orthophosphate.

This desperate struggle had its roots before in my preparation for O levels, but my involvement at that time had been neither so intense nor so exclusive. The summer before, I had at least still been playing cricket on a regular basis for Colts. In the summer of 1964, I Played very little cricket at all. In a repeat of the year before, I had been tried out for the 1st. XI but had been equally erratic in my bowling. Despite the fact that I had conceded to the doctor's orders and become a medium-pace bowler, I continued to have problems with my neck and back. To add to my physical ailments, my teeth had started to give me all kinds of trouble and this had necessitated several visits to a dentist in Kendal.

This increasing emphasis on work to the exclusion of play began also to subtly effect my behavior and relationships with others. As I took my work more seriously, I began to take myself more seriously and this began to be seen as out of character with being resident Court Jester. The dormitory Goon Show with Hordern, for instance, began to wane away. Increasingly, I sought people out more for the purpose of helping me with my work than as partners for one play activity or another. However, unlike my first year at Sedbergh, it was impossible to become totally withdrawn or alienated. Over the years in Powell House, the network of relationships and friendships had become decreasingly competitive and increasingly supportive. People like Mark would joke me out of my seriousness and there were always John and Dave to talk me out of ensuing depressions.

Fortunately, there were some other areas of respite. First, there was the Powell House Jazz band, my main outlet and certainly the project that had brought the most satisfaction over the last year or two. From the early days of Peter Wolf and I jamming in the music cube, we had both attracted and helped to develop the abilities of several other individuals. Chief amongst these was a skinny little fellow, two years my junior, called Jonathan Marks. Pete and I had decided that we needed a drummer. Marks was one of several younger boys who would always hang around in the corridor outside the music cubes to listen to Pete and I when we played. One day, he expressed an interest in learning how to play the drums. We jumped at the opportunity. We persuaded him to get a side drum and to start working out with us. He learned quickly, and by the summer term of '64 had become quite proficient with both sticks and brushes. We had our basic trio - Brown on piano, Wolf on guitar and Marks on drums.

The next thing was to find a bass player. It wasn't long before that got sorted out. My old friend (and crush) from Colts Cricket days, John Walford, told me that there was a fellow called Kenny Ball in his House who was great on bass. Now it was the Powell House Trio + one, Kenny Ball from Evans House. When we played together, it was almost always jamming along basic rhythm and blues patterns. Meanwhile, however, I was being pressed by an enthusiastic young trombone player called Tom Wright to expand both our repertoire and the band to encompass traditional jazz numbers. It didn't take much persuasion. I loved traditional jazz as much as I loved blues. Moreover, the resources were all there, already developed and raring to go. In addition to Tom Wright, there was a boy called Robert Stoner who played trumpet and none other than Geoffrey Grime who had developed

into a useful clarinet player. I had a book of Dixieland standards such as Basin Street Blues, St. Louis Blues, Bill Bailey and Tiger Rag. During the summer term of '64, the now assembled Powell House Jazz band would gather around the piano in 6 dorm and let fly.

I loved these times. I got indescribable pleasure and fulfillment out of playing music in this way. This was not a world of mindless memorization, nor was it a world governed by Rules of Analysis, a world in which something was either right or wrong. Rather, it was a world of many options, all of which were 'right'. It was a world of creative synthesis rather than strict analysis. Best of all, it was a world in which mind and body, spirit and emotion, could all breathe and find release. It was a colorful and sensual and exciting world, and which I found very therapeutic.

The other area of escape from Physics and Chemistry was in my English class. There were two things that made this class special. The first is that for almost the first time in my school career, I was allowed to read and study contemporary fiction. I say 'almost' because in the fourth form, we had been permitted to read Animal Farm by Orwell. But this is the only exception I can think of. Otherwise, my diet for years and years had consisted of the classics, namely Dickens, Hardy, and of course Shakespeare. If ever there was an example of the dangers of 'linear thinking', it is in the notion, firmly embedded in school curricula all over the world, that one must proceed *chronologically*. In English Literature, a student must appreciate Dickens and Hardy *before* he can understand or appreciate twentieth century literature. In History, it is deemed more important to memorize the facts of The War of The Roses, and the list of English Kings and Queens than it is to understand the causes and effects of the two World Wars. What a misguided notion! If 'Teaching for Relevance' is to mean anything then it should be diametrically the other way around. How much more interested I would have been in nineteenth century literature and history if I had been allowed to start with what was so much closer and relevant to my background and experience. In any event, by the time I reached the sixth form, it was finally deemed that the twentieth century was worthy of some attention.

There was one book, in particular, that we had to read in this English class which had a profound effect on me. The book was Lord of the Flies by William Golding. The book was relevant because it dealt with a group of public school boys. The book was powerful because it was so easy to relate the characters and their relationships to my own experiences. The book was profound because it forced me to look at the deeper themes underlying these relationships.

The other thing that was special about this particular English class was the fact that the teacher, Gerry Blackwell, encouraged us to write compositions. Not just critical essays on the text, but 'creative' compositions on topics that stimulated the imagination. On one occasion, Mr. Blackwell asked us to write a composition on the topic of 'Hell'. That was all he gave us. Just one word, 'Hell'. How much better than having to 'describe the structure and the mode of action of a moving coil ballistic galvanometer and explain how and for what purpose they differ from those of a similar non-ballistic galvanometer', or having to discuss how 'the worlds of court and country life in Shakespeare's As You Like It meet, but never really mingle'. Hell. Write about Hell. Write from your experience, write from your imagination, just write about Hell. Now that was a relief, *that* got my creative juices flowing.

* * *

Summer Holidays: July 1964

When I arrived at Waverly station, I had to take a taxi to my parents house. In the past, my mother or father had always met me but as they had recently sold the car, it had been deemed best for me to find my own way home. I couldn't understand my parents. First they had sold the house and got a small flat without a garden. Then they had sold the piano. Now they had sold the car. A few days earlier, I had been in a milieu in which there had been two or three cars per family. A milieu in which the son had free access to his parent's car, or even a car to himself. Now I was in a situation where I was faced with the unpleasant prospect of having to take a bus with my

parents if, say, they suggested a trip to Gullane.

I had just returned from a week's holiday spent at Mark Hudson's house in the countryside near Hull, followed by a week with John Spedding in Southport, Lancashire. The Hudsons did not have a Rolls-Royce, like Auntie Mollie, but they did own a Daimler and a Jaguar. They did not have a butler and a chauffeur, but they did have a live-in cook and housekeeper. They didn't have a private swimming pool or a yacht, but they did have a tennis court and a games room complete with full-size billiard table.

The object of my visit to Southport was to play in the British Boys Golf Tournament at nearby Formby. There were two letters waiting for me when I got to the Speddings' house. The first was my school report which my parents had already read. I quickly scanned it and felt great relief when I discovered that on the whole, no-one had said anything bad about me. In fact, for the first time, what Mr. Begley had to say made me positively glow with satisfaction. For the Housemaster's Report, he had written the following:

'He has an inherent quality, which makes it impossible for most people, including me, not to like him, and regard him as a terribly good chap, but he is unfortunately somewhat bumbling with a genius for putting his foot in it and extricating it with excessive to-do. But he has great goodwill and is doing his best, and we can hope much for him.'

The second letter was from C.M.B. Howard, Secretary of The Sandhurst Entry Board. In it, he acknowledged and granted my request to have my application to Sandhurst deferred from January 1965 to September 1965. The reason that I had requested this deferral was simple. The original application for entry in January had been made before I had taken O levels at a time when it had seemed highly questionable whether I would even take A levels, let alone pass them. Due to my O level successes and increasing desire to get into University, it was necessary to change the date of possible entry to Sandhurst so as to allow me to take A levels and hence give me the opportunity of entering University.

As far as my father was concerned, he had now accepted that I would be taking A levels. However, in return, he wanted me to take the Civil Service Examination in September to cover my ass. His reasoning was as follows; if I failed A levels, I could fall back on the Civil Service Exam as a means of entering Sandhurst. And if I failed both A levels and the Civil Service Exam (God forbid!), then there was still the back door entry through the ranks. In practical terms, one aspect of this arrangement was that, rather than having a break in the summer in between my O level and A level years, I was expected to study for the upcoming Civil Service Exam.

As it turned out, the storm that had been brewing for several years, broke out in full force following my return from Southport. My father had not appreciated the two weeks I had taken off my studying, nor was he impressed by the fact that I got knocked out in the first round of the British Boys Golf Tournament. My mother, on her side, seemed to be in a state of extreme agitation about the prospect of my going into the army. Although she had never seemed very keen on the idea, she had never said much on the subject - up until this point. Now, with the realization that the whole matter of my future life would be resolved in the next year, she began her own campaign in earnest.

"Darling, you don't really want to go into the army, do you?" she would say. "I know Daddy tells you what a grand life you would have and what a marvelous time he had, but you know quite honestly that's just not true. He was miserable a lot of the time. When he was in Nigeria, he got a whole host of tropical diseases, black-water fever, malaria and dysentery. That's why he didn't get his promotion to Colonel in Malaya. He was too sick. He was classified as 'unfit for service in the tropics.' That's why he was sent back to Britain during the war and finished up doing liaison work. He's very bitter about that, you know - the fact that he never got his promotion. But what could they do? He was a sick man, after all. Darling, don't go into the army. You don't want to kill people, do you? I mean that's what the army is all about when you get to the bottom of it. It's not about 'seeing the world', and riding horses, and pomp and pageantry. Underneath all that, the army has to do with wounding or killing others, and being wounded or killed. That's not the kind of person you are. Darling, why don't you become a doctor, or an engineer, or even a businessman?"

My mother's campaign, was waged in the kitchen, usually before meals. Meanwhile my father's offensive would continue, as it had for several years, in the sitting room, usually after meals, when my mother was doing the washing up.

"Wonderful life, the Army," he would always start. "Makes a man out of you. Teaches you how to lead and take responsibility for the lives of others. Gives you a marvelous sense of comradeship, the chance to make deep friendships that will last a lifetime. Gives you security; a decent living wage, accommodation provided free of charge, servants to help with household chores, and of course, a pension when you retire. But above all, it gives you the opportunity to do the highest thing any man can aspire to, to serve your Queen and Country, to defend the rights and freedoms that we enjoy in this country."

Nothing about sickness, disease, killing or death. Rather, he talked about the healthy life to be had out there in the colonial boondocks, away from the noisy, smelly wasteland that we call 'civilization'. For my father, the purpose of the army was not to 'kill' but rather defend one's homeland.

From the kitchen to the sitting room, the sitting room to the kitchen. From the incomprehensible language of Physics and Chemistry, to the double talk of my parents. Who was right? I didn't know. They couldn't both be right. Or maybe they could? All I knew was that I could not both decide to be in the Army, and decide *not* to be in the army at the same time. Things were coming down to the wire. All my life I had striven to please both my parents. Here, now, was a situation where that was impossible.

I think what finally began to sway me, what finally began to tip the balance in this psychological war between my parents was a factor over which neither of them had much control, and that was how I perceived each of them as people. In the final analysis, that was determined not by their words, but by their attitudes and their behavior, particularly towards each other. It is in that area that my father began to lose my respect and hence his influence over me.

That summer, one day in August, something happened that helped me resolve the dilemma. What happened was an incident involving my mother and father. The incident was by no means unique, but it was a particularly dramatic example of the kind of thing that went on between them. And given the fact that at that time I was being pulled in opposing directions by my parents, it had a profound impact on me.

(Table laid as for supper in gloomy, underlit kitchen. Son is fiddling with radio trying to find some soothing classical music. Mother is bustling around bringing dishes to the table.)

Mother: Sit down darling, leave the radio, we don't need it.

Son: I'm trying to find some music.

Mother: Oh well, never mind that. We're ready to eat now. Where's Daddy?

Son: I don't know. I've told him already that supper's ready. He seems to be in a really foul mood today.

Mother: (disregarding this last comment) Well, go and tell him again, will you? I don't want it to get cold. We're having chicken curry, his favorite.

Son: (turning off radio and going out into the corridor) Daddy, supper's ready (returning to kitchen) ... I think I hear him coming.

Mother: Good. Now sit down and pour out some water for yourself and Daddy oh dear, there isn't any on the table. Just a moment, I'll get you some.

(ENTER Father. His face is tense and all indications are that he is in a very bad mood. He sits down and immediately takes a piece of toast leftover from breakfast. He is unnecessarily demonstrative as he butters the stale toast, clanging his knife on the plate, scraping the butter on aggressively, etc.)

Mother: (bringing a pitcher of water) Here we are. (to son) You can pour Daddy some water if he would like some.

Son: Would you like some water, Daddy?

Father: (very forced) *No thank-you. Toast and butter ... that's all I need ... (perverse) you have some. It's good for the health, I hear. You obviously won't be getting anything hot for quite some time.*

Mother: (hurt) *It'll be ready in a few seconds. (More quietly, half to herself) I wish you wouldn't eat toast. You won't have any appetite.*

Father: (aggressive) *Hmm? What's that you say? 'Won't have any appetite?' ... no, I must say I am losing my appetite for fried fish.*

Mother: *Fried Fish!?*

Father: (feigning surprise) *Oh ... isn't that what we're having? (To son) You smell fried fish, don't you?*

Son: (shifts in chair uncomfortably, begins to shake head)

Mother: (very hurt) *Curry! Curry. That's what we're having. Can't you smell it? I went out especially to get a fresh chicken from the butcher. It doesn't smell anything like fried fish. Besides, we had fish yesterday. We always ...*

Father: (interrupting) *Oh I thought ...*

Mother: *We always have fish on Fridays and curry on Saturdays ... you know that. It's chicken curry ... your favorite.*

Father: (raising voice, becoming - cruel) *Oh, I thought we had fried fish every day this week. The place was beginning to reek like a chip shop.*

Mother: (unable, as always, to play Father's game, becoming increasing upset) *Ian, you know we haven't had fish all this week, don't you?*

Father: (interceding) *He doesn't know anything. He spends too much time gallivanting around the country to know anything.*

Mother: *Oh, that's not fair!*

Son: (steadily, but not looking Father in eye) *I worked hard for my O levels. I passed them. I've been working hard ever since...*

Father: (his eyes blazing) *Hah! None of you young people know the meaning of work. Life's too easy for you. Not like in my day. Good God, man, you don't even know what you want to be, yet! When I was your age, I knew what I wanted. There was no confusion. I knew the army was the life for me. But you, you can't decide. Just like your mother. Always in two minds. Just like your brother and your sister. Your sister gets a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music, and then what happens? She tells us that it's not what she wants and she drops out. And your brother, well we all know about him.*

Mother: (alarmed) *Please, Douglas ...*

Father: (waving her off angrily) *Your brother ... good old Long John, he decides to leave his home, where at least he has a roof over his head and food for his belly, and what does he do? He moves to the south of England to look for a job! He doesn't have any training, any qualifications, and he expects to find a job! He doesn't have money and he doesn't have a job. How does he expect to survive? We know he won't make it. We know he'll be back before long ... on his knees.*

Mother: (pleading) *Oh not now, please ... not at table ...not at mealtime. Eat your curry, please. It's so good, and it's getting cold. Eat your food, Ian.*

Father: *I've had my meal (he indicates the toast). You can give this to fat Harry here. (He shoves his plate of curry across the table)*

Boy: (finally forced to look his father in the eye) *Look! ...*

Mother: (interrupting, pleading) *No. Ian, no ... let's not have an argument ... let's not have a scene. Don't argue with your father. Come on now, both of you, eat your food.*

Father: (exploding) *I said I DON'T WANT IT!! You can feed it to the dog. You can shove it up your arse for all I care.*
(at this, Father rises to leave, Mother bursts into tears, Son rises in protest. Father turns to son). *Where are you going? You stay here and comfort your mother, she looks as if she needs it.* (Father exits, slamming door behind him)

(Scene as if after a bomb explosion. Complete devastation. Mother in tears. Son, in state of shock, tries to console her.)

Mother: *What a thing to say! How could he say such a terrible thing to me? Dreadful man!*

Son: (soothing) *I know, I know ... don't cry, Mum, don't cry.*

Mother: *I don't know why he gets so angry, I really don't. There's nothing wrong with the food ... is there? Well, why? I mean ... he's getting old ... I know his back's been troubling him ...*

Son: *That's no excuse. He has no right to say things like that. I don't know why you take it. Why don't you retaliate?*

Mother: (recovering) *Oh it's not so bad. I'm alright really. Goodness knows, I'm used to it. It would just make things worse if I got angry! Adapt oneself ... that's what I've always believed.* (With resignation) *Let him blow his top. He'll get over it. He'll be fine again in an hour or two.*

Son: *Yes, but meanwhile you're the one that gets hurt ...*

Mother: *No, no I don't ... not really.*

Son: (resolutely) *Well, one of these days I'm going to tell him what I think of him. I'm going to stand up to him. Someone has to.*

Mother: *No, Ian, no. Your father may get angry sometimes but ...*

Son: (working up) *Angry! He was half crazy!*

Mother: (with a justifying tone of voice) *No, no he wasn't. No, it's just his way of letting off steam. Underneath it all he's just concerned about your welfare. He wants the best for you, you know.*

Son: *What about your welfare?*

Mother: *Oh, I'm all right. No, he's just worried because you haven't decided what you want to be. It would mean so much to him if you went into the Army.*

Son: (incredulously) *But you don't want me to go into the Army!*

Mother: *That's right. I don't. But then again, I always believe in having as many strings to your bow as possible. Keep all your options open. Anyway, let's not talk about this any more at the moment. I'm all right now. I shouldn't let these things affect me so. Darling, eat your curry before it's completely cold. I'm going to make some tea. Perhaps you can take a cup through to Daddy when you're finished.*

A day later, I suddenly realized why the film 'The Blue Angel', had upset me so much. Like Herr Professor, my mother was a fine, upright, caring and essentially good person. But like Herr Professor, she had a weakness, a vulnerability that allowed my father to reduce her to an impotent puppet. Her anger would turn to depression, and the inward fury would make her eyes yellow into madness. For a while, her soul would fragment as she denied her mind and her emotions in the name of caring, in the name of being a 'good wife and a good mother', in the service of Fear.

That summer, my father was angry a lot of the time, and my mother was depressed a lot of the time. Once, during a particularly black depression, she showed me a poem that she had written in 1949, when she

was 38 years old and I was nearly three.

The poem was called 'Chains':

*I'd like to think my soul is free
But know too well the likes of me
The words I've said are hardly true
For times there are when I am blue
And black despair can take its toll
With flowing tears - to lack control
To such extent, that off to bed
I'm forced to go, with aching head
And swollen eyes. No small surprise
That Douglas takes his hat
Shoos out the cat
and leaves me flat
Why must I weep? You wonder why?
Because my man has said
I leave him cold. His love is dead;
His children brats! To make me wife
"The worst mistake I've made in life."*

*If this be true. Why? You married me
I've born you five, how could you be
So cruel now we are not so young?
You should stand by your trust begun
But no, you've cut the props of Peace
Like a lamb shorn of its fleece
I feel the chill of bitter hate
Expose us all to loveless Fate.
And brats need love, like buds the sun.
What can I do? What have we done?*

*As to desert land, the welcome rain
Return of love bring Peace again.*

Had it not been for my Mother's continual defusing of my anger towards my father, and his treatment of her, I think I would have rebelled much sooner than I did. The fact was that, in very different ways, they were both giving me the same message, and that was, 'DON'T GET ANGRY WITH YOUR PARENTS'. The result was that, like my mother, my anger would get turned inwards and I would finish up feeling very depressed. I sought any excuse to stay away from home. I began to do my Physics and Chemistry studying in the Edinburgh Public Library on Forrest Road. I also began to look for acceptable ways for being out of the house on Sundays, normally a sacrosanct family day. One Sunday I cycled all the way to Gullane and back, a distance of over 40 miles.

Apart from my studying at the library, my mainstay excuse for being away from the house was going to work as an usher at some of the Edinburgh Festival Concerts. This was my first paid job. The job gave me a sense of independence which was good. On the other hand, having to get to distant places like Leith Town Hall and the Freemason's Hall only added to the sense of increasing alienation from life in Edinburgh. I felt lost in Edinburgh. My confidence seemed to wane away. As far as girls were concerned, I had got to the point of convincing myself that I was physically unattractive and completely void of whatever skills were needed in approaching them successfully. I had even begun to write down copies of conversations in my diary before some

prearranged meeting so that I wouldn't be totally at a loss for words.

I just didn't understand women. I didn't understand why they did what they did, why they thought what they thought, why they felt what they felt. I didn't know what they wanted from men. I couldn't even figure out what they found sexy and attractive in a man. I mean, what was the big deal with people like Elvis Presley and Cliff Richards? They seemed like punky greaseballs to me. But, whatever they had, I definitely did not. I always felt awkward and boring around girls, and they seemed coy and silly and capricious.

With me, at any rate, they always seemed to be the ones calling the shots. Like the letter I got from Ursula Sturrock just before summer term ended:

'Dearest Ian,

Many thanks for your letter. No, I didn't mean that we may as well stop writing, as long as you know that you're not the only one to whom I write. I can't say, as yet, where you stand as I really don't know you well enough but perhaps we could rectify that this holidays.

I do like Iain McLeod quite a lot, but as I said in my last letter, I don't know where I stand with him but I am hoping to find out next holidays when I go to stay with my friend in Fife, where I hope to see him.

I'm told that I'm two-track minded, horses and boys! But I hardly think that's true, though I can't say I'm not interested in either!' ...etc. etc.

Great! So I stand in line behind Iain McLeod, and when *he's* finished telling her where she stands, she'll grace me by telling me where I stand with her. That helped my confidence no end! What was it that Iain McLeod had that I didn't? Confidence, perhaps?

Girls seemed to like rebels, guys who acted tough and broke the rules. But why couldn't they see that you can be a hero *within* the rules? Sir Edmund Hillary didn't break any rules When he climbed Mount Everest. John Kennedy didn't break rules on his way to becoming President. He respected them. He operated within them. And when they weren't useful, or even troublesome, he found a way to triumph in spite of them.

Lately, I couldn't understand Pam. A few months previously, she had asked me if I had a friend who would like to correspond with Cheryl, a friend of hers. I had asked John Aitken if he was interested, and he had said that he was. Now, Pam was telling me that she thought John and Cheryl's letters were far more interesting than ours (ours being overly romantic and uninformative apparently). In addition to this, she had recently begun to tell me of various illegal exploits in which she had been involved, as if she were proud of them. In a letter dated August 30th. 1964, she described a recent bicycling trip to Vancouver Island in British Columbia.

'Got stoned to the gills one night and walked into Victoria Y.W.C.A. at about 2-30 a.m. Boy! Was that a whopper! ... so after 3 days of shop lifting we took a boat to Seattle. We spent a day shop lifting there and then came home by train. On the train we got really drunk with this sailor. It was great. What a holiday! My parents still can't figure out how I had enough money to buy them presents!!'

This account did not increase my respect for Pam. Would it have increased her respect for me had I told her the same thing? Maybe respect is the wrong word. Maybe she associated shop lifting with 'having fun' or 'being courageous'. I didn't know, and in many ways I didn't care. I wasn't about to start shop lifting for Pam or anyone else.

Finally, and thankfully, the holidays neared an end. With a sense of both excitement and dread, I realized I was about to start my last year at Sedbergh! There was an immediate excitement because, I was the hot prospect to be the full-back on the 1st. XV. I could feel the desire for recognition and glory surging up within me. It had been

a long time since the heady days of Colts Cricket and Colts Rugby. I yearned to be on top. I yearned to be able to write to my father and tell him that I had made it, that I was on the 1st. XV, that I was a hero. I would show him. I would prove myself to him. I would practice my kicking and my tackling and make sure I was fit as a fiddle before returning to Sedbergh. I *would* succeed!

12.

Within the first few days of being back at Sedbergh, I was informed that last year's full-back, Pete Donald, had decided to return to Sedbergh for one term. In addition, there was one of the strongest back lines the school had ever known, including 'superstars' John Spencer and Alistair Biggar.

"In a normal year, Brown, you would have made the team without any doubt," I was told, "but this year is exceptional."

The only consolation that came out of all this was the fact that Colin Crabbie had also failed to get onto the 1st. XV. But it was a bitter blow, especially as many considered me a better player than Donald.

If it was any consolation (which it wasn't) I had been made a House Prefect, along with David Lungley and John Spedding and was sharing a study with them. On the other hand, it was a very different affair from the three of us being in a study with Mark Hudson and Iain Bilsland as we had the year before. The jokey, playful atmosphere had all but gone. Life had become serious. Spedding and I had A levels coming up and David was embroiled in studying for Oxford and Cambridge entrance examinations. As far as blend of personalities went, the main difference was that there were two less individuals to insulate David and I from John Spedding. In my case, Spedding was a constant irritation but just about bearable. With David, however, feelings ran stronger. Years later, David himself put it like this: 'I have only ever hated one person and that was John Spedding. He deliberately competed with me on everything with the intention of doing me down and lauding superiority. I gave him many opportunities to be friendly, but he was always vindictive - so I shall always remember him with intense dislike. I hope in the future he never gets into a position of power, for he will undoubtedly abuse it.'

Considering the stresses and strains, it is a wonder we all co-existed as well as we did. David had taken his A levels in the summer and was in a peculiar transition between 'Post A level relief', and having to gear up again to the rigors of the Oxford and Cambridge entrance examination. With my Civil Service exam only a month away and all the pressure from home regarding going into the army, I felt under enormous strain. One outcome of this state of affairs was that David and I seemed to alternate going into depressive states. Fortunately we were able to empathize with each other and provide support. David helped me with my Physics and I showed him guitar chords and piano technique in return. The two of us would have long talks about women, parents and the pressures and confusions of pursuing a career. Often, we would be joined in these talks by John Aitken. Normally, I didn't like threesomes, but in the case of John, David and I, it was different. Like David, I didn't like competitiveness. With people like Mark Hudson, Ralph Blacklock and John Spedding (to say nothing of Colin Crabbie and others), there always seemed to be a push-pull competitive undercurrent. With John and Dave however, the ambiance was almost always cooperative. I felt that each of us wanted the best for each other. On the other hand, what I missed with John and David was the spice of playfulness and mock competitiveness that I was able to have with Mark, Dave Roberts and Michael Hordern. When I wanted some fun, things seemed a little bland with John and David.

The thing that separated John from David and I was the fact that we were now House Prefects and John wasn't. This didn't create any real problems, but it must have been just another thing to exacerbate John's growing sense of bitterness about his lack of achievement (and hence recognition) at Sedbergh. Being a House Prefect was not such a big deal although this was no consolation to John. The thrill of being able to summon fags by pressing a little button beside your desk was soon over. The worst thing about becoming a Prefect was that you were assigned to sleep in one of the junior dormitories so as to maintain law and order after lights out. This meant an end to the free-spirited days when people such as Michael Hordern and I staged our community jamborees in the dorm. Now, after everyone else had gone to bed, the prefects would gather together in a study and drink tea and discuss the day's events. It was at times such as these that I am sure John Aitken must have felt excluded. He was still 'in the ranks' and we had become 'commissioned officers'.

At the beginning of October, two things of significance happened. The first was that I put in my U.C.C.A. application. As far as I know, U.C.C.A. stands for University Central Clearing Agency, but everyone always referred to it as 'UCCA'.

For most people, this was a routine procedure in their A level year. For me, it was an important action for it represented my desire to keep the university option open as a counterweight to the army. In the UCCA application, it was required that you name three universities that you would like to attend, and two subject areas in which you would like to concentrate. My principal guides in helping me make this choice had been my sister Joy and her husband Jim. In discussions that I'd had with them, it had become clearer that what I really wanted was the opportunity to work with people. This meant that I should probably get as far away as possible from Physics and Chemistry and study some area that had to do with people. Joy had said that I had good perceptions and intuitions about people and that this would stand me in good stead if I did Sociology, and Jim had told me that my Physics and Chemistry background, plus my interest in the outdoors, made Geology a practical possibility. That was enough for me to go on.

As far as choice of University went, Joy and Jim recommended their own University, the London School of Economics. Joy also suggested Keele University as a progressive new University especially interested in the Social Sciences. As my third choice, I added St. Andrews University. I knew by word of mouth that St. Andrews had a good reputation. It was not that far from Edinburgh and therefore was a diplomatic choice with respect to my parents. Besides, as an avid golfer, how could I NOT apply there!

The other significant event was taking my Civil Service Exam. The nearest center for the exam was in York. As there were four papers to be taken, it was necessary to stay overnight in York. I was accompanied to York by another Sedbergh boy. David Sale had been a contemporary of mine from the beginning. Although in a different House (School House), we had both been on Colts Rugger and Cricket teams as well as the 2nd. XV the year previously. One important difference between Sale and I was that he had an Army Scholarship and I didn't. Of the three candidates that had applied two years previous, these being Stewart Jeffrey, David Sale and myself, I was the only one who had failed to get a scholarship. It had been a bit crushing at the time and had led to the inevitable questioning about what they had that I didn't.

We arrived in York on a Thursday evening. A knife-edged wind swept down the street as we went in search of a pub. We were to take the exams on the Friday and Saturday, consequently we had the evening to ourselves.

I don't recall what we talked about that evening but I do know what was on my mind. Once again I got drawn into reflecting about 'types'. In this case, I went through the various Sedbergh boys who I knew were planning to join the Army. Which ones were Army types? Were they all Army types? Was I an Army type? What was an Army 'type'?

There were two people I could think of who were definitely Army types. One was Stewart Jeffrey. The other was the current Head of Powell House and my 'chief' in my capacity as House Prefect. His name was David Biggart. Both were hearty, jovial, extraverted and somewhat swaggering in their manner. Both had that extraordinary kind of invulnerable self-confidence that seems to go with being a natural leader. Both he and Biggart seemed more cut out for the Army than me.

Then there were Gaskell and Amos. It was true that they had very different personalities to those of Jeffrey and Biggart and yet they too seemed to 'fit', even if it was a different kind of army stereotype. These two had several things in common. Like Jeffrey and Biggart, they both had great self-confidence. In their case, it didn't manifest itself in a dominating leadership vein. If anything, they were anti-authoritarian. They both had that knack of being able to challenge authority without provoking reaction. They both had a care-free manner and a constant desire to have fun. They both appeared to be that combination of dare-devil and playboy that I associated with World War fighter pilots. In place of a swaggering manner, they had good looks and a bubbling vitality that made them highly desirable to women (as well as their same sex, given that they were both high on the list of 'crush' desirability at Sedbergh). Nick Gaskell had told me that he had lost his virginity by the age of sixteen. Unfortunately, I had no reason to doubt him. But the biggest thing that Jeffrey, Biggart, Amos and Gaskell had in common was a single-minded commitment to join the Army.

David Sale was a different type again although he, too, seemed to share the common traits of self-confidence and commitment to joining the Army. The son of the Headmaster of Rossal School (a well-known public school near Blackpool), he reminded me of a loyal work-horse, someone who had been brought up to obey the rules and show quiet devotion to his master. He was rather colorless in personality but achieved things in an unostentatious and methodical way. He had the kind of leadership quality that came from a stable and consistent presence. He reminded me a bit of Uncle Arth – the ‘quiet hero’ type.

And what was I, in comparison? I was certainly not self-confident. I was ridden with all kinds of vulnerabilities and insecurities. I seemed too emotional to be an Army type. My feelings were of a strong, even passionate nature. I could never imagine Jeffrey or Biggart getting depressed, for example. That was it, I was too emotional and also too confused. I was anything but single-minded. Begley was right – I was a ‘terribly good chap, but was always putting my foot in it.’ My father was right. I didn’t know what I wanted. I was a Jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none. I was a Chameleon. I was a ship with a powerful motor and no rudder. I had neither the clear-headedness nor the cool-headedness to be an Army type, to be Officer material, to be a leader of men.

The exams seemed to go quite well. I left York feeling that I might well have passed them, with the possible exception of Physics. These feelings were out of keeping with my usual post-exam state as I usually convinced myself that I had failed, partly because of a genuine conviction and partly as a deliberate strategy to protect myself against the agonies of actual failure. The lower the expectations, the less the let down and the less the recriminations, such was the theory.

It was only when I was back at Sedbergh that I began to realize that the situation didn’t seem so good whether I passed or failed. If I passed, I knew the pressure would be on me to forget about A levels, or at least University, and to prepare to enter Sandhurst. If nothing else, I would be obliged to follow up my exam successes by attending the whole series of interviews and leadership tests to be held in December at Sandhurst. And if I overcame that hurdle, I would then be formally accepted to Sandhurst. To turn my back on the Army at that stage seemed unthinkable, especially as I would still have no idea of whether or not I would be accepted by one of my three University choices.

The more I thought about it, the more I began to hope that I had failed. That eventuality would, of course, not please my father. But at least it would not be of my own choosing. That, I realized fearfully, would be the ultimate crime - if I said ‘no’ to the Army of my own free will.

The next month began to take on the dimensions and atmosphere of a nightmare. I began to be obsessed by the question, ‘What if I pass?’ My head began to whirl. Different voices and different images clamored for attention. I felt as if I was being sucked into a whirlpool, that I was losing control.

It was a nightmare of voices:

<i>Me:</i>	<i>What if you pass, Ian? What if you pass?</i>
<i>Father:</i>	<i>You’ll love the Army. Besides you’ll never make it to University.</i>
<i>Teachers:</i>	<i>(in chorus) He tries, he tries, but he’ll never make it to University.</i>
<i>Joy & Jim:</i>	<i>Don’t listen to them. Of course you can make it to University!</i>
<i>David & Mark:</i>	<i>Why do you want to go into the Army anyway?</i>
<i>Father:</i>	<i>Why do you want to go to University?</i>
<i>Mollie:</i>	<i>Uncle Vincent never went to University. Think about going into business.</i>
<i>Pam:</i>	<i>Forget the Army. That’s really dumb. Come to Canada.</i>
<i>Amos/Gaskell:</i>	<i>You’re still a virgin!! Join the Army and you’ll be fucking all the time!</i>
<i>Peter Wolf:</i>	<i>You’re creative. Be a musician or an actor. That’s what you’re cut out for.</i>
<i>Mother:</i>	<i>Have as many strings to your bow as possible.</i>
<i>Father:</i>	<i>Be a man!</i>
<i>Auntie Mollie:</i>	<i>Do what you want.</i>
<i>Mother/Father:</i>	<i>Do what you’re told.</i>

Father: Do your homework.
Mother: Do your scales.
Mother/Father: It's your choice. It's up to you.
Teacher 1: Be conscientious.
Teacher 2: Don't be over-conscientious.
Mother: Be conscientious darling, and don't go into the Army.
Father: Serve your Queen and Country. Join the Army!
Auntie Mollie: Do what you want. Become a businessman, and make lots of money. Don't be like your parents, for God's sake.
Mother: Darling, please don't go into the Army. You don't want to kill, do you? You don't want to kill, do you? ... You don't want to kill ...
Father: Shove it up your arse! I said, SHOVE IT UP YOUR ARSE!!
Mother: Don't get angry with your Father. It's not his fault. Try to do what he wants. It's the least you can do.
Aunt Mollie: What do you want, anyway?
Everyone: (in chorus) Yes, what DO you want anyway?
(chanting) What do you WANT? What DO you want? What do you want to BE? What do you want to DO? YOU, yes you, we're talking to you What do want to be? WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU GOING TO DO?'
Father: Join the Army.
Mother: Don't be barmy.
Joy & Jim: Go to College.
Aunt Mollie: What a load of rubbish!
Pam: Come to me. Come to Canada. Leave it all behind you. Get away, get away. Come to me. Come to the other side. Come inside. Come. Come.

And as the injunctions, imperatives, questions and persuasions, warnings and enticements tumbled over each other, a simple feeling grew in strength, fortifying its resistance to the madness. Like Herr Professor, it began to grown into a scream, straining to be let out, a scream that screamed:

DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO.
 DON'T PIN ME DOWN WITH YOUR QUESTIONS!
 GIVE ME TIME! GIVE ME SPACE!
 BACK OFF! LEAVE ME BE!

These feelings got sustenance and support from more than one source. There were those people who had set an example by their independence and refusal to conform. I had been influenced in particular by the message I had drawn from three different books. There was Lord Of The Flies and the way in which Ralph had maintained his sense of values despite the fascistic behavior of Jack and the threat of ostracism from the group. And then there was Animal Farm with its similar themes of individual free will and choice in the face of group immorality and coercion. These books influenced me deeply.

Yet the book that affected me most deeply of all was one I was reading during this nightmarish period. As one of my optional courses, I had decided to take T.C.H. (Twentieth Century History) with none other than Mr. Begley as my teacher. He had asked us to do a book report on any famous twentieth century leader. I had searched

through the library and come across a biography of Mahatma Gandhi by Louis Fischer. I was interested to read about Gandhi on several counts. First, and most importantly, I had heard my father refer to him in derogatory terms. So many times, I had heard accounts of my father's experiences in India, the keystone of the British Empire, as it was in his day. But, of course, I had never heard the view from the other side. My interest in challenging my father's racist views had been whetted over the past few years by contact with Joy and Jim's Third World friends from The London School of Economics. I was also interested in Gandhi because of his extreme asceticism and the fact that he instigated such profound political changes through non-violent means.

During the months of October and November, I read with increasing fascination the story of the great Indian leader. Eventually, I came to a chapter that compared Gandhi with Churchill in very bold and uncompromising terms. At the end of the chapter was a page that contained words which seemed to strike to the very heart of my confusion.

Here is the concluding paragraph:

'Churchill is the Byronic Napoleon. Political power is poetry to him. Gandhi was the sober saint to whom such power was anathema. The British aristocrat and the brown plebian were both conservatives, but Gandhi was a non-conformist conservative. As he grew older, Churchill became more Tory, Gandhi more revolutionary. Churchill loved social traditions. Gandhi smashed social barriers. Churchill mixed with every social class, but lived in his own. Gandhi lived with everybody. To Gandhi, the lowliest Indian was a child of God. To Churchill, all Indians were the pedestal for a throne. He would have died to keep England free, but tried to destroy those who wanted India free.'

(The Life of Mahatma Gandhi, by Louis Fischer, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1950, p. 263)

The above passage resonated deeply within my being. Whereas Gandhi was a truly great man, one who inspired deep inner feelings of truth, equality and justice, Churchill seemed to represent so much of what bothered me about British society. In my mind, Fischer's comments about the difference between Gandhi and Churchill linked with Orwell's statement, 'All Animals Are Equal, But Some Are More Equal Than Others'. Why was it that in the photos my Father so often and so proudly displayed to me, there were so many servants? These servants, whether black or brown, were usually grown men and yet my father referred to them as my 'boys'. It was the same thing that had bothered me when, as a member of the rugby team, we went to play a Grammar School team from Skipton or Lancaster. The attitude was definitely one of superiority. I felt the same thing about being waited upon in restaurants. *'Churchill mixed with every social class, but lived in his own.'*

What I realized was that so many things could be substituted for the word 'Churchill' in that statement; for example; my father, the Hudsons, the Crabbies, the Royal Family, Auntie Mollie, Sedbergh Schoolboys, any public schoolboy. And I realized that, of course, that I was also included on that list. The point was, however, that IF I did as Joy and Jim had done and went to University and actually *lived* with Indians and Nigerians, then maybe I could ease myself off that list. Whereas, if I joined the Army as an officer, I would set the seal once and for all on my position as a member of the ruling class. I didn't want that, it seemed wrong to me to have relations based on inequality. It seemed wrong in the context of my mother and father, it seemed wrong in the context of my father and his 'boys', it seemed wrong in the context of restaurants, and it seemed wrong in the context of rugby matches against Grammar Schools. I felt I needed time to explore the ways in which the world worked, to separate in my mind right from wrong, and to be in some way an agent of change for the better. It felt as if I would be running away from something by joining the Army. It felt as if I would be signing my life away. There had been something incendiary in that line; 'Gandhi smashed social barriers'.

As the seeds of a decision was sown in the morass of confusion, the nightmarish situation continued unabated. Now it was characterized by fear. Fear of my father. Fear of what he would say. Fear of what he would do. Fear of what would happen if I took my life in my own hands.

Then one day, I received a letter that acted like a catalyst. The letter was from Major M.V. Argyle, Q.C., M.C. It read as follows:

'My dear Ian,

You will hardly remember me. I married Anne Newton, who is Mollie Jobson's daughter. I hear that you are having a bash at the Army and Sandhurst to begin with. A jolly good choice. I took the liberty of mentioning your name to my old regiment, the Queen's Own Hussars. If you would like to try to join the Q.O.H., perhaps you would talk to your father about it, and fill in the enclosed form ...

I love my old regiment and have no doubt as to its efficiency, but it is hard to explain this to someone you hardly know!

Yours sincerely,

Michael Argyle.'

That afternoon I went for a run by myself. It was pouring with rain and as I pounded along the road a few miles out of Sedbergh. I could feel the fear and the ever present thought of 'what if I pass?' being replaced by a sense of determination. Suddenly I found myself forcing out the words 'don't wait' and 'do it now' in rhythm with my stride and breathing. The decision was made. A few days later I wrote two letters. One was to my father. The other was to the Secretary of the Sandhurst Entry Board. In both cases, I stated my decision not to enter Sandhurst and my desire to have my application withdrawn.

* * *

It was a strange time. In early November, I had been asked to sing in a production of 'Pirates of Penzance'. I had accepted the invitation and started rehearsals up at the People's Hall in the town at just about the same time that I wrote the fateful letter to my father. While a Greek drama unfolded on one level, a very English light comic operetta brought relief on another. The Chorus of Police was made up of Sedbergh schoolboys, David Roberts and I being amongst them. The Chorus of Pirates, on the other hand, were comprised of Masters and some stalwarts from the town.

The three lead roles had been shrewdly cast. Mabel was played by Jennifer Thornley, the Headmaster's beautiful, intelligent and sophisticated wife. The Pirate King was played by Chris Bennett, the master who had so rudely interrupted my creative chemical experiment of the year before. Last but not least, the plum role of Major General Stanley had been awarded to Howard Mitchell, the assistant school janitor. When the word got around that Howard Mitchell was playing the part of the Major General, the production was a hit, even before anyone had seen it. While the sanctimonious and self-righteous Bennett aroused people's mirth at the idea of him being a pirate, this was nothing to the hilarity that greeted the news regarding Howard Mitchell. The man in question was a 'local' who had only been working at the school for a few years. He was skinny and had one of those faces in which everything seems to protrude. He had bug eyes, goofy teeth, spiky sandy hair, and an Adam's apple that must have stuck out a good inch. He spoke in a high-pitched voice with a heavy Yorkshire accent. To a middle-class public-schoolboy's eyes, he seemed vacuous and weak-willed. He seemed to be the antithesis of the hearty, robust, masculine Sedbergh ideal. The thought of him being the progenitor of fourteen daughters (as General Stanley) was another source of derisive jokes. The fact that he was a suck-up with the masters and a bit bumptious with the boys earned him scorn from all sides. People had always laughed at Howard Mitchell and it really seemed as if it was a somewhat sly if not cruel joke on someone's part to cast him in the lead role. It was as if they were saying, 'listen you little worm, if you want to puff yourself up and be important, here's your chance, you'll never get another one'.

As far as I was concerned, 'The Pirates of Penzance could not have come at a better time. It was just what I needed. Saying 'no' to the Army had brought in its wake a dizzy sense of liberation. I had overcome my fear of my Father, or so it seemed at the time, and I had gained self-respect in the process. Saying 'no' made me feel like I had

a mind of my own. I felt like celebrating, and being in 'The Pirates' was my celebration. Going to rehearsals several times a week got me away from Physics and Chemistry. It got me away from worrying about the future. It even got me away from Powell House and the habitual routines. It was liberating in itself to be allowed, after so many years of confinement, to walk through town in the evening past The Red Lion, The White Hart and The Bull. One of the other boys in the Chorus of Police, Chris Wells by name, tempted me on a couple of occasions to nip into the Red Lion for a drink. I declined. It wasn't a temptation that I wanted or needed. On the other hand, I was envious of the progress this same boy was making with the daughter of the owner of The Bull, a girl called Anna Dalton and one of General Stanley's daughters.

One evening when I returned from rehearsal, Mr. Begley met me in the lobby and informed me that my father had just phoned him. It appeared that my father had received my letter and was somewhat upset. It turned out that he had decided to come down to Sedbergh without delay in order to discuss the matter with Mr. Begley and I. It had been arranged that he would come down that weekend, three days hence. After telling me this, Mr. Begley asked me why I hadn't told him of my decision. His tone was one of disappointment. I didn't have a satisfactory answer for him. He then asked me if I was clear in my decision. I replied that I was sure I was, that I was more determined than ever to go to University. He then concluded the brief discussion by saying, that if this were the case, he would support me in my decision not to go into the Army.

For some reason, the prospect of my father storming down from Edinburgh in full battle cry didn't terrify me. I had been more afraid of what my father might do before making my decision. Somehow the nightmares of imagination have always proved worse than the nightmares of reality. I realized that my father couldn't do anything. I had made a decision and he couldn't revoke that decision or make me revoke it. Besides, I felt secure. I was on my turf. He was coming to my territory. I had protection. Furthermore, I still had the glow of satisfaction about having had the strength to make such an important decision.

My father came down to Sedbergh by train on the 21st. November, which was a Saturday. It was only the second time he had been at Sedbergh, the other time being my first day at school. Mr. Begley had invited him to stay in his flat on the second floor of Powell House. It was an eerie feeling knowing that my father was suddenly in the heart of my *real* home, a home of which he knew nothing. Now that he had arrived and was actually in Powell House, I felt less protected, less sure of myself. My friends were not much help. They didn't really understand all the issues behind the decision not to go into the Army. Besides, they had their own problems. David, for instance, only a week before had undergone a most unpleasant experience in which, following a long fell run, his pulse had begun to race and he had rushed off to the sanitarium in panic. As it happened, the doctor, a wise old bird called Dr. Morris, had told him that he was perfectly O.K. and that he should pull himself together, a prognosis that had worked immediately. The panic attack was just a further symptom of the ongoing depression and anxiety associated with overwork, and the strain of waiting for exams and anticipating their eventual outcome. Everyone had their problems.

In my own rising state of anxiety, I found myself automatically searching for escape routes in the same way I always did in Edinburgh. I realized, with some relief, that as a House Prefect I could always seek refuge in another House for at least the time it took to have a coffee and a chat. As it happened, I didn't have long to wait before I was summoned to appear in Mr. Begley's living room. I had played a match for the 2nd. XV in the afternoon, and I was to meet my father and Mr. Begley in the evening after supper.

My first impression on entering the living room was that both my father and Mr. Begley looked slightly drunk. They both had a cigarette in hand and a glass of sherry on the table in front of them. There was a bottle of whisky on a side table with two empty glasses beside it. Both faces were considerably more relaxed than normal, especially that of my father. They looked as if they had been having a good time together, and the atmosphere was receptive, not hard and aggressive as I'd expected. As I sat down, I couldn't get over the fact that here in the same room were my two fathers, the real one and the surrogate. I could never have believed that they would be in any way compatible. My feelings were ones of surprise, awe and wariness. I had felt burned by their

cozy, grown-up to grown-up collaboration in the past.

Much to my astonishment, the conversation turned out to be relatively brief. My father said that, of course, he had been shocked and disappointed to hear of my decision but that Mr. Begley had explained my determination to get into university and that there was a possibility that I might be able to pull it off. He then emphasized, as much to Mr. Begley as to me, that he had always supported the idea of my going to University but had more or less rejected this as a viable option due to my mediocre academic performance. The discussion was wrapped up with assurances from Mr. Begley and my father that they would support me in my attempts to get into university. My father added that if I ever decided to change my mind about the Army, I could always re-apply.

As I left the living room, I got the feeling that what both men really wanted was to be left alone to drink some more and continue their reminiscing about past experiences. Then I thought about it; Mr. Begley and my father *did* have certain things in common. Mr. Begley had traveled a lot. Someone had told me that he had done intelligence work in Malaysia during the war. They probably did have things to talk about. It suddenly struck me that one of the big problems with my father was that he was desperately lonely. He had no close male friends to talk with, or share a bottle with. Even if my mother was right, and he had been unhappy much of his time in the Army, nevertheless, his life at that time must have been rich in comparison with its present barren state. Surely that was the source of much of his frustration.

The next day, the 22nd. November, was my 18th. birthday. I was now old enough to drink, drive, vote and get married. My father and I had arranged to meet for lunch, after which he was going to catch a train from Oxenholme. As we sat there in The Bull, I noticed once again that he seemed so much softer than usual. It even felt good being there, just the two of us. Somehow it seemed so utterly different from when my mother and father were together. My father seemed more open, more human.

“You know, your mother has not always been well,” he said out of nowhere, as we awaited dessert.

“There have been times when, quite frankly ...”. My father broke off suddenly.

It was as if a visor had clanged down on this intimacy. I wished that he had continued. What *were* my father’s feelings towards my mother? I knew what my mother’s feelings were, but I knew little of what my father felt other than his frustration and anger about so much of what occurred in the present, and his nostalgia for the past. Is that all there was? Is that all there was to him? A frightened old man, vitriolic with bitterness and rage? A bigot and a racist? A wife abuser? It was so easy to focus on the cruelty he had displayed towards my mother and my brother Robin. But I remembered also the love and attention he had shown me when I was very young. He had wanted the best for us, it had seemed. I remembered the parties he had organized, the help he had given me with my homework, the half-crown prize he had awarded on Grand National Day to whoever of us children had picked the highest-finishing horse. Then there were the sandcastle competitions at Gullane and the summer days picking raspberries in the back garden. There *had* been good times. But for so long now it had been an arid desert, an emotional hell-house, void of caring or love. What had happened to the loving part of my father? Where had it gone? Now as I sat across from my father, I wasn’t concerned with such questions. It just felt good to be with him. I was nourished by his openness, like parched leaves softening and opening in the rain.

My father was talking again. His words drifted through.

“Let’s just say that your mother is going through a difficult period, trying to adjust to you children leaving home. Robin and Joy are both in London now and you are here at Sedbergh with an uncertain future ahead of you. Your mother tends to get very anxious and very depressed.”

There was concern in his voice. It was true; when he was away from her, he could show concern and even caring.

“Anyway, I’m glad I came down. It has been good to see how you live here and it has been very good talking to your Housemaster. He seems like a first-rate chap. Actually, I’ve been impressed by all I’ve seen, and frankly I think you’ve been damned lucky to have been at a school like this. As to your future, well, we shall just have to wait and see. But at least Mr. Begley has reassured me somewhat on that score.” My father paused for a moment, his jaw tightening. Then he looked me in the eye and continued. “I’m concerned that you think I have been trying to force you into the Army. That is not the case, and never was, so you can get that out of your mind.

Anyway, that seems irrelevant now. You've chosen a different path. Now you must accept the consequences.

My father left a few hours later. I couldn't believe it. Nothing terrible had happened. No Sword of Damocles had descended. He had even accepted, or so it seemed, my decision not to go into the Army. I felt ecstatic. No more the discipline and authoritarianism of the army, but the freedom of University.

Appropriately, the last month of the winter term seemed to be a period of cultural activities and escape from the usual routine of Sedbergh life.

First, there were the 'Pirates of Penzance' performances at the end of November. They were a huge success. Chris Bennett got continual chuckles with his ridiculous impersonation of a pirate. The Headmaster's wife did what David Lungley had done several years before as Princess Ida, namely won the hearts and inflamed the passions of quite a few members of the audience. Chris Wells and I milked the most out of our roles with some Laurel and Hardy type antics, so much so that after the first performance, the Headmaster congratulated me on my performance and said that he hoped I would do more acting. The Physics teacher, on the other hand, told me that my performance had given him the idea that the solution to all my career problems might lie in becoming a policeman. He was quite serious.

The real star of the production, however, was Howard Mitchell, something that everyone had predicted. The highlight of his performance was 'The Major-General's Song'. With Howard's rich inflection, the first line sounded something like this: 'Oh, ah ahm t'verreh mowdahl ovah mowden.Mehja Generahl'. People seemed to find Howard much more bearable following the 'Pirates of Penzance' production. As for me, I had enjoyed all aspects of the production immensely and I was sorry to see it end.

Shortly after finishing 'The Pirates', I began rehearsing for a performance of Fauré's Requiem, a beautiful choral work that the school had decided to put on in the chapel. I had been chosen to play the 'cello solo. This turned out to be a pleasure thanks to the richness of the piece and the wonderful acoustics in the chapel. But the most enjoyable experience of all, during this cultural binge, was appearing in the Powell House Christmas concert. Traditionally, the Prefects always did a series of sketches at the conclusion of the concert. In the 1964 House Concert, our sketches were subsumed under the title 'Belli 'Celli'. The opener was a sketch in which I appeared alone as a Squadron Leader giving a tipsy briefing on bombing raids over Hamburg. For me, being able to play this role, was pure psychodrama, given my recent situation. I found it wonderfully therapeutic and freeing to be able to step outside the inner battleground of warring identities and, in an instant, become a much simpler kind of person, a caricature of the real thing. For years, I had forced myself to think and say nice things about the Armed Forces. Now, in a role such as this, I could act out and play out all that I found ridiculous associated with this world. I could act out the 'military type' without worrying about *being* him. It is ironical that a month after deciding not to be an Armed Forces Officer, I could portray one so successfully. I found it even more ironical when Mr. Begley, obviously impressed, told me after the show that what I had done was "as good as anything you see in the West End." Apart from anything else, he was praising me for doing exactly the kind of thing that he had castigated me for doing a few years before in the dorm with Hordern.

Many of the ideas for the Squadron Leader sketch were drawn from a sketch I had seen performed the previous summer by the 'Beyond The Fringe' team of Peter Cook and Dudley Moore. I loved watching the Oxford University Late Night Revue and the Cambridge Footlights Revue at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. I had gone to see them for the last two years. They were both an extension and a validation of the kind of thing that Hordern and I had done together. They gave me a sense of my own power. I knew I could do as well as they. I had a definite ability to act. I could feel it. People told me so. I had always known it. Acting felt as natural to me as scientific investigation felt foreign. The power that I felt in this area was a sense of being able to move people, whether it was moving them to laughter or to tears. Unfortunately, there had been little scope for legitimate dramatic expression at Sedbergh. Drama had not, as yet, been given the institutional support and recognition of say, music. Perhaps, if the situation had been different and I had developed both experience and confidence as an actor, it would have affected my career choices. But I doubt it. First, there was my mother's reaction, one that I heard often in connection with a friend of Joy, Bridget Connell, who had gone to R.A.D.A. (The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art). 'An acting career is too risky,' my mother would say, 'too insecure' ... 'besides, it leads into a kind of bohemian world where, more

often than not, there's drink and drugs.' But it was not just my mother. Acting was not a suitable career choice by Sedbergh standards either. I had never heard of anyone from Sedbergh going to R.A.D.A. or a similar institution. And then there were my own inner feelings. Despite the fact that I felt such a strong ability to act, I also felt an equally strong 'conscience' that forbade me to indulge for very long in anything frivolous.

University variety shows like 'Beyond the Fringe' however, was something quite different. Shows such as this, were being put on by students. Not students of drama, but students of something worthy like medicine or law, or even philosophy or sociology. That made it legitimate, not only legitimate but highly attractive. In fact, this aspect of University life was possibly the real magnet for me. There was no doubt that, just as my conceptions of Public School had been initially formulated by the Bunter books, my 18 year old view of University was to a great extent a product of years of watching Edinburgh University 'Rag' weeks, Edinburgh Festival Fringe activities, and popular portrayals of student life such as 'Doctor in the House.'

University was where one drank and fucked and made merry, a place where one threw off the chains of adolescence, and serf-like deference to school and parents. A place to explore intellectually and artistically. A place to become liberated from the lockstep, irrelevant school curricula and examinations. Given this conception, it is not altogether surprising that I decided against going into the Army. The prospect of going into the Army had not just been a nightmare of voices, it had also been a nightmare of images - of boots, and shells, and dirt, and shrapnel. Images of angry faces and shattered limbs. Images of submissive obedience and mindless authoritarianism. An image of myself as my father.

Pushing against this nightmare was the dream of University. Images of lazy days punting on the Cam; of all night discussions on important, relevant, urgent topics; of beautiful, seductive, long-limbed, long haired women, women who looked like Joan Baez, women who were too intelligent to be coy or unavailable. Yes indeed, the world of the University was a series of unending enticing images. Granted, there *was* an educational aspect to University, but this was taken care of by gentle, wise, father-figure Professors who looked like a hybrid of Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein and Albert Schweitzer. These wonderful and kindly gentlemen were genuinely concerned with the welfare of each and every student, and were available to discuss anything from cabbages to Kings, over sherry of course. But for the main part, University was wine and cheese, and freshly brewed coffee, scattered copies of 'The New Statesmen' on the floor, curling Toulouse-Lautrec posters on a peeling wall, groaning bookshelves with books such as Wittgenstein's Logico-Tractatus and Christine Keeler's 160 Positions under a Peer rubbing, shoulders with each other. University was a time and a place for all manner of experimentation and exploration and expression. It was bigger and better and freer than Sedbergh, plus it had the additions of birds and booze, jazz and blues, drama without dues, any sport you could choose, and last but not least, plenty of snooze. Yeah man, let's face it. It was Nirvana. I wanted to go there.

13.

Sedbergh: January, 1965

The Christmas Holidays, which had just ended had not been exactly wonderful. My father's tolerant attitude vanished when the Civil Service exam results came through. It turned out that I had done rather well, better than he had ever expected. I was 36th. out of the 65 candidates who had passed. Eighty one had failed. Although, as expected, I hadn't fared very well in Physics, I was astonished to find that I had the second highest mark of anybody in Chemistry, a result that was purely a reflection of hard work rather than ability. As usual, I had done well in English.

As far as my father was concerned, these results were more a source of recrimination than a cause for celebration, given the nature of my recent decision. But for the main part, the recriminations were held in check. The prevailing mood was one of suspended tension. Judgment would be withheld until the situation regarding University became clearer.

As it happened, there was another factor that served to exacerbate my father's frustration. I had been promoted to Sergeant in the C.C.F. and put in charge of the Mountain Rescue unit for the Lent term. When my father asked me about my activities in this unit, it was evident to him that I really enjoyed myself. It was true. I did enjoy myself. The Mountain Rescue unit was different from the rest of the C.C.F. It was challenging, it was fun, and it served a useful purpose. Rather than being trained to take lives (as my mother would put it), we were being shown how to save them. Over the past year I had played an enthusiastic part in the unit and had found it a milieu in which I seemed to lead by example. Climbing and hiking, taking a stretcher down a cliff face, keeping group morale up in adverse conditions, these were things that came easily to me. Besides, the Mountain Rescue Unit was not a place for parade ground discipline and military pomp. I felt at home in it. I liked the fact that my relationship - with others were determined more by actions than by words.

However, I was sure that sooner or later, my father would seize on the facts of my enjoyment and my achievement as concrete proof that I should have gone (or should still go) into the Army. As far as he was concerned, these facts just rubbed salt into the wounds. As far as I was concerned, they augmented a nagging inner doubt regarding the correctness of my decision.

I had three months to wait before I heard from U.C.C.A.; three months to sit and sweat and worry about whether the gamble would pay off, and then another three months, after that, before the actual A level examinations. There was no question about it. The doubts were beginning to creep back. Apart from anything else, my mother hadn't even given me any kudos for deciding not to go into the Army. That bothered me. It was a withholding of exactly the kind of support I needed. What was the matter with her? I had done what she wanted. In any event, I began to wonder. Maybe, just maybe I had made the wrong decision.

Shortly after returning to school, I received a letter from Pam. I had been anxiously awaiting this particular letter. A month earlier, I had sent her a Christmas present of a heart-shaped locket. This was the first time I had bought a significant present such as this for a girl, and it was certainly the first time I had persuaded myself to spend so much money. The thing that had made this present especially important was the fact that it was meant to be an affirmation of my commitment to keep our relationship going. It was also meant to be a re-affirmation of my original promise to get together with Pam, one way or another. Such a gesture seemed appropriate given the fact that since her letter about shop lifting on Vancouver Island the previous summer, I had not written to her at all. This had in part to do with the crisis regarding the Army, and in part to do with a feeling of being estranged from Pam's way of life and her values. As it turned out, her response to my silence had been interesting.

A letter of November, 1964 had read as follows:

'Dear Ian,

What the hell's going on anyway? I sent you a big parcel of valuable pictures and a lot of other stuff and I get no answer ...

I wish I knew a little more about what you do with your life. All I know is that you go to Sedbergh, you are nearly through, you were considering the Army, and that you want to come to Canada and get together. That's not a fat lot, and I'm not satisfied either, see!

Please write soon and justify your existence. I'm not really that mad at your not writing. I'm just dying to hear from you. I'll never really be mad at you. I don't have much of a temper anyway,

All my love, Pam'

This had been followed by another letter, dated Dec.2nd. 1964:

'Well Mister Brown, what's the meaning off all this? 3 letters and about 6 pictures and still no answer, that's a bit much even if you do have a new girl friend! ...

I'm going to continue writing to you even if you do stop corresponding with me. There's a certain comfort writing to someone whom I share almost nothing with. But I sure do miss you. PLEASE WRITE, it means so much to me,

All my love, Pam'

These two letters had punctured my growing cynicism regarding the opposite sex. It seemed that she did care for me after all, despite the vivid description of her boyfriends and her recent tendency to tell me that *she* had been 'too busy to write'. With this realization, my longing had swept back in full force, and the locket had been the result.

So when I received her January letter, the first thing I did was quickly scan the letter for her response to my present. There was no mention of it, not even an acknowledgment. This surprised me because I had sent the locket by air mail and in plenty of time to beat the Christmas rush. Assuming that she had not received it, I returned to reading the letter. I did not find what I wanted to see or hear.

Extracts from the letter, dated Jan. 4th. 1965:

'I have had the most wonderful Christmas of my entire life. But before I tell you about it, I must remind you that we promised that we'd tell each other about any other boy friend or girl friend, so that's what I'm going to do ...'

(description of what it was like for Pam, her mother, and her sister as members of the chorus in a Christmas pantomime)

'... this inevitably was perfect bliss. There were many members of the male chorus. Also, to live up to my reputation as 'the big flirt' (I didn't let a chance go by). We all had a regular panic' (whale of a time). I got off with a nice, very good-looking second year student from 'varsity. His name was Ted...'

'Ted told me that I could have any one of the dancers dangling from my finger ... he took me out twice. I'll have to admit that he kissed me both times and held me tight ...'

'but I won't be seeing Ted anymore because he's going steady and will be back at University. But it doesn't make any difference to me because I have one special boyfriend. He is the sweetest guy in the world. He likes me ever so much and I like him a lot more than he thinks. One day he is going to hold me tight in his arms and kiss me, ever so gently, and tell me he loves me. This will be within the next 5 years, and then he'll never leave me again. You'd like him Ian, and I think

*you'd approve. He lives in Scotland and goes to school at Sedbergh,
All my love from your silly girl friend, Pam.
X O X O X O X O X O X O*

I was hardly able, unfortunately, to focus on the second half of the letter. To hell with Tom, Dick, Harry, Fred and Ted! I had sent her a token of my undying love (lust?) for her, and all she could do was tell me about some 'male chorus member'. He must have been a fairy. Everyone knew that. All male chorus members were fairies. Damn him anyway! Oh, and what was that she'd said? 'A second year 'varsity student'. Well excuse me!! I mean, I'm only a schoolboy! I'd need a telescope even to see the bloody 'varsity let alone find myself there. Damn the University and its loose, perverted ways! A regular Sodom and Gomorrah! Damn the theatre and the low life it attracted. Damn Pam! Damn me if I was going to write to her before getting some response to that locket.

Pam and her prairie gold hair, her maple-red lips, and her twin rocky mountain peaks once again dissolved into the nether beyond and life returned to the rain and fog and occasional pleasures of the hand.

Old Zen saying: *have you ever heard the sound of one hand pumping?*

Then, one rainy, foggy day, something happened that rivaled Kennedy's assassination in its impact. On January 24th, at lunchtime, we were informed by Mr. Begley that Winston Churchill had just died. A few days later, the whole House was required to watch the state funeral on television.

Whereas Kennedy's death had put everyone into a state of shock and outrage, Churchill's death brought on a slow welling of mourning and feelings of patriotic loyalty. Churchill had become a symbol for what Britain believed it was. He was the British bulldog and the British lion rolled into one. He was defiant, proud, courageous, just and loyal. Without him, we might now be an appendage of Germany. Without him, the song 'Rule Britannia!' might have become an embarrassing anachronism. There was good reason to mourn the passing of this man. Watching the funeral, I felt deeply moved, perhaps especially so because somewhere deep inside I had an uneasy sense of guilt.

Only month before, I had written an essay that had glorified Mahatma Gandhi, at least partially at the expense of Churchill. What Louis Fischer had said about Churchill had rung true with me, on a rational and moral level. It had even influenced my decision about the Army. The trouble was that Churchill's funeral did not move me on a moral level. It was a highly emotional event which, apart from anything else, gave me my first understanding that loyalty and patriotism are emotional by nature and can easily be at odds with conscience or reason.

The pomp and pageantry of the funeral was fitting. The horses and the soldiers in their shining armor were magnificent. The military music was stirring. The service, in St. Paul's Cathedral, was deeply moving. Hundreds of thousands of people had passed by the flag-draped coffin as it lay in state in Westminster Hall. Hundreds of thousands watched in silence as it was borne on a gun carriage to the painfully slow beat of muffled drums from the Hall to the cathedral. These were 'common' people. Maybe he hadn't 'lived amongst them', but they still clearly respected and loved him.

This was the man who had only succeeded in passing the Sandhurst entrance exams on his third attempt. This was the man who was, amongst other things a soldier, a journalist, a writer, a politician, a landscape painter, and a qualified bricklayer. This is the man who had infused a whole nation with dedication and inspired them to a higher purpose with the famous speech:

'We shall not flag or fail. We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender ...' (House of Commons, June 4th. 1940)

The whole spectacle made me feel proud to be British. I felt proud that we had defeated the bloody Germans. I felt proud that my father had been part of that victory. I felt proud that my uncle had won a V.C. in that war. And somehow, I felt ashamed that I had turned my back on the Army. The following week, I threw myself into my duties as commander of the Mountain Rescue Unit with fresh vigor.

My feelings of doubt regarding my decision not to go into the Army were not helped by a visit from Joy and Jim a week or two later. I had originally been excited about their coming up to Sedbergh. I had told them so much about my life at school that I wanted them to see some of it for themselves. But once they had arrived, and I was responsible for escorting them around, I felt somewhat embarrassed by their presence. They seemed sloppy in their dress. Their incessant smoking seemed out of place and unhealthy. In fact, they looked unhealthy amongst my robust, ruddy-faced counterparts. From my pristine point of view, even their attitude seemed to be unhealthy. When I visited them in London, I would tell them funny anecdotes about various Sedbergh characters. I would, for instance, portray John 'Bogie' Begley, his words barely escaping from the corner of his mouth. They seemed to find this kind of thing very funny, and I certainly lapped up their mirth. But now, actually being in Mr. Begley's presence, was a different story. Now, as I watched their concealed smirks and sidelong glances, I felt embarrassed and uncomfortable. I felt that rather than having fun *with* me, they were making fun *of* my world. My allegiance was now with Sedbergh. They were the outsiders. They knew nothing of my world.

There was something detached and laconic about Joy and Jim. It was the same bearing that characterized the 'brainy' students of Clio and the Modern Language VI form. They were somehow more observers than they were actors. They were connected to their heads and somehow their words and their ideas and their concepts seemed to prevent them from seeing or feeling my world at a deeper level. At least, that was how it appeared to me.

Though no fault of theirs, it turned out to be an ill-timed visit. Following Churchill's funeral, the perceived and hierarchical order of 'the soldier' had worked its way back into favor over the intellectualism and bohemian anarchy of 'the student'. Joy and Jim were from Bohemia, and at that moment Bohemia was a foreign country and one with which I felt a dubious alliance.

Following this visit, life settled back into its predictable routine; classes, prefect's duties, studying, Mountain Rescue once a week, and the daily sport of rugby or running. One day towards the middle of February, something happened that deeply disturbed me and brought my inner confusions tumbling to a head.

Because of the atrocious weather, all rugby games had been cancelled and a compulsory run had been prescribed as the afternoon's exercise. While I was going around the run, I noticed several Powell House boys walking. This kind of slacking was 'not on', and when they saw me coming they began running. Suddenly, as I turned a corner in the road, some movement in a field to my right caught my eye. Behind a clump of bushes, I could see someone in running shorts attempting to conceal himself. I recognized the person as being Stan Stoner, the resident trumpet player in the Powell House Jazz Band. My immediate thought was that he must be having a smoke on the sly. In any event, I could tell that he wasn't aware that I had seen him. I decided to keep on running.

Later, in one of the Prefect's studies, it turned out that quite a few people had skipped the run. This was not a major infraction, but serious enough to merit a group 'foss' and some kind of punishment. After some discussion, we decided to tell all those who had skipped the run to meet in the library after supper.

Such an arrangement, of course, relied on people's honesty to own up. But that was the honor code. Self-confession, self-reliance, self-discipline and self-denial were the corner-stones of the Sedbergh code of ethics. People were expected to own up. As it turned out, at least fifteen people were sitting in the library when we walked in. This number seemed to correspond with our expectations.

It was only after Biggart had begun his lecture that I noticed that Stan Stoner was not present. I was sure I must be mistaken and so I checked again to make sure that he was not sitting in some dark corner of the House library. It was a shock when I realized that he definitely was not there.

After the meeting had ended, and some mild punishment had been meted out (going around the same run before breakfast the next morning), the Prefects gathered together in Biggart's study for a cup of tea. I told Mark what had happened concerning Stoner. He suggested, somewhat nonchalantly, that I call him in for a talk. I was surprised that, in his tone of voice and in his manner, he did not show more reaction to this flagrant violation of the

honor code. It almost seemed that Mark was implicitly telling me to cool it. After all, Stoner was fairly senior, besides which he was a member of the current 'rebel' set, a group that included Anthony Hordern, Stan Stoner, and a boy called Alistair Muir.

I couldn't deny that the situation made me feel uncomfortable. Not only was Stan Stoner in his fourth year, but as far as our musical activities were concerned, I regarded him as an equal. He was also, as it happened, a prospective Army candidate. However, the fact remained that he had abused the system of justice by his lack of conscientiousness. I felt as if he had let me down personally, and I was determined to at least find out why he had chosen not to come to the library.

It was about 7 p.m. when I sent a bell fag to summon Stoner to number 1 study. This was the study that Mark shared with David Biggart. It was not only the inner sanctum of power for Powell House but also the whole school due to the fact that Biggart had just been made Head Of School, while Mark had taken on the duties of Head of House. Biggart had some business to attend to that evening and I had asked Mark if I could see Stoner in their study. There were several reasons for this. The first was that I wanted Mark to witness the proceedings. The second was that I wanted to impart some sense of gravity to the situation by holding the meeting in 1 study rather than the cramped and less austere surrounding of the study I shared with David Lungley and John Spedding.

My intention was to question Stoner, extract a confession, and deliver a moral reprimand. I neither wanted to intimidate, nor to punish him any more than to tell him to follow the already decreed punishment of re-doing the run the following day. Things did not work out as I had intended. The expression on Stoner's face as he entered the study was far from contrite. From the outset, he seemed to be hostile. But things only really began to warm up when he denied that he had skipped the run.

"Oh come on, Stan, I saw you. I saw you quite clearly behind those bushes," I said incredulously.

"You must have made a mistake. How could you tell it was me?" he protested, raising his voice.

"I saw you with my own two eyes! I know what you look like. It was you all right. Why don't you admit it?" I could feel myself getting hot under the collar. This was outrageous. I had never before experienced such a blatant and totally unrepentant denial of the truth. Suddenly Stoner's eyes blazed and he said:

"In any case, what right do you have to interrogate me like this? Why should I stand here and take this?"

"Take what? So far I think I've been pretty decent. I think it's the other way around. Why should I take the way you're behaving. First you don't have the guts to come to the library. Then you lie to me. Then you raise your voice and ..."

"What makes you think you're right, Brown? DO YOU ALWAYS THINK YOU'RE RIGHT?" The interruption came suddenly and was delivered at full force. The tone was now defiant and bitter.

At this point, Mark who had been pretending to study at his desk, turned round impatiently, "keep your voice down, Stoner. Prep. has already started."

I felt stunned. This was not going according to plan. Stoner was behaving in completely the opposite way to what would normally be expected under the circumstances. I couldn't believe what was happening. This was like a bad scene out of *Bunter*.

"No, I don't always think I'm right, but I know I'm right this time. I also know that I have the right to question you. I'm a prefect and that gives me the right to question you if you break the rules. For God's sake, man, why do you have to lie?" When I said that, it flashed across my mind for an instant that I had sounded just like my father.

"I'm not lying."

"But I saw you in broad daylight. Listen, I don't even care what you were doing. At this moment, I don't care that you skipped the run. I don't care that you may have been having a fag behind those bushes. I don't care about the bloody run. What bothers me, what really bothers me is that you didn't come to the library and now you continue to refuse to own up."

"How do you know I didn't go round the bloody run? In any case, why should I *have to* go round the bloody run? What right do you have to make me?"

This exchange continued for a few more minutes, becoming more heated and less productive by the second.

Suddenly my patience snapped. "Listen, Stoner, I don't know why you're doing this but you're not going to get away with it. You've forced me to punish you. I'm going to have to beat you, and let me tell you I'm doing it more on account of your lying than for anything else. I'm really disappointed in you. You've really let me down. Go to 6 dorm. and wait for me."

I was furious. How dare he behave like that! He wasn't just challenging me, he was challenging the whole system of rules and values that was the bulwark of our community. He had to be severely punished. There was no other option.

"This is unfortunate," Mark said after Stoner had left the study. He looked concerned.

"I know it is, but did you hear him?"

"Yes, but ..."

"Well, don't you think I'm doing the right thing?"

"I suppose so. I mean you are sure that it was him you saw?"

What the hell was this, I thought to myself.

"Yes, of course I'm sure."

Mark examined me and some of the concern seemed to disappear from his face.

"Well, in that case, you're right," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

Five minutes later, I beat Stoner four times on the buttocks with the prefectorial binstick, a wooden cane about two feet long. After the beating, Stoner looked at me cold-eyed and left without a word. He displayed neither the remorse nor the gentlemanly attitude of gracious acceptance traditionally deemed appropriate after a beating.

For a moment I stood in the dormitory drained of all emotion. The drama was over, and with it the crystal spirit of moral zeal felt shattered. I slowly descended the stairs. My feet felt heavy. Something was welling up inside me but I didn't know what. Suddenly, at the bottom of the stairs, I could feel a deep sobbing from within me. I sat down on a bench, head in hands, crying softly 'what have I done?', 'what have I done?' It was the first time I had cried in years.

This incident made me question myself deeply. It had seemed right to uphold the values of truth and honesty, but it had seemed wrong to beat Stoner. I had always had blind faith in Sedbergh's system of values. In fact, I had often thought how much fairer was the system of justice at Sedbergh than the oppressive dictatorship that existed at my parents' house in Edinburgh. But if such a system led to such an outcome, then surely there must be something wrong with the system. Or was there just something wrong with me? The more I reflected on the beating incident the more I couldn't escape the feeling- that it wasn't 'me' who had beaten Stoner. Somehow, I felt like I had been a puppet. A puppet whose strings were being pulled by a set of internalized values that I had neither consciously questioned or chosen. By being honest and loyal to these values I had done something that felt repugnant. I had to learn to pull my own strings. I had to learn to question authority. That was what was so ironical. Stoner had lied, that I was sure about. But at least he had had the guts to stand up to me, to question my authority. But then again, how could the system possibly work if people were always questioning authority? It was all very confusing.

In any event, the incident may have spurred on the 'rebels'. In the next few months, Stoner, Hordern and Muir seemed to become increasingly difficult. In fact, in the end, it was Alistair Muir, a bright boy who later won a scholarship to Cambridge, who staged the most overt challenge to authority that I had encountered in my days at Sedbergh. One day he declared to Mr. Begley that he had decided that he was not going to kneel down at evening prayers on account of the fact that he had come to the conclusion that he was an atheist. Mr. Begley's answer had been swift and simple – and draconian. Kneel down, follow the rules, or leave the school. The next day Alistair Muir was kneeling down along with everyone else. Needless to say, at that time there were no Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus or Buddhists at Sedbergh, at least not practicing ones.

Shortly before the end of the Lent term I received a letter from U.C.C.A. I had received an outright rejection from The London School of Economics and had only been put on the waiting list at St. Andrews and Keele.

The news could hardly have been worse.

About the same time, David Lungley also received discouraging news. He heard that he had failed to gain entrance to either Oxford or Cambridge. However, as he had already been accepted by Reading University, things were not that bad. There was now no point in him staying on at Sedbergh and so at the end of March 1965, he packed his bags for the last time. The emotional impact of saying goodbye to David was lessened by the fact that he and I, along with John Aitken and a boy named Peter Maingay, had arranged to spend a week in the Lake District. Nonetheless, the end of term was a wrenching experience. The hard fact was that my closest friend was moving on to a new life. The day to day contact and sharing was gone for good. It was the custom for someone leaving Sedbergh to summarize their accomplishments in a 'Valete' to be printed in the House magazine. It was also traditionally the job of the editor to furnish each 'Valete' with a quotation that would serve as an epitaph for the person in question. As it happened, the editor of the 1965 edition of 'The Chameleon' was David himself. This meant that although he could compile his 'Valete', he found it inappropriate to supply a quotation for himself. Consequently, he asked me if I would do the honors. I came up with something that pleased him. It was a quotation from Henry Van Dyke that read: 'Individuality is the salt of common life.'

David was leaving. After almost five years of living, sleeping, eating, studying, and mutually engaging in all manner of cooperative and competitive activities, it was hard to come to terms with. We had shared so much; the ups and the downs; the successes and the failures. We had grown together in ways we didn't even understand. Now the future was uncertain. All I knew was that he was going to Kenya until September and from there to his first year at Reading University. It all seemed incongruous and threatening. I found myself re-living our five years at Sedbergh in an attempt to grasp the significance of our relationship. Some of these thoughts found their way into a letter:

*'My dear David,
May I just say that I don't think that I have ever admired anyone for guts, determination and self-will as much as you. And I think it is true to say that any arguments, disagreements, or 'coldness' between us has been my fault, or has been caused as a result of my 'over-sensitivity' ... the main thing is for us to keep in touch, even if it just by an annual Christmas card. Just remember, OLD FRIENDS NEVER DIE ...'*

A week later, I received this tribute back from David:

'Jock, thank-you very much for your kind words. I will never admire anyone as much as you for strength of personality, thoughtfulness, goodness, nobleness of character, perception, and all the other qualities which I count of the highest value in anyone. I sincerely hope that we will always keep in touch, and if ever I can do anything for you at all, you can count on me...'

David put some final thoughts in his Editorial for the 1995 'Chameleon'.

'Unquestionably, the modern generation does not think in the same terms as past ones, particularly in regard to the use of leisure. This general change of outlook is, of course, a product of ever-increasing automation and civilization, which have rendered our every day tasks so much easier, quicker and cleaner. Everything is much more organized and efficient.

This state of affairs is breeding a large number of people who are not willing to think, or strain themselves unnecessarily. If they have to do something, they will do it as quickly as possible, and then lapse quietly back into apathy and shallow-minded oblivion. "Why do things the hard way?"

This general attitude is reflected in the use of leisure hours; people are far more willing to sit and receive some entertainment such as a film, and then pass judgment on it - "I wish I hadn't gone" - than to weigh what they have heard about it beforehand and decide whether or not to

go. They will sit for hours listening to (hearing?) a radio or record player ("what a bind having to turn the records over!"). In short, nothing positive or creative: a characterless desire to be fed with anything rather than to discriminate.

Unfortunately there is little one can do to change this apathy because it is a question very largely of different values. You cannot make someone appreciate the bleak beauty of a tramp across barren, stark fells in the rain; the warm glow of achievement after a difficult self-imposed task well performed. The problem arises simply because during the past few decades, 'things' have changed so greatly and so quickly that some people have been swept away by the rushing surge of the new era, not holding fast to the solid, basic values of past times. Distracted by glittering tinsel they ignore deeper things like an appreciation of Nature; they have one-channel, streamlined transistorized minds.

With the march of progress, these people will multiply; but there will always be at least some of the other sort. It is a question of conditioning and environment; if every effort is made to gratify a child and he is always comfortable physically, his every wish being catered for by lax parents, he will inevitably be tied to the temporal. and this is a danger which is rapidly increasing as everything becomes easier to obtain – there is an organization to cater for everything. If some parents and schools are not prepared to discipline, teach, and sometimes deprive their wards of something, then humanity is going to veer further and further away from its true self. The few individuals who maintain discrimination and talk of past days when people respected the simpler things of life, will be rejected as unbalanced, old-fashioned eccentrics; but they will be right.'

14.

Edinburgh: April 1965

He stood there like something out of a dream. Tall, incredibly good-looking, he was the living incarnation of what you assumed was only to be found in the glossy brochures. It was on a sunny April morning that I met him. I was walking home along Jawbone Walk, in The Meadows, when I noticed what appeared to be a fighter plane to my right. I rubbed my eyes. A fighter plane in The Meadows? On the ground? In the distance, it looked like an apparition, what with the shimmering effect of the early morning dew on the wings and body glistening in the sun's rays. I wandered over to investigate and discovered that the plane was the center-piece of an R.A.F. display, one that had been set up as part of a recruiting campaign. If it had been an Army display, I probably would have walked on by. But it wasn't, it was the R.A.F.

There was something exciting about planes. There always had been. As children, my father had taken us to the Edinburgh Air Display at Turnhouse Airport. We had watched in awe as Hunter Hawks executed their precise turns and rolls, the odd Hurricane or Spitfire buzzed by like an angry mosquito and, if we were lucky, the delta-winged Vulcan bomber, looking like some vast and ominous prehistoric bird of prey, would swoop in low, with a thundering noise that would deafen everyone. It was their grace, and power, and freedom. To fly, fly away, to leave the earthly battlefield of warring emotions and conflicting desires, to soar above it all like an eagle ... how wonderful that would be.

As I was looking admiringly at the plane and daydreaming in this fashion, a soft-spoken voice behind me inquired: "Hello, young man, are you interested in planes?" I turned round and there he was. A young God in a uniform. It was as if David Niven or Kenneth More had stepped right off the screen.

We started talking and I told him that I had recently decided against going into the Army. I could not have anticipated his response. He smiled broadly, his perfect teeth flashing, and said:

"Good show! You made the right choice, I can tell you. I would hate to be in the Army. Wallowing around in the mud and rain. Marching around like a bunch of stuffed dummies. What a life!"

I wondered if I was dreaming. Only months before, I had been wearing the same blue-gray uniform as this man as I had strutted up and down the Powell House stage doing my impersonation of an R.A.F. officer. However, this man wasn't tipsy or silly or laughable. Nor was he stuffy, pompous or overbearing. He didn't even say 'old chap'. Instead he seemed intelligent, perceptive, sensitive and light-hearted. I didn't doubt for a moment that his inner self was as impressive as his outer appearance and bearing.

I found myself getting drawn further into the conversation. This was intriguing. He was so easy to talk to. He seemed interested in me, and in what I had to say. Moreover, I didn't have to be there. There were no obligations. The meeting hadn't been pre-arranged. Neither of us had any expectations. All this made me feel a sense of liberty and consequently a willingness to pursue the conversation.

The Flight Lieutenant chatted away about the differences between Army and Air Force life and about his own background and experiences. I told him about my struggles with A level preparation and once again he laughed warmly and said that he couldn't hack academic work when he had been at school. For some reason, I mentioned golf at one point and it turned out that he was a low-handicap golfer and one who knew the courses at Gullane like the back of his hand. What was happening was like a seduction. I felt a growing sense of kinship with this man. He was like a big brother. Somehow I felt secure in his company. The upshot was that in fifteen minutes the unthinkable had come into being.

At length, I took the plunge. "How would I become an officer in the R.A.F.?" I ventured. He replied that I would have to go to Cranwell (the R.A.F. equivalent of Sandhurst) and added that I was still eligible to apply. I then asked him if there would not be a stigma against me on account of the fact that I had turned down the Army. Again the rich, warm laugh in response:

“Good heavens, no. Probably a plus in your favor!”

I looked at my watch. It was nearly 1 o'clock. I would be late for lunch. I thanked him sincerely for our talk and set off in the direction of Spottiswoode Street. As I walked up the street I kept having to pinch myself to see if what had just happened wasn't a dream. It was all so bizarre. For some reason I had never even thought of being a pilot before. I suppose I had assumed it must be too difficult, beyond my reach. It was a giddy sensation to realize that becoming a pilot was probably considerably more within my reach than was becoming a student at University.

It was several days before I mentioned the R.A.F. idea to anyone. During this time I received two letters consoling me about the U.C.C.A. results. One was from my sister Joy, and the other was from Mr. Begley. My sister's message was basically as follows:

- (1) work like hell to get good A level results
- (2) consider applying again in 1966, and in the meantime take a year off and get some kind of job
- (3) don't be discouraged. As my sister put it: “you are unfortunate in being among ‘the bulge’ (post second World War 2 baby boom) and it was always anticipated that there would be a serious shortage of University places.”

For his part, Mr. Begley had two suggestions:

- (1) work like hell to get good A level results,
- (2) make a definite but flexible secondary plan, against the possibility that my A levels results would not be good enough.

I didn't derive much satisfaction from these suggestions. They were too vague. I was sick of being told to work like hell. I *was* working like hell, and had been ever since O levels. Besides, ‘taking a year off and getting some kind of job’ sounded like a definition of failure to me. The problem was that for five years, I had lived in a highly structured environment. Yearly progress along various paths could be measured quite clearly. It was possible to know ahead of time where you were going, what your goals were, and what the obstacles might be. It was possible to plan the most efficient use of time and energy. At the end of five years of tangible progress, achievement and recognition, there was a feeling that one was on the brink of being launched gloriously, like a rocket, into the higher echelons of society. It was hard to come to terms with my father's oft repeated warning that ‘in Life you have to prove yourself over and over again.’ The Myth of Sisyphus, had I known it, would have been foreign to my thinking at that time. In any event, being put on a waiting list, having to perhaps retake Physics and Chemistry A levels, waiting around for a year and doing some kind of job, all these ill-defined prospects did not sit well with me. Freedom of choice had seemed a great thing when I had rejected the Army. Now I found it terrifying as I surveyed a wilderness of options.

One morning, about a week after the conversation in the Meadows, I went for a walk with my mother on Blackford Hill. Walking was my mother's great love, and since the loss of the piano, her greatest therapeutic activity. As she walked, she delighted in all manner of observation, whether the beauty of some wild flower, a chance recollection, or some perceived idiosyncrasy of human behavior. The inner anxiety, and confinement of the house was replaced by an expansiveness, a looking outwards, a purposeful attitude. In the house, my mother seemed to shrink in stature. Her body slumped and she seemed to enter a mental maze of anxiety in which she would become trapped. As her sense of proportion diminished, her anxieties and fears increased. I had known since a young boy that walking was good for my mother and had felt bound to accompany her whenever she suggested we go for a walk. More recently however, I had begun to resist her dependence on me. Since Robin had left home, I was the only child and consequently had become the focus of my mother's needs.

On this particular morning, however, I went willingly. I had decided that it would be a good time to sound out my mother on the idea of the R.A.F.

“The R.A.F.! Wherever did you get that idea?” was her initial, startled response.

“I saw a display in the Meadows and talked with a Flight Lieutenant.”

“But what about University?”

“Mum, don’t you see, I’m doing what you always say. Having as many strings to my bow as possible. Just because I’m contemplating the R.A.F. doesn’t mean I’m turning my back on University,” I reasoned.

“But why the R.A.F.?”

This was the question I had been waiting for. I had worked out the perfect answer for this question, one that I was sure would satisfy everyone.

“I would love to fly,” I replied eagerly. “Oh, I don’t want to fly fighters or bombers. What I want is to fly helicopters as part of Air-Sea Rescue Squadron.”

The fact was that I did genuinely feel pleased with this proposal. Not only would it satisfy my father (keep the Brown tradition going), and my mother (‘don’t you see, Mum, I’d be *saving* lives, not taking them’), but it also sounded good to me. The more I thought about flying and parachuting and the suchlike, the more the whole idea excited me.

As for the notion of Air-Sea Rescue, that was a brainwave. I would be a man of action and yet a man of peace, a modern day Knight rescuing those in distress, Gandhi in a helicopter reciting Churchill.

I would be AN INDIVIDUAL, roaming the skies at will, ever vigilant for signals of danger or distress. Yes indeed, better by far to pluck poor souls from troubled waters than be a pallid, chain-smoking academic or rapacious businessman. No longer would I be a stuffed dummy wallowing around in the mud and the rain. No longer would I have the prospect of being a bookworm for another three years of my life, chained to a point somewhere between my ears, a slave to my mind.

No siree, I would leave all that behind. I would transcend all that and become transformed, transubstantiated into a glorious eagle, clear of purpose and concentrated in power. I would be the highest form of eagle, somewhere at the point that eagle becomes angel. No longer would I be a bird of prey bound to its killer instincts. Rather I would become a great bird of compassion, an angel of mercy, a saver of souls.

“Well, I still think that you should go down to Derby and see Auntie Mollie and Uncle Vincent. There’s nothing wrong with Business you know.” My mother’s remark was like the action of the sun’s rays on Icarus’s wax wings. It brought me down to earth with a thud.

“Yes, Mum. I will go to see them. Maybe in the summer holidays.” I suddenly realized that although my mother had changed the subject, she had not blocked the idea of the R.A.F. outright. I immediately felt both elated and conciliatory.

“Also Mum, I don’t know if I told you,” I resumed, “but the Headmaster told me about something called the Draper’s Scholarship. Apparently, the Drapers Guild of London gives three scholarships a year to boys going to study at Commonwealth Universities. He felt that I might have a better chance of getting into a Canadian University for instance, than a British one. Anyway, I’m just mentioning it to prove to you that I’ve got at least four strings to my bow; British University in ‘66, Canadian University, the R.A.F., and the world of Business.”

We rounded the hill and began our descent. As my mother started to tell me about crazy Auntie Adelaide, I drifted back into my daydream. There was no question about it. The role of ‘Rescuer’ was highly appealing for some reason.

A few days after the conversation with my mother, I mentioned the idea of the R.A.F. to my father. At first, he just shook his head in disbelief. But after I told him of my specific interest in Air-Sea Rescue, and how I had originally got the idea while doing Mountain Rescue work the previous term, it seemed as though a spark of interest showed through his guarded defenses. I knew that my father had been wounded by my decision not to go into the Army. He knew, and I knew, that it had loosened his hold over me.

It was that Easter holidays that it looked as if I would earn my wings (of another kind), finally the opportunity arose that would allow me to fly away once and for all from my embarrassing virgin state.

At that time, the Springbox Rugby team from South Africa were on a tour of Great Britain. This was

an event of some magnitude due to the fact that it only happened once every six years. As a result, quite a few Sedbergh boys had planned to be at Murrayfield Stadium on the afternoon of the 17th. April to see the Springbox versus Scotland match. Amongst these was Ralph Blacklock. In the latest chapter of our friendly rivalry, Ralph had managed to get onto the 1st. XV before me, and I had been made a House Prefect before him. In the Lent term, however, I had played fairly regularly for the 1st. XV, and for his part, he had gained admittance to the prefectorial band. As a result we had been drawn closer, although we were still far from being bosom buddies. There was something bullish and unyielding about Ralph that prevented me from really wanting to try to get close to him.

However, Ralph and I *had* arranged to meet on the 17th. The plan was that I would buy the tickets in advance, and in return, he would try to persuade his girl-friend to bring up a friend so that we could make a foursome and go out for dinner after the game. Sure enough, when I met Ralph he was with two girls. One he introduced as his 'bird', the other came by the name of Carol. The first thing I noticed about Carol was her fully developed breasts. The second thing I noticed was her accent. She had a heavy Sunderland inflection. It was the first time that I had gone out with someone who spoke anything other than the Queen's English. Carol was definitely *not* in the mould of Ursula, or even Libby - something which I was not sure was a good thing or a bad thing. She did seem more spontaneous, unquestionably less stuck-up, and this I liked. As we watched the game, I got the feeling that I was getting the come-on.

By the second half, I was sure. A delightful sense of relief and excitement began to spread through me as I realized that, for the first time in my life, I didn't have to play the game that 'nice' young girls like Ursula and Libby seemed to revel in, a game with a set of red, orange and green lights with much more elaborate and finely-tuned triggers than the traffic variety. The signals may have been obvious to some, but for me they were obtuse, almost cryptic in nature. Why couldn't the whole thing be 'above board'? Why couldn't people just say, or at least show clearly, what they wanted or didn't want? I was having no problems with Carol's messages. There was no ambiguity, no hesitancy, no confusion. Her signals were coming through loud and clear. And they were green in color.

The fact was that Carol neither talked, nor dressed, nor acted like a nice young girl. At moments, I almost felt that I was with one of the scivs from Powell House. She certainly didn't seem to be the kind of person I would want as a 'steady' girl-friend. But that wasn't even in question. She was in Edinburgh for only one day. She was here for a good time. Ralph had already let me know a couple of times that she was a 'scrubber' and his lewd winks, coupled with Carol insistently pressing her body hard against mine, had got me increasingly confident about my prospects. What did I care if she was a scrubber? It didn't matter to me that she wasn't a nice girl. In fact, I was glad that she wasn't a nice girl, nay, overjoyed, that she wasn't a nice girl. Maybe this time I would get to experience something more than hugging and kissing.

The rugby ended and the four of us set off in Ralph's car towards Princess Street. We had dinner at The George Hotel and then decided to go to the Monsigneur News Theatre. By this time, the nerves and sinews in my body were a cat's cradle of sexual tension. In my head, there was an accompanying mental excitation.

All kinds of anxious thoughts flooded through my mind. 'My God ... what if ... I mean, what if we ... do I have one with me? ... no, of course I don't ... maybe I can ask Ralph, he brags that he always carries a box around with him 'just in case' ... but maybe that won't happen ... aw shit! ...no, in fact, maybe that's a good thing ... I mean, how do I know what she's got? ... come to think of it, Ralph once told me that a friend of his got the pox from a Sunderland scrubber and in addition to all the scabs and things, his cock had actually begun to shrink! ... Oh Lord! and there was another thing ... how did I know if she would think that my cock was big enough? ... maybe she wouldn't ... maybe she's used to huge ones ... and then maybe I would come right away and she would laugh at me ... or, even worse, maybe I would get so excited that I'd come in my pants before she's even got her hand in ...'

Anyway it was too late to worry I concluded as we entered the theatre and took our seats a few rows from the back. For a second, I savored the irony of the situation. I hadn't been in this theatre since the days that Anthony Ferguson and I had come to see the 'Sylvester' and 'Bugs Bunny' cartoons. At that time, the purpose was to lose ourselves in a fantasy world and have a good laugh. Now, here I was in the same theatre. The cartoons and the Pathe Pictorials were the same. It was probably still the same usherette that had been

there six years earlier. But now I wasn't interested in what was happening on the screen. The Monsigneur News Theatre was serving a different purpose.

Within five minutes of being there, the Sunderland Scrubber was flying. She was the pilot, no doubt about it. She actively helped me get my hand into her blouse and under her bra, and then gave a little gasp when I touched her nipples. Then, as we kissed, she simultaneously explored my mouth with her tongue and placed a hand on my erect cock. I let out a groan of pleasure. Gone were my anxieties! All I could think was 'at last, at last, thank God! praise the Lord! at last it's happening.' She began rubbing her knuckles up and down the length of my cock, while giving it intermittent squeezes. I could feel myself ready to explode. This, and the fact that the people behind us were becoming increasingly aware of what was going on, told me that we had to get out. We had to go somewhere where we could really let it all hang out (so to speak), somewhere that would allow us to go the whole way. She was willing, that was obvious. No red lights, not even an orange.

I withdrew my hand from Carol's breast and leaned over to speak to Ralph. "We're getting out. We'll meet you at the car in a couple of hours." And suddenly we were outside, on Princess Street. It was raw and cold. We put our arms around each other and started walking.

"Are we going to your place?" inquired Carol in a matter of fact voice.

"Good heavens, no." I could feel my erection going into instant withdrawal at the thought.

"No, I thought we'd go up Carlton Hill. It's quiet up there."

The choice of Carlton Hill as a location resulted in two monumental blunders (or the cost of two erections, depending on how you look at it). The first was over a hundred years ago, when the City Fathers discovered to their dismay that there was not enough money in the budget to allow completion of an extraordinary Parthenon-like building that had been taking shape on the top of Carlton Hill. As a result, work was halted, and a collection of Grecian pillars and plinths were what remained. This insult to Scottish fiscal conservatism was immediately dubbed as 'Edinburgh's Disgrace' and has been left standing to this day as an embarrassing reminder to future generations of City Fathers to be more prudent with public funds.

The second time occurred on April 17th. 1965. As it turned out, like the City Fathers of old, I had not done my homework carefully enough. The first problem was that Carlton Hill was further away than I had thought. It took us at least 25 minutes to walk the whole length of Princess Street, past Princess Street gardens and the Scott monument, past the Royal Caledonian Hotel and the G.P.O., along Waterloo Place and up the long flight of stairs. By the time we were on the path leading to the summit of Carlton Hill, our respective passions had been both bludgeoned by the biting wind and dampened by the soggy air. The second mistake I made was to imagine that Carlton Hill would be quiet and secluded. Despite the darks the damp and the cold, what seemed like a steady stream of people made their way past the bench I had chosen as our trysting place. No sooner had Carol got her hand under my belt, beneath my trousers, and into my underpants; no sooner had she begun to stroke my craving, grecian column, than some old fool with a yappy Cairn terrier would appear out of nowhere, and she would have to whisk her hand out at high speed.

At least she knew where to look. For my part, it was the first time that any girl had permitted me to put my hand into her pants. I didn't really know what to expect. I also couldn't see what I was doing which didn't help matters. The first shock was encountering a forest of hair. The only knowledge I had of a woman's genital area had been gleaned from Playboy magazines. Unfortunately, at that time, it was illegal to show either pubic hair or the vagina. Consequently both were air-brushed out and what was left was a bald, featureless, cleftless area of flesh that might as well have been a small, pink buttock. It didn't even resemble a peach. I didn't know that women were supposed to have pubic hair. Having just discovered that they did, and seemingly a lot of it, the next problem was where, amongst all this hair, was the all-important ... whatever you are supposed to call it ... cunt, vagina, quim? I was sure that it was located three or four inches below the navel, at about the same point that the cock protrudes in the case of the man. That would make sense. As far as I knew from the forefinger and thumb demonstrations I had seen at school, the cock went into the cunt at right angles.

Using this mental diagram as an aid, I pressed a finger in, at what seemed the appropriate spot, hoping to find the elusive tunnel. All I could feel was a ripple of Sunderland fat and some wiry hair being

crinkled under the pressure.

“Ee, what’s the matter with you, lad?” asked Carol who was becoming impatient. “first time with woman?” Lower down, move yer hand lower down! Bloody ‘ell!” But then there was another problem. I had never been able to figure out whether a woman was meant to have two, or three holes ... or entrances, or exits, or orifices, or whatever you were supposed to call them. With a man, it was easy. He had an arse-hole and a penis hole, through which came either urine or the other stuff. But with women ... were there supposed to be three holes? One the anus, the second for the urine, the third designed to receive cocks or push out babies? Or were there only two holes with each one having a double function? Maybe the urine came out of the anus, or would it be the vagina or vulva, or whatever it’s called? And then, where was the blood supposed to come from once a month? And come to think about it, what was *that* all about, anyway?

But Carol was right. Lower down there *was* something. But it didn’t feel like a hole. It was all kind of fleshy, with folds of skin. Was this it? Was this the ‘cunt’? And if it was, how did you get in past the forest of hair and the folds of skin?

Carol’s impatience was turning to frustration. She thrust her own hand into her pants, grabbed my mentally-challenged finger and guided it into her inner sanctum. My first reaction was to think ‘so, big deal ... so this is what all the fuss is about. *This* is the prize, the heavenly jewel that forces men to their knees, drives them to cross desert wastes, compels them to compete with other men, even to the point of being prepared to main and kill? Carol’s cunt felt like warmed-up jellied eels or chopped-up chicken livers. Yuk! I could never stand to touch liver. In fact, my mother’s weekly manipulations of strips of bloody, squirmy liver had been one of the principal reasons I had rejected the idea of ever becoming a doctor. My instinctive response was to immediately withdraw my finger. But I was curious, besides which Carol’s hand was clamped on my wrist, making sure that I didn’t get lost again. So be it. ‘All right,’ I thought, ‘now that my finger is here, what am I meant to do with it? Move it up and down? In and out? Round and round? With a mixing motion? Stirring? Rapid? Slow? Hard? Soft? It was all so ridiculous. It wasn’t my finger that had been starving and deprived all these years. It was my poor, unappreciated, misunderstood, alienated penis. I was sure that the jellied eels and liver would feel much better sloshing around my cock than gooing up my finger.

As it turned out, such weighty considerations were given short shrift due to the arrival of another old dear and her Cairn terrier (or was it the same one, coming back for another look!?) After about four or five more of such interruptions, we’d both had enough. The mood had become testy.

“You should’ve borrowed Ralph’s car keys, then we could’ve doon it in the caar. If I’d known it was this bleedin cold, I would never have coom,” said Carol fiercely as we began our long trek back to Ralph’s car. My mind raced furiously. This was terrible. *The* great opportunity to lose my virginity, to break my duck, to pop my cherry, to become A MAN, was vanishing in front of my eyes, shriveled and frozen to death by Edinburgh’s inclement weather, and shamed into submission by a bunch of elderly voyeurs.

But it was too late. I couldn’t think of any other way around the problem, and we were only a few minutes away from where Ralph had parked his car.

“Have a good time?” asked Ralph winking, as he adjusted his belt. I cursed him under my breath, and as I walked home on my own, I cursed Edinburgh, Carlton Hill, and Hugh Hefner.

15.

Sedbergh: May, 1965

The time had come for the final intense drive to prepare for A level examinations. I had worked out a time plan such that I would be able to cover all aspects of the Physics and Chemistry syllabus before the examinations in July. This had been a mammoth task. Unfortunately, no-one had told me that it was quite legitimate, and certainly more expeditious, to be selective and cover, say 60% of each syllabus, rather than try to gain in-depth knowledge of 100% of it. Partly as a result of this misunderstanding, and partly due to a driving desire to pass my A levels, I had found it necessary to become increasingly disciplined in my studying. In the last two holidays in Edinburgh, I had put in long hours of study at the Central Public Library on George IV Bridge. Now, as the final countdown took effect, it was a case of having to find every possible minute to study. Apart from regular study hours, I carved out three additional chunks of time, these being early morning (sometimes I got up as early as 5 a.m.), afternoons (sports activities were now virtually off my agenda), and late evening after everyone else had gone to bed.

Meanwhile, interwoven with this monk-like existence was a very different set of activities and way of being. In the intricate hierarchical structure of Sedbergh School, I was now at the top, an accepted member of the elite. In addition to being made a School Prefect, I was promoted to the rank of C.S.M. in the C.C.F., second in command to Under-Officer David Biggart. In a most unusual state of affairs, Powell House had a monopoly on that year's power elite. In all, we had 6 School Prefects, an extraordinarily large number for one House. Biggart was not only Senior Cadet but also Head of School. David Roberts was captain of Cricket, and Ralph Blacklock was captain of Swimming. Mark Hudson was Head of House, as well as being one of the three editors of the *Sedberghian*, the other two being Roberts and Hudson.

This disproportionate concentration of power in Powell House began to effect its inhabitants. Even the youngest boys began to unconsciously imitate the Biggart swagger. We were number one, that no-one could deny. It was just cause for pride *and* assuming a certain air of superiority.

It was cozy at the top. Not only was I buddies with the triumvirate of Biggart, Hudson and Roberts, I was also on close terms with several other members of the inner circle. Chief amongst these was Colin Crabbie who was now Head of Lupton House. We were an exclusive club. We had our special tie and cravat. We were entitled to wear the school badge with the motto 'Dura Virum Nutrix' on our blazers. Our world was no longer limited to The House, as it had been when we were House Prefects. Now, the School's business was our business, the school's responsibilities were our responsibilities.

The landscape was clearer from the top. The organic whole that was Sedbergh School was visible and accessible in its entirety. The seven separate, independently operated Houses were now vitally inter-linked. Before, we had to read evening lessons in the House dining room. Now we had the responsibility of reading to five hundred people in Chapel on Sunday morning. Our jurisdiction had now expanded to become the whole school. We now had the right to discipline a boy from another House.

Life was good at the top. As a School Prefect, we had freedom of movement. We could now visit other Houses at will, in addition to the House privilege of being able to send a fag. In a process that was akin to international diplomacy, periodic goodwill visits would be made to other Houses. Hospitality (coffee and biscuits) would be extended, and congenial talks about internal and external policies would ensue. This would inevitably be laced with juicy bits of information about the latest scanda l.

Once a week, the School Prefects would meet with the Headmaster, 'Prick' Thornely, in his study. The main purpose of this meeting was to discuss school affairs in general, and for the Headmaster to get feedback about what was happening at the grass-roots level. I had slowly got to know the Headmaster a little better over the past two years. There had been the encounter following my Housemaster's beating. There

had been another more pleasant encounter after 'The Pirates of Penzance', and recently, there had been a chance meeting where the H.M. had told me about the Drapers' Scholarship.

In addition to all-out studying, and the responsibilities and privileges of being a School Prefect, I also needed desperately to clarify my career options. It was in this area that my increased contact with the H.M. proved fruitful. Mr. Thornely must have been aware of my confusion as to what career path to follow, probably as a result of talking with Mr. Begley, for in the summer term he began to give me information and advice. One day, early in May, he told me that he thought I would make a good teacher. He said that it might be possible to teach in a preparatory school in Kenya, that is if I was interested. This seemed about as far-fetched to me, at the time, as the suggestion from my Physics master that I become a policeman. On another occasion, I approached the H.M. and asked him what he thought of the possibility of a career in music. I had begun to think that I should not have neglected my musical studies to the extent that I had. In my post U.C.C.A.- result panic, I consoled myself with the fact that I *did* have Grade VII from the Associated Board of The Royal Schools of Music and thus was only one grade away from being at the required level for entry to The Royal Academy of Music. The H.M., who was a fine musician himself, listened to what I had to say, and then said, "you know Ian, in my opinion, all the real pleasure and fulfillment of making music is lost if you become a professional musician." I remembered my sister's trials at The Royal Academy. I also thought of the complete contradiction in my own feelings between the tedium of classical music training and the fascination of improvisation and jazz-blues exploration. The Headmaster had made his point. Case closed. One option bit the dust.

But the way in which the H.M. helped me the most was by introducing me to a person that I had never remotely expected to meet, let alone get to know. It happened at a school concert in Powell. The visiting recitalist was Gerald Moore, the famous accompanist. During the intermission, the Headmaster approached me and said, "Ian, come with me for a second, I would like you to meet Hamish Blair-Cunynghame." My jaw dropped in astonishment. I didn't know much about Mr. Blair-Cunynghame, but I did of course know that he was the Chairman of the Governors of Sedbergh School. The meeting was very brief. Mr. Blair-Cunynghame said that he had heard from the Headmaster that I was having some difficulty with career decisions and that he would be glad to meet with me to see if he could help in any way.

The next morning, at 9 a.m., I met with Mr. Blair-Cunynghame for about forty-five minutes in the Headmaster's study. The first thing that struck me about Mr. Blair-Cunynghame was that he appeared to listen carefully to what I said. No-one in my family ever listened carefully, they seemed too preoccupied in their own thoughts or feelings. Being listened to was not something I took for granted. Nor did he seem anxious or impatient to deliver his opinions. There was an intelligence about the man, one that was characterized by a desire to gather as much information as possible before coming to conclusions.

As I looked at him, I realized that there was nothing particularly striking about him in the physical sense. He was tall and of medium build with the thinning gray hair and spectacles one would expect of a man his age. His face, although not handsome, had a boyishness to it that was appealing, especially when he became animated. He didn't have the stony look that so many adults had. When I told him about my background, his eyes were calm and attentive, except for those moments in which I hinted at problems with my father and in my schoolwork. Then his eyes became concerned and soft. At other points during the meeting, when I made some joke to lighten the mood, his eyes crinkled and he laughed heartily. There seemed to be a playful quality about him with which I could readily identify. It was as if he had a vital spirit, a rebellious energy that was striving to break out of the formality and weightiness of his position.

All in all, there was something extraordinarily responsive and 'democratic' in his manner. Not only was there a willingness to let the other person breathe and expand, but an actual desire to facilitate such a process. Within quite a short time, I felt extremely relaxed in his company. I liked him, and I was amazed that he seemed so open in displaying his apparent liking of me. I think my predominant feeling on leaving the meeting was one of salvation. A higher being was taking me under his wing.

The next time I saw Mr. Blair-Cunynghame was on Speech Day, June 12th. Powell Hall was a sea of color. Instead of the usual rows of blue blazers, there was a profusion of wide-brimmed hats, summer dresses in marigold yellow, poppy reds and lavender blues, and gray suits enlivened with roses and

carnations. The starkness and spartan austerity of Sedbergh had been banished for a day. But somehow the luxurious colors and scents of sweet perfumes seemed incredibly out of place in this shrine to masculine toughness. It was almost decadent. And yet ... and yet, it was Speech Day. This was the day that the school threw open its doors to those forgotten figures, the parents. This was the day that the school put on its most benign face, paraded its most successful products and boasted of its worthy aims and philosophy.

For an outsider, Speech Day was one of several occasions, another being Ten Mile Day, when the school revealed itself for public scrutiny. The insider knew that what was revealed depended on the occasion. For him, there could be no greater difference than between Speech Day and Ten Mile Day. The latter was the essential reality of Sedbergh. The former was a frivolous, mid-summer's dream, the selling of an image.

On the stage, Mr. Blair-Cunynghame, the Chairman of the Governors, had already finished his speech, and the Headmaster was in the middle of his. The Headmaster may have been a fine musician but unfortunately, the modulations of his vocal chords did not reflect this fact. His speaking voice had all the vitality and color of a bagpipe drone. Needless to say, the effect on boys and parents alike was somniferous.

"... sometime in the future, equal opportunity for all may no doubt become a reality; but in the meanwhile Sedbergh remains an Independent School and plays her traditional part at a time of rapid change and development. This, however, is not to say that Public Schools are dissociated from what goes on outside their boundaries or that they are isolated societies sealed up by reactionary headmasters in some hygienic and purified vacuum..."

A nudge in the ribs rudely invaded my snooze.

"Jock, psst!" It was David Roberts, who was sitting next to me, trying to get my attention.

"... the exact opposite is the truth. So far from sitting down and looking at everything from within a protective shell, the Public Schools are immediately and vitally concerned with all the engaging and exciting problems of the day. For many years, they have proved their ability to adapt themselves to changing needs. They are now responding to the needs of Industry and Commerce, of Science and Technology ..."

"What's the matter," I whispered, trying to suppress a yawn.

"Did you hear about Chris Wells?"

"No, what?"

"He got de-pre'd."

"What, why?"

"He was found out."

"What do you mean?"

"You know, his night excursions to see Anna Dalton."

"Oh," I muttered, not knowing quite to say or think. Chris Wells may have been a fellow Policeman on stage, but in reality, he was a Pirate, a stalker of hidden booty. I, on the other hand, was a Policeman both on and off stage. The small voice of the pirate within felt sympathy at the news about Chris Wells, but this was drowned out by the policeman's call for justice.

"... schools like Sedbergh exist, in fact, to satisfy the freedom of parents to send their sons to a school of their own choosing, and when Public Schools are able to broaden their entry, as they have been trying to do for a long time, this freedom will be extended to the many who do not, up to now, enjoy it ..."

“You know something else?” Robert started up again.

“No. What?”

“There’s a big hush-hush regarding Iain Thompson.”

“Why?”

“Because he was caught red-handed with a fag in his study.”

“Doing it!?”

“Well, doing something.”

“Good Lord!!”

“... however, though our business is to educate for work and usefulness in the world, the school also has a duty, in some sense, to keep the world at bay. For there are many of us who, without being prigs, do not think highly of some of the standards which the outside world has chosen to adopt ... ”

“But that’s really sick. I mean Wells gets de-pre’d for being a hetero, and Thompson gets away with it when he’s a homo.”

“Yes, but Wells isn’t on the 1st. XI.”

“Even so ... ”

“the response made by individual boys to being in this kind of atmosphere naturally varies but I am confident that there must be very few at Sedbergh who are wholly unaffected by it.”

“You can say that again,” I said sarcastically, picking up on the Headmaster’s last remark. “Thompson being a pretty good example.”

“Oh, you’re just jealous!” shot back Roberts.

I was about to reply to this when I became aware that the Headmaster seemed to be in the process of winding up his interminable speech.

“Boys, after all, are mysterious beings. Are they, as the Psalmist asserts, little lower than the Angels? Or, as Darwin held, little higher than the Apes? At Sedbergh, we agree with Sir Winston Churchill that it is always better to be an optimist. Consequently, we are firmly and absolutely on the side of the Angels!”

Grateful applause rang out as the Headmaster stepped away from the podium. I was still stinging from Roberts’ remark. Two months of sharing the same study had put a strain on our relationship. Roberts was pushy. I couldn’t stand pushy people. There was a kind of thrusting aggressiveness about a pushy person that felt like an invasion of my personal space. Pushy people were always trying to get you involved in things, without first checking to see if you were interested in getting involved, or else, they would push you before you were ready to get involved. In addition to being pushy, Roberts kept up a persistent teasing which I often found fun to parry, but which recently I had found most irritating. It wasn’t that his teasing was malicious. In fact his manner was usually jocular. What I found irritating was the sheer predictability of this way of relating. I had also recently begun to realize that I didn’t particularly relish the role of ‘the fool’ anymore. In the past, I had let people tease me and had laughed along with them. If I got hurt, I tried to hide it. Now I took myself more seriously. My understanding of myself and others was slowly increasing. I was more consciously aware of my vulnerabilities and I no longer wanted them poked and prodded at.

The latest theme for Roberts’ taunts concerned my old comrade from Colts Cricket days, Nick Gaskell. Roberts and I had both had a crush on Gaskell for years, and a sort of ongoing rivalry had developed between us as to who would gain the greatest favor. In the past year, Roberts had unquestionably come out on top. Gaskell had established himself as one of new stars of the 1st. XI and Roberts was the Captain of the team. They were now team buddies and consequently went on trips together and generally spent a fair bit of time in each other’s company. In one of the untalked about, yet completely accepted aspects of Sedbergh life,

Roberts had now 'won' Gaskell. First there had been a mutual attraction, then a playful testing-out, then a form of courtship, and finally a partnership of sorts. The relationship between Roberts and Gaskell, unlike that of Thompson or Wells, was acceptable on account of the fact that the sexual tension was contained and channeled, and hence stabilized. Feelings could be expressed in a myriad of ways both gestural and verbal, especially if one was a sports star. However, the line was drawn at overt sexual activity.

Roberts was right. I was not only envious when I compared my demise as a fast bowler to their success, but I was also jealous of his relationship with Gaskell. In a certain way, I was even jealous of Thompson and his unknown fag. Like Stoner, Thompson had broken the rules and that shocked me. But, on the other hand, he had only done something that I and countless others had often yearned to do. He had done it, and in the final analysis, it appeared that he had got away with it. That was what really rankled.

"Hey ... he's about to call out your name." Roberts stuck his elbow in my ribs again.

Sure enough, while I had been day-dreaming, the Headmaster had introduced the guest of honor, someone called Sir Henry Wilson Smith, K.C.B., K.B.E., and the business of handing out the various school awards had already begun.

A few minutes later, I was back in my seat clutching a new volume of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, the book I had chosen for accumulating a certain number of Distinctions and Merits. I wished my parents could have seen me receiving the prize on stage. They had said that they might come but as always, when a social function was concerned, they had pulled out. There was also a twinge of regret as I realized that my mother wouldn't even hear me playing in the concert later that evening. I was to play the Allegro from Mendelssohn's 'Cello concerto in 'D', a piece that I had grown to love. This regret turned to sadness at the further realization that my father had never seen me play in any kind of match and my mother had not once seen me in a concert throughout my time at Sedbergh. With an effort I jogged my attention back to the stage.

Sir Henry had distributed all the prizes and was about to begin his speech. The first thing I picked up on was the north-eastern inflection in his voice. This surprised me. I didn't know that Knights came from Newcastle, at least not bearing a regional accent. Inevitably, wondering about his Geordie accent quickly linked me to Carol, the 'Sunderland Scrubber'. Suddenly, there I was back in the world of jellied eels. Ah ... if only ... if only! What might have been with Carol had become my favorite fantasy and this certainly seemed to be an ideal time in which to indulge it - yet again. Besides, it was a good antidote to feelings of envy and jealousy. Sir Henry was blabbering something about how Industry was every bit as important as the Professions. How tedious, how irrelevant - certainly not as interesting as the Land of Jellied Eels.

"Well, Brown, what did you think about Sir Henry's comments about Industry?" The questioner was Mr. Blair Cunynghame.

We were in the marquee that had been erected in the field behind Powell Hall. It was after the speeches, and parents and staff were mingling while eating cocktail sandwiches and drinking white wine. The only boys that were permitted to be present were the School Prefects, their duty being to circulate and re-fill empty wine-glasses.

"Well, er ... I would have to agree that Industry is becoming increasingly important these days," I said confidently.

The Chairman of the Governors smiled and held out his glass. From the twinkle in his eye, I could see that he didn't believe me for a moment.

"Good, good, I'm glad to hear that. Well, if you can meet me tomorrow at 9 a.m. in the Headmaster's study, we can talk more about Industry, and other such weighty matters." Mr. Blair-Cunynghame's face was now a curious mixture of the playful and the bleary. It occurred to me that I must have refilled his glass at least three or four times. It bothered me a bit that he might be half canned. I was grateful for his help but slightly guarded. Why me? The fact is that a lot of things were bothering me, not the least of them being the harsh reality that my A level Physics and Chemistry examinations were only two days away.

* * *

The paper lay virginal on the lab. table, fresh and clean and white. My eyes focussed and unfocussed as, before me, the words and formulae whirled and collided.

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE SCHOOLS EXAMINATION BOARD
General Certificate Examination

PRACTICAL CHEMISTRY

Wednesday, 23rd. June 1965. 3 Hours

Answer All 3 Questions:

HA is a solution of sodium hydroxide

HB is a solution of phenoxyacetic acid in chloroform

HC is chloroform

(a) Determine the normality of HB as follows. Measure out 10 mls. of solution HB from a burette into a conical flask and titrate against the sodium hydroxide solution using phenolphthalin as an indicator. From your results, calculate the normality.

(b) Examine the distribution of phenoxyacetic acid between chloroform and water as follows. Into each of three conical flasks ...

When you have waited for a special day for years, when you have imagined a thousand times what that day would be like, when you have played through a million possibilities as to what will befall you, how you will respond and what the outcome will be, there is a certain unreality to that special day, once it arrives. For several precious minutes, the Chemistry A level Practical Paper sat in front of me and all I could see was a jumble of words in a language I didn't seem to understand. It was as if I was there only in the role of observer, not participant. It was almost as if I was disembodied, like I was a ghost. All round me, other individuals were already bustling with activity, efficiently filling burettes, and pouring into conical flasks. I looked at my watch. The seconds were ticking away. My watch began to feel like a time bomb. Time was melting over a skeletal tree. The laboratory was a Salvador Dali desert landscape, just as barren, cruel and absurd. Dimly, I realized that I had to force myself to get going. This was it. This was what I had been waiting for. This was A-day, and D-Day and J for Judgment Day. This was the climax of the 'most important days of my life'.

I looked at the paper again. '*Answer ALL 3 questions*' burned its way into my brain. I had to do all this in *three* hours, I thought incredulously. Get going! STOP DREAMING! My will intervened. O.K. O.K., so what the hell is phenoxyacetic acid anyway? Phen ... oxy ... acetic acid. Ah yes, of course, suddenly something clicked on inside me. The mists cleared. I was no longer a ghost. I was a robot. I had become programmed with the relevant mental set. Yes, thank God, there it was: subject – Chemistry ... click, whir, flash. Topic – titrations ... click, whir, flash. Sub topic – phenoxyacetic acid. I was fully activated. My mind and body started to work together. Yes, there we are ... I was measuring out 10 mls. of solution HB. I knew what I had to do. The robot was guiding me through the delicate process of a titration.

For three hours this uncomprehending machine, relying completely on its memory banks, moved around stiffly, performing an amazing number of tasks. Then someone barked out, 'time! please stop whatever you are doing'. And it was all over.

The next day I took the Physics A level Practical exam. Unfortunately, this time even the robot was unequal to the task, and at the end of the three hours, only two questions had been fully answered.

The first stage of my A levels was over. There was now a period of two and a half weeks before the written examinations. The strain was enormous. My face had become drawn into a taut mask. The color had gone from my cheeks and my eyes had lost their luster. I found myself squinting a lot because the light seemed so harsh. I had begun to get bad headaches and even my sleep was becoming troubled.

This was a period of despair. It wasn't just the exams. It was everything. I couldn't come to terms with the fact that in a month I would be leaving Sedbergh for the last time. My sense of security was crumbling. I didn't know where I was going. I knew that Sedbergh was my home and I knew that I was going to have to leave it. But to where? One thing I knew was that I desperately did not want to finish up living in my parents' house in Edinburgh.

Even my relationships at Sedbergh were becoming increasingly strained. For example, I had become extremely jealous when I heard that Peter Wolfe, my guitar player, had begun playing with a boy called Doug McDonald from Evans House. It seemed to me that McDonald was a better piano player than I was, and this made me feel inadequate. And then there was my study-mate Dave Roberts. His string of successes with the 1st XI exacerbated my sense of failure. As for Mark, our relationship had reached an all-time low. Over the course of the Lent and Summer terms Mark had become increasingly self-inflated and bossy as he had settled into his role as Head of House and aide-de-campe of David Biggart. His playful self had largely been usurped by a business-like and, highly organized managerial self. The egalitarian relationship that I had enjoyed with him was becoming replaced by one characterized by 'delegation of responsibility'. It seemed to me that Mark was forever asking me to do things for him. I felt used, that I was his flunky, that he was playing unfairly on my good nature. One day, shortly after Speech Day, he had asked me to do something for him, and I felt finally that I had been pushed too far. I blew up and told him not to boss me around. He asked me what I meant and I told him that it was like Bertie Wooster and Jeeves (Mark's favorite author was P.G. Woodehouse). I was Jeeves, needless to say. I told him that I didn't want to be Jeeves. I told him that he could find another man-servant.

During this period, John Aitken was extremely supportive. In the absence of David Lungley, John became my bosom buddy. He had an extraordinarily empathetic way of listening and he also did very un-Sedbergh like things such as offering back massages.

The two and a half weeks passed and, in what seemed a very anti-climactic four days, the A level written examinations came and went. It was a repeat of the Chemistry A level practical examination. Once again, the sense of unreality returned. Once again, the robot took over and enabled me to fill several pages in each of the four separate papers, although as usual, I didn't complete the required number of questions. They were finished and I felt numbed and in a vacuum. All I knew was it was over. It was over. Thank God, it was over.

The days that followed were quite different from the period that had come after O levels. That had been a celebration, a spontaneous letting off of steam that was communal in nature. But between the ages of 16 and 18, the community had become differentiated and fragmented. Some had already left, some had become distinct by virtue of promotion, and everyone was marked by two years worth of specialization as either a 'science man', an 'arts man', or a 'linguist'. There was a further sense of separation that came from the impending departure from the community and an awareness of the diverging paths that would spring from it. Some would enter the hallowed portals of Oxford and Cambridge. Others were headed for the less glorious but still dignified cloisters of Edinburgh, St. Andrews, Bristol, and London. And then there was the 'red-brick' brigade trying to convince themselves that Sussex and Essex and East Anglia were *the* 'in' places to be in the mid-sixties. In a different category were the Army bunch, and in an almost unmentionable category were those n'er-do-wells destined for business and industry.

Following A levels, there was a feeling that people already had one foot out of Sedbergh. Each individual who was planning to leave at the end of that summer term was going through his own process of psychological withdrawal. Collective fate was no longer a factor as it had been for so much of the time at Sedbergh. Now people were encapsulated in their own private destinies. Whatever collective spirit remained was bound up with a sadness with what was happening, a mourning at the loss of deep day-to-day friendships and the disintegration of 'our' particular community. For many people, however, these feelings of loss were more than compensated for by a sense of excitement about the freedom of living in the outside world.

I was not one of those people. In the wake of the numbness that accompanied the sudden cessation of intense mental concentration, I began to feel overwhelmingly sick. I felt sick at the prospect of leaving Sedbergh. I

felt sick about my uncertain future. I felt sick at the possibility of failing one or both of my A levels. I felt sick at the possibility of having to live in Edinburgh with my parents. And I felt not only sad but sick at the prospect of losing my friends and my secure place in the community.

It was in this state of mind that I decided to write to my first year teacher at Sedbergh, Dick Dawe. It seemed appropriate. Besides the fact that I had felt a strong link with this man in my first three years at school, I needed confirmation of my worth from someone outside Sedbergh. As Dick Dawe had been teaching at Christ's Hospital in Horsham, Sussex for over two years, he seemed to fit the bill.

In July, I received a reply:

'Dear Ian,

I really am sorry not writing sooner as I feel your letter was so interesting and delightful it deserved a better fate than this.

The measure of your success at Sedbergh is self-evident. If you can reach the highest form, after starting in the lowest, become a school prefect, there can be no question of failure.

You always were a pessimist because you were a perfectionist, i.e. you knew you had the ability, but mind did not always triumph over matter! In cricket I never expected you to achieve the heights, but I did hope you would do it in Rugger.

However, I hear that Donald is a very good player and you were just unlucky. There is no reason why success should not be yours in Rugger later on. There is plenty of time. In fact a failure or two is very good for one. When I failed to get a Blue at Cambridge it did me the world of good. One learns from one's mistakes if one is wise. Anyway what use is success at games to one after school? They are for fun and not to be taken too seriously. Sorry, I am preaching!

Yes, I am married at last and have four step children, 13, 10, 6, 5. Quite a handful but so much better than remaining a bachelor.

I hope you get to a University sooner than later. Whatever you do, I know that will succeed as you have it all in you. If you want your ego boosting again, write me another letter or better still come and see us down here. Good luck – it's up to you now,

Yours, Dickie'

Before the end of the term, I was invited out for dinner by Mr. Blair-Cunynghame. If anything pulled me out of my black depression, it was the evening I spent with him. He took me to the Barbon Inn. The only other time that I had been to the Barbon Inn had been with Auntie Mollie. The inn was a beautiful old Tudor building located on the banks of the Lune river, on the road between Sedbergh and Kirby Lonsdale. It had a reputation for having the best food and the most comfortable atmosphere of any hotel or inn within the vicinity of Sedbergh. It also had a reputation for the highest prices. The fact that Mr. Blair-Cunynghame had invited me there, was an indication that our relationship was assuming some importance.

It was a wonderful evening. I began to accept the intimacy that seemed to occur when we were together. The doubts that he might be a homosexual or some such thing began to disappear. The man was just exceptionally warm, friendly and frank. Every time I met him I could feel myself opening up a little more. He brought out my sense of humor. We seemed to be on the same wave-length and it was easy for me to make jokes with him. But more importantly, I realized that I was opening up on deeper levels. Unlike Mr. Begley, who I had never been able to trust due to his collusions with my father, Mr. Blair-Cunynghame seemed not only to like me but also to be prepared to give me unqualified support. And that was what I craved. I wanted someone to say, 'Ian I like you, I'll always like you, I believe in you, I accept you as you are, it doesn't matter if you make mistakes or fail sometimes, I will still like you, believe in you, and accept you. With my parents, the support was always qualified. 'When you achieve this, *then* you will be O.K.' But as I'd already begun to discover, it didn't seem to work that way. Rather, when I pulled myself up the level of their expectations, it turned out to be a false summit. The support, belief and acceptance which I felt I had just earned, were withheld ... postponed until I reached the 'real' summit. As someone

once said, 'it matters not that a parent has love for their child, what matters is that they show it, and the child sees it.' It was many, many years before I discovered that behind my striving to gain my parents' support and acceptance was a simple child-like plea for their unqualified love.

Mr. Blair-Cunynghame was becoming something of a father figure to me. He made me feel warm and secure and worthwhile. I felt I didn't have to prove myself to him. That evening, over wine and roast duckling and later beside a crackling log fire, I opened up to him. I told him of my unhappiness at my parent's house and of my battles with my father. I told him of my failures with women (as I saw it) and of my dreams of wanting to work with people, of travelling the world, of facing up to physical, mental and spiritual challenges. I told him of my respect for Gandhi, my confusion regarding the Army, and my distaste for the notion of working in business or industry. I told him that I wanted to learn about myself and about other people, that I had a tremendous thirst for knowledge in this area, that I wanted to understand better so I could help make things better, that in view of this, my brother-in-law Jim had suggested I study Sociology or Anthropology at University. I told him that I hated Physics and Chemistry but that I didn't think I was stupid. And like the other times that I had met him, he listened and let me talk.

Eventually, I told him about my fears of leaving Sedbergh. At this, he intervened and suggested in the event that I failed one or both of my A levels, I should think of coming back to Sedbergh for one extra term. The fact that he should be the one to bring this up made a significant impact on me. By this point, I knew that both Colin Crabbie and Mark Hudson were thinking of returning for an extra term, but I had never really considered the idea for myself. In many ways, it was what I needed to hear. I wanted to hang on, I knew it. Or, at the very least, I wanted to leave Sedbergh with my head held high and my future secure. The fact that Mr. Blair-Cunynghame, the Chairman of the Governors had suggested the idea made it legitimate. The point about coming back for an extra term was that one could re-take A levels on the London University Board in January and thus not have to wait another complete year. However, there was also often a hidden agenda which had to do with non-academic matters. Mark was thinking about returning for an extra term because he wanted to be Head of School. Colin wanted to return because he wanted to get onto the 1st. XV. He also felt that he'd had a chance of becoming the next Head of School. Peter Donald had returned unexpectedly for an extra term, and by doing so, had put paid to my chances of playing on the 1st. XV. Like Colin, I knew that if I returned for the '65 Winter term, I would be virtually assured of a place on the team. It was worth thinking about. The whole idea certainly made me feel more secure.

A few days after the dinner at Barbon, I wrote to Mr. Blair-Cunynghame thanking him. Before long, I received this reply:

'It was good of you to write and I am so glad you enjoyed the dinner at Barbon - so did I. Somehow the combination of the end of your A levels, good wine and good food and vigorous conversation makes, I expect for the same kind of current enjoyment and afterwards, happy memory, which will make the occasion stand out for a long, long time.

As regards yourself and industry, I know exactly what you mean by a whitewashed office - Personnel - and a half-finished cup of mouldy coffee. You needn't have apologized - it was a graphic and comprehensive description. The trouble is that many other forms of human activity, whether for gain, for pleasure - or purely emotional and instinctive - also have their moments and periods of 'whitewashed walls and half-finished mouldy cups of coffee'!! This really needs explanation, but you'll know what I mean.

I do hope I have been of some help to you, as you so kindly say, and I intend to go on trying if I may. I think you are entirely justified in your views but don't let the issue loom too large at this point. Things have a habit of assuming a perspective that is related more to one's present mood than to reality. You'll get a worthwhile job alright ...

Yours sincerely,

Hamish Blair-Cunynghame'

The end of term was a strange affair. Now that it was unclear as to whether or not I would be returning, I found myself in the confusing situation of not being able to say final goodbyes. Everything was conditional on the results. Mr. Begley assured me that he would welcome me back for an extra term. Mark Hudson, who by this time had been told he would be Head of School, said that he hoped I would come back so that we could share a study and I could help him in the running of the school.

Mark had revelled in the Biggart dynasty and had taken to the role of heir apparent like a duck to water. Power was as attractive to Mark as it was disagreeable to me. For me, there was something immoral about disparity of power, and something decadent about the celebration of it. Mark, on the other hand, had been brought up to regard the exercises of power as natural, right and good. There were leaders and there were followers. There were masters and there were servants – so what? Mark knew which side he was on. He was a leader and a master, and that's what he wanted to continue to be.

The differences between Mark and I regarding this were brought out at the end of the summer term when Biggart decided to hold weekly 'dinner parties' at which he and Mark were the hosts and two different House Prefects were invited each week as guests. The dinner parties were held in number one Study and turned out to be orgies of consumption. Biggart reminded me of something in between Henry VIII and Julius Caesar. He was the Emperor and his orgies were celebrations of his absolute right to do anything he wanted. To me, such celebration of imperial power was decadent and an abuse of privilege. I missed the leveling presence of Dave Lungley, a voice of humility was needed amongst all this pretentiousness.

Others would say that we had cause for celebration. After all, Powell House had won the Cricket Cup and the Senior Relay on School Sports Day. We had come second in Drill Cup by half a point, and everyone knew we should have won it. For my part, I couldn't help thinking about what Fischer had said about Gandhi and Churchill. Those successes had not been due to the Prefects alone. If there were going to be celebrations, then everyone should be celebrating, not just a select few.

In any event, despite our differences, Mark and I continued to be friends. In many ways, Mark had been good to me. Over the past three years, he had invited me out with his parents many times. In addition to this, I had stayed at his house on at least three occasions. And, as it turned out, our paths were intertwined for at least half of the upcoming Summer holidays. We had decided to go on B.A.O.R. (British Army Over The Rhine).

Once every second year, a small contingent of Sedbergh cadets joined a unit of a regiment stationed in West Germany. Mark's motive for going was clear. Every Sedbergh schoolboy was obliged to attend at least one Army camp during their stay at Sedbergh. As Mark had not yet gone to one, this was his last chance. That motive hardly held in my case. I had already been to two Army camps in the summer, and two Arduous Training camps in the Easter holidays. My motives were more complex. First, there was the traditional one of wanting to keep away from having to be at home in Edinburgh. The B.A.O.R. trip, plus the immediately following Sapphires Cricket tour to which Mark had once again invited me, meant that I would be away from home for at least the first three weeks of the holidays.

The other motive, I suspect, had more to do with a sense of responsibility and / or guilt. Following my interest in the R.A.F., the previous Easter, I had experienced an increasing sense of guilt over the fact that I had gone against my father's wishes regarding entry to Sandhurst. Just as at least part of my 'interest' in the R.A.F. had sprung from this same source of guilt, my decision to go to the B.A.O.R. camp was both an attempt to appease my father, and a means by which I could once and for all test out whether or not I wanted to go into the Army. To the extent that I had been second in command of the C.C.F. that summer term, and knew that I would be Senior Cadet if I returned for an extra term, I also felt something of a responsibility to go.

So, as stated before, the end of term was a strange affair. I bustled about packing my kit for B.A.O.R., while not knowing what to pack to take back to Edinburgh. On the last day, I charged around in full battledress, saying final goodbyes to old friends who knew they were definitely leaving, qualified goodbyes to masters and boys who knew they would be returning. If this was to be the end of my days at Sedbergh, there could be no question that it was an unsatisfactory end.

Summer Holidays, 1965

British Army Over The Rhine (B.A.O.R.): July - August 1965:
Extracts from Diary:

July 26th. Monday:

Uneventful boat journey from Harwich. Arrived at Hook of Holland at about 6 a.m. Caught train which took us to Hanover. We had breakfast on train. Train from Hanover to Celle. Met there by a Major from the Royal Horse Artillery. Were taken back to camp in trucks. Had a meal, dumped kit, and changed into denims. My section of cadets had been amalgamated with 'J' battery, 'F' Troupe, 3^d. Regiment of the R.H.A. At about 7 a.m. we went out to join the battery, about four miles from camp. There, we were split up in pairs and each pair was sent to a different gun tractor. We (Pete Wolf and I) got to know the men over beer and fags in our tractor.

July 27th. Tuesday:

Slept night in bivouac. Got up at 4 a.m. Breakfast. Were shown around the encampment. Organization of battery was explained. Went for a ride in Centurion tank. At about 11 o'clock, we started off on exercises. Spent the day going to different gun positions. Ended up in final night position in the pouring rain. Practice firing until 11-30 p.m. I was on guard from midnight until 1. On being relieved, I tried to crawl under the tarpaulin beneath which the rest of the crew (Sarge, Lofty, Paul, Keith, Sorkey and bombardier Nash) were fast asleep. I couldn't fit under so I stood shivering in the rain with Peter Wolf and Sarge until Reveille at 3 a.m. Definitely the worst night of the whole trip!

July 28th. Wednesday

Started off on 'Regimental Gallop'. Went from one position to another. Still pouring. Mud everywhere. Morale getting lower and lower. Rain getting worse and worse. In one place, the whole of 'J' Battery got into the most fantastic mess. The mud was so bad that not only did we have to winch out our guns, but then it was necessary to have our tractor winched out by someone else's tractor. Eventually, we got the gun set up. Then we had to stick beside it for about an hour in soaking denims and in a bitter wind. At 'cease-fire', we all rushed to our tractor and tried to spend the night there wrapped up in blankets. Needless to say, I didn't sleep very well.

July 29th. Thursday

Woke up at about 5-30. Blue sky and sunshine for first time since we've been in Germany. Left others snoring in tractor and tried to dry off denims in front of an log fire. Had just succeeded in getting them fairly dry when rain starts and soaks them again! After breakfast, we are told that the exercise is over. General relief and major rejoicing! As we are trying to get out of our positions (more winching), the farmer whose property we have just devastated turns up to inspect his cornfield.

We move off in a convoy to a new camp at Trauen. Much better than first camp. Now we have a tent with beds and pally-asses. After a shower, I get into dry civvies (lovely) and have a meal. Then Pete Wolf, Nick Gaskell and I go for a drag in the woods. Then it's back to the canteen where we get completely pissed with the men. Wonderful time. Pete spewed up all over the place when we got back.

July 30th. Friday:

Straightened ourselves out in the morning. Slept most of the afternoon. Went round to Nick Gaskell's tent after tea. We were in the middle of a very interesting talk, mainly about sex and

girls and love, when two soldiers walked in. They made fun of the fact that I had the insignia of C.S.M. even though I was only a cadet. Then one started telling me how to clean my belt. One of them took it from me and proceeded to show me how it should be done.

All this while, they were drinking beer and getting more and more drunk. Then the other one, who called himself 'Scouse', suddenly drew out a knife and started wielding it threateningly. Then he showed us four huge scars on his stomach which he said were a result of a razor, a butcher's cleaver and a knife. As this was happening, Mark entered the tent. Nick took this diversion as an opportunity to slip out of the tent and sound the alarm. A few minutes later, Scouse was dragged off by two M.P's, 'but not before he had vowed to come back at a later date and get all of us.

August 1st. Sunday:

Quiet morning - lovely day. In the afternoon we visited Belsen Concentration Camp. We saw the mass graves, the gas ovens and the monuments. We heard about the bulldozers and how the smell had been so bad that for years after, no birds were to be seen. We tried to imagine, in this landscaped garden, what it must have been like. I was with Mark and Peter Wolf. I noticed Pete standing for a long time in front of a monument that had the inscription:

'Israel and the world shall remember thirty thousand Jews exterminated in the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen at the hands of the murderous Nazis: Earth conceal not the blood shed on thee.'

I think that was the first time that it dawned on me that Pete was Jewish, and what that must mean.

August 2nd. Monday:

Said goodbye to the men. Left Celle and returned to England the way we had come.

August 3rd. Tuesday:

Arrived in London. Nick was met by his girl-friend - lucky bastard! Said goodbye to him and the others. I've had my fill of goodbyes ... Mark and I catch the train north. Met at Brough by Mrs. Hudson. Whisked back to West Ella Hall in the Daimler where we have a steaming, hot bath, judiciously spiked with Dettol. Wonderful, warm, clean civvy clothes.

Delicious, aromatic dinner served up by Hilda. Wine, liqueur and cigars and the evening ends with a relaxing game of snooker and the prospect of cricket a few days hence.

16.

A little over a week later, I was on the train heading up to Edinburgh. The Sapphires' second cricket tour had been virtually a repeat performance of the previous one. Again, there had been a rich and pleasurable blend of superb meals, lavish parties and languorous games of cricket. In fact, the keen edge of competition was felt much more strongly in the chase to win over suitable young women than it was on the cricket field. And again I discovered in myself distaste for this kind of competition and its associated games and rituals. I wanted a woman, just like anyone else. I just didn't want to have to compete with other men for her. For example, at one party during the Sapphires' tour, I was having my first dance with a girl called Anne Waterson. My experiences on Carleton Hill had left me with a kind of accelerated 'carpe diem' attitude towards time and its relation to romantic and / or sexual progress. As a consequence, my advances started earlier in the game and were of a more vigorous nature than in the past. As it turned out, Anne Waterson must have thought that a hand on the breast in the first dance was advancing too fast. Or so it seemed. At the end of the dance, she coolly thanked me and then headed off outside the marquee. A few minutes later, unwilling or unable to take the message, I decided I would go out and see if I could find her. For the next fifteen or twenty minutes, I wandered around in the garden and adjoining wooded area, but was unable to find her.

When I returned to the marquee, the first person I saw was Anne Waterson. She was wrapped around Dave Roberts and from what I could see, he not only had his hand on her breast, but another on her bum, to say nothing of a knee pressing between her thighs. I felt immediate pangs of jealousy. What was *he* doing with her? She was my girl. I'd seen her first! He was just intruding. It wasn't fair. I'd already seen him dancing with at least two other girls. He wasn't even a good dancer. It wasn't right. It wasn't fair. Everyone should get their share. Sexual Socialism – why not? If it was handled like that, no-one would miss out. Shit, there'd be enough crumpet for everyone. Under *this* system, it was a case of the survival of the fittest. What really got me down was that in women's eyes, 'the fittest' seemed to be a rather uncaring and callous sort of man who was inconstant in his affections and was likely to ditch them before long.

I could never understand why the cool and aloof types like Elvis Presley and Marlon Brando were so attractive to women. Was there a basically masochistic streak in women? Is that what it was? Did they like to be treated in that way? And if so, why? There seemed to be so many questions and so few answers. And as usual, I was left staring at a few simple facts. I had been rejected. Being rejected didn't feel good. In fact it hurt. People like Dave Roberts and Nick Gaskell didn't get rejected. They did the rejecting. What did they have that I didn't? Well yes, they were both better-looking than me, and yes, they did both pay more attention to what was 'in style' than me (e.g. they wore winkle-pickers to my brogues), but it was more than that: they had 'THE KNACK', and I didn't. What I couldn't figure out was whether or not I wanted to acquire 'the knack', even if that was possible. On the one hand, I wanted to increase my rate of success with the opposite sex, on the other hand, I didn't like the way you had to be in order to achieve this.

Meanwhile, my relationship with Pam continued to mystify rather than edify. When I got back to Edinburgh there was a letter from her waiting for me. After many months of silence from my side (this following vivid accounts of Pam's amorous exploits in the theater, and a continued lack of any response to the locket I'd sent her), I'd finally been persuaded to write to her. There were a couple of influencing factors. First, was a letter I had received from Pam in February. In it, she had told me that she missed me when I didn't write and that she needed a shoulder to cry on at that moment due to the fact that three friends of hers had been caught house-breaking and the owner had decided to press charges. The letter had finished with the lines:

“ ... dear, dear Ian, you're such a comfort when I can write to you like this. Please write soon and tell me something nice, All my love, Pam.”

The second factor that influenced me to break my silence was that in my post A level depression, I needed someone to confide in. Given the nature of Pam's letter, I felt that I could be intimate with her again. The result was a long rambling, self-pitying letter in which I waded through my problems with my parents, my problems with career choices, and my problems with women. On the last subject, I did not tell about *my* fling with the 'Sunderland Scrubber'. Instead, I dwelt on the unfair advantage Pam had in meeting the opposite sex, due to the fact that she was at co-educational High School, and I was at a boys-only boarding school. The air-mail envelope that lay on the hall table when I entered my parents house contained a response to this letter.

Excerpts from Pam's letter - August 1965.

' ... I can imagine how horrible it must be, while I am mixing with men all the time ... I have sympathy and understanding for you, but cannot possibly feel the same about you as you do about me, which makes it difficult for me to write to you without being casual or phony. To be perfectly honest, I hardly know you at all through our written correspondence. I'm sure you must agree. I feel like a low-down grub at admitting this to you but I must face it and tell you what is wrong ... anyway, the reason that has finally forced me to write is this. Mum is in Britain at this very moment and she is going to give you a call and ask you to go with her to something in the Festival. Anyway, if you see her, please don't mention to her how naughty I've began about writing, because she is so nosy ... '

Wonderful, I thought to myself as I re-read the letter. I write to her to get some comfort and what do I get? I'm told that after five years of writing to each other, 'we hardly know each other at all.' And we've reached a point where Pam feels 'forced' to write because she's worried about what her mother may think. I got off the bed and looked at the mirror. Sometimes, I felt like smashing something. At that moment, I felt like smashing the mirror.

* * *

I was staying with John Aitken in Bromley, Kent when I got my A level results. John's father was a Personnel Manager with Shell Oil. He had managed to get summer jobs for John and I as messengers. The job had started on the 3rd. August and, as a result, it had only been necessary for me to spend eleven days in Edinburgh. I was beginning to feel like a displaced person, a refugee. But being a refugee was preferable to being a prisoner.

I had only been in Bromley for two days when my mother 'phoned. "Hello, Ian darling, we've just received your A level results. I'm afraid you failed Physics but you did pass Chemistry with a 'D' grade." It wasn't a shock. I knew I had done badly in Physics and I had prepared myself for a result such as this. At least I had passed Chemistry. Now I only had to worry about one subject.

The next day I spoke with Mr. Begley to confirm that I would be returning to Sedbergh for one extra term.

With the exception of the ushering I had done at the Edinburgh.Festival the previous year, the job at Shell was the first real job I had ever had. For three weeks I got a taste of the world that the likes of Auntie Mollie, Mr. Blair-Cunynghame, and Sir Henry Wilson Smith seemed so keen to advocate.

Every morning for three weeks, John and I would get up at 7-15, have a rushed breakfast, and catch the 7-55 commuter train to Waterloo Station. From there it was only a five minute walk to the massive Shell building on the South bank of the Thames. Every day for three weeks, the impersonal attitudes and robot-expressions of the commuters wrought its impression. Every day, several times a day, John and I would collect the Telex messages and letters, which we would then take to their appropriate destinations amongst the rabbit warren of offices and floors and wings.

Over the days and weeks, as I tramped up and down these corridors, I would glance into the offices in order to try to get a grasp of what went on within. As often as not, I was amazed to see gray-suited businessmen with their feet up on the desk listening to the Test Match on the radio, or drinking tea and discussing their wives or mistresses with an associate, or idly flipping through a magazine or newspaper. At least, this is how it appeared to my Sedbergh eyes. A lot of overfed, over-paid, under-worked men in gray suits is how I saw it. At £11 a week, I even felt that John and I were being overpaid.

It was a dreary, soulless world, one that was too 'comfortable' to retain any vitality. The meals were sumptuous, the temperature was warm and controlled, and the tea breaks seemed never ending. In fact, a sizeable proportion of the Shell employees seemed to be members of the tea-lady brigade. These good women were forever wheeling their trolleys up and down the corridors dispensing cups of tea and digestive biscuits to grateful, outreached hands at office doors. To me, it was an insulated world of papers and telephones, wall-to-wall carpets and humming neon lights. It was just a tarted-up version of 'the white-washed office and half-finished cup of moldy coffee' which Mr. Blair-Cunynghame had found reasonably accurate.

By the end of three weeks, I wondered how anyone could make a comparison between flying jets through the blue heavens and being chained to the desk in this colorless, inert vacuum. I day-dreamed of getting away, of finding freedom. Where was freedom to be found, anyway? I knew it wasn't to be found in my parent's house, and I knew it didn't reside in the Shell building. Maybe one had to break away completely. I dreamed of mountain-climbing in the Rockies, of going on a safari in Kenya, of canoeing down the Rhine, and of crossing the Sahara by Land Rover. Yes, maybe that was it. Maybe you had to break away completely from family and former upbringing.

Before leaving London, I attended the wedding of my brother Robin. Robin had been living in Shepperton, Middlesex for over a year, and the wedding was to be held at a church nearby. Like my sister, Robin had seen marriage as a way of legitimizing distance (emotional, psychological, and geographical) from my parents. His wife-to-be was a singularly unattractive yet tough-minded woman called Avril. It was a marriage of opposites and yet one in which both sides stood to gain something. Avril, for instance, had a B.A. in Psychology and thus middle-class credibility and respectability. This was appealing to Robin who was vulnerable about his lack of qualifications. On the other hand, Robin had human qualities and resources that drew Avril to him. Whereas Avril had a certain Presbyterian chill about her, Robin was full of humor and warmth.

Robin had asked me to be best man at the wedding. I was touched by this although somewhat embarrassed to play the role. The truth was that Robin and I were just beginning to get to know each other. In Edinburgh, our relationship had always been abrasive. Since Robin had got away from the parents, a more benign side to him was coming out. Like Joy in London and me at Sedbergh, he was now able to breathe. He could now open his arms and give and receive nourishment. He had broken out of the Venus fly-trap of the nuclear family and was flourishing as a result.

I felt happy for Robin. He so desperately needed some good breaks. There was also a benefit for me. To the extent that his life improved, it relieved some of the guilt I felt for being the favored son. I think this sense of guilt went back to when, at the age of three, I had hit my brother over the eye with a spade. From the start, my father cruelly made fun of Robin. My father couldn't accept how he looked – with his club foot and ungainliness. In turn he took out his hurt and anger on me, in the form of constant teasing. Somehow, when I hit him I was trying to say, 'Robin, I'm sorry that Daddy is being so horrible to you, but don't take it out on me. It's not my fault. But I'm warning you. If you do take it out on me, I'll fight back.'

However, there was no way round the fact that striking my brother with a spade had been wrong. As it happened, the scar had never gone away. It was a perpetual reminder of the incident. But for the main part, the guilt I felt was associated with feeling that I had been luckier than Robin and as a result, I was stronger and more successful than him. I was also more 'normal'. Robin was a real misfit. His strange appearance and eccentric mannerisms were an embarrassment. The fact that I got embarrassed also made me feel guilty.

At least the wedding seemed to be a step in the right direction. I figured that marriage might make Robin more 'normal'.

My father, of course, thought that Robin was crazy and refused to attend the wedding. However my mother came, and Joy and Jim came, and all in all the occasion was pleasant.

* * *

Sedbergh: September 16th. 1965

Everything seemed to have the same freshness as my first impressions, on that fateful day almost exactly five years ago. Because I now knew that beyond any shadow of a doubt, this was to be my last term, there was a poignant sense of 'the last time'. Now was the time to form last impressions. Now was the time to savor the changes that had taken place over the years. It was the first day of my last term back at Powell House, the home of the Chameleons.

Nothing had changed. The first day smells of polish and disinfectant were the same. Matron, inevitably, was in her headquarters, the linen room, administering the domestic chores. George, the old toothless handyman was sitting in the boot-room outside the toilets as always, sucking on his briar pipe and saying, 'how do,' to old faces, looking for all the world as if he had been a permanent resident of the place since the time of Dickens.

As I walked down the corridor towards study 1, I could hear the muffled monotone of Mr. Begley as he addressed the throng of new boys.

"... Powell House is now your new home. Within these four walls you will eat, sleep, study and work. For the next five years, you will be part of a community within these four walls, a community of approximately sixty people. Any community has a structure, or a pecking order if you will ... ah Ian, welcome back." Mr. Begley spotted me as I entered the lobby and his tone of voice immediately changed. Then he looked back at the new boys and, waving in my direction, said *"this is Brown. He is second head of House. He is also a School Prefect, head of the C.C.F. and ..."* Mr. Begley paused as a little smile came across his face, ... *"and he is going to be a permanent member of the 1st. XV this term, aren't you, Ian?"*

I replied that I hoped so and then nodding curtly to the new boys, I continued on to study 1. For a few minutes, I left the door open so that I could hear some more of Mr. Begley's speech. I couldn't help smiling at the familiarity of it all.

"... so, needless to say, you are all at the bottom of the pecking order and prefects like Brown are at the top. As new boys, you have no privileges, those you have to earn. But you do have duties as fags to the prefects. Hudson and Brown will explain the nature of these duties to you later. In addition to a pecking order, you will also learn that this community has rules, rules which you will be expected to obey and for which you will be punished if you don't ..."

I closed the door. He had nearly finished and besides, since the Stoner incident, I felt somewhat uneasy at the whole concept of punishment, especially the more severe forms such as beating. I sat down at my now desk and let out a deep sigh. Study numero uno. Instead of 'Biggart and Hudson', it was now 'Hudson and Brown'. The new boys faces changed. The prefectorial regime changed. But that was all. It came as a bit of a shock to realize that we weren't indispensable. Even though it was hard to believe, one or two of those new boys would get on a school team. One or two of them might become School Prefects. And who knows? There could even be one amongst them who would do something really extraordinary like break the record for the Ten Mile. It was a cause for humility. But outside this slow and systematic turnover of boys, everything remained the same. The House, the surrounding fells, the Masters, the Matron, the classes, the food, even the Housemaster's speech to the new boys. They didn't change. They truly were indispensable, or so it seemed. With a sudden feeling of warmth, I realized that in their immutability, they had become old and trusted friends.

The door opened suddenly and I was jogged out of my reveries. It was Mark.

“Hello, old fellow. Well, here we are again, Jock. Oh Jock, before I forget, I’ve got some fantastic news. Guess what, I just heard that I’ve been accepted by Cambridge. Isn’t that fabulous! Means that I don’t have to worry about work this term. I can devote all my time to running the House and the School. We’re going to have a great time Jock, old man. So glad you’re back to help me out. By the way, could you do me a favour and ask the cook if she can have supper ready for five thirty rather than six? Must go. Got a million things to do.”

And with that he was gone. As far as running the House was concerned, the pattern was set. Mark was The General, and I was his aide-de-campe. However, unlike the previous term, I didn’t feel resentful at the prospect of Mark’s delegations of responsibility. After all, we were the only ones left from the old guard. Everyone else had left. Roberts, Blacklock, Biggart, Holme, Spedding, non-prefects like Aitken and Hordern, they had all left. Besides, there was a better balance of power between us than in the previous term. He was Head of School and Head of House, but I was Head of the C.C.F. and a probable member of the Ist. XV.

There was in my last term at Sedbergh a relief from the pressure of the previous years. My parents had been disappointed that I had failed one A level but had accepted both my decision to re-take the Physics A level and to return to Sedbergh for the extra term. There were acceptable career options on the horizon to keep them in check for at least a while. More importantly, Mr. Blair-Cunynghame had come into my life. The fact that a man of his stature had taken a liking to me and was actively trying to help me had tended to muffle their anxieties and doubts. At school I felt liked and respected and people were glad to see me back. As far as work was concerned, what had to be accomplished was very clear and defined. To a large extent, I was given the freedom to work on my own and seek help from my Physics teacher as I saw fit. I continued to work hard, but not obsessively as in the previous year.

In the sporting world, it became apparent after a few weeks that I would at last become a permanent member of the Ist. XV. This achievement restored a sense of dignity and helped erase the failure complex that had plagued me for several years. I felt at ease with myself and an inner calm began to replace some of the turmoil. Now that I was actually on the team, all I had to do was prove that I deserved my place.

There was no doubt that one of the most settling influences was my ongoing relationship with Mr. Blair-Cunynghame. In many ways I didn’t want to be pushed out into a bleak and unknown world, however Blair-Cunynghame represented a psychological and emotional bridge across which I could view the outside world. The bridge was not only between school and career. It was also one that connected my three major geographical points of reference. In addition to his frequent visits to Sedbergh, B.C. worked in Edinburgh as Chairman of The Royal Bank of Scotland and kept a flat in London. Like me, he was a Scotsman with an English accent and a cosmopolitan outlook.

In October, Mr. Blair-Cunynghame contacted me and arranged to see me on Sunday, the 24th. October, after morning chapel. It turned out to be a day to remember.

The early-morning sun glistened on the hoar frost that covered the ground. The last of the autumn leaves lay scattered in clumps of mottled brown and yellow. Across the cricket field, lay the village of Sedbergh nestled under the backdrop of the fells. Plumes of smoke curled lazily into the crisp air as wood fires were kindled. As I made my way past the swimming-pool and up the Chapel path, I had the same sense of heightened awareness that I had experienced on my first day back at school. I felt like I could reach out and breathe in what I saw. No longer was my vision and urge to expand blocked by inner tensions.

As it happened, I was due to read one of the morning lessons in Chapel and as a result, I did feel a slight nervousness, but I experienced it more as an excitement than an apprehension.

As I entered the vestry, I could hear the sounds of ‘Jesu, Joy of Man’s Desiring’ coming from the organ. I took my place in the bass section of the choir and knelt down to pray. For some unaccountable reason, I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude and in my prayers I expressed this. There was so much beauty in the world, so much to be thankful for. Why did I always have to get so wrapped up in my own petty problems, I wondered?

As the service started, I glanced down the aisle towards the back of the Chapel to see if I could spot Mr. Blair-Cunyghame. I was excited that he would be there to hear me read. There were certain occasions at Sedbergh that seemed particularly steeped with meaning. One such occasion was The Ten Mile concert. Another was the School Prefect duty of reading in Chapel. I could remember my first term at Sedbergh, and how I had watched from the treble choir stalls as some huge and muscular hero of the school had arisen at the back of the chapel, and there, with all eyes upon him, had made the long walk down the aisle towards the lectern. There had been something so solemn and awe-inspiring about the ritual. It seemed like such a big responsibility to give a schoolboy, even if he was a prefect.

The organ stuck up the introduction to one of my favourite hymns. I realised with a start that I was due to read at the end of the hymn. Unlike my heroes of old, I would not taking the long walk from the back of the Chapel, due to the fact that I was a choir member. The lectern was directly in front of the choir stalls, and so only a very brief journey was required, a fact that peeved me somewhat.

“Hymn number 359.”

*O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul on Thee
I give Thee back the life I owe
That in Thine ocean depths, its flow
May, richer, fuller be.*

*O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee
My heart restores its borrowed ray
That in Thy sunshine's blaze, its day
May brighter, fairer be.*

*O Joy that seekest me through pain
I cannot close my heart to Thee
I trace the rainbow through the rain
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.*

*O Cross that liftest up my head
I dare not ask to fly from Thee
I lay in dust, life's glory dead
And from the ground, there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be.*

I stood at the lectern and opened the huge bible. I felt good. The hymn had made me feel strong and clean inside. I looked out over the sea of faces.

“Here beginneth the second lesson. The lesson is taken from Job, verses 12 to 28.” I paused and looked up again. I felt like John the Baptist.

“But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?”

* * *

“Well, I thought we might go to the Shap Wells Hotel for lunch,” said Mr. Blair-Cunyghame. We were in his Rover 3 litre heading out of Sedbergh towards Kendal. As we climbed up the twisting road towards Killington Reservoir, I realised that I didn't feel the same need to talk as I had in previous meetings with B.C. There was a

comfortable ambience between us, due in which I could relax and let the silences be as enjoyable as the conversation.

Shap Wells was on the road between Kendal and Penrith and lay high in the hills below Shap summit. This road which wound its way up and over this pass, was in fact the major road south from Scotland. The area had a notorious reputation for being the scene of some terrible accidents, many involving trucks that had slid, or jack-knifed off the side of the road and down the steep slopes.

By the time we got to the hotel I was famished. Blair-Cunynghame bought me a beer and a malt whisky for himself, and without further ado, we headed straight for the dining room. There we had a delicious lunch of scotch broth, jugged hare and home-made apple pie. In turn, all of this was washed down with a bottle of Blue Nun. After coffee, B.C. suggested that we go for a hike on the fells. With my belly full, and broad sunlight pouring into the room, I agreed readily.

It was one of those days where everything flows with the ease and spontaneity of a dream. There were no rough edges, no anxious decisions, no underlying tensions. It was a special day in which everything seemed infused with special meaning. Somehow I felt that I had been brought to this wild part of the Cumbrian fells for a reason. Perhaps it was for a celebration. Perhaps to receive the grace that follows a mourning, or perhaps both. In any case it felt like a joyous occasion.

Before us and below us lay the moors, their autumnal palette at its richest, what with the heather's dying crimson, the claret of the whins, the tawny bracken, and the yellow umbers of the grasses. Around us and above us were the undisturbed hillsides, rolling fells that were broken into crazy patterns by dry stone walls, fells whose ridges turned from blue to gold as sunbeams and cloud-shadows raced over them. This was a place of wild watersheds and lonely grey roads. This was a place as barren and treeless as Iceland and yet a place liberating in its solitude. Once, not so long ago, wolves and wild boars had roamed these parts. Now only sheep and the occasional pony were to be seen. Further down in the valleys, lay scattered farms and their outbuildings, white-walled with grey slate roofs.

All of this I saw and revelled in as we took our walk. The views were wide-flung and uplifting. The silence was punctuated only by the moor-bird's cry and the far-off sound of a rushing beck. I'd never been here and yet I'd always been here. I'd been here all my life. I'd been here as long as the mountains. I'd been here with the bronze and iron-age dwellers and seen their barrows and hut-circles, earthworks and ancient field-systems. I'd witnessed the mighty red-coat army marching north and fearful Jacobite renegades fleeing south. I'd seen young boys being turned into hardened men in the winter snow as these fells became the training ground for battling the Germans.

That was a special day. I felt as one and at one: at one with myself, at one with my companion, at one with my surroundings. I had never felt happier.

17.

During October and November, I received several letters from old Sedbergh friends like David Lungley, John Aitken and David Roberts.

One letter from John was interesting in that it compared life on 'the outside' (at Reading University) with life at Sedbergh.

'Life is so much more natural. It's great to be able to do what you want, with no time rules and everything so informal. And it's great to work in an integrated society and treat each other as equals. It really makes one wonder sometimes whether the strict discipline of Sedbergh was really worth it, I suppose it was, but by God if they don't pull their fingers out and treat chaps naturally there is going to be real trouble. The fact is that the more Sedbergh has to do with Casterton (the nearest girl's boarding school) the better.

It really makes me sick to think of you up there - the sooner you're out the better. It's a kiddie's society. By the way, I won't be up for the Uppingham match with Dave. I think he's crazy to want to go. The place will be ridden with patriotic rugger-buggers ...'

The match against Uppingham that John referred to was an important affair. Uppingham, the well-known public school in Staffordshire, was making a northern tour and we were one of their fixtures. At the beginning of the term, it had been hoped that we might have an unbeaten season. Everything had gone well at first. We won our matches against the Old Sedberghians, Lancaster Royal Grammar School, Durham, St. Bees and King's School Canterbury. Then for some unaccountable reason, we lost the next game to Rossall School. Although this destroyed our hopes of an unblemished season, it was still regarded as vitally important to win our remaining games. The game after Rossall was against Ampleforth and we won this with ease. This left only two games on the schedule, Uppingham and Loretto.

As the match against Uppingham was the last home fixture, it was the game of the season for Old Sedberghians to come and see. In addition to Dave Lungley, several other old friends were returning for the occasion. I was excited about the upcoming game, especially as I had scored eleven points in the previous match against Ampleforth. These points, as well as six others from previous matches, had increased my confidence considerably. Finally, I had thrown off the yoke of having to prove myself. I deserved to be on the team. This feeling was validated when I was awarded my 1st. XV colours, the day after the Ampleforth game. At last, a few weeks before my nineteenth birthday, I had earned the right to wear the coveted brown and gold blazer.

It was the twentieth of November and the day of the big game. As I was the only member of the 1st. XV from Powell House, I was very much the centre of attention. My fag, Birtwhistle, wished me luck as he handed me a gleaming pair of rugger boots. Matron smiled and wished me luck as she instructed a member of the Junior Dayroom to bang the gong for lunch. In the dining room the scivs ogled me in my new jacket, giggled, and made some ambiguous remark like, 'score a few for us, Brown.' At the head table, Mr. Begley did his bit by practising some psychological warfare on the two Uppingham boys to whom I was host, by telling them repeatedly what a formidable team we had that year. After lunch, as I was changing into my white shorts and brown rugby shirt, David Lungley (who had just arrived), Peter Amos and David Roberts entered the changing-room, slapped me on the back and exhorted me to 'give them hell.'

On Buskholme, the conditions were nearly perfect. The crowd roared as we took the field and the game was soon underway. It became clear before long that we were very evenly matched. In a tremendous battle, the play continued to swing from end to end. Points were scored on both sides and with five minutes left in the match, Uppingham were leading by one point. Then, as luck would have it., we were awarded a penalty. It was a long way from the posts, and John Spencer the Captain, asked as if I thought I could make it. I replied that I was sure I could. The suspense was enormous. As I poised myself to run up, the crowd was

completely silent. I took six steps, kept my head down, and kicked. The ball sailed up and away. Behind the posts the linesmen's flags went up as the ball crept over the cross-bar. There was a roar. Two minutes later the game was over. We had won 11-9.

"Have you heard the one about the magic penis?" The question came from David Roberts. It was after the game and I was soaking in a steaming, hot bath.

"Can't say I have."

"Well, it goes like this. A woman could not, for the life of her, get her hubby sexed up, so she went to the quack and told him about it. He sent her to a little shop with a prescription. At the shop, the bloke behind the counter took her order and produced a magic tool. He said, all you need to do is to take the tool out of its bottle and say, 'magic penis my cunt,' and in it will pop!' So the next morning, when her hubby went to work, she took the tool and said, "magic penis, my cunt." Ahh! At last ... SATISFACTION!! She moaned in ecstasy at the tool's motion. Meanwhile, her maid was watching through the keyhole, and she thought she would try it out while her mistress was out. So the time came and she said, 'magic penis, my cunt.' Sure enough, in it went, but when she had finished, she couldn't get it out. So she put her clothes on and went outside down to the copper shop. On the way, she met a copper and said, "Constable there is a magic penis up my twat and it won't come out. The copper laughed his head off and said, "magic penis, my arse - ho, ho, ho! Suddenly ... WHOOPS! ... The End.. or should I say, up the end. Ha, ha, get it? The butt-end of the joke, I mean. Ah well, never mind."

I faked a laugh. David Roberts did not know how to tell a joke – even a good one. In addition, I always found it hard to laugh when I knew that was what was expected of me. However the joke had had an unintended consequence that Roberts was quick to spot.

"Well, well ... talking about magic penises, or should I say magic pokers," he said laughing, as he moved to the side of the bath, peering intently at my dirigible-like member. When he mentioned the word 'poker', I felt as if I was in a time warp. It seemed only yesterday that Bilsland had ordered me to turf and the resulting display had earned me the nickname of Poker. As Roberts stood there gazing at my cock, I could feel the familiar sensation, best described as the age-old phrase, 'stirring of the loins'. I wanted to be touched. The desire was so great. I could feel myself rebelling after five years of 'look but don't touch'. I have no idea what Roberts was thinking, but suddenly, to my astonishment, he put his hand into the water and grabbed my cock. For a couple of seconds he held it, squeezing it and then with a perfunctory laugh let go and withdrew his hand.

"There you are, Jock. You've been dying for me to do that for years, haven't you? Well, I finally did it. That's your present for getting eight points in the match."

I felt shocked. I never would have thought that he would actually have done something like that. The spell was broken. The tension was gone. Rather than his action exciting me, it was as if it had taken away something. The stirring in my loins ceased and my erection collapsed as quickly as the Hindenberg. I was speechless.

Roberts had sat down and was in the process of lighting a cigarette. I had a moment to gather my thoughts.

"So, er, how's your love-life at University?" I asked, thinking it best to shift attention safely and securely in a heterosexual direction."

"Oh God!" sighed Roberts, seemingly relieved at the question. "Well, what can I say? For a start, most of the birds at Leeds U. are complete bags. Mind you, there are a few that are gorgeous. Like June, for instance - did I tell you about June?"

"No," I replied, as I got out of the bath and began drying myself.

"Well, she was one of the Physics Secretaries. At first I thought she was fantastic, and to begin with it was great. God, she was an incredible flirt. She used to work me up something terrible. Anyway, one night I practically raped her in the car. That's when things changed. I don't know why, but after that I felt kind of sick. What I mean is, I got sick of her. I felt sort of trapped. It was awful going around with her trying to laugh politely without being sarcastic. I can't explain why, but I really felt like hurting her emotionally." He paused, a look of cruel disdain on his face.

“Really? Why did you want to hurt her?” I wrapped the towel around my waist and sat down on the bench beside him. I was rapidly getting caught up with this story.

“I don’t know why. I mean I never felt like that before.” A fleeting look of confusion passed across his face to be quickly replaced by a vengeful grin. “But the fact is I did, and believe me, when a chance came along, did I take it.”

“What happened?” I asked intently, feeling that I was seeing the essential David Roberts for the first time.

“Well, June was in a Youth Club production of ‘The Importance Of Being Earnest’ by Oscar Wilde. One day, she got me to read in for someone who was sick. The part I was taking was Dr. Chasuble, the vicar. Immediately after the rehearsal, the Youth Club leader asked me if I would take the part. For some reason, I accepted. Well it so happened that the person playing the part of the character with whom Dr. Chasuble was having a love affair was this fourteen year old wench with a ‘38’ bust. So anyway, during the play, I tarted up to her; don’t know why except to spite June. I mean, she was in the play so she saw the whole thing. Well, afterwards June comes up to me and says she’s never been so humiliated in her whole life. So that was that. I took the opportunity to tell June we were finished. I left her standing there blubbering and then, right in front of her eyes, I walked off with the fourteen year old. Served her right!

Roberts turned towards me as if expecting some response. I had no idea what to say. Seeing that he wasn’t getting any positive reinforcement, David Roberts stood up and headed for the door.

“So anyway, I’m on the loose again, and talking about that, I think I’ll head off to The Bull for a pint and a prow around. See you later, whack.”

Most of the visiting Old Sedberghians stayed on for the Sunday following the Uppingham match, so as it turned out that I hadn’t seen the last of David Roberts.

After Sunday lunch, I retired to my study and played host to Peter Amos and his extremely attractive girl-friend. Peter Amos had never been one of my closest friends but there was a link with him due to the fact that he was going into the Army. Unlike David Roberts, who had come back to Sedbergh dressed in a button-down shirt, narrow suede tie and zip-up leather boots, Amos had a conservative appearance what with his cavalry-twill trousers, hush puppies and tweed jacket. In addition, unlike most Old Sedberghians I’d seen, his hair was cut short and trimmed neatly. The presence of his girl-friend in the study made feel distinctly uncomfortable. She seemed so out of place. I felt we had nothing in common and didn’t really know what to say to her. So, after handing her a cup of coffee and a biscuit, I settled myself down to talk to Peter Amos.

“Tell me what’s been happening with you,” I ventured.

“Well, I’m presently trying to get into Mons,” he said, referring to the brother institution to Sandhurst.

“Isn’t that what Robert Stoner was trying to do?”

“Yes, but he failed. That’s one reason that my hopes are not all that high.”

“Stoner failed to get in?” I inquired, feeling immediately concerned.

“Yes. It’s too bad. He really wanted to get into the Army. The last time I saw him, he seemed really fed up with everything. He said he was thinking of joining the Foreign Legion and you know I think he meant it. Crazy bugger!”

“Well, so what’s it like since you left Sedbergh. I mean how does it feel?” I asked, wanting to change the subject.

“To tell you the truth, I miss the place. I really do. I almost envy you being back here. It’s all very well for people to say that life begins when you leave school, but there are literally hundreds of things I miss or have had to give up since leaving.”

Amos’s girl-friend reached forward and touched him on the arm. “Yes, but that’s because you’re in a limbo, Peter. It’ll be different when you’re commissioned in a regiment. She spoke with the manner and inflection of a Colonel’s daughter. Probably was, I thought to myself. She reminded me of Ursula.

“Is your father in the Army?” I asked, giving voice to my intuitions.

“Good Lord, no! He’s a vicar – a man of peace! Why do you ask?” She laughed and tossed the

blonde hair off her shoulders.

"Oh, I don't know. Sorry. It doesn't matter." I could feel the embarrassment showing. I'd only been trying to acknowledge her presence. "Er ... so what do you think of Sedbergh?" I felt tongue-tied. I also felt I had completely shed my hero image of the previous day.

"It's all right, I suppose ... for a school," she added condescendingly as she produced a packet of cigarettes and lit one for herself.

"So what are your plans, Jock?" asked Peter Amos intervening.

"Well, I've just applied to Cranwell."

"What! I thought you were going to University."

"Well, I may still be, probably in Canada if anywhere. I've also just applied for something called a Drapers Scholarship."

"Good Heavens, I don't believe it," said Amos laughing. "The R.A.F! You must have changed your mind at least twenty times."

As he was saying this the door opened, and in walked David Roberts.

"What's this? Who's changed their mind twenty times?"

"Jock has. He's now thinking of joining the bloody R.A.F. Either that, or going to Canada, of all places."

"Oh I know. I give up with Jock. One minute it's the parade ground, the next it's the eskimos. Are you still writing to that girl, what was her name?"

"Pam. Yes ... well at least, yes and no." I was beginning to feel claustrophobic.

At this, David Roberts turned to Amos's girl-friend and said, "you see, old Jock here doesn't go for nice young English girls like you. For some reason that I can't figure out, he fancies Canadian girls somewhere out there on the frozen tundra, three thousand miles away. It's either that or else nice young boys. That's why even though he's nearly, what is it Jock, nearly twenty, he's still at school."

The three of them laughed. It was distant and hollow to me. I had already withdrawn through several layers of my being. I didn't know how to cope with this kind of thing. I didn't have the necessary psychological defences. I didn't know how to push back.

"Oh come on, Jock," said Roberts patting my shoulder. "Can't you take a joke? You know we all love you, Jockey old sport."

That was it. I had to get out. I couldn't sit there any longer. I couldn't breathe. I couldn't stand it.

"Yes, of course Dave. I know you're just joking. I'm sorry I was thinking of something else. Excuse me, I just remembered there's something I have to do. Excuse me Peter and ... I'm sorry, I don't remember your name, will you excuse me? I must go. I'll see you later."

And I fought my way past legs and arms and bodies, and burst out of the study.

I felt sick and angry. I wanted to return to the study and confront Roberts. I wanted to punch him in the face or crush him in one way or another. And yet, as was my usual habit, I rejected confrontation for withdrawal. 'What's the matter with you?' I asked myself as I instinctively headed down the corridor and away from the study. 'Why can't you stand up to pushy, aggressive people like Roberts?' And for that matter, why couldn't I hold my own with women? Roberts always had to be competing. He had walked into the study and the moment he saw the girl he decided he had to make a good impression. But his way of doing that was to compete, to try and make himself look clever by making me look stupid. Why did some people have to pull themselves up by trying to push others down? That would never be permitted in a sporting game, so why was it accepted in the human game? How petty! How small-minded! I hated free-for-all competition. Couldn't people cooperate?

I walked out into the cold air. I was still being propelled, like a stone from a catapult, by my reaction to what had happened in the study. I was hardly aware of the biting wind as, automatically I set off up School Hill. Sometimes I became aware of the strength of my passion. It could become all-consuming, a driving force of enormous power that not only excluded others but also excluded other parts of myself. It was an alliance of passion and will that could easily throw me off balance.

I was slowly brought out of myself by a realisation that I was rapidly getting soaked by a fine drizzle

that had started up. The wetness seeped inside my shirt collar and through my socks. Finally I woke up to the fact that I was outside. It was no longer claustrophobic. It was dark and it was wet, and it was cold - but at least I could breathe freely.

As I trudged off through the drizzle, my anger towards David Roberts began to subside. In its place a different perspective began to emerge. The irony of the whole thing was that 'the outside world' wasn't the moor land or the fells. It wasn't Shap Summit with the bracken and purple heather. Nor was it a facsimile of a cosy, cooperative community like Sedbergh. Rather it was, according to all accounts, a rat-race, a world to which the 'qualities' of one such as David Roberts seemed ideally suited. However much I didn't like it, David Roberts represented the outside world. It *was* aggressive and pushy out there. The sooner I came to terms with that the better. I could forever be running away because something offended my sense of fairness and decency, *or* I could start learning to fight back. At the very least, I had to learn how to assert myself better. I had to stop worrying so much about others. I had to learn to stop being over-conscientious. I had to learn how to say 'no'. I had to learn not to accept everything. I had to learn how to prevent myself from being manipulated by others.

I reached the cloisters and quickly sought refuge in the lower part where there was an escape from the rain and some shelter from the wind. As I sat there on a cold stone bench, I remembered something David Lungley had said to me that morning. He had been talking about life at Reading University. He mentioned, in passing, that apart from his academic studies, his two main pursuits were ballroom dancing and Judo. As usual with David, there seemed to be a simple wisdom summed up in these choices. On the one hand, dancing - a way to come out of yourself, overcome shyness, meet, touch, accept others. And, on the other hand, judo - a way to protect yourself, to defend your weakness and vulnerabilities against threat or attack from others. David and I had one great thing in common. We were both enormously vulnerable, although in different ways. He associated his vulnerability primarily with his physical self. I associated it with my emotional self. As I sat there shivering in the cloisters, it came as quite a revelation to realise that I needed to do the same as David. I needed to learn how to defend myself while also learning how to overcome my defences, a curious contradiction and yet one into which I was beginning to get some insight.

* * *

I had received instructions from the R.A.F. to report to the Officers and Aircrew Selection Centre at Biggin Hill. Biggin Hill was located in the Borough of Bromley, southeast of central London and, as it happened, not far from John Aitken's parents' house, where I had stayed during the summer.

At the beginning of December, I travelled south by train from Sedbergh to London. It felt strange to be going to the famous airfield which, in 1943, became the first R.A.F. station to claim 1000 enemy aircraft destroyed; strange because it was the first time I had left Sedbergh during term time for more than a day, and strange because my thoughts and feelings had increasingly become centred around getting to University and applying for a Drapers Company Commonwealth Scholarship (my potential ticket to both University *and* Canada). Only a few days earlier, I had received word that I had an interview with the Drapers Company in January, 1966.

As the train made its way through the midlands, I read the brochure I had been sent by the R.A.F.

'We're looking for leadership potential ... the whole process of testing your personality, initiative, fitness and aptitude may take up to 4 days ... the aptitude tests will measure your psycho-motor skills; your ability to interpret data in 2 dimensions and devise a 3-dimensional solution, your ability to complete several tasks simultaneously ... there will also be a health assessment, including hearing and eyesight tests ... If you are successful, you will move on to the selection interview and exercises based on leadership scenarios.'

Cranwell was the R.A.F. equivalent of Sandhurst and so the Civil Service Exam that I had already passed meant that if I was successful at Biggin Hill, I would be accepted for pilot training at Cranwell in the Fall of 1966.

On the first day, the tests just kept coming. On the second morning, there were noticeably fewer applicants at breakfast. It appeared that the 'whittling down' process was ongoing and discrete. By the third morning, the 80 or so original applicants, had been reduced to half that number. I felt flattered to still be 'in the hunt' but also jolted into questioning whether my heart was really into what I was doing. Did I *really* want to go in to the R.A.F.? This was the eleventh hour. The answer was the same as before; I *would* like to be a pilot but I wasn't sure I wanted to be in Armed Services.

On the fourth and last day, those of us who were left had our interviews.

Suddenly, and dramatically, everything was resolved. In my interview, I was told that I had done well in all areas but one, this being the eyesight tests. My vision was not up to the very high standard required of a pilot. But, I was assured, the Selection Committee wanted to accept me to Cranwell, not as a pilot but as a prospective Officer for the R.A.F. Regiment. I gathered that the R.A.F. Regiment were responsible for the guarding of airfields and other ground related duties. It was as if I had been looking for an acceptable reason not to go into the R.A.F. and it had just been supplied me. I had wanted to fly planes. not be stuck on the ground.

My response to the Selection Committee was clear and immediate. 'Thank-you but no thank-you.' The road to University was clear, if only I could satisfy their requirements.

* * *

Life at Sedbergh began to die away like the diminishing flame of a spent candle. This time there was an acceptance, a kind of sweet sorrow completely unlike the brittle tension and sense of rupture of the previous term. This time it was 'the end'. It felt right. There was nothing to keep me on. None of my contemporaries would be left. I was one of the old lags and it was time for all of us to move on.

In those last few weeks, Mark and I were drawn together. We had shared many experiences over the course of five years and now we were sharing one of the deepest experiences of all, letting go of the past, loosening the emotional attachments and turning to face the future. In this process of letting go, we unconsciously turned to each other for support. The value of our friendship was appreciated as we both realised that even though our stay at Sedbergh was ending, that didn't mean that our relationship had to end. As it happened, an opportunity arose where it was possible to do something that seemed absolutely appropriate under the circumstances and that was to pay tribute to our friendship in public. I had already been asked to play the Adagio from Haydn's Cello Concerto in the end of term concert. It occurred to me that there could be no better tribute than to have Mark accompany me on the piano. After some hesitation, due to lack of confidence, Mark accepted the offer and began to practice his part assiduously.

The concert was on December the 14th., the last day of school. Somehow it felt right that the last significant thing I would do at Sedbergh would be to play the 'cello. That had also been the first significant thing I'd done over five years ago. It gave me a feeling of roundness or completion, a circle of fulfilment. As it happened, I was riding a wave of confidence regarding my musicianship due to the fact that at the beginning of the month, I had won both the Stringed Instrument Prize and The Renfrew Martin Singing Prize in the School Music Competitions. Another fringe benefit of this success was that it assuaged lurking feelings of guilt about having not pulled my weight as a music scholarship boy.

The last few days were inevitably an emotional affair. Most of the time was spent in packing and making last farewells. At the Headmaster's office, I was asked what was my choice of book prizes for winning the two music competitions. The Headmaster seemed both surprised and impressed when I told him I would like, Churchill - The Life Triumphant and Collected Essays by George Orwell. As I bid him farewell, he said, "I couldn't persuade you to stay one more term, could I?" We are going to stage The

Mikado and I think you would make a wonderful Pooh-Bah. Besides you would probably be Head of School if you came back next term.” There may have been just a moment’s hesitation on my part.

One by one, I said goodbye to the masters who had taught me over the years. There were glasses of sherry, shared memories and words of encouragement and advice. Of all my contemporaries, there were two people in particular to whom I wanted to say goodbye. One, of course, was Mark. The other was Colin Crabbie. Again there was a circle of completion. Colin had been there at the beginning and he was there at the end. In Colin’s case, he had provided continuity, in the uprooting from The Edinburgh Academy to Sedbergh, and for all I knew, he might well provide the same kind of continuity in the move back to Edinburgh.

As it turned out, Colin had offered to give me a ride back to Edinburgh the day after the concert with his parents. So on the morning of the 14th, I finished packing my trunk and had it moved to Lupton House in preparation for our departure. In Colin’s study, we sipped tea and didn’t seem to have much to say to each other. I knew he was as sorry to leave as I, but as usual with Colin, his feelings were hidden behind an image of tough self-reliance. Since our Hogmany escapade of a couple of years earlier, Colin had increasingly moulded himself into an unambivalent Scottish identity. His inflection was now consistently lowland Scottish and his attitude at leaving was one of ‘well, I’m finally leaving the land of the Sassenachs to return to ma hameland.’

That was the difference between us; he was returning home, and I was leaving home.

The Christmas concert was the climax of those last few days. It was the final letting go. I had expected it to be almost unbearably heart-wrenching and yet strangely enough, there was almost a serenity to the occasion. It was a long program. For the first three items, I was on stage with the rest of the orchestra. We opened with the overture to ‘The Magic Flute’ by Mozart. This was followed by Haydn’s Motet, ‘Insanae et Vanae Curae’ in which we were joined by The Musical Society choir. Then we played the first movement of Bach’s third Brandenburg Concerto. This was followed by two carols and the anthem, ‘To Sing Unto The Lord’ by Purcell. Then it was time for the school song ‘Winder’.

As the organ bellowed out the introduction, I took my place beside Mark at the back of Powell Hall.

“We’re on next, old pal,” I whispered.

“I know. I’m nervous as hell,” hissed Mark.

And then along with four hundred other boys, we sang ‘Winder’.

*Oh Eton hath her rivers and Clifton hath her Down
And Winchester her cloisters and immemorial town
But ours the mountain fastness, the deep romantic ghylls
Where Clough and Dee and Rawthey come singing from the hills*

*For it isn’t our ancient lineage, there are others as old as we
And it isn’t our pious founders, though we honour their memory
’Tis the hills that have stood around us, unchanged since our days began
It’s Cautley, Calf, and Winder that makes the Sedbergh man*

*Not ours the crowded highways, the dust, the heat, the glare
We see a vaster prospect, we breathe a larger air
We watch the heather redden, we hear the curlew cry
About us is the moorland, above the windswept sky*

For it isn’t our ancient lineage ...

*So when in days hereafter, in tamer lands you dwell
Or in some fevered city, far off from beck and fell
As boyhood’s days grow dimmer, the memory will not die
Of Winder’s clear-out outline, against an evening sky*

For it isn't our ancient lineage ...

A minute later, Mark and I, feeling very much like two fine specimens of Sedbergh men, walked onto the stage and played the Haydn Adagio as well as we'd ever done. It was a very special moment.

The rest of the programme seemed to flash by, as if in a dream. Elgar's 'Serenade for Strings', Handel's anthem 'Zadok the Priest', another carol and a spiritual, and then the final item, Verdi's 'Grand March' from Aida.

After the concert, Mark and I had been invited to have dinner with Mr. Begley in his apartment. From the outset, it was clear that this was going to be an occasion to remember. The dining room table was covered with a white linen cloth upon which were several bottles of wine and a candelabra. As he bustled around the room, pouring out sherry, stoking the fire, and bringing hors d'oeuvres to the table, I suddenly noticed something that I had never seen before. On the mantelpiece above the fireplace were two mounted photographs. One was of an attractive woman in her thirties. The other was of a young boy perhaps four or five years of age. Whatever my thoughts were, I little suspected the truth that was to emerge.

Over dinner, the conversation started out predictably with reminiscing about the past five years, but as we proceeded from one course to another, and from one bottle of wine to another, Mr. Begley gradually began to open up about his own life before he became a master at Sedbergh. The story that emerged shook me to the core. It seemed to be a series of misfortunes fit for Job. First, there was a severe car accident when Mr. Begley was at Oxford. He described how after the crash, he wandered around in a daze with his arm and several ribs broken, before he was found. The result of that mishap was a missed Rugby Blue, a permanent paralysis on one side of his face, and a deep phobia about being in cars.

He then referred to his days during the war as an intelligence agent in Malaysia. As he was talking about this, he suddenly broke off and in a low and confidential tone of voice said, "there's something I want to tell you chaps." I looked at Mr. Begley intently. I had never seen much if any emotion in his face, save the odd tightening of anger. Now his voice was soft and husky, his brow creased with lines of reflective pain. It was an expression I had never seen before.

"Now I feel very close to you two boys," he continued, "and so I'm about to tell you something that very people know, and certainly not any other Sedbergh boy. Needless to say, this is absolutely confidential. He then turned to the photographs on the mantelpiece, and picking up the one of the woman, he said, "this was my wife."

My jaw dropped in astonishment. I looked at Mark and he too had a similar expression. For five years, I and everyone else, had lived with the image of Mr. Begley as a crusty, embittered old bachelor. For five years, we had conjectured as to whether he was still a virgin, or whether perhaps he was a burned-out homosexual. His single status and apparent lack of ease around women had made him the butt of many callous jokes. No-one had ever imagined that he might at one time have been married.

"But ... what happened, sir?" inquired Mark, a concerned look on his face.

"Well Mark, there's a long story behind what happened, but the upshot is that she committed suicide."

At this I could feel my mind go blank although I was still in touch with my feelings. I had never been able to understand why someone would commit suicide. It was incomprehensible to me. No matter how bad things were, there was always something to live for. And in any case, suicide was something you read about. I had never heard anyone talk of it before, at least not as pertaining to their lives.

The Housemaster put down the photograph of his wife and picked up the other one.

"This was our son. Shortly after this photo was taken, he died of leukaemia." Mr. Begley turned away and took a shot from his glass of liqueur. I felt seized by a jumble of emotions. Here we were meant to be celebrating a farewell and instead, we were being drawn into a horror story. And yet I could feel my heart going out to this man who I had so misunderstood for so long. The 'little man', as we'd called him, had grown in my estimation. I felt honoured that he should have decided to share these deep secrets with Mark and I and to entrust them with us.

He didn't talk much about the causes of his wife's suicide or his relationship with his son. We certainly didn't press him with questions. It was enough that he told what he had. Even if we didn't know the causes, we had been witness to the effects for five years.

The evening ended with another bombshell. The Housemaster confided that he was about to retire. He would see out the year, he said, and then move to Kenya where he had been offered a position as a teacher in a boy's preparatory school. "It will be a good deal less demanding than Sedbergh," he said, "besides, the thought of all that sun is very appealing."

The next day I left Sedbergh for good. A few days later, I received my final School Report:

Form: U6Ma
Av. age: 17.11
Age: 19.1
No. of boys: 20
Starting place: 14
Final Place: 19
Height: 5.11¼
Weight: 12.3

Physics:

While he takes time to appreciate new ideas, he has worked with commendable determination to consolidate his knowledge. If ever hard work deserved success, it deserves it here.

Housemaster:

I think he has had a most worthwhile term. His intellectual approach has become vastly calmer, more understanding, and more confident. If he can avoid unnecessary errors, he should succeed now in getting his Physics A level.

Out of school, his 1st. XV colours and his Music Competition successes should do him much good. He is in many ways a splendid specimen, and he has been an exceptional asset to us.

Headmaster:

I am deeply grateful for the splendid contribution he has made in so many spheres of activity. His influence here has been entirely first-class and he will be greatly missed. My best wishes go with him.