FREUD, DISCOURSE ANALYSIS, AND OTHERNESS:
THE HISTORICAL HERMENEUTICS OF CREATIVITY AND
AESTHETICS IN THE SUBJECT FORMATIONS OF
WRITING AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

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A submission presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Glamorgan
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

PhD by Portfolio Submission

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July 2008
ABSTRACT
This dissertation is a theoretical study with a hermeneutical praxis. The portfolio consists of four interrelated sections that combine research and theory with discourse and creativity: (a) “Part One: Overview: Freud, Discourse Analysis, and Otherness: The Historical Hermeneutics of Creativity and Aesthetics in the Modern Subject Formations of Writing and Psychoanalysis”; (b) “Part Two: Bridging Thesis: The Metaphor of Meaning: The Uncanny Nature of Discourse in Modern Narratives”; (c) “Part Three: Thesis: Psychoanalytic Theory and Creativity: Freud, Otherness, and the Historical Hermeneutics of Modern Subject-Formation”; and (d) “Part Four: Novel: Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop”. The dissertation’s critical analyses utilize an interdisciplinary, contextual, historical, and yet, as we will see in “Part Two: Bridging Thesis”, practical approach. And, although the portfolio covers Freud’s narrative works in writing and psychoanalysis, his use of discourse analysis in the theoretical formulations of psychoanalysis, and the creative otherness—the Freudian _oeuvre_—that exists in the metaphorical language and symbolism of his writing, the success of the research project lies within the application and interaction of scholarly research on the one hand and the creative discourse that is developed on the other.

Still, due to its overarching and holistic methodology, the dissertation connects research and scholarship with creativity and writing theory, which juxtaposes my creativity as a novelist with my academic abilities as a researcher. The following five-part format outlines the subsequent sections of the dissertation’s research design in the “Overview”: (a) “Introduction: Freud and the Creative Moment”; (b) “The History and Scope of the Research: Neurology, Writing and Psychoanalysis, and Cultural Criticism”; (c) “The Importance of the Research:
Part One: Overview

Narrative Theory to a Hypertext to a Metapsychology”; (d) “The Originality of the Research Project: Aesthetics, Creativity, and Otherness in the Subject-Formations of Writing and Psychoanalysis”; and (e) “Research Methodology: The Qualitative Approach to Grounded Theory in Psychoanalysis”.

As a theoretical study of Freudian psychoanalysis, the hermeneutical praxis for this dissertation was first developed from the readings, research and writing of “Part Three: Thesis: Psychoanalytic Theory and Creativity: Freud, Otherness, and the Historical Hermeneutics of Modern Subject-Formation”. Overall, its exploration and analyses of Freud, psychoanalysis, and the use of aesthetics in his theoretical formations cover a wide spectrum of creative desire, otherness, and the hermeneutics of writing and psychoanalysis. In the dissertation’s development, the research begins with a five-part thesis (Part Three) that covers writing and psychoanalysis’s early historical development from neurology and physiology to aesthetics and the art form, creativity and the artist, and subsequently the discourse analysis of Freud’s subject formations over his 40-year career as a psychoanalytic theorist. From a historical and discursive approach to qualitative research, I formulated the overarching and holistic scope of my thesis into a hypothesis that would analyse the following: (a) Freud’s early neurological writings that form the theoretical foundation for his hermeneutics for creativity and aesthetics; (b) his specific writings on creativity and the artist; (c) the implicit writings about creativity, as it relates to religion and the new creation account of psychoanalysis; (d) an account of the place of writing within his discussion of religion, culture and civilization, which forms a critical juncture between early Freudian writings and
later Freudian attempts to use psychoanalysis as cultural commentary; and finally, (e) a conclusion, which brings the thesis together, that will suggest that writing poses a particular problem for Freud because of his unresolved frustrations about creativity and critical discourse—Freud’s own “return of the repressed”.

These interrelated topics form sub-sets of the major dissertation thesis by informing and guiding my examination and analysis while chronicling the historical significance of Freud’s autobiographical, creative oeuvre, and an academic life that accounted for his development as a researcher, life writer of psychoanalysis, and modern theorist of the mind. As a final analysis of his discourse, the thesis will analyse Freud’s problems with his approach to aesthetics, creativity and the artist, especially concerning his problems with writer’s block.

Thus using a chronological and evolutionary approach to historiography that traces fifty years of Freud’s lifetime writings between 1889 and 1939, the intent of this multi-faceted study is to examine writing and psychoanalysis as it developed from neurology and physiology into narrative and literary subject-formations of aesthetics, discourse analysis, and cultural criticism.
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PART ONE: OVERVIEW
A. Introduction: Freud and the Creative Moment

Sigmund Freud constructed a model of creativity for the modern mind, not because of his debatable genius or the Freudian canon of literature, but rather because of his desire to creatively inspire his existence with language and meaning. Forever in love with the power and beauty of the written word, Freud’s personal triumph lies in the legacy of his life writings: the 150 or so books, articles and scholarly works; the 20,000 handwritten letters and “penned” notes; the iconography of Freud the public figure as spirit of the psychoanalytic metaphor, fused into modern culture (Flem 103–4). And still, there is the scholarship that not only translates and comments upon Freud’s work, but also prompts an explanation—an exegesis and redaction of its concepts and premises—such as LaPlanche and Pontalis’s *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*. Furthermore, we must also consider the medical concepts and treatments that deal with clinical psychiatry and psychology, and the volumes of critical commentary that attempt to place the importance of Freud and psychoanalysis into theories of post-colonial and post-Gothic literature—the critical accounting of Freud’s hypertext and metapsychology.

Writing satisfied not only a practical way for Freud to record his analytic sessions with his patients, but also at a deeper, personal level, a mental praxis—a mystic writing pad to join the physiological with the psychological, and turn biology and medicine into a science of aesthetics. We can see, for example, overwhelming evidence of his love for the written word—his desire to be the master of the modern *oeuvre*—in his early writing of “Note upon the ‘Mystic Writing Pad’”; the Paris translations of Charcot’s writings and lectures on hysteria and pathologies of the
nervous system (1886), hypnosis (1888–92), and the *Tuesday Lectures* (1892–4); and two decades later in the eloquently emblematic “The Moses of Michelangelo”.

Quite expressively eloquent, Freud spent most of his adult life dancing a Viennese Waltz with his poetic double—his *otherness*—romantically in love with the *book* as something of an idealised love object. This idealisation began as early as age seven with the reading of the Book of Books, the Philippson Bible, and Jewish mysticism. As a child, a significant amount of Freud’s desire for creative inspiration was the result of his father Jacob Freud’s (1815–96) own love for the arts, classical learning, and the Judaic teachings of the *kabbala* and the *Talmud*. Moreover, as a young boy, Freud’s favourite books ranged from the finest children’s stories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the best oral traditions of European folklore and the metaphorically potent myths of ancient Greek and Roman literature.

Because of his profoundly ambiguous and at times cynical approach to creativity and artists in general, in the end Freud always appears to be unsure where his theories on creativity are taking the reader, because creativity and the creative process are never quite grasped as theoretical concepts in any kind of hermeneutic framework. In the final analysis of Freud’s scholarly works on creativity, aesthetic value eludes all of his scientific deductions, no matter the extent or depth that he went to shoring up his theoretical assumptions on psychoanalytic theory. Freud’s scientific deductions on aesthetics always seem to give way to the seductive impulses of his creative spirit, and what should have been his primary emphasis upon interpretation always becomes secondary to his analysis of the art and the artist’s imagination. For most of his adult life, Freud was psychologically,
intellectually and culturally torn between scientific fact and the aesthetics of human creativity—the biological and the emotional. Freud was forever trying to understand and explain the maddening moments of life's darkest paradoxes. With the exception of his earliest writing from the 1880s and early 1890s, we can consistently see this autobiographical landscape—Freud's creative otherness—imprinted upon his psychoanalytic life writings.

To academia in the twentieth-first century, Freudian psychoanalysis is still considered a modern form of philosophical thought because the field continues to generate a considerable amount of intellectual interest, although its medical and psychological application has been replaced by more modern and economical approaches to the therapy of ego psychology, especially in America. Starting out as a dynamic, literary theory involving the rigid codes and propositions concerning the familial bonds of the Oedipal Complex, the conflicting sub-systems of the unconscious in psychic life, and the fantasy, dream relationship between the author and text, or artist and artwork, traditional psychoanalytic criticism was primarily developed around the imagos, the psychoanalytic affect of the repressed emotions, the transformations of the affected emotions to its manifest object (the text or artwork, for example), and the centre of the critical accounting—the close, microscopic readings between the affected latent content and the socially accepted manifest desire. Overlapping the academic fields of medicine, physiology, biology and aesthetics over its hundred-plus-year history, psychoanalysis has been consumed, dictated and directed by the creativity of its theorists, the writings of its practitioners, and the amount of creative speculation and adoration that the discipline
could conjure up in the minds of its proponents. Looking back at the continental fin de siècle, no one in Europe or America could have expected the literary magnitude of what was about to take place—from the unknown writing of the Project in 1897 until Freud’s death in 1939—in the life writings of one man.

This Overview (Part One) will explore the originality, importance and significance of my dissertation—“Freud, Discourse Analysis, and Otherness: The Historical Hermeneutics of Creativity and Aesthetics in the Subject Formations of Writing and Psychoanalysis”—as an exposition, textual analysis, and critical account of the research and creativity in writing and psychoanalysis as it applies to Freud’s theories and hermeneutics. I not only discuss how this has helped to formulate my own ideas about my creative discourse, but also what contributions the dissertation portfolio’s scholarly thesis (Part Three), creative novel (Part Four), and bridging essay (Part Two) make to what is new in the field of writing and psychoanalysis, the creative writing of psychoanalytic novels, and the rhetorical and psychological problems associated with writer’s block. Thus, employing a qualitative research approach of grounded theory with a hermeneutical praxis, the methodology used in this dissertation encompasses interdisciplinary readings and research from a wide variety of academic disciplines—research and writing across the curricula of the humanities and social sciences.
B. The History and Scope of the Research:

Neurology, Writing and Psychoanalysis, and Cultural Criticism

Early in the reading phase of this dissertation, my psychoanalytic supervisor suggested that I carry out an overview of Freud, creativity and psychoanalysis as a means of establishing a historical account for the dissertation portfolio's overarching research design. I originally wanted to develop the scholarly thesis along the lines of psychoanalysis and creativity from Freud through Lacan to Kristeva, ending with the feminist writing of Hélène Cixous. Finding the topic too critically imposing for the research that I was attempting, I realised that I had to concentrate upon one major body of work that had a concordance of themes and a related genre of scholarship. Although this limited my initial thesis, in the end it afforded me the latitude to carry out more sophisticated analysis of Freud's more creative works within my research aims and within the range of my own scholarly abilities.

Using my historical sketch, I revised the theoretical approach of my thesis by beginning with Freud and the psychic scene of writing contained in his more neurological writings of the 1880s and '90s. In the research process, the scholarly thesis (Part Three) begins with Freud's early mechanistic writings on neurology and the *psychical apparatus*—as Freud often referred to the psyche—and analyses the significance of why, during the 1890s, Freud moved from neurological and physiological research on the body to an analysis of aesthetics and humanism. As a historical foundation for his later theories and hermeneutics on creativity, the artist, and religion, the scholarly thesis begins by documenting the early works that impacted directly upon the praxis for the development of psychoanalysis. Some of
the more important neurological documents were “Sketches for the ‘Preliminary Communication’ of 1893”, Project for a Scientific Psychology, and Freud’s collaboration with Josef Breuer, Studies on Hysteria. We will discuss how these medically-driven reports on Freud’s neurological and physiological writings influenced what most critics call the “hypothetical phase” of psychoanalysis (1895–1905), and Freud’s theoretical change to aesthetics and creativity within the psychoanalytic dreamscape—the surreal realm of mental life. Moreover, while carrying out the research for the scholarly thesis (Part Three), I began to see connections between Freud’s philosophical search for a body of academic knowledge in psychoanalysis and his desire to express the western oeuvre of modern culture as they theoretically emerge (1894–1900) through the spatial layers of the psychical apparatus. Within these geographic spheres, Freud firmly established his iconoclastic metaphors of the mind, joining creativity and aesthetics with religious illusions and dogma to symbolically institute the superego, the id and the ego.

I rooted the scope of my theoretical research within the Freudian body of life writings on creativity and aesthetics, which began as a letter to Wilhelm Fliess (Letter 71, 15 October 1897) and ended with Freud’s preface to Marie Bonaparte’s psychobiography of Edgar Allan Poe’s life and literary works. Around James Strachey’s “Appendix: List of Writings by Freud Dealing Mainly or Largely with Art, Literature or the Theory of Aesthetics” (SE 24 213–14)—which includes a collection of 22 essays, novellas, letters and short notes—I developed what ultimately became a five-part hypothesis on Freud’s specific writings on creativity, the artist and their artworks, and his theory of criticism from the 24 volumes of
Strachey’s *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Related to Strachey’s list, the more important works on creativity from the Freudian canon are “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of Childhood”, “The Moses of Michelangelo”, “Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s *Gradiva*”, “The Uncanny”, and the famous psychobiographical criticism “Dostoevsky and Parricide”, all of which will be fully explored in Part Three of the dissertation portfolio.

From this generative body of work—and, I might add, the other major translation of Freud’s works through the first half of the twentieth century, *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud* by psychoanalyst A. A. Brill—I began to see links in Freud’s personal and professional life concerning his love-hate relationship with religion: what would constitute a history of the world culturally, and a spiritual entity mystically, from an existential point of view? Although never having been schooled as a child in Jewish orthodoxy, the *kabbala* or the *Talmud*, Freud consistently wrote his prose from the great literary traditions of the folkloric Moses and the biblical genesis, Oedipus and the Greek classics, and the humanistic traditions of the Italian Renaissance, especially within the hyper-extended framework of a religious hierarchy. This link between creativity and religion would further prompt Freud to psychoanalytically express his own frustrations with being Jewish and an admitted atheist in the 1927 work *The Future of an Illusion*, and by rewriting a new creation account of religious history in *Moses and Monotheism*, published just before Freud’s death in London in 1939.
As a matter of recourse, Freud tried to resolve an introspective debate within himself about religion, Yahweh and civilization, which would find its way into his writing about creativity. This internal debate—a neurotic compulsion at best—always centred its unconscious motivations upon the lack of connectivity and unresolved Oedipal issues with his father’s complete tolerance of the younger Freud’s precocious childhood. This intellectualisation shifted during his self-analysis in the late 1890s from his unconscious thoughts of his father’s Judaic heritage to the development of psychoanalysis. Freud provides the widest possible scope within his rhetorical discussions on the subjects of creativity and creative personae by establishing the hypothetical and symbolic place—the psychoanalytic dreamscape—where aesthetics inhabits a topos of locus in religion, culture and civilization. That is, he novelistically starts with a quasi-scientific reality and suspends its established authorial purposes in favour of a bourgeois literary fantasy of peril and triumph, reminiscent of nineteenth-century Gothic literature. Freud combined the psychoanalytic dreamscape—as the place of writing in works such as The Future of an Illusion and in specific passages of Civilization and Its Discontents—with aesthetics, religion and culture established in my thesis (Part Three, “Psychoanalytic Theory and Creativity: Freud, Otherness, and the Historical Hermeneutics of Modern Subject-Formation”) on religion, creativity, and the culture significance of illusions within his practice of religion—Freud’s topos of locus within his place of writing.

In his essay “Freud’s Writing on Writing”, Jean Michael Rey contemplates the difficulty of writing on a hyper-textual level, where the mechanical images of the
writing exist completely externally to the abstract consciousness of the writer’s metaphorical and symbolic meanings: "who can say, perceive, or know himself on a level with what he writes, with what writes him?" (Felman 324). From trying to always be the great solver of enigmas, Freud spent the better part of 40 years of his professional writing career applying the psychoanalyst’s handwritten conjectures from the patient’s psychic confessionals to his theories of applied psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic criticism, trying to merge the medical with the humanistic.

As we will see later in my analysis of "The Uncanny" in Parts Two and Three, at times in his discussion of aesthetics Freud is never quite sure where he is taking us, because creativity, the artist and the artwork always seem to elude his theories and scientific reductions about the mind (Harari, Hertz). Especially in the writing of "The Uncanny", with quiet indignation taking over, we can see Freud’s critical mind seek out a kind of cerebral impasse by playing the devil’s advocate when his writer’s block takes over, proclaiming that the subject of his frustration is art for art’s sake and does not really exist in real life anyway ("The Uncanny" 249–51). As a systematic problem, Freud’s writer’s block could take on many forms of neurotic symptoms, including intellectualisation, projection and displacement, as evidenced in his use of the literary conceit of the body’s navel to express the abyss of his psychoanalytic knowledge at that theoretical juncture in his academic thought processes (The Interpretation of Dreams 199 n. 2):

I suspect that the interpretation of this portion has not been carried far enough to follow every hidden meaning. If I were to continue the comparison of the three women, I should go far afield. Every dream has at least one point
at which it is unfathomable; a central point, as it were, connecting it with the unknown. [all quotes are given exactly from their original translations from their cited sources]

As this dissertation portfolio will demonstrate, Freud’s theoretical constructs and analytic writings did not end with just a simple praxis of people’s mental life. Autobiographically, *The Interpretation of Dreams* quite freely posits Freud as the subject of his own analysis and conflated theories. Theoretically, he goes from generating a self-analysis of his unconscious to his father’s death and screen memories of his own Oedipal Conflicts, and subsequently to the conception of his little dream-book and the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which historically signifies the birth of psychoanalysis. In writing *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud aligned psychoanalysis with the spiritual quest for truth, which drew religion into Freud’s mysticism.

He then systematically took his theories of psychic life on a journey of psychoanalytic commentary, while creating in his genetic style of writing a meta-psychology of language and meaning, elevating his theoretical concepts and hypothetical constructs to a hyper-textual level of what basically amounts to the aesthetics of Gothic folktales, romanticism, and participatory research, conveniently cloaked in the science of the day. Notably, this constant desire for a truth in discourse and theory—the verities of life—would become the creative breeding ground for the psychoanalyst, the analysand, and the psychoanalytic writer, who would use subjectivity and the otherness of writing and psychoanalysis at the centre of their intellectualisation of the topic. As the consummate scribe, in Freud’s case...
the hand that writes the word is never far removed from the theories or hermeneutics that the language and the hand would create. And through its development as discourse analysis, writing and psychoanalysis become testimony to Freud's subjectivity within his manifested conflicts, partly as an internal turmoil with finding a psychological and cerebral truth that could account for a theory of mind within the paradoxes of living in the modern age.

C. The Importance of the Research:

Narrative Theory to a Hypertext to a Metapsychology

Working within the creative and subjective hermeneutics of writing and psychoanalysis, the underlying significance of this research and creative dissertation lies in the premise that Freud was not only the father of psychoanalysis and generative theories of the mind, but a frustrated writer whose psychoanalytical writings provided some compensation for the many paradoxes of his conflicted life: (a) born to a Jewish family but an avowed atheist who never left the brotherhood of the B’nai B’rith or the Jewish community centre near the Ringstrasse of Old Vienna until his exile to London in 1938; (b) developed and fostered the academic field of psychoanalysis but felt severely uncomfortable with traditional psychiatry and the patient care of the mentally ill; and more significantly, (c) desired that psychoanalysis be like an applied science similar to medicine but spent the last 40 years of his life writing the layers of hermeneutics for the humanistic philosophy of psychoanalysis that would become the academic thought—the otherness of metaphorical and symbolic language—behind the field of psychoanalytic theory.
Beginning with the extended research effort of the scholarly thesis, it is important to cover the complex steps of grounding Freud’s writing career within his more neurological writings of the 1880s and early 1890s. In Freudian psychoanalysis, the neurological and physiological are always meshing and conflicting with the metaphorical and the humanistic. In Part Three of this dissertation portfolio, the scholarly research begins with a discussion of the impact that nineteenth-century science and biology had on Freud’s metaphorical and symbolic language as a writer. Between his collaboration with Breuer in *Studies on Hysteria* and his father’s death in 1896, this evolutionary and theoretical decision to change his subject formulations from a science of the body to a science of the mind narrated as aesthetics and creativity appears to be as much a personal—Freud’s desire for an artistic expression of *psychical-analysis*—as it does a medical or technical need to synthesize a hypothetical conclusion.

Professionally turning away from an unemotional, neurologically-based writing style in the early 1890s to an enlightened, historic mode of genetic discourse by the time that *The Interpretation of Dreams* appeared in 1900, Freud began to construct and intertwine into his analytic writings whatever literary genres, poetic allusions, accounts from history and anthropology, and religions in which he was interested in order to create and theoretically develop the rationale and logic for the academic field of psychoanalysis as a theory of the mind. And, contrary to his medical training at the Helmholtz School of Medicine in Vienna (1873–81), Freud spent the last 46 years of his life’s writings—from *Studies on Hysteria* (1893–95) until *Moses and Monotheism* (1939)—trying to bridge nineteenth-century science
and biology with an enlightened *otherness*—an *oeuvre* of language and metaphor for psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory.

As I will discuss in this Overview, the benefits of this research portfolio to the academic community are numerous and varied. Overall, its exploration and analyses of Freud, psychoanalysis, and the use of aesthetics in his theoretical formations cover a wide spectrum of creativity, *otherness*, and the hermeneutics of writing and psychoanalysis. In the dissertation’s development, the research begins with a five-part thesis (Part Three) that covers Freud and psychoanalysis’s early historical development from neurology and physiology to aesthetics, creativity and discourse analysis over his 40-year career as a psychoanalytic theorist. As a historical and aesthetic approach to a qualitative and grounded research design, I thus formulated the overarching and holistic scope of my thesis, Part Three of the portfolio—"Psychoanalytic Theory and Creativity: Freud, *Otherness*, and the Historical Hermeneutics of Modern Subject-Formation"—into a hypothesis that would analyse the following: (a) Freud’s early neurological writings that form the theoretical foundation for his hermeneutics for creativity and aesthetics as seen in Chapter II; (b) his specific writings on creativity and the artist, as we will explore in Chapter III; (c) the implicit writings about creativity, as it relates to religion and the new creation account of psychoanalysis in Chapter IV; (d) an account of the place of writing within his discussion of religion, culture and civilization, which forms a critical juncture between early Freudian writings and later Freudian attempts to use psychoanalysis as cultural commentary in Chapter V; and finally, (e) a conclusion, which brings the thesis together in Chapter VI, that will suggest that writing poses a
particular problem for Freud because of his unresolved frustrations about creativity and critical discourse—Freud's own "return of the repressed".

These interrelated topics form a sub-set of the major research thesis by informing and guiding my examination and analysis while chronicling the historical significance of Freud's autobiographical, creative *oeuvre*, and an academic life that accounted for his development as a researcher, life writer of psychoanalysis, and modern theorist. As a final analysis of his discourse, the thesis will analyse Freud's problems with his approach to aesthetics, creativity and the artist, especially concerning his problems with writer's block. Although my scholarly thesis is not about proving or disproving psychoanalytic theories using a contrasting approach to psychoanalysis, discourse analysis or modern ego psychology, it was helpful and rewarding in the writing of my creative novel (Part Four) to view the development of the characters in ways that relate to Freud's use of psychoanalysis, while creating my own language and symbolic metaphors. In the end I faced, as Freud did in "The Uncanny", my very own writer's block, which had to be dealt with throughout the whole process of writing the novel, especially during the revising phases, which took the work down from a 200,000-word document to an 80,000 final manuscript.

Throughout the whole, complex process, the writing of the novel and the creative development of the characterisations were placed under the strict scrutiny and analysis of my own writing block, especially where it concerned, in Freudian terminology, Oedipal repression and the return of the dead. Furthermore, once completed, the success of the research in the thesis carried over into the characterisations of the novel and firmly established a praxis in my theoretical
awareness while writing the bridging thesis (Part Two). Within the research and writing process, the academic research informed and prompted the writing of the creative novel (Part Four, Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop), while the scholarship in the thesis and creative novel brought the bridging thesis (Part Two) together as an overarching event between the complex forces involved in writing theory, psychic awareness, and the aesthetics of creativity as an otherness.

Unlike the straightforward approach that I employed in the writing of the scholarly thesis (Part Three), the writing of my fictional novel (Part Four) became a complicated matter of division in my own personality, as I could feel unconscious and conscious strivings tugging at my creative awareness. This concerned my own Oedipal feelings and the impressions that my scholarly study had made upon my thoughts concerning Freud's problems while writing and rewriting "The Uncanny". Throughout the writing of my novel Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop I had to continually question the limitations of my creativity, as my creative oeuvre was tied to an otherness—my father—and the impressions that he made upon my mind, not only in terms of my Oedipal makeup, but as a truck driver and the subject of a character in a novel that I was writing. These questions became part of the effects that my research on Freud and "The Uncanny", and my desire to express my relationship with my father through the writing of a novel, had on me both psychologically and academically: does all writing produce somewhere in its arbitrary nature an uncanny effect, a shadow of its authorial existence? And does this uncanny effect always have the power to deconstruct the very structure that the writing is trying to create—its own deconstructionism—with every stroke of the
author's imagination? Fortunately, these questions were taken up and answered fully in the writing of the bridging thesis (Part Two): "The Metaphor of Meaning: The Uncanny Nature of Discourse in Modern Narratives."

As writing theory, the bridging thesis (Part Two) became something altogether different and unique. Its purpose was to not only evaluate my writing in the novel Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop (Part Four), but also to utilise my research into psychoanalysis to develop the novel's forward action, while intervening simultaneously in the work's writing process as not only the author but as an unconscious force in the spirit of the novel's creation. Written as a hermeneutic evaluation of my doctoral research and the creative writing of a fictional novel, the bridging thesis evaluates the following: (a) how Freud's "The Uncanny" impacted upon my writing of Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop; (b) why creativity's hidden phantoms of suspicion—as discussed by Hélène Cixous in her essay, "Fiction and its Phantoms: A reading of Freud's 'Das Unheimliche'"—affect a work's ability to generate the aesthetics necessary for a complete poetic reality; and more importantly, (c) how and why the scholarly thesis moulded my writing approach in the creative novel, which has in turn influenced my ideas about what constitutes writing theory as a practice. Moreover, I had to answer the question: how has my study of Freud influenced my ideas about creativity and the practice of writing as theory? Understanding Freud's writer's block in "The Uncanny" became a major undertaking because it would form a bridge between my research into psychoanalysis and the self-applied analysis of my own creativity as a novelist. The reason for focusing the bridging thesis upon Freud's writing of "The Uncanny" lies
within my desire to establish a writing theory between scholarship and creativity as I attempted to untangle the *uncanniness* in my own literary works.

For all of Freud’s rhetoric on psychoanalysis as a scientific apparatus of the modern, research-driven world, aesthetic references to the classical learning sites of Rome, Athens and Jerusalem—the sacred and the profane—are always at the centre of his psychoanalytic theories. The problem arises when one realises that not one of Freud’s theories on psychoanalysis—beginning with his theoretical break from Josef Breuer and the start of psychoanalytic commentary, exemplified by short writings such as *Screen Memories*—can be proven or re-enacted quantitatively through the use of a scientific model or hypothesis. From a theoretical and interrogative perspective, there is a complete change in academic emphasis between Breuer and Freud’s “On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communications” and *Studies on Hysteria*, and Freud’s publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. This change raises questions that relate to Part Three, about the severe dichotomy of his early writings between 1890 and 1900, especially how it would affect creativity, aesthetics and the art form in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In this 10-year period of writing on psychic research, Freud goes from writing about the symptom and the affliction to the *imago* and the manifestation of the psychic discord.

As we will see on numerous occasions in this dissertation, aesthetics provided a ready-made vehicle to express not only the affliction but also the symptom, which could demonstrate through a narrative expression an internal reality to his external theories. Once Freud had chosen to demonstrate his theories and
hermeneutics in works such as “Delusions and Dreams in Jensen Gradiva”, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, and “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, aesthetics and creativity became a means to an end, which would create its own set of problems and limitations within the theoretical and hermeneutical framework of writing and psychoanalysis’s metapsychological structures. Unlike Freud’s medical training, neither creativity nor aesthetics could be put to any hypothetical scrutiny or tested under a laboratory microscope. Thus, throughout the development of psychoanalysis, Freud was in need of new theorems and hermeneutics to continually shore-up previous conjectures and propositions, especially as his colleagues began to write their own variations and extensions of psychoanalytic theory. Perhaps the most famous of these cases was Freud’s Theory of Seduction (1895–1897), which was later dropped to become part of the role of fantasy in infantile sexuality (letter to Fliess, dated 9 September 1897, in The Language of Psycho-Analysis).

This inability to prove or disprove psychoanalysis’s credibility and reliability would create monumental theoretical shortcomings, all the way from the conception of The Interpretation of Dreams to his last work, Moses and Monotheism, four decades later. Conversely, because of its lack of scientific rigour and reliability, why is Freud never able to escape the universal questions: what is creativity? How is creativity accessed in the dynamics of the psychic realm? Furthermore, why are the symbolic metaphors of the sacred and profane always at the centre of Freud’s theories and the psychoanalytic landscape as the place of writing, when it is scientific knowledge that he says his discourse attempts to explain?
As we will see in the scholarly thesis (Part Three), these same theoretical assumptions are forever questioning the very scientific hypothesis, paradoxically, that Freud’s creativity is trying to generate, as hermeneutics, into his subjectivity and otherness as psychoanalytic discourse. Moreover, as a consequence of this inability to find a hermeneutic able to withstand scientific scrutiny, most research in the last 30 years on Freud and his explanation of creativity and aesthetics has revolved around the discussion of psychoanalysis’s failure to meet the criterion of a quantitative, pure science, not the attempt his theories or his creative zeal make in trying to analyse the subject of aesthetics, literary criticism, or a humanistic approach to the problems of the human condition.

Thus, the importance of this dissertation to the academic community and fellow writers is its diversity. The portfolio is theoretically and hermeneutically pointed and complex, varied concerning its creativity on aesthetics, yet practical and visionary in its aims and goals as far as discourse analysis, creative otherness, and subject-formation in writing and psychoanalysis are concerned. The significant reasons for reading the dissertation’s theses and creative projects are as follows: (a) the scholarly thesis (Part Three) covers Freud’s subject formations in writing and psychoanalysis, tracing psychoanalysis’s theoretical development from Freud’s “hypothetical phase” through aesthetics and creativity to cultural criticism and religious commentary; (b) the dissertation portfolio outlines Freud’s theory of aesthetics and creativity in the subject-formation of psychoanalysis as an academic field of study; (c) the scholarly thesis, and to some extent the bridging essay (Part Two), carry out a case study of Freud’s discourse analysis and psychoanalysing of
“The Uncanny”, which demonstrates his problems with writer’s block; and (d) the writing of the novel entitled *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* (Part Four) becomes, through the novel’s developmental phases, a testing and a case study of my own creativity—my personal *oeuvre*—laid bare to the scrutiny of the research that I had just finished in the scholarly thesis, juxtaposed with the actual creative work and its critical accounting in the bridging essay, theoretically and creatively testing and overcoming my own writing block, which became quite significant during the complex process of writing a fictional manuscript and reducing the document to a finished work.

D. The Originality of the Research Project: Aesthetics, Creativity, and Otherness in the Subject-Formations of Writing and Psychoanalysis

Freud knew more about the *psychic realm* and the *mental apparatus*, as he wanted to call the mind and the organic brain, than his theories or hermeneutics could express or, more significantly, he could formulate into a subjective, hyper-textual document that he conceived as the metapsychology of psychoanalytic theory. It is important to make the distinction between what Freud came to *know* between the early 1890s and what he could write as critical discourse by the time of his death in 1939. With this distinction firmly in mind, the originality of this research thesis lies in its hermeneutical approach to the oblique layers of applied traditional psychoanalysis, the academic field of psychoanalytic theory as literary criticism, and Freud’s critique of creativity and aesthetics, involving the psychoanalytic synthesis of neurology and physiology in the analysis of creative works, the artists and artworks, the
psychoanalytic place of his discourse analysis, and the use of a new creation account in his evaluation and criticism of religion as an illusion manifesting itself as cultural neurosis.

Early on in my readings, these questions concerning Freud’s theory of his hermeneutical formulations led me to two critical findings about his development as a writer and theorist. First, within Freud’s literary psyche vis-à-vis his writings and theories, I will hypothesize that Freud himself is torn between secretly being the artist/patient that he is critically writing about and the scientist/medical doctor that his ego is portraying on the surface. Secondly, I further surmise that these first few years (1895–1905, the so-called “hypothetical phase”) show how Freud began to reposition his writings from the biological body of physiology to the affective realm of thoughts and feelings, directly related to psychoanalysis’s inability to develop as a factual science of the biological organ rather than a critique of the aesthetics of the cultural affect upon the mind. Moreover, the use of discourse analysis as a hypertext to produce a quasi-scientific hypothesis was further enhanced by Freud’s ability to create metapsychological ideas that not only rivalled the scientific thought of the day, but also generated philosophical hermeneutics into subject-formations, creative definitions, and academic interpretations about the internal workings of the mind.

Within Freud’s critical studies of dream-life in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, jokes and slips of the tongue in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, and the crazy pathology of everyday life in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, psychoanalysis slowly started becoming a generative source of aesthetics involving theories about how people thought. And, as Freud started developing his critique of
mental life, the scientific desire to theoretically empower the clinical aspects of psychoanalysis became less important than delving into and analysing the subjectivity of psychoanalysis's conjectures by creating academically accepted definitions of its metaphorical being as a language of psycho-hermeneutics.

Starting with the research for the scholarly thesis (Part Three), my readings began to explore Freud's early research writings into neurology and the *psychical apparatus*, and analyse the significance of why in the 1890s Freud moved from neurological and physiological research on the body to a research analysis of aesthetics and humanism. Crucially, in a wider sense, why does Freud take his research writings from the nineteenth-century science of observable phenomena and neuro-physiology to a realm of subjective appropriation and writing about the psychic *otherness* of surrealism and the Gothic sublime? As a result of his physiological research in the late 1880s and 1890s, why does he switch his scientific analysis of the neurotic and somatic symptoms—neurological disorders *vis-à-vis* the mind—to the psychoanalytic and psychobiographical literary analysis of creative artefacts (classical plays, romantic tales, Ancient Greek mythology, dreams, even the occult) and accounts of Judaic and Christian writings, as an attempt to understand creativity during the first two decades of the twentieth century?

Was the wholesale theoretical change largely because Freud saw (a) mechanistic accounts of behaviour as inimical to the understanding of the creative process, and (b) creativity as a rational and critical means of delving into the dynamic forces of the unconscious mind? However, once the hermeneutics of psychoanalytic theory began with the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*,
why did Freud feel constrained to forever work within some kind of scientific practice that failed, at least for him, to account for creativity, thereby reducing its scientific credibility as an academic theory of the mind? Also, are not the Freudian hypotheses about creativity similar to what he writes of screen memories in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, that the mental capacity to retrace itself to the site of the screen memories obscures the attempt to get back to the original, potentially traumatic, moment in the unconscious layers of the psyche (Brill 62–8)? Thus, ironically from the Freudian point of view, the psychic ability to generate screen memories, as a creative phenomenon, both blocks and inhibits any scientific effort to retrace a traumatic moment into the unconscious layers of the mind.

By the time he was a young man in medical school, Freud developed a private interest in Jewish mysticism, so his style of writing contained a schematic structure that ranged from the realm of the known to the unspecified unknown, while using both the sacred and the profane to add religious emphasis to his research. This intensity of seeking in his writing of a polymorphous language of knowledge of people's existence left no earthly corner untouched, often juxtaposing even the pagan and the occult with the sacred institutions of the Judaic and Catholic religions. Professionally alone in the late 1890s when his break from Breuer was complete, Freud began to follow, in theory at least, the teachings of the ancient interpretative traditions of Talmudic learning, discovering in the very act of writing a spiritual intrigue and a kind of secret, cottage thinking which, paradoxically, idealised the "sciences of the spirit" and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poems as a link to the mystical and holistic of a pagan counterculture (Goethe 495): "Beauty is the
manifestation of secret natural laws which otherwise would have been hidden from forever!"

Within its most basic precepts, religion was always a place of creativity where Freud could psychoanalyse the mind’s desire to find order and meaning, juxtaposed with the darkness and chaos of death and disorder. To Freud’s psyche his Jewish heritage was a real-life Oedipal issue that was constantly present as a brooding obsession, haunting his figure of existence. Given these circumstances, the historical conventions of religious thought, not Judaism specifically, were a desired otherness, a romantic elsewhere within its own context, and not unlike Freud’s spatial and metaphoric theory of the unconscious mind, a hidden world of ambiguity and power, where he could link all of his oxymoronic and humanistic elements into a discourse of people’s lost souls.

Professionally, the very thought of the word religion seems to have been a displaced metaphor operating aesthetically as a conceit when formulated into the subjective consciousness of his writings and overarching theories of hermeneutics (The Future of an Illusion 44):

Our knowledge of the historical worth of certain religious doctrines increases our respect for them, but does not invalidate our proposal that they should cease to be put forward as the reasons for the precepts of civilization. On the contrary! Those historical residues have helped us to view religious teachings, as it were, as neurotic relics, and we may now argue that the time has probably come, as it does in an analytic treatment, for replacing the effects of repression by the results of the rational operation for the intellect.
Fifteen years earlier (1912–13), in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud suppressed any spiritual need that he might have in favour of finding a religion of psychoanalysis through deductive reasoning and a bourgeois science of hermeneutics using a wide array of historical artefacts from his many secondary sources. In this work specifically, Freud’s cultural analysis of biblical history attempts to find the original moment when civilization and laws were first developed, which would have given his cultural theories a real scientific genesis, compared to the biblical genesis of Adam and Eve recounted in aetiological myths (*Totem and Taboo* 186–7):

As time went on, the animal lost its sacred character and the sacrifice lost its connection with the totem feast; it became a simple offering to the deity, an act of renunciation in favour of the god. God Himself had become so far exalted above mankind that He could only be approached through an intermediary—the priest. At the same time divine kings made their appearance in the social structure and introduced the patriarchal system into the state. It must be confessed that the revenge taken by the deposed and restored father was a harsh one: the dominance of authority was at its climax [...] But there is a second meaning to this last picture of sacrifice which is unmistakable. It expresses satisfaction at the earlier father-surrogate having been abandoned in favour of the superior concept of God.

Profoundly enamoured with the mystical world as he was, all of this leads us to two poignant questions about Freud’s philosophical beliefs as a human being: was Freud a true mystic at heart? Or was he a man who could not find a real God in any of his scientific deductions, but paradoxically saw God’s presence in the great
mysteries of life—its sublime beauty? Certainly from Carl Gustav Jung’s philosophical perspective on mysticism, Freud’s writings attempt to play that role in his critique of religion and the artistic imagination: “only the mystic brings religion into creativity” (Progoff). However, was it Freud’s mysticism or Freud the creative author trying to locate his momentary otherness within another creative realm for the purposes of psychoanalytic theory?

Quite often in his discourse on creativity we see Freud skipping between these two spheres, trying to bring to the surface the turmoil of the unconscious as a journalised reality of written expression. Similar evidence of a symbolic representation could be found on the furniture in Freud’s offices in Vienna and London, decorated with his favourite pagan statues. During breaks from analysis with his patients, Freud could dream a few silent moments with the spirits of antiquity and feel unbridled in his own estranged otherness and creative elsewhere.

E. Research Methodology: The Qualitative Approach to Grounded Theory in Writing and Psychoanalysis

Utilising the hermeneutical praxis of grounded theory by comparing the analyses and criticism of related texts, using Freudian concepts as an orientation and focus to his subject-formations into psychoanalysis, and employing Freud’s subjective and my creativity as the otherness of an oeuvre, this qualitative study will: (a) establish and examine a historical timeframe within the development of psychoanalysis, which includes a short discussion of Freud’s more neurological and mechanistic writings of the 1890s and early 1900s; (b) document the importance of Freud’s life
part one: overview

writings on aesthetics, religion and culture that are specific to the artist and their artwork; (c) examine accounts of religion that represent his attempt to culturally develop a psychoanalytic theory of Old Testament and Judaic writings as a new creation account and complete with a psychoanalytic authority of the text; (d) analyse Freud’s use of the novelistic setting, a topos of locus, in his discussion of religion and place; (e) examine and analyse Freud’s attempts to overcome his writer’s block, in “The Uncanny” for example, as symptomatic of his fear of psychoanalysis’s inability to meet and sustain the rigours of scientific scrutiny; and finally, (f) discuss as writing theory the uncanny nature of Freud’s unconscious otherness in relationship to the symbolic navel, the last psychic point of maternal reference leading to the abyss of his mental capabilities.

For specific clarification, close readings are designed to draw out contradictions and inconsistencies about creativity and aesthetics. I examine the historicity of “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, the desire to be the artist and the artwork in “The Moses of Michelangelo”, the aetiological and classical metaphors of Renaissance Italy in “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood”, the pathology of the family siblings in “Dostoevsky and Parricide”, the modern literary and cultural criticism from passages of Civilization and its Discontents, and Freud’s place of writing in The Future of an Illusion. Eventually we will see that Freud’s beliefs about the artist, creativity and aesthetics were based upon the desire to reduce creativity to a therapeutic form of catharsis, wish fulfillment, ego pleasure, and psychic release from libidinal drives.
As the benchmark contribution of early psychoanalytic writings, *The Interpretation of Dreams* would examine the form, design and structure of the creative imagination alongside the form, design and structure of daydreaming, obsessive fantasies, and somatic dream-work. In a cause-and-effect relationship, Freud viewed creativity and aesthetics as a socially accepted practice whereby the neurotic mind displayed its more maddening and radical moments of thought. Freud was matching the fantasy world of the artist and their child-like play with the cold realities of adult life after the pleasure principle—to use a title from one of Freud’s future works *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*—had ended. Later works on creativity and aesthetics—such as “The Uncanny”, “Dostoevsky and Parricide”, “The Moses of Michelangelo”, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, the well-known acceptance speech for “The Goethe Prize”, and “Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious”—would follow much the same format, reducing the artform, the artist’s life history, or a combination of the two, to a series of psychoanalytic readings and subjective assumptions. Hypothetically, however, Freud’s theories on creativity in such works as “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” and “Dostoevsky and Parricide” appear to suggest that only the pathological mind can be creative. The struggling writer, artist or poet, with no real socially-accepted place, uses their desires, idle wishes and daydreams and turns them into artistic endeavours that the rest of the world can aesthetically enjoy.

Generally, Freud’s writings on a psychoanalytic model of creativity allow for catharsis to take place in the mind of the sick, troubled artist, relieving what Freud saw on a literary level as a *haunting*, similar to the horrific characterisation of
Nathanael in E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann*, which he tried, unsuccessfully, to come to terms with in the psychoanalysis of Nathanael’s split personality and Hoffmann’s dark tale of the demonic double in Freud’s psychoanalytic inquiry, “The Uncanny”. Theoretically, this catharsis releases the psychic trauma of the artist from their childhood repression—the fear of castration—and transfers the catharsis to the psychoneurotic apprehensions of the viewer of the artwork, who would further repeat the cathartic process for their own pleasure and the purgation of their emotions.

As a poignant work on hypertextuality using a metapsychology of psychoanalytic terminology, “The Uncanny” is Freud’s most important example of literary case study and the formulations of his discourse analysis in the pathological characterisation of a gothic folktale. Freud first became intellectually cognisant of the criticism of creative works and aesthetics from his critical study of “Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s *Gradiva*”, which was originally given at a lecture to the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society in 1905 (Nunberg and Federn). An essay written in that same year but not published until after his death in 1942 entitled “Psychopathic Characters on the Stage” followed this early critical work’s thematic structure.

Utilising theoretical and hermeneutical praxis, the readings in this dissertation will lead to a qualitative research process that focuses upon the interactions of Freud’s historical works as developing theories of psychoanalysis in, for example, “The Uncanny”, and cultural criticism in *Moses and Monotheism*. While the major works included in the scholarly thesis (Part Three) are used as stand-alone examples of contextual criticism, I have also used critical reductions
(passages) of specific works that will be analysed in their historical and critical context as comparative analyses of how psychoanalysis developed within its own hermeneutical framework, significantly Chapter VII of *The Future of an Illusion* and Chapter I of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Brill). Additionally, from a methodological standpoint, we must also take into account the *reading* texture of Freud’s works—the *otherness* of the psychoanalytic literary space. Works that relate directly to Freud’s desire to express this *oeuvre* are significant in the following examples: "The Moses of Michelangelo", "The Uncanny", "Dostoevsky and Parricide", and *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*.

By positioning the methodology of comparative analysis of the analytic story within the more historical, creative and theoretical aspects of the Freudian canon, this dissertation portfolio will present an in-depth examination of the more significant and poignant of Freud’s works as part of his journey to discover his creative and critical voice—to be both an author and to fulfil his scholarly desire to add literary and cultural criticism to his *repertoire* of academic thought, especially evident in his works on folklore and anthropology such as *Totem and Taboo* and “The Taboo of Virginity”.

Theoretically, the success of this dissertation lies in the application and interaction of scholarly research on the one hand and the creativity that is developed on the other, while analysing, examining and even experiencing the creative *otherness* of the Freudian *oeuvre* that existed in his metaphorical language and symbolic writing.

In summary, owing to its overarching and holistic methodology, the sections of this dissertation portfolio bring together four important facets of aesthetics:
investigation, academic study, creativity, and the fiction narrative. These traits of literary and academic rigour juxtapose my creativity as a novelist with my didactic abilities as an investigator of Freudian psychoanalysis. As this Overview has pointed out, throughout his life Freud’s mind was stimulated by trying to understand and explain life’s greatest ironies and mysteries within the theories and hermeneutics of psychoanalysis. Beginning with his self-analysis and the writing of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, we repeatedly see this autobiographical landscape—Freud’s artistic otherness—imprinted into the theories and hermeneutics of his psychoanalytic writings.

As this dissertation will demonstrate in the next three parts, Freud’s legacy will always be that he creatively inspired his and modern people’s existence with language and meaning. Without question, his theories defined mental phenomena—paradoxes relating to the mind—in the first half of the twentieth century. Furthermore, by attempting to be the great solver of riddles, Freud spent his entire professional career, the best part of 40 years, within the academic framework of writing and psychoanalysis, trying to merge medicine and biology with aesthetics and humanism. We can also see from Freud’s conflicted mind that his metaphorical theories sought a form of refuge in aesthetics, as this prompted his oeuvre access to his creative otherness.

As we will see in Parts Two and Three of this dissertation portfolio, in his discourse analysis of creativity, the artist and the artform, Freud is quite unclear about where his theories will take the reader concerning his interpretation of aesthetics, because psychoanalysis and Freud’s quasi-scientific deductions about the
mind can never match the artist’s creative intentions. For example, in “The Uncanny”, this fact is very evident in Freud’s classical discourse analysis of Hoffmann’s *Der Sandmann*, where Freud’s literary case study and interpretation of art fail to match wits with Hoffmann’s creative licence.

And finally, utilising a theoretical study within a hermeneutical praxis, this dissertation portfolio will analyse, examine and evaluate a wide spectrum of creativity, *otherness* and hermeneutics in Freud’s use of discourse analysis in psychoanalytic theory, his development of subject formation in psychoanalytic theory, and the importance of understanding and evaluating the creative *otherness* in the Freudian *oeuvre*, which developed into the academic field of writing and psychoanalysis.
Notes


3. In the highly theoretical work “The Uncanny” (*Das Unheimliche*), Freud draws together the writings of Jentsch, language excerpts from Theodor Reik’s psychoanalytic Ph.D. dissertation, Sander’s *Worterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, Grimm’s dictionary, Schiller’s poem on Herodotus, the word interpretations of Otto Rank, and Hoffmann’s two German horror tales *Die Elixire des Teufels* and “The Sandman”. Taken together, this research collection forms what are, essentially, diagnostic sketches of a complete analytical essay upon psychoanalytic theory’s concepts of repetition-compulsion and Oedipal castration.

4. As we can see from these examples, Freud had dozens of literary accounts that came from patient case files that were directly related to the psychoanalysis of their clinical histories: “Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year Old Boy” (“Little Hans”), “Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis” (“Rat Man”), and “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis” (“Wolf Man”). Historically, “The Uncanny” comes at the end of a decade-long period of Freud using his uncanny ability to psychoanalyse to
create a dialogue of psychic explanation using aesthetics, ancient plays and biblical characterisations, and literary or biblical figures, or to create a characterisation from his analytic sessions with his patients, to add insight into humankind's mental life.

5 Other important works used in the comparative analyses of Freud's works on creativity and aesthetics from the first half of the twentieth century are Rank's, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*; Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature*; and Hoffman's *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*. This was supplemented with critical commentary that has been written since Freud's death: *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* by Paul Ricoeur; Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence*; Shoshana Felman's *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading Otherwise*; Linda Ruth Williams' *Critical Desire: Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject*; John Lechte's *Writing and Psychoanalysis*; Elizabeth Wright's *Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal*; Andrew Smith's *Gothic Radicalism: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteenth Century*; and perhaps this dissertation's most important work, Clive Bloom's *Reading Poe, Reading Freud: The Romantic Imagination in Crisis*. 
Works Cited


PART TWO:

THESIS

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY AND CREATIVITY:

FREUD, OTHERNESS, AND THE HISTORICAL HERMENEUTICS OF
MODERN SUBJECT-FORMATION
Introduction

Theoretically, Sigmund Freud’s beliefs about the artist, creativity and aesthetics were based upon the desire to reduce creativity to a therapeutic form of catharsis, wish fulfillment, ego pleasure, and psychic release from sexual drives. After switching from the study of neurology and physiology in the mid and late 1890s, Freud sought psychoanalytic theories to account for the psychic illnesses of creative neurotics who expressed their unconscious wishes and libidinal frustrations through art, literature and poetry. In this respect, the main contribution of early Freudian theory is *The Interpretation of Dreams*, wherein he examines the form, design and structure of artistic creations: the object and subject-formation, alongside the form, design and structure of daydreaming, obsessive fantasies, and somatic dream-work.¹

Basically, Freud was matching the fantasy world of the artist and their child-like play with the cold realities of adult life after the pleasures of childhood had ended. *The Interpretation of Dreams* quite freely posits Freud as the subject of his own analysis and conflated theories. He systematically moves from generating a self-analysis of his unconscious, to his father’s death and screen memories of his own Oedipal Conflicts, and subsequently, to the conception of his little dream-book and the obscure publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Importantly, the work also established a discursive pattern that later works on creativity and aesthetics—for example, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of Childhood” and “The Moses of Michelangelo”—would follow, reducing
the art-form, the artist’s life history, or a combination of the two, to a series of psychoanalytic readings.

These discursive procedures were further enhanced by Freud’s ability to develop theories that not only rivalled the scientific thought of the day, but generated philosophical theories into subject-formations, creative definitions, and academic hermeneutics of modern critical thought. Indeed, within Freud’s critical studies of dreams, jokes and the pathology of everyday life, the generative sources for a new humanistic science of aesthetics would begin the fin de siècle as clinical psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory, which became aligned with the history and philosophy of twentieth-century modernist culture. Intellectually, Freud’s aesthetics become fused by developing what Pope called “[d]efining creativity [...] [thus] [...] creating definitions” (35, 70–89). Historically, these analyses of creativity and aesthetics began as a letter to Wilhelm Fliess (Letter 71, dated 15 October) and ended, in time rather famously, with the preface to Marie Bonaparte’s psychobiography of Edgar Allan Poe.

Moreover, from his theoretical search for the psychoanalytic truth (the verities of life) and the inner knowledge of psychic life, these early writings on creativity became the true object of Freud’s critical ambition. As Freud started developing a psychoanalytic discourse, the recognition of the act of theoretically empowering clinical psychoanalysis became less important than delving into and analysing the objectivity (the cerebral process) of its conjectures by creating academic definitions of subject-formations (the metaphorical being) of psycho-hermeneutics. This departure from science to a science of aesthetics brings up two
very important questions about Freud's theoretical formulations. First, in this understanding of Freud's literary psyche *vis-à-vis* his writings and theories, I will hypothesise that Freud was torn between secretly being the artist/patient that he is critically writing about and the scientist/medical doctor that his ego portrays as a psychoanalyst searching for the patient's true self. And second, can we not further surmise that these first few years of speculating and theorising on creative artefacts from religion, drama and literature are directly related to psychoanalytic theory's inability to develop as a science of the body rather than as a critique of the aesthetic of cultural affect upon the mind?

Starting out as a theory involving the rigid codes and propositions concerning the familial bonds of the Oedipal Complex, the conflicting sub-systems of the unconscious in psychic life, and the fantasy/dream relationship between the author and the text—or artist and artwork—traditional psychoanalytic theory was developed primarily around the *imagos*—the psychoanalytic affect—of the repressed emotions, the transformation of the affected emotions to its manifest object (the text or artwork, for example), and the centre of the critical accounting—the close, microscopic readings between the affected latent content and the socially-accepted, manifest desire. Working within the creative and subjective hermeneutics of writing and psychoanalysis, the importance of this thesis lies within the premise that Sigmund Freud was not only the father of psychoanalysis, but also a frustrated writer whose psychoanalytical writings provided some compensation for the many paradoxes of his conflicted life: born of a Jewish family but an avowed atheist who never left the brotherhood of the B'nai B'rith or the Jewish community centre near
the Ringstrasse of Old Vienna until his exile to London in 1938; developed and fostered the academic field of psychoanalysis but felt uncomfortable with traditional psychiatry and the patient care of the mentally ill; and more significantly, desired that psychoanalysis be like an applied science similar to medicine and biology, but spent the last 50 years of his life writing the layers of hermeneutics for the humanistic field of psychoanalytic theory (Flem 5, 6, 160–1).

For all of Freud’s rhetoric on psychoanalysis being a scientific apparatus of the modern world, aesthetic references to the sacred and classical learning sites of Rome, Athens and Jerusalem are always at the centre of his psychoanalytic theories (Flem 51). Not one of Freud’s theories on psychoanalysis—which begin with his theoretical break from Josef Breuer and the start of psychoanalytic commentary, as exemplified by short writings such as Screen Memories—can be proven or re-enacted quantitatively through the use of a scientific model or hypothesis. However, earlier in the decade, mental anguish combined with neurological and physiological symptoms were squarely at the centre of Freud’s physiological research. Hypothetically, there is a complete change of academic emphasis between Breuer and Freud’s research paper “On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communications” and the collated book by Freud and Breuer entitled Studies on Hysteria and Freud’s publication of The Interpretation of Dreams, which relates significantly to the research of this thesis about the dichotomy of his early writings between 1893 and 1900.

Philosophically, why does Freud take and hypothetically generate his research writings from the nineteenth-century science of observable phenomena and
neuro-physiology to a realm of subjective appropriation using a discourse about the psychic *otherness* of surrealism and the Gothic sublime? As a result of his physiological research in the late 1880s and 1890s, why does he switch his scientific analysis of the neurotic and somatic symptoms—neurological disorders *vis-à-vis* the mind—to the psychoanalytic and psycho-biographical literary analysis of creative artefacts—classical plays, romantic tales, Ancient Greek mythology, dreams, even the occult, and accounts of Judaic and Christian writings—as an attempt to understand creativity during, primarily, the first two decades of the twentieth century? For Freud, was the wholesale theoretical change largely due because he saw mechanistic accounts of behaviour as inimical to the understanding of the creative process, which then caused the study of creativity to be a rational and critical means of delving into the dynamic forces of the unconscious mind?

Once the hermeneutics of psychoanalytic theory began with the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, why did Freud feel constrained to forever work within some kind of scientific practice that *failed*, at least for him, to account for creativity? Also, are not the Freudian hypotheses about creativity similar to what he writes of screen memories in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, that the mental capacity to retrace itself to the site of the screen memories obscures the attempt to get back to the original, potentially traumatic, moment in the unconscious layers of the psyche (Brill 62–8)? Thus, the psychic ability to generate screen memories, as a creative phenomenon, both blocks and inhibits any scientific effort to retrace a traumatic moment into the unconscious layers of the mind.
Furthermore, can we not consider Freud’s attempts at self-analysis, culminating in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, as his way of creatively defining the *fin de siècle*, with the ultimate goal being the furthering of psychoanalytic theory through self-directed analysis? More importantly, why is Freud never able to escape the universal questions of “What is creativity?” and “How is creativity accessed in the dynamics of the psychic realm?” As a result of Freud’s growing concern with the twentieth-century ideal of humanistic and democratic originality, why are the symbolic metaphors of the sacred and the profane always at the centre of Freud’s theories and the psychoanalytic landscape as the place of writing when it is scientific knowledge that his discourse attempts to explain? As we will see, these same theoretical assumptions are forever questioning the very scientific hypothesis, paradoxically, that Freud’s creativity is trying to generate, as hermeneutics, into his subjectivity and *otherness* as psychoanalytic discourse.

Reading Freud means coming to grips with the *psychogeneticist* position and his approach of speaking about the body in very literal terms involving conflated levels of symbolic representation (Leclaire 38). But are Freud’s organic, mental representations of the mind—his hyper-extended meta-language of metaphor and meaning—that much of a different philosophical approach than the *organicist* position of late nineteenth-century medical psychiatry in Europe and the United States?

This research thesis seeks to discern, differentiate and recognise Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis as it relates to creativity, aesthetics, and the cultural criticism of religious history and its practice. Additionally, this research will also
examine Freud’s struggles with writing, which appeared quite regularly in his critical discourse as displaced models of his theoretical inadequacies to simply and adequately deal with a writer’s block that originated in his conflicted psyche. For Freud, who would fill the void of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic criticism with a psychoanalytic history of ideas, this conflict of his psyche would become the creative breeding ground for the psychoanalyst, the analysand, and the psychoanalytic writer, who use the subjectivity and otherness of writing and psychoanalysis at the centre of their intellectual discourse. Obviously, Freud knew more about the psychic realm and the mental apparatus, as he wanted to call the mind and the organic brain, than his theories or hermeneutics could express or, more significantly, formulate into a subjective hyper-textuality that he could conceive as psychoanalytic theory.

It is important to make the distinction between what Freud came to know between the early 1890s and what he could write as critical discourse by the time of his death in 1939. With this distinction firmly in mind, the originality of this research thesis lies within its hermeneutical approach to the oblique layers of traditional psychoanalysis, the academic field of psychoanalytic theory, and Freud’s critique of creativity and aesthetics involving the psychoanalytic accounting of creation, using religious practices as cultural neurosis complete with its own dogma, displacements, illusions, fabrications, and grandiose wish-fulfillments.³

“Chapter I: Medical Research, the Psycho-physiological, and the Psychical Apparatus” explores Freud’s early research writings into neurology, physiology and the neurotic psyche, and analyses the significance of why in the 1890s Freud moved
Part Two: Thesis

from neurological and physiological research of the body to a research analysis of aesthetics and humanism. As a historical foundation for his later hermeneutics on creativity, the artist and religion, we will explore those works from the 1880s and '90s that impacted directly upon his praxis for the development of psychoanalysis, especially "Sketches for the 'Preliminary Communication' of 1893", *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, and Freud's collaboration with Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*. This thesis will also cover how Freud began to reposition his more neurological and mechanistic writings of the early 1900s from the biological body of physiology to the affective realm of thoughts and feelings within the Freudian psychic landscape of dreams and the surreal. More importantly, we will discuss how these neurological and physiological writings influenced what most critics call the "hypothetical phase" of psychoanalytic theory (1895–1905).

Although never having been schooled as a child in Jewish orthodoxy, the *kabbala* or the Talmud, Freud consistently wrote his prose from the great literary traditions of Moses and the biblical genesis, Oedipus and the Greek classics, and the humanistic traditions of the Italian Renaissance, especially within the hyper-extended framework of a religious hierarchy (Flem 67–9). This linking of creativity to religion would further prompt Freud to psychoanalytically express his frustrations with being Jewish and an admitted atheist in *The Future of an Illusion*, and by rewriting a new creation account of mankind's religious history in *Moses and Monotheism*, both of which will be discussed in "Chapter II: Freud on Creativity: The Look Inward to the Soul, Then Outward to Mankind".
Moreover, not unlike the young Oedipus who tragically searches for a body of profound and universal knowledge while upon the road to Thebes, Freud’s philosophical search is for a body of academic knowledge, civilized law, and the Western oeuvre of modern culture through the layers of the unconscious sphere, where the iconoclastic metaphors of religion firmly join the superego, the id and the ego. This link forms “Chapter III: Psychoanalysis, Creativity, and Religion as the New Authority of the Text”.

As a matter of theoretical recourse, Freud tried to resolve an introspective debate that he had within himself about religion, Yahweh and civilization, which would find its way into his implicit writing about creativity. For Freud, this debate, a neurotic compulsion at best, always centred its unconscious motivations upon the lack of connectivity and unresolved Oedipal issues with his father’s complete tolerance of the younger Freud’s precocious childhood. And more significantly, this intellectualisation shifted during his self-analysis in the late 1890s from his unconscious thoughts of his father’s Judaic heritage to the development of psychoanalysis as the place of Freud’s writings.

Quite literally, Freud provides the widest possible scope within his rhetorical discussions on the subject of creativity and creative personae by establishing the hypothetical and symbolic place, the psychoanalytic dreamscape, where aesthetics inhabits a topos of locus in religion, culture and civilization. That is, he novelistically starts with a quasi-scientific reality and suspends its established authorial purposes in favour of the bourgeois literary fantasy of peril and triumph so reminiscent of nineteenth-century Gothic literature (A. Smith 59–60). Subsequently,
Freud combines the psychoanalytic *dreamscape*—the place of writing in works such as *The Future of an Illusion* and in specific passages of *Civilization and Its Discontents*—with aesthetics, religion and culture, explored in “Chapter IV: Theory to Aesthetics to Religion: The Psychoanalytic Place of Writing”.

The final part of this research thesis, “Chapter V: Freud, Writing, and the Displace Conceit: Unresolved Frustrations about Creativity”, is a theoretical summary of the previous chapters and a discussion of “The Uncanny”, which will demonstrate that while Freud was a prolific writer of discursive theory, he held a tremendous amount of unresolved frustrations as a scholarly and creative writer of theoretical criticism. As we begin to see in the early history of psychoanalytic theory, the more Freud’s subject-formations were hyper-conflated and hyper-textualised, the more his philosophical and theoretical hermeneutics were eschewed. From trying to always be the great solver of enigmas, Freud spent more than 50 years applying the psychoanalyst’s handwritten conjectures from the patient’s psychic confessionals to his theories of applied psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic criticism, trying to merge the medical with the humanistic (Felman “Turning the Screw of Interpretation” *Literature and Psychoanalysis*).

As we will clearly see in Chapter V of this thesis, at times in his discussion of aesthetics and psychoanalytic theory (see “The Uncanny”), Freud is never quite sure where his writings are taking us, because creativity, the artist and the artwork always seem to elude psychoanalytic theory and Freud’s scientific deductions of the mind. Furthermore, his critical afterthoughts on the subject of the artist’s creative licence seek a kind of cerebral refuge within his statements by playing the devil’s
advocate, proclaiming that the subject of his frustration is art for art's sake and does not really exist in real life anyway ("The Uncanny" 249). Chapter V's discussion of "The Uncanny" will demonstrate that while Freud was a prolific writer of discursive theory, he held a tremendous amount of unresolved frustrations as a scholarly and creative writer of clinical psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic criticism because of his inability to theoretically express "What exactly is creativity?" or "How does it operate in the mind?"—psychologically or otherwise.

Chapter V also demonstrates that certain works in the Freudian canon point directly to a hidden writer's block that indicates an angst with creativity and critical inquiry, which at times caused his discourse to be systematically uneven and his theories to be quite inconsistent. Freud's writer's block could take on many forms of neurotic symptoms, including intellectualisation, projection and displacement, as evidenced in the use of the literary conceit of the body's navel to express the abyss of his psychoanalytic knowledge (The Interpretation of Dreams 199): "Every dream has at least one point at which it is unfathomable; a central point, as it were, connecting it with the unknown."

Thus, I formulated the scope of my thesis upon Freud, psychoanalytic theory and creativity into a hypothesis that would analyse, address and comment upon the following: (a) Freud's early neurological writings that form the theoretical foundation for his hermeneutics for creativity and aesthetics, as seen in Chapter I; (b) his specific writings on creativity and the artist, as we will explore in Chapter II; (c) the implicit writings about creativity as it relates to religion and the new creation account of psychoanalysis in Chapter III; (d) an account of the place of writing
within his discussion of religion, culture and civilization, which forms a critical juncture between early Freudian writings and later Freudian attempts to use psychoanalysis as cultural commentary in Chapter IV; and finally, (e) a conclusion, which brings the thesis together in Chapter V, which will suggest that writing posed a particular problem for Freud because of his unresolved frustrations about creativity and critical discourse—Freud’s own “return of the repressed”.
Chapter I

Medical Research, the Psycho-physiological, and the Psychical Apparatus

A. Neurology and the Psychic “Scene” of Writing

With the writing of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud began constructing and intertwining into his analytic and neurological hypotheses whatever literary genres, poetic allusions, accounts from history and anthropology, even religion, to create, devise and theoretically develop the rationale and the logic for a psychoanalytic theory of the psyche. While this thesis is mainly concerned with Freud’s writings on creativity, religion and aesthetics, the development of my argument will benefit from a short digression into the how and why of Freud’s decision to move from being a neurological researcher to a psychoanalytic theorist, which promoted all his talents as a writer by expressing his theoretical models through literary language.

By starting with notes, letters, essays, “novel-sketches”, and scientific papers on neurology, within the realm of neurological investigations, Freud began to develop his literary skills as a discursive commentator on the mind and its strange “unobservable” maladies while still in the Helmholtz School of Medicine in Vienna. Freud’s first official publication came in 1877, a scientific paper upon the central nervous system of larvae. This first publication, created from his studies in the Brucke laboratory in Vienna, brought Freud’s neurological hypotheses to the very doorstep of the neuron, later discovered by Waldeyer in 1891. While on research vacations to Paris and Berlin during the early 1880s, Freud continued to refine his skills as a writer on neurology, hypnosis and its psychological effects within the
mind/body context by writing "Report on my Studies in Paris and Berlin" and "Preface to the Translation of Charcot's Lectures on the Diseases of the Nervous System".

Then, in 1885 and 1886, we can see more of his neurological writings in the essays where the young Freud agreed to edit and translate Charcot's French lectures into German, complete with introductions, footnotes and literary reports, and write "Observation of a Severe Case of Hemi-Anaesthesia in a Hysterical Male". Starting out in the early 1890s as a replacement therapy for Charcot’s hypnotic-analysis, Freud's developmental analysis of a subjective critique of the psyche as an inner otherness of the analyst and the patient was also a reflection of his own private and professional reality: Freud starting to write his own psychoanalytic reality. These essays, editorials, annotations and translations were more historical and physiological afterthoughts and postscripts rather than scientific scholarship, reminding one of journalistic travelogues of a young medical reporter.

In the late 1880s, these addenda to other researchers’ writings about neurology, hypnosis and psychological maladies continued until Freud wrote and published Hypnosis in 1891 and the critical study, "A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnosis", which appeared in 1892–3. These neurological studies and findings on the nervous system and the mind were quickly followed by "Sketches for the ‘Preliminary Communication’ of 1893", Project for a Scientific Psychology, and Freud's collaboration with Josef Breuer, Studies on Hysteria, which brought Freud professionally to a science of the psychology of the mind. We can impose a systematic chronology upon Freud’s research efforts of his theoretical praxis for
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psychoanalytic subject-formations, but in reality, until his self-analysis in 1897–8 and the writing and publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, these hypothetical guidelines of his professional life were as much an unconscious effort as they were a conscious and self-directed one. Because he was more fascinated by teaching, writing and research than having a medical practice, for the 1880s and 1890s, Freud’s apparent interest was in neurological research and hypnotic therapy as it specifically applied to the *otherness* of psychological maladies, not psychiatry or mental illness. Here, at this juncture of his life, we are able to view the liberalised, progressive and creative Freud emerging from the harsh social stratification of the Austrian-German medical system of formalised medicine and institutional care.

Once Freud and Breuer developed the different chapters that comprise *Studies on Hysteria*, the scientific model of research is increasingly conflated with the motifs and genres of literature and the creative writing style of the *kabbala* and the Bible (Flem 173, *Studies on Hysteria* 291):

I am making use here of a number of similes, all of which have only a very limited resemblance to my subject and which, moreover, are incompatible with one another. I am aware that this is so, and I am in no danger of overestimating their value. But my purpose in using them is to throw light from different directions on a highly complicated topic, which has never yet been represented. I shall therefore venture to continue [...] to introduce similes in the same manner, though I know this is not free from objection.

Routinely, Freud was beginning to discover that while writers and poets use poetic licence to explain the complexity of the mind and its maladies, he was also
compelled to use the metaphors, allusions and transfixations of the patient's cathartic moments in free association. Thus, later on in his historical writings, the "psychic scene" became the "primal scene" (Flem 174-5).

Still not satisfied with his theoretical writings from his collaboration with Breuer in *Studies on Hysteira*, Freud took his writings into the transitional point between neurology and psychoanalysis in the difficult and ambiguous *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, in which Freud actually writes, in note-taking fashion, about many of his theories that would be included in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Metaphorically and symbolically, we can consider Freud's 15 years of making entries into the *Project*—his notes, findings, afterthoughts, post-cathartic moments—the place of writing where he would note phrases, slips and inferences that his patients had relayed to him from their talking cures.

More significantly, from retracing Freud's early writings and observing other directions of his works' thematic compositions, it is easy to forget that his patients were the single most important factor in his theories and subject-formations. This becomes more evident once Freud had published—10 to 15 years after the writings and annotation (1887-1902) in the *Project*—works relating directly to actual case histories, the essays, critical studies and textual surveys that begin to build up the literature for psychoanalysis: "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy" (the famous "Little Hans Case History"), "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis", and "Two Instances of Pathogenic Phantasies Revealed by the Patients Themselves".

However, as we survey Strachey's volumes and lists, we do not recognise their true importance given under the names of the sobriquets. Freud would use his
patients' clinical sessions as "transcribed" case histories by means of labels, secret references and code names, guarding the secrecy of the psychoanalytic session and their privacy: the famous "Anna O", Breuer and Freud's case written about in Studies on Hysteria, Freud's "Dora Case" chronicling hysteria referenced in The Psychopathology of Everyday Life, "Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria", and "Rat Man" from "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis". These psychoanalytic "scenes" of discourse analysis formed important case histories of patients, which have filtered down from theories and hermeneutics carefully transcribed into the conscious and unconscious findings within the Project, and they would form the five classical case histories of Freud's critical studies of psycho-biographical writings from his "psychoanalytic couch" of free association: "Anna O", "Dora", "Little Hans", "Rat Man", and "Wolf Man".

Symbolically, and more importantly to this thesis, the fact would always remain, as Strachey stated, that "the Project, or rather its invisible ghost, haunts the whole series of Freud's theoretical writings to the very end [of his life]" (qtd. in Francher 290). Furthermore, within the confines of the "psychoanalytic book", the Project would always form praxis and assume hermeneutical importance within the elemental issues of psychoanalytic theory as heuristic subject-formations. In his essay "The Neurological Origins of Psychoanalysis", Francher offers a fuller, more complete understanding of how and why the Project was important to Freud's discursive career in psychoanalysis (1, 4):

the Project [...] is of the greatest interest to anyone who wants to understand how Freud's theories actually developed. Occurring at the transition point
between his neurological and psychoanalytical careers, the *Project*’s speculations were seminal for Freud. Among the topics to receive their first systematic treatment there were the dichotomy between an unconscious “primary process” and a conscious “secondary process” mode of thought; the formulation of an “ego” as the directive, reality-attuned agency in the psyche; and the theory of dreams. [...] The work laid the groundwork for virtually all of Freud’s later theorizing about the basic structure and function of the human mind.

Later in the paper, Francher goes on to summarise Freud’s complete genesis for his background in the science of neurology (4):

when Freud set out to construct his “Psychology for Neurologists” in 1895, he had the theories, assumptions, and points of view of his mentors to use as starting points. He had to modify and elaborate their ideas, however, so as to account for the phenomena of hysteria. His hypothetical nervous system had to be capable of discharging accumulated emotional energy into the musculature, thus creating hysterical conversion symptoms. It also had to create overdetermined and symbolic relationships between symptoms and unconscious ideas. And it had to modify associational predispositions built up in the past with motivational factors acting in the present.

Briefly, if we take the scientific model of a research hypothesis, commonly referred to as the cycle of research, we can find obvious differences between quantitative research and the poetic licences that are employed by writers of creativity and aesthetics. While these comparisons have no scientific basis
whatsoever vis-à-vis each other’s academic worth, the two heuristic models can
demonstrate Freud’s use of popular Gothic writings of the day, allusion to classical
knowledge, and references to the creative replica of his neurological and
physiological writings from the 1880s and ’90s.

Coming under the heading of modern research methodology, there are two
different research approaches: (a) Freud’s neurological, deductive approach—
traditional, positivist, experimental and empiricist—and (b) his Renaissance or
inductive approach—interpretative, naturalistic, constructive and “mystical-
positivist”—that he used opportunistically in his discourse. Then, there was also the
multitude of concomitant research approaches that he was directly or indirectly
aware of: historical, the archeological field study, descriptive survey, case study,
and, of course, what is known now as grounded theory using the literary or religious
artefact. On the other hand, with creativity, until a writer has created the work, or a
framework for the action to take place, little exists except emotional content and
memories. To be sure, the case can also be made that once Freud received his
medical training and carried out neurological research, coupled with his love for
writing and the book, his task of creating literature for psychoanalysis was a much
easier undertaking than if he had been an accomplished researcher who did not have
the flair for belles-lettres and journée du roman, of which Freud prided himself upon
being a man who wrote to think.

To further our discussion of the psychoanalytic scene, we need to consider
how assumption, space, scene and place were employed in Freud’s writings as a
literary replacement for the scientific cycle of research. Freud’s theory of the
Oedipal Complex and all of its psychological trailings—for example *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipus, *Hamlet*, Homer’s *Iliad*, Freud’s self-analysis as an universal compulsion during his self-analysis in the years 1897–8, his letters to Wilhelm Fliess in Berlin (LaPlanche and Pontalis 282–7), *Totem and Taboo*, and Freud’s 1924 essay, “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex”, to name just a partial list of well over a dozen works, essays and notes on the subject-formation of a mythological complex surrounding a Greek dramatic *persona*—could be employed as an aesthetic cycle of research once psychoanalysis gained momentum as an academic field of study.

At first his psychoanalytic writings on Oedipus and the Oedipal Complex had a rather uneven course, coming into its fullest meaning in a letter to Wilhelm Fliess dated 15 October 1897, during self-analysis after his father’s death, as a literary allusion to the play *Oedipus Rex* in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Officially, as a universal compulsion, “Oedipal Complex” does not appear as a psychoanalytic theory until 1910 when Freud wrote and published the essay “A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men”. The assumption is made that Oedipus, by means of Greek literature/myth, desires his mother, would like to displace his father, have his mother’s unrivalled affections, and complete his narcissistic sexual needs by means of his most available love object, Queen Jocasta. The void or question in the reader’s mind becomes and concludes on “object reality”—that we, the readers, need to learn more, because on an unconscious level there is a sexual desire for the mother figure in the child/boy/young man’s home place and triangle of love.

Once we unconsciously learn and comprehend this model from Freud’s psychoanalytic scene, and its assumptions, unconscious spaces and emotional
"haunts", hidden in our hearts is the unconscious feeling of being "Oedipus/ego" upon the crossroads to Thebes. Somewhere, lurking in our darkness of desire and fear, we seem destined to meet our own father’s apparition in the disguise of King Laius, Freud’s Primal Law of Judgement. For once Freud’s theories and subject-formations have the assumptions, spaces and scenes down in the psychoanalytic "writing book", Freud the writer could return to the "scene" whenever his hermeneutics required, as the psychoanalytic place of writing and theory. Moreover, when Freud began to write strictly psychoanalytic documents in the early 1900s, what better way to observe the ego (German Ich) than through the aesthetics of creative artefacts and the religious observances of compulsions, prohibitions and sacred documents, evident from his writing in the field of aesthetics: “Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s Gradiva”, “Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices”, “Creative Writer’s and Day-Dreaming”, and his first attempt at psychobiography, Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood.

Unfortunately for Freud there was one overwhelming problem. From this strict adherence to a scientific cycle of research, severe complications would arise in the guise of the psychoanalytic criticism of stories and novels that resist analysis, such as “The Uncanny”, where Freud’s analysis of the psychotic Nathanael (Strachey’s spelling) in Hoffmann’s “The Sandman” becomes one concentric argument after another and never really achieves any resolution, psychoanalytic or otherwise. “The Uncanny” will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter V of this thesis, and is a telling piece of critical work in that Freud’s psychoanalysis of a psychotic literary character reveals more about Freud than it does the story’s main character.
Now that we have discussed Freud's discursive development from neurological science to psychoanalytic theorist and writer—a career that covered a period from 1877 to 1897—we will return to discussion of our main focus upon creativity and religion as it relates to the place of his writing and his creation of the psychoanalytic authority of the text within religion, culture and aesthetics.

B. Freud's 1890s Metamorphosis:

The Science of Neurology Becomes the Metaphor of Creativity

In the 1890s, Freud's writings on creativity and psychoanalytic theory expressed his desire to find a scientifically informed praxis of theoretical deductions about the mind's conceptual limits. Scientifically and intellectually during this time, Freud's move from clinical neurology, as exemplified in *Studies in Hysteria* with Josef Breuer, to a less mechanistic view of the mind, which would be incorporated into the start of psychoanalysis in the work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, would begin to slowly incorporate archeological descriptions—digging, penetration, excavation—into his discourse. Historical, literary and religious metaphors started to displace then replace the scientific terminology of biology and medicine.

For instance, as Freud's creative mind exploited a system of research investigations largely based in the academic discipline of archeological excavation, unearthing each to reveal an important research finding, his writings would travel deeper and deeper into the uncharted realm of dream symbolism. Dream symbolism was also indispensable to an understanding of what are known as (a) "typical"
dreams, which are common to everyone, and (b) "recurrent" dreams, which Freud saw as specific to his psychoneurotic patients (On Dreams 74):

If the account I have given in this short discussion of the symbolic mode of expression in dreams appears incomplete, I can justify my neglect by drawing attention to one of the most important pieces of knowledge that we possess on this subject. Dream symbolism extends far beyond dreams, but exercises a similar dominating influence on representation in fairy tales, myths and legends, in jokes and folklore. It enables us to trace the intimate connections between dreams and these latter productions. We must not suppose that dream symbolism is a creation of the dream work; it is in all probability a characteristic of the unconscious thinking which provides the dream work with the material for condensation, displacement and dramatization.

Of course, Freud's desire to bring together a diverse gathering of the arts and sciences of that time was a developmental process. During the last decade of the nineteenth century, Freud's desire to substantiate a quantitative, hard science of neurology began to slowly and methodologically give way to a creativity that was stimulated by Freud's profound knowledge of the science and biology of the day. In 1891, Freud and Breuer's first published paper "On Aphasia" was printed in a medical journal as a strictly scientific study, concentrating upon a neurological disorder that affected a patient's ability to pronounce words or name familiar objects because of an organic brain disease. Two years later in 1893, Freud and Breuer's research into the neurological causes of hysteria was presented as a medical paper to
the professional community: "On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena: Preliminary Communication".

Starting out as lectures, this collaborative work with Breuer was further expanded into a major work published in 1895 as *Studies on Hysteria*. Once again, the medical work focused upon the neurological research that Freud and Breuer had been mutually working on, and its medical thesis associated the symptoms of hysteria with the manifestations of repressed psychic energy arising from forgotten childhood trauma—a claim that Freud, soon after his split with Breuer, revised and changed from unconscious trauma to wishful sexual fantasies in 1897.

*Studies in Hysteria* was followed by another, largely unknown, handwritten medical manuscript of 100 pages, which was written in 1895 and is referred to in the Fliess letters simply as “The Project”; the work was later translated and published in 1950 as the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, which Freud, feeling rather rushed at the time of its completion in 1895, had not edited before he mailed the manuscript to Wilhelm Fliess in Berlin during that same year. Paradoxically, Freud’s career in neurology and medical research in physiology does not begin to explain how an “other” or otherness—a distinctive new oeuvre—had developed into Freud’s writings by the time *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published and submitted to the medical community in Vienna in the winter and spring of 1899 and 1900.

Crucially, examining the opposite end of the theoretical perspective, and having seen the great transformation in Freud's scholarly writing during the 1890s, a nagging question arises: why did Freud abandon his scientific research—as evidenced in “On Aphasia”, *Studies on Hysteria*, and the (unpublished during his
lifetime) *Project for a Scientific Psychology*—for a metaphorical metapsychology that reads and sounds closer to the surrealist movement and the symbolic values of early expressionism of the *fin de siècle* and the first two decades of the twentieth century rather than the late nineteenth-century medicine, biology and psychiatry of modern Victorian Vienna? Perhaps Freud's desire to develop a humanistic psychology rather than produce medical papers on strictly scientific hypotheses played the final card in this mental debate. Furthermore, as a lifelong student of the Renaissance, Freud had been influenced by the literature, music and art of the great creative and intellectual moments in the *History of Ideas*, prompted by the great German romantic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as a vehicle of understanding.

I would also like to add that, contrary to other paths that Freud could have chosen, inventing psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory offered the artistic side of Freud's personality the unique possibility of giving birth to a very original conception of the human mind that had never been explored in quite this way before, namely a philosophy of the human psyche. Intellectually, Freud prided himself on knowing that while his views may have been a product of this immersion in the world of knowledge, the originality of psychoanalysis as a pure theoretical concept was still his and his alone, although he gave credit to Breuer in the early years of psychoanalysis' genesis.

Intellectually, this move from biology and medical science to a new science of the mind created a whole new formulation of generative writings on the subject of writing and psychoanalysis—not only by Freud, but also by his many followers.
Conceptually, as a creative critique, Freud had to develop a language for psychoanalysis that combined his creative inspiration with the subconscious “magic” of the hidden mind, while giving the new discipline the framework and rigours of science and psychiatric medicine. Robert M. Young made several poignant findings that relate to Freud, using his otherness not only for personal satisfaction as a creative writer, but also for the historical significance of the failure of a scientifically informed language to fully express or accommodate psychological states of existence (“Freud: Scientist and/or Humanist?” 14):

Freud’s basic metaphysical position was psychophysical parallelism that he did not think [...] and did draw, throughout his life, on a physicalist vocabulary when speaking of the mind. The reason is that he had no language of persons for his metapsychology. He had a language of mind and a language of brain, but he had no theoretical language of persons at the most abstract level of his thought. Nor did he have a sense of the concept of a human being considered fully biologically. He wrote many, many humanistic things about literature and biography and mythology and clothed his writings in a rich metaphorical language. But there was no conceptual space in psycho-analytic ontology for persons or persons as organisms.

Despite the fact that he was intent upon following a purely scientific path during the years of his transformation in the 1890s, it was impossible for Freud to rule out creativity, speculation and hermeneutic suspicion, as there was no quantitative body of knowledge or human research evidence to rely upon or refer to that would have justified his assumptions about the earliest years of psychical-
analysis. Metaphysically, this creative spirit to invest, expose, superimpose, find and reinvent the mystical knowledge and irrational being of human existence takes on a religious experience, which further develops over the course of Freud’s psychoanalytic life writings from the late 1890s until 1939, becoming nothing short of a literary and cultural genre.

In the 1890s Freud’s professional move from neurology to a less mechanistic view of the mind involved a decade of scientific and scientifically informed research that culminated in his self-analysis and creatively inspired work The Interpretation of Dreams. Theoretically, this transformation in the last decade of the nineteenth century would influence all of Freud’s writings, especially the ones on creativity and religion that he would produce from The Interpretation of Dreams until his death.

For the purpose of historiography, most theorists on the subject generally agree that The Interpretation of Dreams and the year 1900 marked both the birth of clinical psychoanalysis and the genesis of the academic field of psychoanalytic theory, historically and psychologically marking Freud’s conversion to a totally artistic and poetically inspired explanation of the mind. Once The Interpretation of Dreams was written, the rest of his professional career in professional humane letters and scholarly research depended upon a return to an otherness, a defined elsewhere of Freud’s creative inspiration that held the artistic spark of his poetic double. This feeling of trying to satisfy his otherness drove all his erotic energies, especially once his professional ambitions and subsequent transformation to psychoanalysis had begun at the fin-de-siècle.
C. Neurology and Theory: The Fin de Siècle of Writing and Psychoanalysis

Once what many critics are calling the "hypothetical phase" of psychoanalysis was over (1895–1905), Freud's primary goal for the new field of psychical-analysis became the establishment of a permanent place for the nouveau practice to develop theoretically and discursively as an academic discipline of the mind, although early on this private endeavour may have been only clinical and not necessarily philosophical and hermeneutical. Within the scope of academic praxis, this "hypothetical phase" would include Freud's most basic precepts concerning the accomplishment of theoretical inventions: (a) Freud's theory of the primary instinctual drives; (b) the Oedipal Complex; (c) repression as an infantile neurosis; (d) resistance to the psychoanalyst during therapy; (e) the catharsis of the central conflict; and more significantly, (e) the psychic spheres of the mind: the ego, id and superego.

Freud created and developed some of his most important works and theoretical applications by way of deterministic research into neurology and psychical-analysis between 1894 and 1905: "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense", "The Aetiology of Hysteria", "Screen Memories", The Interpretation of Dreams, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, and Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious. Moreover, by the time that he had finished writing "On Psychotherapy", Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, and Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, we can see that Freud began to concern himself with the "place" of writing and the authority of the text. Along with Project for a Scientific Psychology, these "formative" works would guide, instruct and promote
the basics for early psychoanalytic theory, although these initial subject-formations on psychoanalysis show a strong influence from neurology and physiology.

Also, what becomes important in this critical period (1895–1905) is a discursive style of writing and thought that is personally and professionally garnered from multiple modes of influence and contrasting life experiences. From writing about the clinical aspects of sexuality and psychotherapy in young boys, Freud would often resort to his own feelings of romantic travel, boyish excitement, and the sex-act as highly intense movements of *ecstosis*—what Jacques Lacan would later call *jouissance* (qtd. in Flem 14–15):

> It is a puzzling fact that boys take such an extraordinarily intense interest in things connected with railways, and, at the age at which the production of phantasies is most active (shortly before puberty), use those things as the nucleus of a symbolism that is peculiarly sexual. A compulsive link of this kind between railway-travel and sexuality is clearly derived from the pleasurable character of the sensation of movement. In the event of repressions, which turns so many childish preferences into their opposite, these same individuals, when they are adolescents or adults, will react to rocking or swinging with a feeling of nausea, will be terribly exhausted by a railway journey, or will be subject to attacks of anxiety on the journey and will protect themselves against a repetition of the painful experience by a dread of railway-travel.

Obviously, in this passage Freud's meta-psychological discourse expresses the complexity of particular mental processes/human desires displaced and sublimated
within the events of everyday life. But more importantly as far as this thesis is concerned, as a theoretician of psychoanalysis, Freud is inductively locating a conjectural place within the psychoanalytic scene of young boys and their sexual desires and phobias as normal acts of ego cathexes (LaPlanche and Pontalis 62–5, 150–1). This passage, taken from Freud’s 1905 essay “On Psychotherapy”, illustrates how the nuances of anxiety, sexual repression, and the hyper, fantasy activities of male puberty are transferred from the clinical arena of the young, male libido onto the social stage of late nineteenth-century train travel and how a fixated repression can also cause anxiety attacks because of unfulfilled psychic desires arising from the instinctual energy of the unconscious (LaPlanche and Pontalis 474–6).

Clinically and theoretically, the period from 1890 until 1905 also demonstrates the extent to which Freud would go in order to alter the way that he spoke and wrote about the evolutionary process of changing neurology into psychoanalysis as a meta-psychology of humanistic values. During the 1890s Freud’s discursive language was completely formulated within neurology and physiology. But increasingly as the 1890s progressed, and as Freud wrote his notes and references into the book simply called the Project, the problem of trying to speak and write about the meta-psychological processes that happen in a psychic event became increasingly difficult once his theories travelled beyond the scope of the heuristic models of neurology and physiology that had supplied him with a research and theoretical base for neurology and physiology during the 1880s and '90s. Within Freud’s own historical writings such as “On the History of the Psycho-
Analysis Movement”, by the time that *The Interpretation of Dreams* was published, Freud wanted to completely “speak” of the complex energy systems of the mind in entirely psychological terms (qtd. in Francher 1, 15):

Just four years after the *Project [...] [was mailed unpublished and unedited to Wilhelm Fliess in Berlin in 1897]*, in his masterwork *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud could write: “I shall entirely disregard the fact that the mental apparatus with which we are here concerned is also known to us in the form of an anatomical preparation, and I shall carefully avoid the temptation to determine psychical locality in an anatomical fashion. I shall remain on psychological grounds” (536).

Since *psychical-analysis*, as Freud had labelled it—used first in 1896 as a psychic concept that was contained in the essay “*Further Remarks on the Neuro-Psychoses of Defense*” (LaPlanche and Pontalis 367–8)—had no psychological language to support its theoretical and hermeneutical “equations” except neurology, physiology, and the “hypnotic-analysis” of Charcot, from an academic praxis of subject-formation it is important to fully appreciate and understand the overwhelming task that Freud was presented with in developing a language—a “book” of knowledge (he called it “literature”—that would fully and adequately support what was to become a completely theoretical and cultural basis for assessing the way the mind thinks about its existence.

After the hypothetical phase between 1895 and 1905, the most acceptable means for Freud to develop more space, and thereby theoretical scope—to “shore up” what he has already written and theorised—was through a hyper-extended
language that critiques, enlightens, and scientifically "enlivens" the psychic thoughts from the cultural environment at large—the world of everyday people. As is quite evident from his essays and critical studies in the first five years after *The Interpretations of Dreams* was published, by the time that Freud had written and published *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* and *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, he had, to all intents and purposes, completed the so-called scientific phase of psychoanalysis as far as the language of nineteenth-century research could take his theories and writings within the discursive confines of argument and analytic space. Freud took psychoanalysis from the analytic couch, complete with its private, guarded sessions, to the larger world of academia and culture.

Importantly, from the perspective of creativity in this thesis, the critique of "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*" would become not only Freud's first literary criticism, but would also establish him as a philosopher of early twentieth-century critical theory. Thus, we could surmise that "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*" not only became Freud's initial theoretical study outside of neurology and physiology, but also established the psychoanalytic scene of his discussion of dream-work and its relationship to delusions; Freud used the artefact of literature to its fullest extent as a *quid pro quo* document of psychoanalytic investigation by giving it authenticity with his own "imprint" and a scientific frame of reference.

From "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*", no subject is too small, mundane or off-limits for the psychological theories of Freud or those who quickly
followed his lead into psychoanalytical theory and criticism. As we have already seen in this thesis, artists, their artefacts, their lives, and the cultural aspects of religion, past and present, are never far removed from Freud's discursive writings and theoretical subject-formations for the next 32 years. And, as is historically evident from the Freudian canon, to the very end, Freud was committed to working the meta-psychological landscape that was contained within creative artefacts, aesthetics, and the full extent that is the Western world's religious history, whether Judaic or Christian.

D. Early Writings, Notes, and Letters on Creativity

Freud's earliest engagements with analytic literary criticism came with three separate discussions on two different character subjects in literary history. The first discussion was upon the theme of the Oedipal Complex in Sophocles' Oedipus Rex and Shakespeare's Hamlet. These brief comments are contained within Chapter V, Section D of The Interpretation of Dreams (Brill 306–12). The second discussion also came from Oedipus Rex and Hamlet, as referenced in "Letter 71" to Wilhelm Fliess on 15 October 1897 (Strachey 213), and the third literary analysis was one of Freud's first attempts at the psychoanalysis of a character taken from Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's story "Die Richterin" ("The Woman Judge"), which was also a written note to Wilhelm Fliess ("Letter 91", Strachey 213) that was dated 20 June 1898 (qtd. in Strachey 3–4).

These initial psychoanalytic discussions were followed six years later by "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's Gradiva", which was Freud's first published
work on the psychoanalysis of literature. Concerning aesthetics and, more specifically, Freud’s analysis about creativity, “Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s \textit{Gradiva}” indicates the links between psychoanalysis and a bourgeois discourse of nineteenth-century science, which is indebted to early German Romanticism and those topics that he felt romantically linked to: history, art, archaeology, the Renaissance, and the ancient classical world. As we can see from the title of the work, the psychoanalysis of literature, not creativity, was Freud’s original ambition for the study’s thesis. Exploring literary artefacts, Freud used all aspects of the humanities to develop his interpretation of delusions and dreams in a psychoneurotic psyche.

First, Freud’s \textit{Gradiva}, complete with 1912 postscript and the frontispiece at the beginning of Volume IX of the \textit{Standard Edition}, comprises carefully situated arguments that are never far removed from the analytic setting of language or the detective scene of investigation and discovery. Aside from its cerebral depth and its analogous frame of reference between Wilhelm Jensen’s (1837–1911) novella \textit{Gradiva} (1903), and Freud’s meta-psychological study of dreams and delusions as a superstructure to the original work, Freud steered clear of a psychiatric case study and was intent upon using the tried and true poetics of the author to develop what he hoped would be a scientific discourse on mental phenomena (“Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s \textit{Gradiva}” 53):

let us pause before we enquire whether, in the construction of his dreams, too, the author meets our expectation that he possesses a deep understanding. Let us ask first what psychiatric science has to say to his hypotheses about
the origin of a delusion and what attitude it takes to the part played by repression and the unconscious, to conflict and to the formation of compromises. In short, let us ask whether this imaginative representation of the genesis of a delusion can hold its own before the judgment of science [...] And here we must give what will perhaps be an unexpected answer. In fact the situation is quite the reverse: it is science that cannot hold its own before the achievement of the author.

Nonetheless, Elizabeth Wright (Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal 26–9) saw the importance of Freud's Gradiva containing four distinct areas of critical development in the academic field of psychoanalytic theory. For Wright these historical developments are as follows: (a) the archaeological factor of psychoanalytic investigation; (b) that dreams, even dreams of characters in novels, can be interpreted; (c) that Freud/Zoe (the hero's childhood friend now grown up), as analyst, clearly sees the artistic ambiguity of the story and relates well to the author's analytic intentions; and (d) the symbolism of the buried life (Pompeii) in Jensen's Gradiva represents, in a literary format, all that Freud could demand of it for a theory of the return of the repressed.

Furthermore, in "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's Gradiva", as readers we get to witness the development of the mature Freudian narrator who writes himself and his narrative voice into being the all-knowing scientific investigator, privy to the sacred streets of ancient Pompeii while exhibiting a profane sexual voyeurism. Apart from Freud developing what he felt was an analytic and clinical perspective on the psychoneurotic symptoms of pathological dreams and delusions, historically this
work's real worth lies in the fact that it creates first and foremost a *topos of locus* for Freud's later studies on creativity and aesthetics. Outside of religion, Freud's critique of Jensen's *Gradiva* is very nearly his most complete analysis of "the place of creativity" in his writings.

In 1905 or 1906, a couple of years before *Gradiva*, Freud had set aside a critical paper entitled "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage", which is interesting for a number of historical and critical reasons. Written as a classical Aristotelian essay, its methodological and step-by-step format demonstrates Freud wedging psychoanalytic thought into the philosophical field of literary criticism and theory. To academically accomplish this, he had to first establish what drama is from the classics onward and how drama critically developed as a literary medium. Then, Freud had to explain and demonstrate how the reflexivity of psychoanalysis can engage creative works and their characters and how psychoanalytic criticism can be applied as a subject-formation of critical analysis to characters and creative works that have been routinely resistant to the normal line of philosophical reasoning.

By focusing upon Hamlet in "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage", Freud is able to show how a man who is not psychopathic becomes neurotic through the play's development and tragic ending. Developing the essay along classical lines of discourse, Freud used the subject-formation of psychoanalysis as a mode of critical analysis—the neurotic mind *vis-à-vis* a psychopathic character in a dramatic production. From a theoretical standpoint, Freud's primary and ultimate goal was the establishment of scientific importance for psychoanalytic theory and criticism to be
seen as an applied theory of philosophical thought (qtd. in “Sigmund Freud: Psychopathic Characters on the Stage” Lechte 121):

however clearly it is recognizable, [it] is never given a definite name; so that in the spectator too the process is carried through with his attention averted, and he is in the grip of his emotions instead of taking stock of what is happening. A certain amount of resistance is no doubt saved in this way, just as, in an analytic treatment, we find derivatives of the repressed material reaching consciousness, owing to a lower resistance, while the repressed material itself is unable to do so. After all, the conflict in Hamlet is so effectively concealed that it was left to me to unearth it.

These diverse and critical readings from 1900 until 1907 chronicle Freud’s initial undertaking into the psychoanalytic criticism of creativity, literary works, and the artist who wrote them. His writings on creativity during this period demonstrate his early ambitions and how he analysed the psychologically interesting characterisations in artworks. In these early essays, Freud’s theory of subject-formation and criticism goes from primarily his analytic study of dreams—interspersed with brief passages on the Oedipal Complex in _The Interpretation of Dreams_—to a short, character analysis of psychoneurosis in Conrad Ferdinand Meyer’s story “Die Richterin” (“The Woman Judge”), to the psychopathology of stage characters in a dramatic production in “Psychopathic Characters on the Stage”, to his first true psychoanalysis of literature in “Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s _Gradiva_”, where he explores more completely (a) the literary artefacts of delusional desire for a work of art (“the Gradiva relief” of a beautiful, young woman, now
situated in the Vatican [No. 1284], 94–5); (b) the undreamt dreams of a character in a story; and (c) the powerful, but highly successful, ambiguity of an aesthetic work of art in the *Gradiva* critique. Twelve years later, a more obtuse study of creativity and the artist—Freud attempting to use the text as psyche and failing to fully come to grips with the psychotic mind of a delusional character and "the return of the repressed"—would find its way into his analytic work "The Uncanny", which will be thoroughly discussed in Chapter V of this thesis.

Chapter II begins with Freud's theories on creativity, specifically as a historical account of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic literary criticism in the following critical works from the Freudian canon: "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood", "The Moses of Michelangelo", and "Dostoevsky and Parricide". We will also re-evaluate the lesser known works on creative criticism, "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" and "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*", from a historical perspective, demonstrating Freud's development as a clinician of psychoanalytic discursive theory.

**Chapter II**

*Freud on Creativity: The Look Inward to the Soul, Then Outward to Mankind*

**A. Freud, Psychoanalysis, and the Artist as Daydreamer**

From an academic standpoint, Freud's most famous work on creativity is his essay "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming". Psychoanalysing the artist as a sort of shadowy figure of reality, Freud transcends his creative ambitions and gives us an
analytic discourse on the artist and their creativity and not necessarily about the aesthetic process of the artist’s creativity. Moreover, by casting the artist as a romantic adventurer who offers the reader a diversion from the drudgery of normal life, Freud is using a hypothetical discourse and a scientifically informed physiology and neurology on a purely theoretical level. Hypothetically, he wants his writing to come to terms with the primary mental processes of dreams and fantasies rather than explain the classical, formal aspects of aesthetics—artistic form as the space of creativity—and how this creative reality relates to the feeling of aesthetic pleasure and delight ("Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" 148–9):

I cannot pass over the relation of phantasies to dreams. Our dreams at night are nothing else than phantasies like these, as we can demonstrate from the interpretation of dreams. Language, in its unrivalled wisdom, long ago decided the question of the essential nature of dreams by giving the name of "day-dreaming" to the airy creations of phantasy. If the meaning of our dreams usually remains obscure to us in spite of this pointer, it is because of the circumstances that at night there also arise in us wishes of which we are ashamed; these we must conceal from ourselves, and they have consequently been repressed, pushed into the unconscious. Repressed wishes of this sort and their derivatives are only allowed to come to expression in a very distorted form. When scientific work had succeeded in elucidating this factor of dream-distortion, it was no longer difficult to recognize that night-dreams are wish-fulfillments in just the same way as day-dreams—the phantasies which we all know so well.
In this passage Freud starts what can be called his second phase of psychoanalytic theory using a mode of reflexivity on aesthetics. We also begin to see a creative discourse that is abstract, translucent, and very much like a dream, the words mysterious and bordering on the magical.

Freud's creative bent was shaped by an innovative and imaginative cathexis of his conscious mind that was further conflated by the desires of his own libido (Beyond the Pleasure Principle 3, 4, 6):

It is of no concern to us in this connection to enquire how far, with this hypothesis of the pleasure principle, we have approached or adopted any particular, historically established, philosophical system. [...] Priority and originality are not among the aims that psycho-analytic work sets itself; and the impression that underlie the hypothesis of the pleasure principle are so obvious that they can scarcely be overlooked [...] It must be pointed out, however, that strictly it is incorrect to talk of the dominance of the pleasure principle over the course of mental processes. If such a dominance existed, the immense majority of our mental processes would have to be accompanied by pleasure or to lead to pleasure, whereas universal experience completely contradicts any such conclusion. The most that can be said, therefore, is that there exists in the mind a strong tendency towards the pleasure principle, but that that tendency is opposed by certain other forces or circumstances, so that the final outcome cannot always be in harmony with the tendency towards pleasure.
Further, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” makes obvious what was to become the classical flaw in Freudian theoretical writings concerning creativity and the artist: striving to expound upon an aesthetic by using a scientifically based explanation of the mind that had its origins in Freud’s more generative writings and research from his physiological and neurological training in the 1880s and early 1890s. Furthermore, in “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, while systematically using a journalistic style of writing (see Flem 117), Freud was attempting to write creative writers and artists into a universal theory of psychoneurosis by employing an analysis of what in reality amounts to a psychobiography of the text as psyche.

By literally projecting psychoanalytic theory onto the personification of the artist in “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, Freud subverts the whole intertextuality of his scholarly writings, which, when considered along with all his other works on creativity, further points to his ambivalence about the ability of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory to explain the nature of creativity and the aesthetic experience of art. Consequently, at the end of “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, Freud’s meta-psychological process, which tries to match psychoanalytic theory with the artists and their works, becomes another highly speculative and elusive analysis to find a deductive pattern—“the return of the repressed” complete with obsessions and compulsions of the psychopathology of the creative mind (153):

The writer softens the character of his egoistic day-dreams by altering and disguising it, and he bribes us by the purely formal—that is, aesthetic—yield of pleasure which he offers us in the presentation of his phantasies. We give
the name of an *incentive bonus*, or a *fore-pleasure*, to a yield of pleasure such as this, which is offered to us so as to make possible the release of still greater pleasure arising from deeper psychical sources. In my opinion, all the aesthetic pleasure which a creative writer affords us has the character of a fore-pleasure of this kind, and our actual enjoyment of an imaginative work proceeds from a liberation of tensions in our minds. It may even be that not a little of this effect is due to the writer’s enabling us thenceforward to enjoy our own day-dreams without self-reproach or shame.

Unfortunately for the truly interested readers of “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, Freud’s repeated attempts to explain the nature of the creative impulse never materialise into a theoretical model that could be formulated into a hermeneutic on creativity or, more importantly, an understanding of where the artistic impulse comes from—its origin in the psyche. Thus, Freud’s psychoanalytic theories on creativity—an art of interpretation of art—became a means for him to unconsciously chronicle his own momentary leaps into his covert fantasy of wanting to become a great writer of profound importance.

**B. Psychoanalysis and Psychobiography: The Artist as Psychic Artefact**

Two years later, in 1910, this desire to discover pathology in the creativity of the artist found its way to the forefront of his writings in the psychobiographical essay on Leonardo da Vinci. As Nicola Glover described it in “Freud’s Theory of Art and Creativity” (2), between “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” and *Leonard da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, Freud “has outgrown the omnipotent,
infantile wish to idealize his subject and can get on with the real business of unearthing the truth”, thus Freud’s “approach [now] centers on the experience of the individual artist, [where Freud] reconstructs his subject’s past, discovering possible complexes, repressions, and neuroses” (Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood 16):

If a biographical study is really intended to arrive at an understanding of its hero’s mental life it must not—as happens in the majority of biographies as a result of discretion or prudishness—silently pass over its subject’s sexual activity or sexual individuality. What is known of Leonardo in this respect is little: but that little is full of significance. In an age which saw a struggle between sensuality without restraint and gloomy asceticism, Leonardo represented the cool repudiation of sexuality—a thing that would scarcely be expected of an artist and a portrayer of feminine beauty. Solmi quotes the following sentence of his which is evidence of his [Leonardo’s] frigidity: “The act of procreation and everything connected with it is so disgusting that mankind would soon die out if it were not an old-established custom and if there were not pretty faces and sensuous natures.”

Only five years have elapsed since Freud completed his pivotal work on joke mechanism entitled Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious in 1905, and already we can see three different and more informed psychoanalytic approaches on the subject of creativity and the artistic mind: (a) the work on joke mechanism and the investigation of the primary and secondary mental processes as an initial application of psychoanalytic theory; (b) “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” and
the pleasures of our fantasies as a normal escape from reality; and (c) the psychobiography *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood*, wherein Freud treats Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519)—the subject/persona of his analytic discourse—as an unconscious and ever-present patient in analysis. 

As an early historiography of modern psychology, *Leonardo da Vinci* would become for Freud the psychoanalytic model for future writings on creativity, where we see psychoanalytic *ghosting* as a form of analysis (71–2):

Another striking feature of the picture [*St Anne with Two Others*] assumes even greater significance. St Anne, Mary’s mother and the boy’s grandmother, who must have been a matron, is here portrayed as being perhaps a little more mature and serious than the Virgin Mary, but as still being a young woman of unfaded beauty. In point of fact Leonardo has given the boy two mothers, one who stretches her arms out to him, and another in the background; and both are endowed with the blissful smile of the joy of motherhood. This peculiarity of the picture has not failed to surprise those who have written about it.

As Freud’s passage continues, we can see psychoanalysis actually *ghosting* the reference works of two other art critics while Freud attempts to explain Leonardo’s filial bonds through his artistic works (72):

Muther, for example, is of the opinion that Leonardo could not bring himself to paint old age, lines and wrinkles, and for this reason made Anne too into a woman of radiant beauty. But can we be satisfied with this explanation? Others have had recourse to denying that there is any similarity in age
between the mother and the daughter. But Muther’s attempt at an explanation is surely enough to prove that the impression that St Anne has been made more youthful derives from the picture and is not an invention for an ulterior purpose.

Then Freud uses a quasi hyper-textuality of analytic discourse to explain the counter-transference that takes place between the painting, Leonardo’s childhood, his artistic creations, and his professional life (72):

Leonardo’s childhood was remarkable in precisely the same way as this picture. He had had two mothers: first, his true mother Caterina, from whom he was torn away when he was between three and five, and then a young and tender stepmother, his father’s wife, Donna Albiera. By his combining this fact about his childhood with the one mentioned above (the presence of his mother and grandmother) and by his condensing them into a composite unity, the design of *St Anne with Two Others* took shape for him.

Thus, from a single screen memory from Leonardo da Vinci’s childhood and three of his more famous paintings, *Mona Lisa*, *Madonna and Child with St Anne*, and *St Anne with Two Others*, Freud constructs a highly interpretive, if not speculative, essay on da Vinci’s psychosexual development by trying to find a tête-à-tête relationship between da Vinci’s unconscious motivations and artistic creations using fragments of historical facts and biographical information.

At the very beginning of Part IV, Freud psychoanalyses Leonardo’s libidinal impulses from scant personal and historical facts, relying heavily upon secondary interpretations of da Vinci’s Renaissance art, which illustrates Freud’s artistic gaze,
love for German Romanticism, and the newly-informed analytic discourse of psychoanalysis (64):

We have not yet done with Leonardo’s vulture phantasy. In words which only too plainly recall a description of a sexual act (“and struck me many times with its tail against my lips”), Leonardo stresses the intensity of the erotic relations between mother and child. From this linking of his mother’s (the vulture’s) activity with the prominence of the mouth zone it is not difficult to guess that a second memory is contained in the phantasy. This may be translated: “My mother pressed innumerable passionate kisses on my mouth.” The phantasy is compounded from the memory of being suckled and being kissed by his mother. Kindly nature has given the artist the ability to express his most secret mental impulses, which are hidden even from himself, by means of the works that he creates, and these works have a powerful effect on others who are strangers to the artist, and who are themselves unaware of the source of their emotion. Can it be that there is nothing in Leonardo’s life work to bear witness to what his memory preserved as the strongest impression of his childhood?

Ironically, Freud’s flaw concerning “Leonardo’s vulture phantasy” (64) depends upon the mistranslation of nibbio, meaning kite instead of vulture, and having no relationship with ancient Egypt or Egyptian mythology, which can undermine even the best scholarly research. The credibility of a theoretical argument, which the research may centre upon, is flawed simply because there is no real patient to confirm or deny the analysand’s thoughts or language. Ironically, a
kite is also a bird of prey, and this assumption may have been in Freud's thinking when he was contemplating his subject-formation of the "vulture phantasy". So, the question can be asked: are the more modern critics overcriticising Freud's hypotheses and not allowing him a certain amount of creative freedom?

On the whole, what sets the construction of this psychobiography in place is how Freud develops the whole relationship between the analyst and the analysand, further constructing the entire scene of transference and countertransference into an imaginary analysis between himself and his famous artist-patient. Furthermore, Freud's monograph on da Vinci was his last major attempt to write a psychobiography using a historical figure, because the new biographical work on a different subject would have required a complete reconstruction of what might have been versus what little was known about the artist. A completely artistic work of art, informing its own discourse as it writes itself, means that any scientific potential that the new psychobiography might have had becomes emboldened by whatever subjects sparked Freud's imagination. In the final analysis, Freud's essay draws significantly upon his love to write, and not da Vinci's real life, nor an explanation of his creative genius as an Italian Renaissance artist.

The path to latent knowledge and insight into a historical figure was not without Freud's psychic investment with the artist and the artistic objects. In "The Moses of Michelangelo", Freud once again employs the classical psychoanalytic situation—transference and countertransference between patient and analyst—to first identify with what Freud considered to be Michelangelo's motives for creating the marble statue of Moses, and secondly, Freud wanted to know if Michelangelo
sought identification with Moses, his biblical subject, in any pathological way. In addition, if we look further into the overall ramifications of "The Moses of Michelangelo", Freud's analysis—his preoccupation with the biblical Moses and not Michelangelo's psychological make-up—goes not only beyond the poetics of discourse, but to a pathological level of neurotic obsession for the seven foot, eight-and-a-half inch marble statue.

This personal obsession might have been something that Freud may have been aware of to some degree, but not to the extent that the iconoclastic myth/art-object represented for his own spirituality ("The Moses of Michelangelo" 213):

no piece of statuary has ever made a stronger impression on me than this. How often have I mounted the steep steps from the unlovely Corso Cavour to the lonely piazza where the deserted church stands, and have essayed to support the angry scorn of the hero’s glance! Sometimes I have crept cautiously out of the half-gloom of the interior as though I myself belonged to the mob upon whom his eye is turned—the mob which can hold fast no conviction, which has neither faith of patience, and which rejoices when it has regained its illusory idols. From this emotional confession, the obvious question could be asked: was Michelangelo’s Moses—the highly imposing figure that sat as the centerpiece of the fresco in front of the Church of Saint Peter in Chains, near the Vatican—a complex and thinly disguised account of Freud’s desire to creatively situate himself in Moses’ persona, while being the analyst and the patient at the same time, with Freud
crossing the aeons of history to virtually become the biblical Moses, the psychoanalyst as the new “law-giver”?

From a theoretical standpoint, as will be discussed in Chapter IV of this thesis, Freud would revisit the biblical Moses in his work on cultural criticism and the Jews in *Moses and Monotheism*. This overt fascination with Michelangelo’s statue and the importance of the historical Moses to the Jewish religion, and Freud’s own creativity on the subject of religion, illustrates Freud’s over-determination and identification with the topics of his writings, demonstrating certain identity fixations within his psyche ("The Moses of Michelangelo" 220–1):

A figure in the act of instant departure would be utterly at variance with the state of mind which the tomb is meant to induce in us […] But then the statue we see before us cannot be that of a man filled with wrath, of Moses when he came down from Mount Sinai and found his people faithless and threw down the Holy Tables so that they were broken. And, indeed, I can recollect my own disillusionment when, during my first visits to San Pietro in Vincoli, I used to sit down in front of the statue in the expectation that I should now see how it would start up on its raised foot, dash the Tables of the Law to the ground and let fly its wrath. Nothing of the kind happened. Instead, the stone image became more and more transfixed, an almost oppressively solemn calm emanated from it, and I was obliged to realize that something was represented here that could stay without change; that this Moses would remain sitting like this in his wrath for ever.
In an uncanny moment of revelation while completing this passage, who are we to assume that Freud is speaking of in the subject-formation of his text: an aetological myth from biblical history, the sublime reflecting from the artist’s gaze of Michelangelo’s work of art, or Freud inhabiting a schizoid realm of the two mystical realities? At the very end of the essay, Freud is caught between his own inner spirit (desire and creativity) and the need to express scientifically (theoretically and academically) how the tenets of psychoanalysis operate on many different levels of understanding when he writes (236):

[j]In his creations Michelangelo has often enough gone to the utmost limit of what is expressible in art; and perhaps in his statue of Moses he has not completely succeeded, if his purpose was to make the passage of a violent gust visible in the signs left behind it in the ensuing calm.
C. Psychoanalytic Theory, the Artefact, and Literary Criticism

If an explanation of psychosexual development and Freud's first use of the concept of narcissism found its way into da Vinci's later artistic life as psychoanalytic theory, then Freud would use the model again in his hermeneutic on the universal theme of the Oedipal Complex in "Dostoevsky and Parricide", a psychoanalytic reading of Dostoevsky's 1880 novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. Freud attempts to differentiate obvious personality traits in Dostoevsky's novel on parricide to the novelist's own life of epileptic fits and poor health, womanising and prostitution, and a general lifestyle of vice and criminality ("Dostoevsky and Parricide" 182):

The unmistakable connection between the murder of the father in *The Brothers Karamazov* and the fate of Dostoevsky's own father has struck more than one of his biographers, and has led them to refer to "a certain modern school of psychology". From the standpoint of psycho-analysis (for that is what is meant), we are tempted to see in that event the severest trauma and to regard Dostoevsky's reaction to it as the turning-point of his neurosis. But if I undertake to substantiate this view psycho-analytically, I shall have to risk the danger of being unintelligible to all those readers who are unfamiliar with the language and theories of psycho-analysis.

Further on, Freud gives an account of the writer's life of parricide, bisexuality, and his epileptic attacks. In each of these passages on Dostoevsky's mental and physical problems, we can see evidence, not of a simplistic explanation of psychoanalytic criticism on creativity that was consistent with "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", but specific examples of the much improved hermeneutics of
subject-formation of applied clinical psychoanalysis that had been developed as a critical discourse by the time that "Dostoevsky and Parricide" was available for publication in 1928. Once again, Freud makes the argument that throughout history, the Oedipal/Electra Complex, as psychoanalysis' reformulation of Original Sin complete with guilt and fear of castration, is the basis and subsequent development for law and civilized society. Freud walks a fine line between The Brothers Karamazov and Dostoevsky's personal history, but he was also trying, rather blatantly, to situate applied clinical psychoanalysis in between the artefact and Dostoesky's notorious lifestyle ("Dostoevsky and Parricide" 183):

Parricide, according to a well-known view, is the principal and primal crime of humanity as well as of the individual. (See my Totem and Taboo, 1912–13.) It is in any case the main source of the sense of guilt, through we do not know if it is the only one: researchers have not yet been able to establish with certainty the mental origin of guilt and the need for expiation. But it is not necessary for it to be the only one. The psychological situation is complicated and requires elucidation. The relation of a boy to his father is, as we say, an "ambivalent" one [...] This whole development now comes up against a powerful obstacle. At a certain moment the child comes to understand that an attempt to remove his father as a rival would be punished by his castration. So from fear of castration—that is, in the interests of preserving his masculinity—he gave up his wish to possess his mother and get rid of his father. In so far as this wish remains in the unconscious it forms the basis of the sense of guilt.
Freud not only analyses a particular artist, but he also draws upon other psychoanalytic theories to justify not just a literary reading but a whole theoretical approach to the mother-father-child relationship, childhood sexual development, masculinity and femininity, law and socialisation, and the iconoclastic God in the heavens as the one true representation of authority in the Western world ("Dostoevsky and Parricide" 183, 187):

A further complication arises when the constitutional factor we call bisexuality is comparatively strongly developed in a child. [...] the threat to the boy's masculinity by castration, his inclination [...] becomes strengthened to diverge in the direction of femininity, to put himself instead in his mother's place and take over her role as object of his father's love. [...] It is enough that we may assume that their original meaning remained unchanged behind all later accretions [...] that Dostoevsky never got free from the feelings of guilt arising from his intention of murdering his father [...] which the father-relation is the decisive factor, his attitude towards the authority of the State and towards belief in God.

And, according to Freud's analysis (181):

[i]t is extremely probable that Dostoevsky's epilepsy was of the second kind ["affective" epilepsy, Freudian terminology]. This cannot, strictly speaking, be proved. To do so we should have to be in a position to insert the first appearance of the attacks and their subsequent fluctuations into the thread of his mental life; and for that we know too little. The descriptions of the attacks themselves teach us nothing and our information about the relations
between them and Dostoesky's experiences is defective and often contradictory. The most probable assumption is that the attacks went back far into his childhood, that their place was taken to begin with by milder symptoms and that they did not assume an epileptic form until after the shattering experience of his eighteenth year—the murder of his father.

This type of subjectivity had to be theoretically located not only in the formal properties of the artwork, but also in the analyst's covert analysis of the artwork's ambiguity: its sublime sense of intrigue and mystery. In his critique of Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of Childhood, we have already discussed how this type of covert criticism of aesthetics can have an opposite effect and distort how later critics have perceived Freud's now famous vulture fantasy, where he is supposed to have conveniently projected the symbols of vultures into da Vinci's artwork because of a complete mistranslation of the word "kite" (Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of Childhood 77):

These pictures [Mona Lisa, Madonna and Child with St Anne and St Anne with Two Others] breathe a mythical air into whose secret one dares not penetrate; at the very most one can attempt to establish their connection with Leonardo's earlier creations. The figures are still androgynous, but no longer in the sense of the vulture-phantasy. They are beautiful youths of feminine delicacy and with effeminate forms; they do not cast their eyes down, but gaze in mysterious triumph, as if they knew of a great achievement of happiness, about which silence must be kept. The familiar smile of fascination leads one to guess that it is a secret of love. It is possible that in
these figures Leonardo has denied the unhappiness of his erotic life and has triumphed over it in his art, by representing the wishes of the boy, infatuated with his mother, as fulfilled in this blissful union of the male and female natures.

Certainly, psychoanalysis was never meant to be an exact science between the analyst and the analysand, and it is easy to imagine how early analytic sessions could have images, symbolism and misspoken words that are ambiguous and unclear, only to find a truer translation once the analytic sessions have continued. Unfortunately, in *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of Childhood*, Freud does not explain where in the mind the creative impulse comes from, what form a piece of artwork might possess, or more simply, what the aesthetic value of the artwork could mean to the artistic community, or, for that matter, what the aesthetic might mean to a visitor in a museum or a library.

Without its subject-formations on psychoanalytic theory and its hermeneutics on applied psychoanalysis, true criticism of creativity, the artist or the artwork rarely exists, except as passages of psychological commentary. Consequently, as with the 1911 essay “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning” and his work *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, Part I and Part II* (1916–17), Freud reiterates most of the same analytic conclusions that he developed during his first two decades of psychoanalysis’ theoretical history (1897–1917), namely that pleasure and fantasy, and their reconciliation in reality, are the basis of creativity. Consistent as well with later findings in psychoanalytic theory, Freud was also quick to point out in his earlier essay, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, that simple
flights of the imagination from an ordinary daydreamer who did not possess what Freud referred to as *ars poetica* usually bored, even repulsed, our aesthetic sensibilities, while the talented artist is able to overcome the revulsion of the daydreamer’s unreality and give, to the mind’s eye and ear, a sense of true pleasure in the psychic reality of mere fantasy.

**D. Creativity, Aesthetics, and “The Goethe Prize”**

In “The Goethe Prize”, a handwritten letter that was delivered as a public address in Frankfurt on 28 August 1930 by his daughter Anna because of his advanced age and health problems, Freud demonstrates how Goethe’s poetry anticipated the content of dream-life in the evocative words (Strachey 209):^4

> Was von Menschen nicht gewusst  
> der nicht bedacht,  
> Durch das Labyrinth der Brust  
> Wandelt in der Nacht.  
> (That which, not known  
> or not heeded by men,  
> wanders in the night  
> through the labyrinth of the heart.)

[From the address] Behind this magic we recognize the ancient, venerable and incontestably correct pronouncement of Aristotle—that dreaming is the continuation of our mental activity into the state of sleep—
combined with the recognition of the unconscious which psycho-analysis first added to it.

After the apparent references to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud eloquently draws upon Goethe’s writings for his theory of the Oedipal/Electra Complex of childhood sexual development (209):

> [Goethe] explained to himself the strongest impulse of love that he experienced as a mature man by apostrophizing his beloved: “Ach, du warst in abgelebten Zeiten meine Schwester oder meine Frau.” [“Ah, you were, in a past life, my sister or my wife.”] Thus he does not deny that these perennial first inclinations take figures from one’s own family circle as their object.

Early on in the acceptance speech, Freud compares Goethe to Leonardo da Vinci (208) by first drawing upon his psychobiographical essay, “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood”. Then, comparing the two men’s psyches, Freud bestows upon Goethe the accolade of a “Renaissance man of creativity”, who was, in Freud’s mind, the perfect artist (208–9):

> Goethe can be compared in versatility to Leonard da Vinci, the Renaissance master, who like him was both artist and scientific investigator. But human images can never be repeated, and profound differences between the two great men are not lacking. In Leonardo’s nature the scientist did not harmonize with the artist, [it] interfered with and perhaps in the end stifled him. In Goethe’s life both personalities found room side by side: at different times each allowed the other to predominate.
And here is where Freud uses his psychoanalytic influence to make an allusion to Leonardo’s family’s pathological environment (208):

In Leonardo it is plausible to associate his disturbance with that inhibition in his development which withdrew everything erotic, and hence psychology too, from his sphere of interest. In this respect Goethe’s character was able to develop more freely.

Then, in what comes off as a historical *esprit de corps* for Goethe’s memory, Freud draws Goethe and psychoanalysis into a historical and scientific alignment that makes them, from the listeners’ and reader’s standpoint, worthy of praise, acceptance and scientific merit for a thousand years to come (208–9):

I think that Goethe would not have rejected psycho-analysis in an unfriendly spirit, as so many of our contemporaries have done. He himself approached it at a number of points, recognized much through his own insight that we have since been able to confirm, and some views, which have brought criticism and mockery down upon us, were expounded by him as self-evident.

In the end, Freud must admit, with a bit of his own creative revelry, that although Goethe was a great employer of psychoanalysis *avant la lettre*, as of yet, psychoanalysis had failed in its attempt to understand why Goethe was a great artist and, more importantly, to comprehend why his artistic achievements had so far resisted any worthwhile critical analysis. And not unlike his acceptance of failure near the conclusion of his essay “The Uncanny”, once again Freud acknowledges Goethe’s influence on the arts, and especially psychoanalysis (212):
But, I admit, in the case of Goethe we have not yet succeeded very far. This is because Goethe was not only, as a poet, a great self-revealer, but also, in spite of the abundance of autobiographical records, a careful concealer. We cannot help thinking here of the words of Mephistopheles:

Das Beste, was du wissen kannst,
Darfst du den Buben doch nicht sagen.

["The best of what you know may not, after all, be told to boys." Faust, Part I, Scene 4.]

In this chapter we have covered all of Freud’s important works on creativity and the artist, literary criticism and psychobiography, and his tribute to Goethe during the acceptance speech for “The Goethe Prize”. In Chapter III of this thesis we will discuss and cover at length, (a) Freud’s discursive and theoretical bridge between creativity, aesthetics and religion; (b) specifically, but not entirely, Moses and Monotheism, Three Essays, as a psychoanalytic reconception of the creation account in the Bible—Freud applying the law of psychoanalysis to the law of the sacred writings in the book of Genesis—and Totem and Taboo as an anthropological, folkloric and philological account of how tribal law, the primal father and “civilized” society began in totemic systems and now resides as infantile residue in psychoneurotic patients; and (c) Freud’s promotion of psychoanalysis as the new authority of the text.
Chapter III:
Psychoanalysis, Creativity and Religion as the New Authority of the Text

A. Creativity and Religion as a Discursive and Hypothetical Bridge to Theory

As one who took so much issue with organised religion—his own Judaic heritage as well as Christianity—it is ironic that nowhere did Freud take any great issue with pagan or mystical writings that were seen as creative works, or oral storytelling, whether written for adults or children. However, from a symbolic, figurative perspective, all his writings seem to have this psychological and metaphorical bridge between the inner and the outer, the sacred and profane, the practiced and the private. Such was Freud's critical but spiritual nature as a scientist, doctor and psychoanalytic theorist.

From two accounts of his life-long love of reading—for example Jensen's romantic work *Gradiva*, and the paperback stories about the Athenian Acropolis and Ancient Rome—books about classical knowledge were continued registers of delight and fantasy to his literary mind—the passionate, psychoanalytic voyage of Freud's quixotic journey of archaeology and the "buried life" (Flem 34–6). We see further complexity in the shorter and lesser known essays and notes from works such as "A Religious Experience" and "A Note on Anti-Semitism", which seem very nearly to betray Freud the scientist and medical doctor and reveal his own psychoneurotic conflicts with the private riddle of Jacob/Sigmund as the father and son of the man, the *brothers* of the B'naï B'rith and Judaism, the spirituality and mysticism of the *kabbala*, and the desire for scientific rigour in psychoanalytic
theory. Moreover, as standard practice, Freud used the shorter works—"A Religious Experience" and "A Note on Anti-Semitism"—as if they were notes, dictated transcriptions from his heart and soul performing like a symbolic writing machine, filled out for the purpose of future references, not unlike a young journalistic reporter who has devised his very own mystic writing pad ("Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad"; see also Wright Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal 122–3).

Metaphorically, as an a priori and crucial element in his hermeneutics on the return of the repressed and the Oedipal Complex, over the last four decades of his life, Freud's thinking was never far removed from the average person's place in the dynamic world of metaphysical transcendence concerning desire and personal freedom linked to the creativity of the spirit, which was always contrasted with the "Promethean chains" and sociological need to live within civilized norms. Indeed, this hermeneutical approach was for Freud a professional pursuit as well as a private philosophy about modern man's coming into the twentieth century: the need to acknowledge the birth-to-death experience as a rite of passage that was continually being written and rewritten into the psychic apparatus. Thus, from a sociological point of view, freedom, personal desire, and drive theory were always present in some form in all of Freud's theories and hermeneutics on applied psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory as a psychic bridge between the diverse facets of human life. Moreover, the human desire for freedom juxtaposed with its ironic need to be in "quasi-bondage" with the traditions of religious history provided an extremely fertile void, because of its total lack of psychoanalytic investigation, for Freud and other psychoanalytic theorists to scientifically develop and mythologically answer the
questions concerning modern people’s search for spiritual meaning within an ever-increasingly complex world.

Theoretically, for Freud and the early proponents of psychoanalysis, this driven manifestation for meaning and truth in the mind took on the existential expression of a mythological experience, as psychoanalytic theorists from Freud to Otto Rank (1884–1939), to the author of Freud’s first complete biography in 1957, Ernest Jones (1879–1958), drew and aligned their academic discourses alongside aesthetics and its association with religious history, rituals and observances. From writing his first complete essay on religion in 1907, “Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices”, the writing and thematic process of this critical study clearly had a considerable impact upon Freud’s later theories about obsessions, compulsions and prohibitions, as “Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices” would inform “Rat Man”, and the incest theme and the forming of civilization in Totem and Taboo, and “The Taboo of Virginity” (from Contributions to the Psychology of Love, III). Freud reasoned from a philosophical level that historically and spiritually, Judaism and Christianity had been saving the Western world’s soul for the last three thousand years, and now the new science of psychoanalysis had the potential to save the spirit (the ego in Freud’s mind) from the psyche’s psychoneurotic and schizoid thoughts, thereby changing the archaic ills of modern society by deconflicting the mind’s troubled soul (Strachey 116, Bakan 295–9).

Interestingly enough, very nearly a century later, French psychoanalyst and literary critic Julia Kristeva, in her address to the 24th Congress of the Canadian Psychoanalytic Society that was given in Montreal on 19 June 1998, spoke about the
same undeniable importance of religion (and religious history) to the development of
the individual ego in Western enlightenment ("Psychoanalysis and Freedom" 13):
in the subject’s [quest for] freedom [...] religions appear as recognitions of
this higher essence of humankind: of this capacity to make meaning, which
they celebrate in the image or the fantasy of one or many figures of symbolic
power with real effects. These divinities are in a sense the guarantors of
meaning. Recognition of an essential human capacity provides religion with
its truth function involves a form of recognition that is both phantasmatic and
[yet] denied, systematizing the internal and external psychodynamics we are
[now] discussing into a hierarchy of values. [Ironically], as a protective and
consoling system of values, religion assures certain human freedoms (we
have seen how before and after Christianity theology is the instigator of the
problem of freedom).

Compared to Freud’s "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices",
Kristeva’s address almost a century later shares important themes and frustrations
from hers and Freud’s psychoanalytic awareness concerning religion’s powerful
cultural history, and its potential value as a psychoneurotic system of obsessions,
prohibitions and repressions. These psychic values can be seen very clearly in not
only Freud’s return of the repressed and the Oedipal Complex, but in more
modernistic terms, what Kristeva refers to in psychoanalytic terminology as
contemporary sexual perversion and progressive radical moralism (13):\

Monotheism, particularly the Catholic form of it, excels in establishing this
balance. It leads to a trade-off between threat/repression and
freedom/perversion, and this counterbalance seems more and more to take on the aspect of a libertarian moralism in the economically favourable context of Western democracies. It is not radically different from humanist morality, but possesses the abundant advantage of benefiting from the security and comfort of tradition. And it exercises a growing fascinating today, at the conclusion of the millennium, a fact that psychoanalysts are well aware of, and perhaps alone in taking the full measure.

Historically and philosophically standing at opposite ends of the twentieth century—the symbolic century of psychoanalytic theory as a cultural phenomenon of the West—the reason that Kristeva’s and Freud’s critiques of religion are important to this thesis resides in their two essays’ collective thoughts about (a) the universal quest for personal freedom, (b) the never-ending struggle for creativity in the mind, (c) the limitless bounds of the human spirit, and (d) the desire for an understanding of the search for meaning in the cosmos. Although completely at odds with each other’s theories because of Freud’s historical adherence to patriarchal language and the traditional Victorian values of the family, they do, however, see the need for a psychological investigation of desire and freedom on the one hand and society and law on the other, as contrasting components of religion’s ironic nature. Just as important philosophically, we must, nonetheless, also take into consideration that in the context of the history of ideas, important eras in theoretical and progressive thinking do not exist in an academic vacuum (Bakan xi):

Movements of thought of the stature of psychoanalysis usually have prominent antecedents in the history of man’s thought. Although there are
giants in every great movement of thought, rarely do their contributions seem to arise full-blown, like psychoanalysis, as the work of a single person. [And,] the development of psychoanalysis is essentially incomplete unless it be viewed against the history of Judaism, and particularly against the history of Jewish mystical thought.

Freud’s primary interest was in the development of psychoanalysis as a modern theory of scientific procedures that took into consideration both the mind’s biological, unconscious processes, and its socialised, “ego-directed” spheres. Nonetheless, in his writings concerning creativity and religion, Freud was not only interested in explaining the aetiological genesis of religion in Moses and Monotheism, but he was also interested in fixing a psychoanalytic priori on how civilization first developed—his theories of primal law, the primal father, and the castration complex—out of a wandering hoard of interconnected families in Totem and Taboo.

Retracing our steps historically, we can see that “Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices” is directly related to the theoretical writing of Totem and Taboo, and is further conflated into Freud’s visions of Michelangelo’s obsessive-compulsive nature in the theoretical critique of “The Moses of Michelangelo”. More importantly, in each of these three works Freud not only creates the “psychoanalytic assumption” and the “psychoanalytic space”, but also the “psychoanalytic scene” for the psychological development of the three realms of the mind: the ego, id and super-ego. Furthermore, as I will discuss in Chapter IV of this thesis, in doing so, by the late 1920s and ’30s in works such as The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and
Its Discontents, and Moses and Monotheism, Freud would also create a "psychoanalytic domain"—a literary place of psychoanalytic discourse, where the qualitative, not quantitative, research becomes grounded in a theory involving classical antiquity, the romantic ideals of Gothic literature, and the mystical wisdom of the ancient writings of the ancient kabbala. Thus, for his theories and hermeneutics on aesthetics and religion, there will always be an archaeological, historical, literary and cultural bridge between his life writings, his theoretical foundations, and subsequently, Freud’s psychoanalytic subject-formations.

B. Psychoanalytic Theory and the Creation Account

Because of its aggressive writing style, one might assume early on in a reading of Moses and Monotheism that it was written to shed new scholarly light upon an ancient and sacred topic. Freud is also quick to point out in the very first paragraph of Part I that his concern is nothing short of a family and national heresy, and that he will subvert his own heritage, if need be, to find the ancient truth about his and Judeo/Christian religious history (3):

To deny a people the man whom it praises as the greatest of its sons, is not a deed to be undertaken lightheartedly—especially by one belonging to that people. No consideration, however, will move me to set aside truth in favour of supposed national interests. Moreover, the elucidation of the mere facts of that problem may be expected to deepen our insight into the situation with which they are concerned.
As we can see from his essays and critical studies, Freud was profoundly influenced by his ability to explain obsessions, compulsions and prohibitions using the historical ironies and paradoxes of Western civilization’s religious beliefs, creating a psychoanalytic account with the assumption that further psychoanalytic argument would follow. In “Part I: Moses and Egyptian”, Freud achieves this using the etymology of ancient names (5–6):

The father of Moses without doubt prefixed to his son’s name that of an Egyptian god like Amon or Ptah, and this divine name was gradually lost in current usage, till the boy was called “Moses.” (The final s is an addition drawn from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is not in the Hebrew, which has “mosheh”) [...] I am a little surprised, however, that Breasted in citing related names should have passed over the analogous theophorous names in the list of Egyptian kings, such as Ah-mose, Thutmose (Thotmes), and Ra-mose (Ramses) [...] many authors who recognized Moses to be an Egyptian name would have drawn the conclusion, or at least considered the possibility, that the bearer of an Egyptian name was himself an Egyptian [...] Nevertheless, to the best of my knowledge no historian has drawn this conclusion in the case of Moses, not even one of those who, like Breasted, are ready to suppose that Moses “was cognizant of all the wisdom of the Egyptians”.

While Moses and Monotheism is a fragmented and repetitious work, for once Freud seems intent upon proving and further shoring up earlier theoretical convictions. Specifically, Freud drew from Totem and Taboo, The Future of an
Illusion, the 1928 four-page essay “The Religious Experience”, and to some extent his cultural work Civilization and Its Discontents. These works were used as references to support his discursive theories and hermeneutics as he progressively wrote the theme of a new creation account into the three critical essays. For Freud, who seems to have had no other purpose in mind except the rewriting of Jewish and Christian documents and replacing it with scientific determinism, there would be little rational or scientific doubt left that religion was an obsessional neurosis and that people have spent most of recorded history believing in a divine father figure as a spiritual projection for the Oedipal Complex (Moses and Monotheism 71):

That conviction I acquired a quarter of a century ago, when I wrote my book on Totem and Taboo [...] it has only become stronger since. From then on I have never doubted that religious phenomena are to be understood only on the model of the neurotic symptoms of the individual, which are so familiar happenings to us, as a return of long-forgotten happenings in the primeval history of the human family, that they owe their obsessive character to that very origin and therefore derive their effect on mankind from the historical truth they contain.

In analytical terms, Freud does this by transforming the three essays into a literary law treatise upon what is known, surmised, eulogised and hypothesised about the character of Moses from the Hexateuch in the Jewish Holy Books and the Pentateuch from the Christian account in the King James version of the Bible. To supplement his psychological law treatise, Freud develops a classical, Aristotelian discourse by undertaking a psychoanalytic investigation into every known fact or
fictional clue surrounding who Moses the historical man was or who Moses the biblical, aetiological myth might have been. For most writers, a rewriting of the Moses story within the confines of biblical history would have been a sufficient and all-encompassing topic, but Freud had always overlaid the topic of Moses with the further complications of the problems that he had with his father, Jacob, from the psychological position of a son who is now a man, who had extremely strong feelings for his mother, Amalia, who was 20 years younger than Freud's father. Thus, Freud knew the perimeters of his topic well, and at worst, revelled in a quiet way in its anger and frustrations as the boy/son, man/father of his own created reality.

As a projection of his psyche, this personal and professional critique of a biblical figure of history had not only scholarly, academic content, but a much stronger psychological one as well. As previously mentioned, adherence to the Jewish religion had haunted Freud from the time of his earliest awareness as an young boy in Freiberg, Moravia, until the book was published in the spring of 1939, a matter of months before Freud's death. Although there is, of course, a psychoanalytic praxis within Freud's development in the following passage from *Moses and Monotheism*, more crucial to this new creation account are the following questions. Is this Freud developing a new creation account, or is he unconsciously displacing his psychoneurotic feelings of repression? Or, can we theorise that Freud is psychologically developing his essays and studies out of his creativity that was respondent to his feelings of repression in his psyche (*Moses and Monotheism* 174–6)?:
Other elements re-emerging from the drama enacted around the person of the primeval father were in no way to be reconciled with the Mosaic religion. The consciousness of guilt in that epoch was no longer restricted to the Jews; it had seized all Mediterranean peoples as a vague discomfort, a premonition of misfortune, the reason for which no one knew. Modern history speaks of the ageing of antique culture [...] In this formulation the murder of God [Moses] was, of course, not mentioned, but a crime that had to be expiated by a sacrificial death [Strachey’s syntax] could only have been murder. Further, the connection between the delusion and the historical truth was established by the assurance that the sacrificial victim was the Son of God [...] Originally a Father religion, Christianity became a Son religion. The fate of having to displace the Father it could not escape [...] Only a part of the Jewish people accepted the new doctrine [of the Son religion]. Those who refused to do so are still called Jews.

As we have seen in Chapter II of this thesis, throughout Freud’s career there have been numerous attempts to explain and retell the aetiological developments of religious history and its creation, or allusions to creativity and religion, through the use of ancient artefacts of archaeology, literature, artworks and biblical documents. As we are about to see, religion was a source of pleasure and academic interest for Freud, but it was also a very perplexing source of anger from his memories of his father and his family’s Jewishness.

From his essay on creativity and religion published at the beginning of the Great War in Europe, Freud had formed an uneasy alliance between the painter and
sculptor Michelangelo, and his magnificent sculpture of the "prophetic likeness" of the biblical Moses in the essay "The Moses of Michelangelo". Originally, the essay had been written for the purpose of psychoanalysing the often irrational psyche—in this case Michelangelo's—of creative writers and artists. In the 1914 essay, however, Freud ends up obsessively and pleasurably intrigued with Moses' mythological being rather than Michelangelo's psychoneurotic obsessions and compulsions for sculpting, in Camarra marble, the Renaissance statue of Moses, the Old Testament prophet. From Michelangelo's art-object and Freud's romantic fixation with Moses' persona, 23 years later he again takes the biblical Moses (Part I written and published in 1937) on an initial journey to discover his aetiological background and biblical derivation as a historical, spiritual and cultural icon of the Jewish and Christian faith. For Freud, this archaeological and mythological passage means finding the biblical law and Hebrew civilization that would theoretically correspond with his own psychoanalytic theories about the Oedipal Complex and the religious Law of the Father (Moses and Monotheism 168):

Following Robertson Smith's totem theory [Religion of the Semites, 1889], I suggested that this horde, previously ruled by the father, was followed by a totemistic brother clan. In order to be able to live in peace with one another the victorious brothers renounced the women for whose sake they had killed the father, and agreed to practise exogamy. The power of the father was broken and the families were regulated by matriarchy. The ambivalence of the sons towards the father remained in force [...] [I]nstead of the father a certain animal was declared the totem; it stood for their ancestor and
protecting spirit, and no one was allowed to hurt or kill it. Once a year [...] the whole clan assembled for a feast at which the otherwise revered totem was torn to pieces and eaten. No one was permitted to abstain from this feast; it was the solemn repetition of the father-murder, in which social order, mortal laws, and religion had had their beginnings.

By attempting what seems like the impossible task—the rewriting of sacred scriptures, risking a private and public controversy over his account of Moses’ more profane creation—Freud once again relies upon his historical, archaeological and etymological knowledge of biblical mythology (Moses and Monotheism 4–5):

What further attracts our interest in the person of Moses is his name, which is written Mosche in Hebrew. One may well ask: Where does it come from? What does it mean? As is well known, the story in Exodus, Chapter ii, already answers this question [...] “The Biblical interpretation of the name: ‘He that was drawn out of the water’”—thus an author in the Judisches Lexikon [1930]—“is folk etymology; the active Hebrew form itself of the name (Mosche can at best mean ‘the drawer out’) cannot be reconciled with this solution.” [...] Instead of citing all the authors who have voiced this opinion I shall quote a passage from a recent work by Breasted, an author whose History of Egypt [1934] is regarded as authoritative. “It is important to notice that his name, Moses, was Egyptian. It is simply the Egyptian word ‘mose’ meaning ‘child,’ [...] The abbreviation ‘child’ early became a convenient rapid form for the cumbersome full name, and the name Mose, ‘child,’ is not uncommon on the Egyptian monuments [...] (The final s is an
addition drawn from the Greek translation of the Old Testament. It is not in the Hebrew, which has ‘mosheh’.” [Freud’s parenthesis]

To add to the argument’s immediate and spontaneous credibility, Freud would then use other psychoanalytic writers like himself, and other scholars of the day, as scholarly references, who had successfully dealt with creation accounts from the literary angle of myths and legends (Moses and Monotheism 7):

In 1909 Otto Rank, then still under my influence, published at my suggestion a book entitled: Der Mythus von der Geburt des Helden. It deals with the fact “that almost all important civilized peoples have early woven myths around and glorified in poetry their heroes, mythical kings and princes, founders of religions, of dynasties, empires and cities—in short, their national heroes [...] Following Rank we reconstruct—on the lines of Galton’s technique—an “average myth” that makes prominent the essential features of all these tales, and we then get this formula: “The Hero is the son of parents of the highest station, most often the son of a king [...] His conception is impeded by difficulties, such as abstinence or temporary sterility; or else his parent’s practic[e] of intercourse in secret because of prohibition or other external obstacles [...]”

According to Freud’s approach to his writings, Moses and Monotheism and The Future of an Illusion are guilty of the same problems and shortcomings that he accuses the biblical texts and documents of. We, as readers, are asked to believe that Freud’s theories and the field of psychoanalytic theory are, according to Freud, completely backed by scientific rigour and fact. Moreover, Freud uses scientific
rationalism in these two works without any spiritual belief whatsoever, and *Moses and Monotheism* and *The Future of an Illusion* contain no more factual information or scientific hypothesis than the biblical documents that Freud is criticising. This finding about psychoanalysis' lack of scientific proof prompts us to ask where the real argument is: what plane of reality do the two works question?

Unlike the aetiological writings of the ancients, or any other mythological, archaeological or religious documents, neither Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* nor *Totem and Taboo* are interested in recreating the cosmos as the Greek Dorian Heisod did in his writing of the *Theogony*, or in rewriting the mythology from the Mesopotamian creation account contained in the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*. Freud is not the least bit interested in taking issue with or proving or disproving the truth of the creation hymn in the book of Genesis (1:1–2:4a). Furthermore, while it is true that Freud recreates Moses as an Egyptian of royal blood—or at the very least causes great speculation to be attached to the Moses myth and to his assumption in the work—Freud did not write *Moses and Monotheism* and *Totem and Taboo*, or any of his other works or critical studies, to give a correct and justifiable birth to the founding of the human race, as in the Mesopotamian *Atrahasis*, the biblical Adam and Eve, or the Greek cultural-log *Works and Days*. Contrary to what the interested reader might surmise from an initial examination of the primary works of religious history and cultural theory, in *Totem and Taboo, Moses and Monotheism, The Future of an Illusion* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud's intention was to alter the cultural and religious background of the Judeo/Christian Church, and with it
the belief systems of the historical and anthropological boundaries of Western civilization.

To do this, first Freud takes the very words and aetiological myths of the Scriptures and the Sacred Jewish Holy Books and subjects them to scientific scrutiny. Secondly, he uses the antiquated words and archaic language of the biblical writings—the spiritual philosophy of heaven and earth—to probe and thoroughly denigrate, turning the sacred on its head by making the sacred sound no more spiritual than the profane. Then, using repetition and familiarity, he causes the sacred to be rewritten by developing a scientific and journalist scene, wherein the psychoanalytic place of writing can begin to develop as a secret and exalted setting (Moses and Monotheism 143):6

It may stimulate us to inquire whether the religion of Moses had given the people anything but an increase in self-confidence through the consciousness of being "chosen." The next element is indeed easily found. Their religion also gave to the Jews a much more grandiose idea of their God or to express it more soberly, the idea of a more august God. Whoever believed in this God took part in his greatness, so to speak, might feel uplifted himself. This may not be quite obvious to unbelievers[.]

Throughout, it seems as though Freud conflates his discourse to a level where any reasoning appears possible. By ignoring the spiritual, he can quickly insert the logic of psychoanalytic investigation. In Totem and Taboo, rather than hyper-extending his scientific argument, in many instances Freud uses analytical compression to reduce two thousand years of Greek mythological and cultural history and render the
whole of classical antiquity and the coming of Caesar and the Romans into the space of two short paragraphs. By ignoring the aetiological myths of the Ancient Near East, the mythic writing of Heisod, and the Sacred Books of the Jewish and Christian faiths, Freud creates a logical void, a psychoanalytic space, to be filled with the discursive art of psychoanalytic theory, which creates, as it were, the proper accounting of everyone's proper being, minus the emotional content.

Rhetorically, in other instances concerning Freud's argument about religion as the new creation account, he figuratively uses a form of child's play in which he comes to inhabit the "cloak" of the market-sellers from the bazaar of the ancient trading ports along the Mediterranean seacoast. His overwrites and retellings of certain passages would make us think so. Take for instance the following analogy in Totem and Taboo, where the romance of writing meets the theoretical purpose of psychoanalytic theory. Writing through the scholarship of William Robertson Smith and his book Religion of the Semites, first published in 1889, Freud develops Smith's archaeological theory of the totem-meal and why it evolved into the totemic-system as a historical understanding of how Sacrament and the Eucharist originated in paganism and bestiality. And more importantly, in doing so in such an obsessive, obtuse fashion—the overwriting of every single word, thought and personal passion—his own ego, as a literary archaeologist and psychic journalist, stands out as much as Smith's innovative work (Totem and Taboo 164–5):

Since sacrifice implies a divinity, it was a question of arguing back from a comparatively high phase of religious ritual to the lowest one, that is, to totemism. I will now attempt to extract from Robertson Smith's admirable
work those of his statements on the origins and meaning of the ritual of sacrifice which are of decisive interest for us. [...] I must omit all the details, [...] and neglect all the later developments. It is quite impossible for an epitome such as this to give my readers any notion of the lucidity and convincing force of the original. [Religion of the Semites] explains that sacrifice at the altar was the essential feature in the ritual of ancient religions. It plays the same part in all religions, so that its origin must be traced back to very general causes [...] Sacrifice—the sacred act par excellence (sacrificium, iepovpyia)—originally had a somewhat different meaning, however, from its later one of making an offering to the deity in order to propitiate him or gain his favor. The materials offered for sacrifice were things that can be eaten or drunk; men sacrifice to their deity the things on which they themselves lived: flesh, cereals, fruit, wine and oil.

Again, on page 166 of Totem and Taboo, in short declarative sentences, and using citation and page numbers from Smith’s work, Freud goes on to explain how the religious communion of blood-drinking—the symbolic body of God and Christ—the Eucharist, developed into a confirmation of brotherhood and social affirmation through a religious, tribal bonding.

At this point in his and Smith’s argument, Freud infuses a quasi-scientific hypothesis that overwrites a research work for the purpose of his own theoretical criticism, as he marginalises the progression of civilization and spiritual development by literally writing a primitive necessity of the tribe out of the darkness
of barbarism and into the light of kinship, social obligation and the law of the clan using a conflated form of a tribal history for the group (Totem and Taboo 166–7):

The oldest form of sacrifice, then, older than the use of fire or the knowledge of agriculture, was the sacrifice of animals, whose flesh and blood were enjoyed in common by the god and his worshippers. It was essential that each one of the participants should have his share of the meal [...] A sacrifice of this kind was a public ceremony, a festival celebrated by the whole clan. Religion in general was an affair of the community and religious duty was a part of social obligation. Everywhere a sacrifice involves a feast and a feast cannot be celebrated without a sacrifice [...] In primitive societies there was only one kind of bond which was absolute and inviolable—that of kinship. The solidarity of such a fellowship was complete. A kin was a group of persons whose lives were so bound up together, in what must be called a physical unity, that they could be treated as parts of one common life.

By this point Freud has established in the primitive hoard certain psychological experiences that bond the clan together into kinship and “one common life” (Totem and Taboo 167). What is more, he compartmentalises the tribe’s spiritual and physical commonality, as the previous passage clearly shows, into a shared biological fact from which there is no rebuttal—either for the reader or Freud’s literary point of view—using his creative spirit to tell a simplistic but powerful account of an archaeological version of a short narrative: the colourful literary account of a synoptic version of tribal archaeology and anthropology compressed
into the romance of the Freudian book of psychoanalysis (*Totem and Taboo* 168–70, 280–1, 312–13):

Let us now turn to the sacrificial animal. As we have heard, there is no gathering of a clan without an animal sacrifice, nor—and this now becomes significant—any slaughter of an animal except upon these ceremonial occasions. While game and the milk of domestic animals might be consumed without any qualms, religious scruples made it impossible to kill a domestic animal for private purposes. [...] Originally *all* [sacrificial] animals were sacred, their flesh was forbidden meat and might only be consumed on ceremonial occasions and with the participation of the whole clan. The slaughter of [such] an animal was equivalent to a shedding of the tribal blood and could occur subject to the same precautions and the same insurances against incurring reproach.

In essence, Freud’s overriding desire was to take the spiritual and the supernatural from the Judeo/Christian Scriptures and Holy Books and shelve them, in one common lot, alongside all the other mythological and archaeological books of ancient and pre-Christian literature. As far as Freud is concerned, the psychoanalytic creation demonstrates the battle in Freud’s mind between the scientific, the romantic and the bourgeois, which is further bonded, in the Promethean sense of the word, and juxtaposed with the spiritual and magical of Freud’s Judaic heritage. However, in dealing with religious themes as a theorist, Freud’s love for the artist in himself is always over-ridden by his medical/neurological training and an emphatic belief in scientific determinism, which ultimately causes all of his explanations of religion,
and especially the psychoanalytic account of creation, to seek the Faustian side of divine spirituality. To ironically look at the magnitude of Freud's intent when it concerns rewriting history, civilization and law by the means of scrutinising religious practice, one only needs to read Freud's disclaimer on the power and purpose of psychoanalysis at the beginning of "Part IV: The Return of Totemism in Childhood" from *Totem and Taboo* (125):

There are no grounds for fearing that psycho-analysis, which first discovered that psychical acts and structures are invariably over-determined, will be tempted to trace the origin of anything so complicated as religion to a single source. If psycho-analysis is compelled—and is, indeed, in duty bound—to lay all the emphasis upon one particular source, that does not mean it is claiming either that that source is the only one or that it occupies first place among the numerous contributory factors. Only when we can synthesise the findings in the different fields of research will it become possible to arrive at the relative importance of the part played in the genesis of religion by the mechanism discussed in these pages. Such a task lies beyond the means as well as beyond the purposes of a psycho-analyst.

Further irony can be found in Freud's use of his family's heritage that, it is safe to say, formed the basis—whether Freud wanted to admit it or not—in his youthful desire for knowledge through classical learning. In his work published in 1958—less than 20 years after Freud's death—David Bakan explains that even though Freud was not a practicing Jew, he was in effect a godless Jew, carrying with him the seeds of the *kabbala*, and that furthermore, in his writings there was always
a direct correlation between the teachings of Jewish mysticism and Freud’s theoretical expressions of psychoanalysis (Bakan 252):

Even more important, for centuries the Torah had been treated as a document so sacred that every letter, every nuance of style—even the size of the letter in the handwritten scroll—were regarded as having profound meanings, which the mystic and the exegete interpreted in a manner strikingly like that of the psychoanalyst interpreting turns and vagaries of human expression. All that was needed was a transfer of subject matter for the text of the Torah to the “text” of human behavior, a point not even very novel in Jewish tradition.

Having now dealt with Freud’s discursive bridge of psychoanalytic discourse, and his attempts to rewrite the creation account in biblical writings and tribal society as the Law of the Father using psychoanalysis as a scientific “tool” of modern determinism, the last topic that we will cover in Chapter III will concern Freud’s psychoneurotic problems with repression—his own return of the repressed. In doing so we will cover and analyse his lifelong Oedipal anxiety that expressed his overt need through discourse and language to rewrite, revise and retell his Jewishness out of his “psychic domain”. And finally, to deal with Freud’s repressed psyche and his Oedipal concerns, once again we must return to his works that relate directly back to him—Moses and Monotheism, The Future of an Illusion, Totem and Taboo, “A Religious Experience”, “Anti-Semitism in England”, and briefly, Civilization and Its Discontents—because all of these works deal directly with Freud’s discontent with his Jewish heritage, religion, and the modern world.
C. Rewriting Biblical History:

Overcoming the Oedipal Complex with Hermeneutics

Freud had developed quite an array of schoolboy interests that would surround his later critiques of creativity, aesthetics, and his religious heritage as a German-Jew. Using his giftedness in rhetoric and humanistic speculation, the young Freud began to see that he could use and formulate ideas such as: (a) spiritual traditions as a "contextualised" reality similar to the spheres of the mind—an object reality; (b) religious dogma as a body of conscious knowledge and unconscious meaning that had evolved since the beginning of recorded history; and more significantly, (c) sacred conventions that were filled with iconoclastic symbols that were intermittently embedded with the untruths and wish-fulfillments of folklore and mythology.

Being Jewish was a personal bondage for Freud, who had, ironically, rejected at every turn formal religious training in his youth—a precocious preference for a secular and classical education, which would have been totally out of the question for other Jewish youths he went to school with in Freiberg, Moravia. As we can see from Freud's overt lack of religious training, this complete otherness—the inner and the outer, and the idea of the body on the one hand and the soul on the other—developed quite early while he was a young boy. Metaphorically speaking, Freud was a Promethean figure in one sense of the word, who stole the fire of secret knowledge from the gods, and then became chained to the rocks of academia by his theories. In rewriting people's divine cultural history in Moses and Monotheism, Freud was also gristing upon his own family's spiritual foundation, profoundly
illustrating that there was very little interest on his behalf for the Almighty's Grace, which might have balanced out his critical scientific musings about believing in one true God.

Scientifically, Freud was too interested in his own godly muses that he had invented and constantly revitalised as psychoanalytic theory for him to care about the spirituality of the Judeo/Christian religion. In Freud's psyche, the Jewish Temple and the B'nai B'rith of Vienna were organisations of social and psychological needs—little more than large and powerful Freemasons, where the members drew together to take away spiritual loneliness and feelings of helplessness. When one steps back and examines the extent of the Freudian canon, Freud's muse was truly the secret, mystical and scientific books of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory that formed the body of his intellectual tradition. Accordingly, even his Judeo/Christian beliefs, through the power of his self-analysis, were proof enough that the kabbala had undergone, in a quiet corner of his mind, the same hypothetical and deductive reasoning that had, in the 1890s, created psychoanalytic theory out of religion, the humanities, and the modernistic sciences of neurology and biology.

As a complex, iconoclastic symbol to Freud, the biblical Moses was the first ancient, mythological hero of the Israelites' struggle to survive in the ancient world and the metaphorical father of Judeo/Christian religious beliefs; in essence, the first biblical character who rises to the importance of an earthly god. Twenty-five years before Moses and Monotheism was published, we can see Freud dealing more with creativity and religion by formulating his theories of psychoanalytic creativity in "The Moses of Michelangelo", where Freud's psychic response becomes awestruck
by not only the larger, more philosophical issues concerning religious tradition, inspiration, and biblical mythology surrounding the creation of mankind, but at the same time, the more profane—and somewhat sublime—motivations behind the art and poetics as miniature accounts of the human spirit rising up in its environment to form a high culture of science, aesthetics and religious tradition (Civilization and Its Discontents 48):

If we assume quite generally that the motive force of all humans' activities is a striving towards the two confluent goals of utility and a yield of pleasure, we must suppose that this is also true of the manifestations of civilization which we have been discussing here, although this is easily visible only in scientific and aesthetic activities. But it cannot be doubted that the other activities, too, correspond to strong needs in men—perhaps to needs which are only developed in a minority. Nor must we allow ourselves to be misled by judgments of value concerning any particular religion, or philosophic system, or ideal. Whether we think to find in them the highest achievements of the human spirit, or whether we deplore them as aberrations, we cannot but recognize that where they are present, and, in especial, where they are dominant, a high level of civilization is implied.

In Moses and Monotheism and The Future of an Illusion, Freud searches for the scientific truth from every possible resource available—grabbing for every artefact, every clue, from the ruins of history. This, in effect, is Freud doing a mental autopsy on a profound literary subject of aetiological discourse, attempting to overtly prove that three thousand years of religious history and man's very creation
account in the Bible are nothing short of a fabrication of humanity. Deductively using psychoanalytic theory as his personal tool for archaeological excavation, Freud reasoned that if Yahweh could be considered an iconoclastic figure of unconscious need, then the mythological Moses of the Bible was the real flesh and blood symbol of people’s struggle to find its civilized “roots” (*Moses and Monotheism* 3–4):

> The man Moses, the liberator of his people, who gave them their religion and their laws, belonged to an age so remote that the preliminary question arises whether he was a historical person or a legendary figure. If he lived, his time was the thirteenth or fourteenth century BC: we have no word of him except from the Holy Books and the written traditions of the Jews. Although the decision lacks final historical certainty, the great majority of historians have expressed the opinion that Moses did live and that the exodus from Egypt, led by him, did in fact take place. It has been maintained with good reason that the later history of Israel could not be understood if this were not admitted.

Thematically, *Moses and Monotheism* becomes a binary companion piece to its biblical reference sources, rewriting significant events that chronicle Moses’ life, first and foremost his given birthright and genealogy from being a child of Israel, to Freud’s creation account and assertion that Moses was probably an Egyptian of the noble class, further explaining how culture developed and the return of the repressed created the family, law, civilization, and the belief in one true God in Judaism, and
Later in the one true Son of Catholicism and Christianity (*Moses and Monotheism* 171–2):

The return of the repressed proceeds slowly; it certainly does not occur spontaneously, but under the influence of all the changes in the conditions of life that abound throughout the history of civilization [...] The father became again the head of the family, but he was no longer omnipotent as the father of the primeval horde had been. In clearly recognizable transitional stages the totem animal was ousted by the god [...] Between the totem animal and the god the hero made his appearance; this was often an early stage of deification [...] As the tribes and peoples were knit together into larger unities, the gods also became organized into families and hierarchies [...] The first effect of the reunion with what men had long missed and yearned for was overwhelming and exactly as the tradition of the law-giving on Mount Sinai depicts it [...] The direction of this Father religion was thus fixed for all time.

In *Moses and Monotheism*, besides creating a new account of who Moses really was and what the myth of his life and suspected killing meant to the culture of Western civilization in Freudian terminology, writing the three separate essays also gave Freud the latitude to explore the Mosaic symbol of iconoclastic power, Moses' symbolic seat of honour in biblical literature, and more importantly, how Moses' ascending myth was formulated into an official religion and tradition of the Jewish people, the Catholic religion, and the Christian Church. In the last and very lengthy paragraph to "Part II: If Moses Was an Egyptian" of *Moses and Monotheism* (64–5),
Freud writes his quasi-historical and oftentimes irrational critique for making such controversial claims:

With this I have come to an end, my sole purpose having been to fit the figure of an Egyptian Moses into the framework of Jewish history. I may now express my conclusion in the shortest formula: To the well-known duality of that history—two peoples who fuse together to form one nation, two kingdoms into which this nation divides, two names for the Deity in the source of the Bible—we add two new ones: the founding of two new religions, the first one ousted by the second and yet reappearing victorious, two founders of religion, who are both called by the same name, Moses, and whose personalities we have to separate from each other. And all these dualities are necessary consequences of the first: one section of the people passed through what may properly be termed a traumatic experience which the other spared. There still remains much to discuss, to explain, and to assert. Only then would the interest in our purely historical study be fully warranted [...] Such a continuation of my essay would link up with conclusions laid down twenty-five years ago in Totem and Taboo. But I hardly trust my powers any further.

From his own Oedipal Complex, writing Moses and Monotheism was his final flight from his father's house to the symbolic house of the terrible child-genius, now a sick old man with cancer of the jaw, who has fled to England and now lives there in exile (69–70):

II. June 1938 (London)
The exceptionally great difficulties which have weighed on me during the composition of this essay dealing with Moses—inner misgivings as well as external hindrances—are the reason why this third and final part comes to have two different prefaces which contradict—indeed, even cancel—each other. For in the short interval between writing the two prefaces the outer conditions of the author have radically changed. Formerly I lived under the protection of the Catholic Church and feared that by publishing the essay I should lose that protection and that the practitioners and students of psychoanalysis in Austria would be forbidden their work. Then, suddenly, the German invasion broke in on us and Catholicism proved to be, as the Bible has it, but "a broken reed." In the certainty of persecution—now not only because of my work, but also because of my "race"—I left, with many friends, the city which from early childhood, through seventy-eight years, had been a home to me.

In *Moses and Monotheism* Freud figuratively steps outside of the discursive essay's argument to speak, rather frankly, about his own soul (70):

I found the kindliest welcome in beautiful, free, generous England. Here I live now, a welcome guest, relieved from that oppression and happy that I may again speak and write—I almost said "think"—as I want or have to. I dare now to make public the last part of my essay. There are no more external hindrances or at least none that need alarm one. In the few weeks of my stay I have received a large number of greetings, from friends who told me how glad they were to see me here, and from people unknown to me,
barely interested in my work, who simply expressed their satisfaction that I had found freedom and security here. Besides all this there came, with a frequency bewildering to a foreigner, letters of another kind, expressing concern for the weal of my soul and anxious to point me the way to Christ and to enlighten me about the future of Israel.

As we can see from the passages that we have discussed, by the work's concluding paragraph, Freud has written himself and his unconscious mind out of the monotheistic religion of the Judeo/Christian Church and his father's heritage, and into the annals of modern history as a philosopher of the psyche and a surveyor of the human soul (*Moses and Monotheism* 176):

> Our research has perhaps thrown light on the question [of] how the Jewish people acquired the qualities that characterize it. The problem [of] how they could survive until today as an entity has not proved so easy to solve. One cannot, however, reasonably demand or expect exhaustive answers of such enigmas. All that I can offer is a simple contribution, and one which should be appraised with due regard to the critical limitations I have already mentioned.

Privately, all though the autumn and into the late winter months of 1939, Freud informed his closest friends that all he was doing was waiting for the March publication of *Moses and Monotheism* (Flem 102). When the book arrived, the symbolic murder of the family text and history was finally complete, the romance of the archaeological journey having started 40 years earlier in 1899 with *The Interpretation of Dreams*, soon after his father's real death was nearing its own
climax and more estranged ending, in exile, in London (Moses and Monotheism 70–1):

The inner difficulties were not to be changed by the different political system and the new domicile [Part III was written in London in June 1938]. [...] This does not mean that I lack conviction in the correctness of my conclusions. That conviction I acquired a quarter of a century ago, when I wrote my book on Totem and Taboo (in 1912), and it had never doubted that religious phenomena are to be understood only on the model of the neurotic symptoms [...] which are so familiar to us, as a return of long-forgotten important happenings in the primeval history of the human family, that they owe their obsessive character to that very origin [...] To my critical faculties this treatise, proceeding from a study of the man Moses, seems like a dancer balancing on one toe. If I had not been able to find support in the analytic interpretation of the exposure myth and pass thence to Sellin’s suggestion concerning Moses’ end, the whole treatise would have to remain unwritten.

With this disjointedness, Freud, the writer of a sacred text, has become like his hero of the ancient ruins and the buried life of the book, the Egyptian Moses, the modern lawgiver of twentieth-century thinking, replacing the sanctity of the Tablets of the Ten Commandments for the psychoanalytic law, proving to the modern, rational world and Freud’s constantly questioning mind that God is not dead, because to the human mind, we have no way to prove His existence—or His spiritual or Divine existence—in any other human or mythological capacity, except as a psychological projection through belief in the ancient, Israelite father Moses, or his New
Testament Son Jesus, or the spiritual Mother Mary for that matter. Freud had so conveniently written the Moses story out of the religious tradition of the Judeo/Christian Church that his life writings on creativity and religion, and his scientific manifestos on the human soul became, after his death, a modern legend increasingly ripe with its own suspicions, rivalling, quite ironically, Freud's deposed lawgiver of the biblical Exodus (Bakan 167–8):

There is one final point to be made in connection with the theme of the murder of Moses, bringing into consideration again the Moses-as-Gentile theme. The commission of heresy, which allegorically portrays as a murder, must necessarily invoke the guilt associated with the Oedipal crime. Indeed Freud saw the murder of Moses by the Jews as a necessary explanation of their genetic burden of guilt, which he as a Jew consciously felt. If it is necessary to kill Moses, however, then the idea that Moses was an Egyptian serves to take some of the edge off the guilt. In a sense, the Moses-as-an-Egyptian myth is a countermyth [Bakan’s word] to that of the murdered Moses. By making Moses an Egyptian, Freud absolves himself and the Jews of the guilt associated with the murder-thought. Killing Moses-as-an-Egyptian is simply killing a member of the group which first persecuted the Jews. Killing [the] Egyptian Moses is not the complete patricide it seems to be. Freud is killing the classical enemy of the Jew, and moreover, a stepfather at best. In the myth Freud fashions [that] he kills someone in the belief that he is his father, which in “reality” he is not, but rather, in this metaphorical sense, the enemy of his father, an Egyptian. Thus writing this
book, Freud becomes a Jewish hero in the history of the Jews. He performs the traditional Messianic function of relieving guilt, the very same function he ascribes to Jesus.

In Chapter IV we will explore Freud’s theories about religion as they relate to the place of writing in the Freudian canonical works. The chapter will start with Freud’s cultural commentary on people’s need for religion and the Jewish God Yahweh. The specific works that will be covered are The Future of an Illusion, Moses and Monotheism, Civilization and Its Discontents, and the preface to Maria Bonaparte’s The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-Analytic Interpretation.
Chapter IV:

Theory to Aesthetics to Religion: The Psychoanalytic Place of Writing

A. The Future of an Illusion: Psychoanalysis and Cultural Commentary

In the critique of culture, psychoanalysis finds its fullest expression in *The Future of an Illusion*, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and *Moses and Monotheism*. In these psychoanalytic studies of culture, Freud creates a hyper-extended place of psychoanalytic investigation by using the argument of people’s illusive nature with religion in *The Future of an Illusion*, the dissatisfactions of every civilization in recorded history in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and Freud’s last attempt to come to terms with his own “return of the repressed” and his family’s religious heritage in *Moses and Monotheism*. However, to examine creativity and religion within the psychoanalytic place of cultural commentary, we must explore one of Freud’s last major works that deals specifically with people’s special relationship between their fragile egos, their wandering spirits, and their feelings of hopelessness within the spiritual cosmos.

In the spring of 1927, Freud began a work of profound theoretical implosion, *The Future of an Illusion*, a book that would forever divide him from his family’s religious beliefs. Even for a non-practising Jew, the work was heresy of the first order: Freud taking on the validity of God, Jesus, the biblical scriptures, and the mystical teachings of the Judaic and Christian churches—something that he had attempted to do on a lesser scale at different intervals of his writing career. Forming a trilogy of sorts in Freud’s mind, *The Future of an Illusion* was followed three years
later by two greater, more provocative and speculative works: Civilization and Its Discontents and Moses and Monotheism. In these three works, Freud takes writing completely beyond a discursive style of psychoanalytic discourse analysis into the realm of sociology and cultural commentary. Ironically, this immersion into a critique of Western civilization’s religious beliefs includes not only his critique of society, but his own religious and cultural background as well. Going further back into his formative years, the actual philosophical thought for The Future of an Illusion was one of the young Freud’s primary concerns of his school years (3): “My interests [...] after making a long detour through the natural sciences, medicine and psychotherapy, returned to the cultural problems which has fascinated me long before, when I was a youth scarcely old enough for thinking.”

Freud, who was always apologetic and modest in his writings and never very far removed from the classical rhetorical essays of the Ancient Greek philosophers, on an intellectual and journalistic level is demonstrating in this simple vignette of his own life how powerful and subtle his writings have become after a lifetime of writing. Stylistically, his writings by 1927 are witness to the fact of how easy it was for him to develop, disguise and create—that is, slip in and out of—the Freudian “voice” in each one of his last three cultural commentaries. And, as is quite evident, The Future of an Illusion is important to his career because psychoanalytic theory was no longer at the top of his list of critical topics, so Freud must address the very thinking—the raison d’être—of human kind and its intellectual and spiritual development as a historical enigma. In the first sentence of Chapter VII of The Future of an Illusion, Freud gets right to the point of his theoretical and creative
study of religion, culture and civilization (34): “Having recognized religious doctrines as illusions, we are at once faced by a further question: may not other cultural assets by which we hold a high opinion and by which we let our lives be ruled be of a similar nature?”

Dialectically throughout the last half of his life, for Freud the writer the fluidity of the written word and the thoughts behind the words, along with writing about the structure of theories of reality, were a powerful and intoxicating medium, more so during the final dozen years of his life. The process of dialectical psychoanalysis was especially poignant in the later works on culture and religion where the hermeneutics and rhetoric of the writing became uppermost in Freud’s mind. And yet, either by design or fearful of what he and others had accomplished in developing the academic field of psychoanalysis, ironically there is also a very cautious side to his later works, as Freud is cognisant of the damage that his philosophical mistrust for religion may mean to the field of clinical psychoanalysis and the academic field of psychoanalytic theory (The Future of an Illusion 36):

The further question occurred to me whether the publication of this work might not after all do harm. Not to a person, however, but to a cause—the cause of psychoanalysis. For it cannot be denied that psychoanalysis is my creation, and it has met with plenty of mistrust and ill will. If I now come forward with such displeasing pronouncements, people will be only too ready to make a displacement from my person to psycho-analysis. “Now we see,” they will say, “where psychoanalysis leads to. The mask has fallen; it leads to a denial of God and of a moral ideal, as we always suspected. To
keep us from this discovery we have been deluded into thinking that psycho-
analysis has no Weltanschauung and never can construct one.” [Freud’s
emphasis]

Perhaps Freud tried to be mindful of his future readers because he clinically
understood that from a theoretical perspective psychoanalysis had systemically
become a religion of its own in the mental investigations of the mind’s secrets and
compassions. We are taken on a personalized journey quite similar to one of Freud’s
many re-accountings of his afternoon walks around Vienna and the Alps as if he is
trekking through some dark, placid forest. His authorial voice is soft, steady, and very
sure of itself, as if he is reciting the theoretical arguments right before our very eyes.
_The Future of an Illusion_ establishes a storytelling tone early on in the book’s first
sentence (5):

When one has lived for quite a long time in a particular civilization and has
often tried to discover what its origins were and along what path it has
developed, one sometimes also feels tempted to take a glance in the other
direction and to ask what further fate lies before it and what transformation it
is destined to undergo.

This opening sentence deals with the individual’s existence in civilized society from
a global, almost mystical, perspective. Moreover, Freud situates the reader
symbolically next to the author in an imaginary chair and starts the journey that
ranges from a moment of familiarity to a theoretical future unknown, inviting the
reader to follow the author’s skillfully constructed discussion. Then, this mental
journey _vis-à-vis_ the reader’s very own sensibilities takes the reader to a very
personal, almost autobiographical and philosophical, account of Freud’s psychic core (35):

Nevertheless, I am ready with rebuttals for them all; and, what is more, I shall assert the view that civilization runs a greater risk if we maintain our present attitude to religion than if we give it up [...] Besides, I have said nothing which other and better men have not said before me in a much more complete, forcible and impressive manner [...] All I have done—and this is the only thing that is new in my exposition—is to add some psychological foundation to the criticism of my great predecessors [...] The only person this publication may injure is myself [...] Speaking directly to the rational and logical mind—preparing the reader for the final two pages of the work (55–6) where science is proclaimed as the only future for the salvation of humankind’s rational being—Freud is not only asking us to see the frivolity of religion, but he is telling us how religion is little more than a hedge against our helplessness as human beings. Simply put, Freud saw the devout as “scared” children with their religious convictions in tow. In passages such as this, Freud is not only making a personal point about religious history, but he is also chiding us all for investing three thousand years of civilized history in little more than wish-fulfillment. Furthermore, Freud makes the text speak not only about Continental Europe of the 1920s, but his own complicated being as well, using a sense of joke-irony that becomes quite confusing as an oxymoronic, poetic conceit (50):
By withdrawing their expectations from the other world and concentrating all their liberated energies into their life on earth, they will probably succeed in achieving a state of things in which life will become tolerable for everyone and civilization no longer oppressive to anyone. Then, with one our [Freud's syntax]

Den Himmel überlassen wir
Den Engeln und den Spatzen.

[We leave Heaven to the angels
and the sparrows.]

(from Heine's poem Deutschland [Caput I])

Inserting outside references from literature, anthropology, religion and history, and relying upon Johann Heinrich Heine's (1797-1856) couplet as a poetic conceit, overwhelmingly demonstrates, as this thesis has pointed out previously, the extent to which Freud went in his writings to employ literary irony, or whatever else is available, to appeal to the reader's supposedly worldly and refined intellect—or that is how his creative voice in the work would have us believe of ourselves as intelligent and sophisticated readers. While following Freud's own often conflated arguments, the obvious question still haunts the serious Freudian reader: could Freud, with his neurotic-obsessive personality, leave the heavens to the angels and the sparrows, as the couplet from Heine's nineteenth-century romantic poem Deutschland (Caput I) suggests?

Reading outside the wide spectrum of the Freudian canon, the general answer to this question is simple when concerning Freud's use of a scholarly
dialogue in historical *lettres*: probably not, because even the heavens, the angels and the sparrows were created out of a religious need to symbolically frame salvation, grace and redemption. Freud found these religious metaphors totally inappropriate, devastating and belittling to the human soul—but, as Freud knew, they were necessary to the spiritual life of the Indo-European mindset for the development of Western civilization. With Freud’s giftedness and desire to seek out the oxymoronic, there will always be the strong written evidence that he will insert whatever it takes to get his ironic or paradoxical point across—to write the validity and reliability into the words and ideas of his “bourgeois” science and “dialectical” creativity—as in the selection of Heine’s couplet as a poetic conceit, to portray in metaphor and allusion whatever intellectual reality he wants psychoanalytic theory to portray (*The Future of an Illusion* 54):

> observe the difference between your attitude to illusions and mine. You have to defend the religious illusion with all your might. If it becomes discredited—and indeed the threat to it is great enough—then your world collapses. There is nothing left for you but to despair of everything, of civilization and the futures of mankind. From that bondage I am, we are, free. Since we are prepared to renounce a good part of our infantile wishes, we can bear it if a few of our expectations turn out to be illusions.

In Freud’s own poetic summation at the book’s conclusion, concerning his chosen and oft-quoted words of wisdom for everlasting salvation in the new psychoanalytic world of religious science, he declares that “No, science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us
can get elsewhere" (56). Taken poetically within the confines of an argument that is embedded within a theoretical work, to the reader the statement sounds very convincing. From Freud’s intellectual viewpoint, the rhetorical statements are meant to sum up the work as a whole—something that the concerned reader could carry around like an aphorism or a Socratic decree. Quite literally, Freud’s two sentences operate in a four-part structure designed to take the reader on an intellectual journey from which they cannot return theoretically. Parts three and four involve the reader’s own projections and some rhetorical trickery on Freud’s behalf, using the power of assumption. Since Freud has spent the entire length of the work developing and convincing us that only science can solve the problems of the future world, then Freud quite naturally assumed that we will understand his rhetorical and theoretical argument from first page to last: the all-encompassing power of scientific knowledge to control the problems of people’s future existence.

B. Writing and Psychoanalysis:

The Final Authority of the Meta-psychological Text

Freud’s discussion of creativity and religious artefacts also included the intellectual desire to take complete control of the authority of the text: rewrite, dispel and replace religious traditions, dogma, mysticism and history by inserting a modern cultural critique of twentieth-century scientific rationalism that was conflated with 30 years of neuro-psychoanalytic determinism. To do this, Freud willfully situated his hermeneutics within certain biblical and religious texts as if they were symbolic places of habitation—more specifically, he created a *topos* of *locus* where a
rationalism of cerebral subjectivity could be juxtaposed with the iconoclastic writings and teachings of the *kabbala* and the *Talmud*, Yahweh and Jesus in the sacred biblical scriptures, and whatever else Freud could reference from the history of the mythological gods and goddesses of ancient accounts of creation.

Out of the quite extensive Freudian canon, *The Future of an Illusion*, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, *Moses and Monotheism*, plus *Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices*, and interestingly enough, the short essay “A Religious Experience”, more than any of his other works, critique the sanctity of sacred writings from a utopian writer’s perspective. In a cultural sense, these works use the ambiguities of the ancient documents themselves, the redactors who wrote and editorialised their verses and aetiological myths, and the scientific proof, the flesh and blood, of God and Jesus’ existence then and now. For example, while Freud seems to objectify every detail of Michelangelo’s sculpture of Moses in front of the Church of Saint Peter in Chains near the Vatican, his intent is quite obviously psychoanalytic, straining out the latent meaning of the artwork, and not its creative aesthetics, ambitions or historical traditions (see “The Moses of Michelangelo”).

Academically, however, from the standpoint of Freud’s complete use of the authority of a written text, *The Future of an Illusion* is not without its own problems of textual credibility. If we can return to the book’s concluding two sentences (56)—“No, science is no illusion. But an illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give us we can get elsewhere”—is not a belief in a statement of this magnitude an illusionary myth in and of itself? Simply stated for the questioning mind, where are Freud’s quantitative deductions or his reference to any factual
research? And how does he account for the emotional and oftentimes unstable side of the ego in his argument? Again, unfortunately, where is the rationale—the scientific analysis—for the lack of acknowledgement that concerns man’s primal nature, the dark side of the human psyche, that Freud had spent so much of his psychoanalytic career writing about? As a factual truth about civilization of any age, where is Freud’s written accountability in the work for how the world really is, not how it ought to be philosophically?

Crucially, for the serious reader who attempts to understand all of this, the illusions of doubt begin to surface not only about Freud’s hypothetical premise, but also about the illusionary aspects of life in general. Since this is a work of creativity masked as science, the logical rebuttal to Freud’s writings in *The Future of an Illusion* lies in the fulfillment of a paradox, for the reader, having now digested the words contained in the book and feeling either satisfied, amused or confused, must mentally find their way back to the real world by themself. In spite of Freud’s theoretical argument, *The Future of an Illusion* is a literary document, complete with the physical realities of book covers, pages and type-print. Furthermore, in the modern world of hyper-textualisation, unless you are a lover of the art of the book, then the book’s physical properties, or lack of them, seem rather important at some point in the reading of the book—literally, reality has to be essential in every human being’s life. Moreover, the reader realises that the whole book is based on Freud’s theoretical premise (52):

civilization cannot do otherwise, because of the fact that mankind’s age-long development is compressed into a few years of childhood; and it is only by
emotional forces that the child can be induced to master the task set before it.

Such, then, are the prospects for your "primacy of the intellect". This passage is the Freudian lynch-pin to the study's whole line of reasoning. It calls upon people to give up their religious beliefs and illusions, as Freud calls them, and use, believe in and master all the hypotheses that the scientific world has to offer, not only now, but for the next thousand years to come—figuratively and symbolically what could be called Freud's eternity for the modern world of the twentieth century and the next millennium.

To be sure, the passage reiterates how all this started psychologically "as the child [...] ends up being the father of the man": Freud referring quite eloquently to an allusion to the "Riddle of the Sphinx" from Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. As becomes very clear, the more the subject of illusions comes up, the less it becomes a topic of religion in anyone's mind except its author. In the end, the obvious and lingering questions will be posed in the mind of the careful reader: (a) will the reader side with Freud's 1920s hyper-textualised and creative writings about a futuristic science; (b) will their own illusionary ideas about the subject of The Future of an Illusion's ability to abruptly change the religions of the Western world be powerful enough to change the last three thousand years of religious history; or (c) will they revert to their own shifting illusions about the reality of their own lives in the history of the illusionary moment?

On a figurative level, The Future of an Illusion is about Freud's formative years and his youthful spirit to culturally critique his angst with being Jewish, while at the same time being subjected to his own unconscious feelings about the religious
law of his Jewish heritage. If, at this point in our discussion of Freud’s and
psychoanalytic theory’s ability to be the new authority of the text, and if we can
believe in his 1935 postscript added to An Autobiographical Study, that he is in fact
returning to redevelop and re-psychoanalyse his past, then we can begin to see that
Freud’s youthful study and critique of Western civilization’s religious beliefs might
cause him to assume that because of his 30 years of writing psychoanalytic texts,
psychoanalysis is intellectually superior, not only to the common lot of every
person, but the philosophical assumptions behind most historical thinking.

Still, there are many passages in the text where Freud seems to be writing for
himself and a like-minded audience, not a critical readership of intellectual
researchers who would challenge the arguments. Still, the counterarguments of any
suspicious reader are then never-ending, producing a whole series of open-ended
questions that cannot be completely answered by Freud or his analytical theories.
More importantly, this extension of psychoanalytic theory’s hermeneutics illustrates
Freud’s development of a hypertext, wherein his inspiration and creative spark are
totally directed at a worldview of cultural consciousness and historical memory that
has come down to us from the Ancients (Civilization and Its Discontents 10):

One might easily be inclined to suppose that it is after all only a minority
which appreciates these great men, while the large majority cares nothing for
them. But things are probably not as simple as that, thanks to the
discrepancies between people’s thoughts and their actions, and to the
diversity of their wishful impulses. One of these exceptional few calls
himself my friend (Romain Rolland) in his letter (December 5, 1927) to me. I
had sent him my small book that treats religion as an illusion, and he answered that he entirely agreed with my judgment upon religion, but that he was sorry I had not properly appreciated the true source of religious sentiments. This, he says, consists in a peculiar feeling, which he himself is never without [...] It is a feeling which he would like to call a sensation of "eternity", a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, "oceanic".

Furthermore, to pinpoint theoretically where Freud is at this advanced stage of his writing career, his intended readership is extremely important to the historicity of psychoanalytic theory and the context of *The Future of an Illusion*. Certainly, he has left the analytic couch of the psychoanalytic session and the great psychoanalytic cases referenced as pseudonyms (Little Hans, Dora and Wolf Man, for instance). During the last 15 years of his life and in his last three major works—*The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents*, and *Moses and Monotheism*—Freud focused upon speaking to the individual’s existence within the cultural group and the group’s cultural milieu within the historical ethnography of myth, folklore and the archaeological past as it relates to the historical epoch. Historically and culturally, it is at this juncture that we see where Freud completely crosses over into what was to become a theory of cultural aetiological history, as he becomes the modern Moses of existential law, taking his philosophical view to a cultic level of authoritativeness, correcting the histories of Moses, Joshua and David in the Old Testament with psychoanalytic speculation and hypertextualised journalism.
What causes this to be palatable to the reader is Freud's assumption of religion's place in our minds. His theory of wish fulfillment is superseded by our wish to understand a true and defendable history of the Bible and its prophets. On some unconscious level, Freud uses our inner weaknesses as human beings to get his point across in our psyches. Spiritually, we wish for the knowledge of the ancients—our forefathers and mothers—like hungry children at his psychological doorstep. Freud is all too willing to recreate and realign sacred writings with his new authority of the biblical text, applied psychoanalysis.

Across this spiritual spectrum, what propelled his writings into this prominent position of outspoken and controversial "spokesman-of-the-soul" was significantly influenced by the fact that he had a well-established, continental audience—theoretically, academically and socially—during the last two decades of his professional life. This was utterly contrary to the first two decades when Freud worked in Vienna as an obscure neuro/psychoanalyst, publishing his analytic and scientific journals in scholarly publications using his native German language and often speaking and reading at the Viennese synagogue to the B'nai B'rith upon his new-found psychoanalytic discoveries. As a result of, not only a professional following, but a cultic one as well, in these final three works Freud is not only speaking to his audience (the reader) about psychoanalysis' successes, but he is also allowing psychoanalytic theory to speak for itself as a textual body of philosophical discourse (Civilization and Its Discontents 64):

Psycho-analytic work has shown us that it is precisely these frustrations of sexual life which people known as neurotics cannot tolerate. The neurotic
creates substitutive satisfaction for himself in his symptoms, and these either cause him suffering in themselves or become sources of suffering for him by raising difficulties in his relations with his environment and the society he belongs to. This latter fact is easy to understand; the former presents us with a new problem. But civilization demands other sacrifices besides that of sexual satisfaction.

Overall, Freud’s later writings—as evidenced in *The Future of an Illusion*, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and *Moses and Monotheism*—constitute a binary event that needs some other source for the author’s voice to survive as a theory of conceptual limits, literary analogies and historical constructs: a psychoanalytic *mise en scène* to complete Freud’s picture-book thinking (Young *Mental Space* 7–8) about the soul’s *dramatis persona* of itself and its existential suffering. As we have seen throughout this thesis, Freud viewed religious thinking and practices as a revision of the myth of creativity. This further becomes important because of how psychoanalysis cannot free itself of religious gestures, its soul-searching, its belief in revelation, the fascination with transgression, and its confessionals—the talking cure of the analytic session. Moreover, by the time that his life writings had become widely popularised in Europe and America in the 1940s, ’50s and ’60s, psychoanalytic theory had slowly evolved into a clinical practice of psychiatry, as well as an academic discipline of the mind, embodied in an evolving twentieth-century rationalism whereby the sciences had begun to strip away the logic and reason from the grace and spirituality of monotheistic and ontological beliefs about God’s true and mystical existence (*Moses and Monotheism* 167):
The psychoanalyses of individuals have taught us that [...] the emergence of the conception of one great God [...] must be recognized as a memory—a distorted one, it is true, but nevertheless a memory. It has an obsessive quality; it simply must be believed. As far as its distortion goes, it may be called a delusion; in so far as it brings to light something from the past, it must be called truth. The psychiatric delusion also contains a particle of truth; the patient’s conviction issues from this and extends to the whole delusional fabrication surrounding it.

Later on, as psychoanalysis became an academic field of study in Europe and America, this authoritativeness even included those who Freud could influence in their own creative and psychoanalytic investigations (Freud’s foreword in Bonaparte):

In this book my friend and pupil, Marie Bonaparte, has shone the light of psycho-analysis on the life and work of a great writer with pathologic trends. Thanks to her interpretative effort, we now realise how many of the characteristics of Poe’s works were conditioned by his personality, and [we] can see how that personality derived from intense emotional fixations and painful infantile experiences. Investigations such as this do not claim to explain creative genius, but they do reveal the factors which awaken it and the sort of subject matter it is destined to choose. Few tasks are as appealing as enquiry into the laws that govern the psyche of exceptionally endowed individuals.
For a personalised introduction that consists of only 112 words, Freud’s wording completely gives not only the place of writing, but all the necessary steps leading up to it. In the foreword to a later edition of the book that was published in 1971, Freud’s concise note energises the preface with a spiritual “gilding” of sorts, thanking “His” pupil and student, professional friend even, with a discursive flair reserved for a bon voyage, Marie: “In this book my friend and pupil, Marie Bonaparte, has shone the light of psycho-analysis”. This affirmation of her scholarly efforts is quickly followed by Freud’s hypothetical assumption of her work, which becomes the first step (a) “on the life and work of a great writer with pathologic trends”. From this prepositional phrase, we automatically assume that the whole gambit of Poe’s life—the literati, the gossip, and the private facts—will all be included, but it also says something about Freud’s respect and admiration for great, creative minds—Poe was not mad, but had “pathologic trends”.

The second step is for Freud to create the void, the need and desire for a new knowledge on the subject: (b) “of the characteristics of Poe’s works were conditioned by his personality, and [we] can see how that personality derived from intense emotional fixations and painful infantile experiences”. Once again, he thanks her for her analytic skills and the detective work that she has done, and creates a psychoanalytic space by introducing language that readers in 1933 would have little or no knowledge of: emotional fixations and painful infantile experiences. With the skill of a great writer, here Freud is preying upon the unconscious; a picture of the mother and child comes to mind. We can only ask ourselves, what was done to Edgar Allan Poe as a child that caused this morbid and devilish pain?
Then, in the confines of one sentence, Freud promptly fills the space that contains the desire for knowledge, and takes our minds to the here-and-now of information processing: (c) "Investigations such as this do not claim to explain creative genius, but they do reveal the factors which awaken it and the sort of subject matter it is destined to choose." The words "creative genius", "awaken", "subject matter" and "destined to choose" all rhetorically create a psychological environment. This last sentence, in effect, combined with the first two steps, becomes the scene/place of the psychoanalytic investigation. Then, Freud finalises his introductory preface juxtaposed with the psychoanalytic place of writing that becomes, with his own words and writings, the genre and motif of psychoanalytic inquiry into the arts, creative genius, and psychological workings of the mind: (d) "Few tasks are as appealing as enquiry into the laws that govern the psyche of exceptionally endowed individuals."

For the sake of argument, let us take this fourth step and compare it to other works that deal with the meta-structure of psychoanalytic place, to whatever degree, with genius, genius in aesthetics, and the general "brilliances" of the mind—a place of writing where Freud uses his ability to split the subject of his discourse analysis and insert a psychoanalytic hermeneutic of suspicion. To develop my argument that the psychoanalytic place was always a part of Freud's writings from the start, we will keep to a brief historical timeline of Freud's career as a writer.

Firstly, in my discussion of genius and creativity, there is the subject of Freud's symbolic use of the Oedipus Complex from Sophocles' play, *Oedipus Rex*, where the main character's faults were his overwhelming desire for knowledge and
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regal genius (see “A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men” 171, “Letter 71”, and “The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex”). Now, is Freud’s use of Oedipus’ desire for his queen mother about a historical character acting on a stage, or is the play about an exceptional character whose brilliant mind is flawed because of their place in Freud’s subjective history of aesthetics, his use of ancient, mythological artefacts projected onto the psychic awareness of modern sensibilities? As Laplanche and Pontalis wrote in their definitive work on *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (282–7), all through his career, Freud saw the literary and universal potential in the character of Oedipus of Greek legend, because (a) it was a myth that had transcended the history of mankind, and (b) it was as a fearful compulsion of mankind’s existence, a psychoneurotic fear that Freud had recognised in his own psyche during his self-analysis soon after his father’s death in 1896.

Secondly, as we have already noted in this thesis, Freud saw the genius of Dostoevsky’s creativity, for example, but while he saw him as profoundly creative, in Freud’s mind he suffered a character flaw worse than Oedipus’ Achilles heel: parricide and criminality (“Dostoevsky and Parricide” 178–9). And unlike Oedipus, and much later Hamlet, Dostoevsky was born into modern times, and his life could be more easily perused than a Greek myth or a Shakespearean play, which made his psychological problems readily available to gossip and scrutiny.

Similar discourse analysis can also be found in Freud’s work on Leonardo da Vinci, wherein Freud theorised that flawed sexual development in Leonardo’s formative years created a need for a creative/feminine outlet as an artist (*Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood* 20–1, 26–9). Further, in the Moses myth of
the biblical creation story, Freud found the genius of creativity in the Judeo-Christian account of Moses leading his people out of Egyptian bondage by elevating religious writings of Moses' heroics to a psychoanalytic study of a cultural phenomenon that has persisted as a religious base for the past three thousand years in Western civilization's culture. Literally, the same case can be made that on whatever theoretical level, Freud was developing the "psychoanalytic scene", and consequently the "psychoanalytic place", as early as his collaboration with Breuer while writing *Studies on Hysteria*. He was also at the halfway point in his development as a theorist of psychoanalysis between the neurological and physiological, and the psychological and the pathological (*Studies on Hysteria* 257–8):

starting out from Breuer's methods, I found myself engaged in a consideration of the aetiology and mechanism of the neuroses in general. I was fortunate enough to arrive at some serviceable findings in a relatively short time. In the first place I was obliged to recognize that, in so far as one can speak of determining causes which lead to the *acquisition* of neuroses, their aetiology is to be looked for in *sexual* factors. There followed the discovery that different sexual factors, in the most general sense, produce different pictures of neurotic disorders. And it then became possible, in the degree to which this relation was confirmed, to venture on using aetiology for the purpose of characterizing the neuroses and of making a sharp distinction between the clinical pictures of the various neuroses. Where the
aetiological characteristics coincided regularly with the clinical ones, this was of course justified.

Perhaps the one true genius that Freud paid homage to without finding overt psychoanalytic flaws in his personality was Goethe, who Freud paid tribute to on 28 August 1930 in his “Address Delivered in the Goethe House at Frankfurt”. Freud, the artist as daydreamer, and creativity have been discussed at length in Chapter II, Section D of this thesis.

C. Writing and Psychoanalysis as the Mise en scène of a Meta-psychology of Modern Life

As a romantic traveller of the spirit, Freud was always fascinated with trains, train travel and railway stations as a source of inspiration and neurotic anxiety (Flem 12–15). Similar to the institution of Judeo-Christian religion, trains and the railway industry were a convenient place for the drama of people’s lifelong labours of work, economy and conservation, waiting to be explored in Freud’s mind whenever he chose to travel throughout Europe. However, if religion was a macrocosmic, cultural phenomenon, then the symbolic “libidinal” train and the railway station, however small and secluded, were its microcosmic opposite: the place where simple people worked and used its common services to travel its lines of commerce.

Flem (13) gives an excellent synopsis of the Freud family genealogy and their association to the industry of train transportation and its railway stations. In a lecture given on 21 April 1896 entitled “The Aetiology of Hysteria”, Freud used a frightening experience of a train accident to draw attention to the significance
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between a hysterical symptom and a traumatic moment that caused a neurotic episode of vomiting in connection with a frightening past event (Flem 12-13). In respect to trains as a metaphor for Freud’s psychoanalytic discourse, one wonders how the mental picture of trauma works in relationship to something as commonplace and necessary as train travel and a railway station. Certainly, from Freud’s love for the dramatic moment upon the stage of human events, the railway train station was a convenient source for the *mise en scène*—the *proscenium*—of everyday life: Freud’s private window on the world where he could observe humanity’s conscious and unconscious strivings, a *topos of locus* where the “navel” of human existence congregated then dispatched to a new destination.

Emotionally, the anxiety of the impending journey, the wait at the railway station, and the eerie scene at night of the gas jets burning precariously to bring light to the darkness of chaos and despair, were finally rewarded by the jolt of the train’s cars rhythmically tugging fore and aft in a Lacanian *jouissance* of sexual excitement that would settle into a steady stream of rocking and jerking motions as the train moved forward. Personally and professionally, Freud’s whole life could be configured around a symbolic and metaphorical railway line between Freiberg-Leipzig-Vienna and Vienna-Paris-London, all surrounding the invention of psychoanalysis and the birth-to-death metaphor of human existence (Flem 12). Routinely, with the passenger focused outward from the train’s coach compartment, the journey represented for Freud the analytic situation where memory’s free association could spring up from every jolt and sway of the train’s contortions. And Freud is there as the occidental tourist enjoying every unconscious moment, every
creative nuance that his mind could generate by the train’s movements and the landscape’s endless procession of changing scenes, which were processed through Freud’s topographic fantasy of imagination and meaning.

As a psychoanalyst, Freud would ingeniously form a link between the journey motif of train travel and the psychoanalysis of aesthetics, where he would juxtapose the dialectic of creative inspiration with this shadow of otherness and elsewhere. This shadow of otherness and elsewhere, as an alter ego to his precocious Jewish upbringing, revealed itself as ritualistic and obsessive thought while Freud was taking one of his many train trips during a vacation across Europe (Flem 12–13). Freud had one of his classical experiences of otherness where he actually had the opportunity to glance at the vision of his poetic, uncanny double. After noting a doubling experience by the Austrian physicist and psychologist Ernst Mach (1838–1916) from his work, Analyse der Empfindungen, Freud recounted a similar experience in his writing of “The Uncanny” (248):

I can report a similar adventure. I was sitting alone in my wagon-lit compartment when a more than usually violent jolt of the train swung the door of the adjoining washing-cabinet, and an elderly gentleman in a dressing-gown and a traveling cap came in. I assumed that in leaving the washing-cabinet, which lay between the two compartments, he had taken the wrong direction and come into my compartment by mistake. Jumping up with the intention of putting him right, I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection in the looking-glass on the open door. I can still recollect that I thoroughly disliked his appearance.
Instead, therefore, of being frightened by our “doubles” both Mach and I simply failed to recognize them as such. Is it not possible, though, that our dislike of them was a vestigial trace of the archaic reaction which feels the “double” to be something uncanny?

From the perspective of a psychoanalysis of Freud’s psychoanalytic discourse, there are numerous observations that are quite unique and telling about this passage from “The Uncanny”. Like many of the Gothic novels that were popular during his early life, Freud frames his experience on the train with a comparable occurrence from the discourse of well-known Austrian professor Ernst Mach. Secondly, we are introduced into the psychic scene of the experience by the violence of the train’s jerking motion, which alerted in Freud’s mind a momentary call for the flight or fight syndrome. In this short passage, he experiences both within a matter of seconds, which points to his condition of neurotic anxiety about trains and train travel. Third, this note was taken from “The Uncanny”, where Freud attempted to make a case for the uncanniness of our doubles, especially when our egos are completely unaware of what is taking place at that second. But, is Freud’s psychoanalysis of their (Freud’s and Mach’s) uncanny doubles about otherness, or is this experience something far more important to psychoanalytic hermeneutics that Freud was totally oblivious of at the time of the experience, and later when he finally saw “The Uncanny” go into print in 1919?

More correctly, was this (m)other experience really about the mise en scène of psychoanalytic interpretation, where Freud’s otherness had overtaken his poetic double, that meta-psychological realm where the aesthetics of psychoanalysis begins
to consume itself as an applied science of theory? If, as Freud writes, he became
witness to his uncanny double, then who are we to assume the real Sigmund Freud
is: the reflection in the coach's glass door or the frightened old man sitting in the
train's compartment? Certainly, for a few seconds Freud did not know who was
who; fearful at first, the excitement of the subconscious experience overtook his
sensibilities, and he eventually saw the sad humour in the uncanny moment.

Decades later he was thoroughly disgusted by remembering his old and gaunt
manifestation of himself that day, as appearance frightfully met reality, and Freud as
the once brave errant knight Don Quixote is stripped of his outer shell of armour and
chivalry, and becomes instead the half-mad and confused Alonzo Quixano within
the psychoanalytic place of writing: the perfect example of a psychoanalytic illusion.
Thus, the *mise en scène* of psychoanalysis has entered into the framed reference of
horror and fright within its forebear—the Gothic setting of Edgar Allan Poe—
although the objectives of their perceptions are perhaps focused upon different
determinates as part of their creative subject-formations (C. Bloom 71–2):

For Poe the observer as analyst or as narrator brings into focus the "oneness"
of the scene in a radical way, for the scene is both filtered through him and
observed by him. Unlike Saussure, Poe and Freud do not, in their figurative
metaphors, find any need to disassociate simultaneous observation from the
totality of the concept to be observed. Both Freud and Poe revoke a
simultaneous response on various psychological and aesthetic levels without
requiring a disjunction between those levels. Thus, the disjunction is only
created to allow for a more complete association. "In this," says Poe, lies
“individuality of impression.” While Freud’s observer seems to be outside of the landscape he views, yet is an intimate projection and requirement of it, so Poe’s observer by shifting the balance of the critical frame actually places himself within the system by changing, as an outsider, the internal relations of the panorama he views.

Another such event of psychoanalytic mise en scène took place in the autumn of 1897, while Freud was travelling by train from Berlin to Vienna (Flem 13–14). Sitting in his compartment and completely absorbed by his exhausting self-analysis and his father’s death at the time, as the train passes through the autumn of the German countryside, Freud does not see the panorama of the view but only his bearded face projected repeatedly onto the glass window. Psychologically, both Freud’s otherness and the train’s movements become one and the same—the objective/subjective of psychoanalytic creativity gives way to the internal machinations of psychical-analysis. The mise en scène of psychoanalytic interpretation becomes the heart and soul of Freud’s internal landscape—a psychic view that only he can relate to. Momentarily detached from the reality of his own ego, Freud’s creative otherness becomes a character in the mind’s setting of writing and place: the unconscious controlling the intimate landscape of his internal, psychic discoveries.

Symbolically, the train’s jolting movements, the unobserved landscape just beyond the glass window, and Freud’s silent vision of himself become dramatic props associated with his journey upon the creative stage of an analytic trance. Unconsciously, in the Freudian repertoire of symbols and metaphors, trains come to
represent the analytic situation, the treatment of his and other people's sick, diseased minds—the *mise en scène* of the patient and the analyst forever locked in a struggle between Eros and Thanatos, the religious illusion in reverse (Flem 14). Moreover, in effect, Freud's free-floating spirit of creativity, captivating both the conscious and unconscious, has entered the "double-uncanny" of the *topos of locus* that was never reached, ironically, while Freud was examining Nathanael's troubled soul and psychotic mind in Hoffmann's "The Sandman". Paradoxically, as we will see in the next chapter on "The Uncanny", it is not that Freud does not understand Nathanael's psychosis or the pathology of the Victorian family; thematically, it is obvious that Freud cannot understand how Hoffmann can bring a horror story to its conclusion without using psychoanalysis or Freud's employment of the hermeneutics of suspicion. In short, Freud was never able to complete either a subjective analysis—a fantasy of suspicion—of Hoffmann's work as the creator, or a psychoanalytic hermeneutic of Hoffmann's tale of Gothic horror and madness.

And finally, one concluding note: what are we to make of the truth of psychoanalytic investigation when neither Freud nor his readership can tell who or what the subject is any longer in, for example, Freud's confusion when attempting to write about the *mise en scène* of his two train experiences? As we have previously seen from these two experiences, Freud unconsciously entered into his own subject-formations of hermeneutics, and subsequently became decentred as a character of his fantasy ego, which may explain, to some extent, why he had bouts of writer's block from time to time. Normally, by employing the Freudian psychoanalytic frame of reference so that he could elevate outside of the subject of his hypothesis, Freud
could create a discourse analysis of the psychoanalytic scene and place of interpretation for most topics of psychic investigation that he chose to analyse. A psychoanalytic frame of reference from multiple perspectives is something that we will see Freud try and accomplish in “The Uncanny” in the next chapter. But, as we can see from Freud’s two train experiences, once his meta-psychological frame of reference is lost and decentred, psychoanalysis becomes the destroyer of its own hypothesis by deconstructing its own research ambitions, and then its analysis can offer little in the way of an extended vision of a work (Harari 149–51, Hertz 308–9).

Next, in Chapter V, we will bring the argument full circle. We will return to the writer himself and the problems that he had with theory, criticism, and his frustrations with subject development, thereby leading to his unresolved frustrations about his own creative abilities. In doing so, we will analyse some of Freud’s more prolific and creative works on criticism, culture and religion. We will cover Freud’s first great attempt at literary criticism, “The Uncanny”. Finally, we will examine how Freud developed his subject-formations and otherness as a means to reach a theoretical “place” of hermeneutics, in an attempt to deal with what some critics saw as a “writer’s block” throughout much of his long career as a writer.
Chapter V

Freud, Writing and the Displaced Conceit:
Unresolved Frustrations about Creativity

A. Writing, Psychoanalysis and Otherness: Freud's Poetic Double

After having covered Freud's critique of creativity, aesthetics, religion and the Freudian “place” of writing within psychoanalysis’ discursive history, in this chapter we will discuss Freud's otherness, which was a significant metaphor of learning throughout his career as a writer. This chapter will also discuss how this “created other” was not without its profound, very nearly sexual pleasures, and yet severe frustrations. We will start with a discussion of Freud's psychic otherness, his displaced models of symbolic language in writing and psychoanalysis, and the psychoanalytic and Freudian “conceit” as an enhanced metaphor for the place of writing. And, within our discussion of such a complex topic as the symbolic other—to use the Lacanian concept of the “mother–other” bond—we will make use of a wide range of psychoanalytic concepts covering four decades of Freudian discourse: (a) the Oedipal Complex, Castration, Law of the Father, and repetition-compulsion from Freud's theoretical phase (1895–1904); (b) Freud's study of a psychotic characterisation in the nineteenth-century short story “The Sandman”; (c) the unconscious/conscious symbolism of “the navel”, as first mentioned in The Interpretation of Dreams; and (d) Freud's literary need for a “Gothic” language that would support his theoretical application of the complex meta-psychological processes of the psychic domain, as discussed by Young in “Freud's Secret: The
Interpretation of Dreams was a Gothic Novel”. In addition to these works and theoretical concepts, we will also consider Felman’s “Turning the Screw of Interpretation” (in Literature and Psychoanalysis) and her critique of the “nature” and underlying meanings of resistance to writing and discursive theory within the term “Freudian text”. We will also consider Foucault’s discussion of Freud’s writings as having “established an endless possibility of discourse” within the modern, academic landscape (“What is an Author?” in Harari).

We will start with a discussion of Freud’s psychic otherness—his displaced models of symbolic language in writing and psychoanalysis; explore Freud’s frustrations with writing and subject-formation in “The Uncanny”, wherein he cannot grasp the experiences in “The Sandman” that conform to a scientific analysis of repetition-compulsion, the Oedipal Complex, and castration; and end our discussion of this chapter within the psychoanalytic and Freudian conceit, “the navel”, as a displaced model of creativity, an enhanced metaphor, for that place in Freud’s mind where writing and theory reach a symbolic void. As we will see, these discursive models promote a Freudian place of writing, a psychoanalytic authority of the text, and a theoretical system of academic analogies and arguments that further offered academics an assortment of divergences and counterarguments within twentieth-century critical theory (Foucault in Harari).

On a conscious and unconscious level, Freud’s creativity and otherness were displaced models of his attempt to create another, symbiotic personality for himself that had arisen from a childhood particularly frustrated by his Jewish heritage and his ethnic standing as a German-Jew (Flem 80–3). By spending a lifetime of writing
subject-formulations about the mind, Freud constructed, through this personal struggle, very nearly a religion out of first, his psychoanalytic theory, and second, his oeuvre of imaginative skills—the imaginative need to write a psychoanalytic discourse that we see imploding as he nears the final years of life in works specifically on culture and religion: The Future of an Illusion, "A Religious Experience", Civilization and Its Discontents, "A Note On Anti-Semitism", and Moses and Monotheism.

Throughout the historical development of psychoanalysis, we are confronted with Freud's metaphorical language, the subject-formations, and the "probing" of the psychoanalytic scene and place of discourse analysis and critical thought, producing what has become known as a Freudian reading of literature and critical theory; thus, reading Freud means reading his poetic double as well (Felman Literature and Psychoanalysis 97). While there were strong feelings—denial as a projected and sublimated reality associated with this created consciousness/otherness—there was also a stronger truth that was associated with his creativity, using religion and aesthetics to bring together all his formulations and subject-formations that eventually became his hermeneutics upon psychical-analysis, to use Freud's own words.

The important thing to remember here is that Freud had a literary gift—a poetic double—for a synthesis of information; leaving criticism aside, he was a man of the Renaissance and Greco-Roman enlightenment and esprit de corps. Not unlike a novelist, his oeuvre drew from many divergent genres and motifs, combining them together under the guise of medical and scientific thought, causing the writings to
appear as directed and free of restraint and confusion. This creative licence came about because of his feelings of inspiration to rewrite history, literature, anthropology, law, ethics, morality—all knowledge under the guise of psychoanalytic theory and modern aesthetics. If Ancient Greek literature and Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex* frame Freud's theory of the Oedipal Complex, then it was the Old Testament and the Moses story for the writing of *Moses and Monotheism*. Because Freud saw the psyche as bound up with the imagination, creativity, self-delusion and prevarication, for example, he wound his explanations of the self into metaphors, symbols and allusions to tales and myths from readings in the Bible, especially the figurative language of Original Sin from the Garden of Eden, and the powerful, instinctual impulses from the symbolic, biblical Serpent of the Unconscious.

In powerful passages of modesty, apotheosis, assumption, quasi-medical and scientific journalism, and more often than not fiction, *The Interpretation of Dreams* would set the literary stage, and narrative path, for psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory for the next four decades. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud points out that there is no scientific evidence or medical research that can help unravel, decode or supplement the symbolic icons of dreams, and that the fragmentary significance of dreams and dream-work requires more documentation and insight than a first, second or even third attempt at interpretation. Thus, there is an inherent need, an outright requirement, for the analytic session and psychoanalysis, which displaces the other into a sublimated reality all its own.
As a journal of a dream-book written as notes and scientific deductions over an extended period of time (1897–1900), in *The Interpretation of Dreams* there are the figurative extremes of the inner and the outer, the microcosmic and macrocosmic; every psychic thought, down to impulses, has a poetic double, their symbolic and metaphorical comparisons contrasted with their schisms of thought. Written on the peripheral edges and frontiers of the mind’s unconscious and conscious realms, Freud’s dream-book created a tension between the two greater spheres of the psychic realm: one to be known and exhibited, and the other unknown and repressed. What is taking place in these instances of writing is the intertwining of the scientific and the medical with Freud’s poetic double and his creative licence. Even in his more profound works on religion, culture, and civilization such as *The Future of an Illusion*, *Civilization and Its Discontents* and *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud’s inner vision of the self and civilized society seems more like hell than heaven.

Outside of his medical research training, creatively Freud owes a debt of an “anxiety of influence” (H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*), to an Oedipal, literary father from the sublime tautology of the nineteenth-century Gothic novel. In his poignant essay, “Freud’s Secret: *The Interpretation of Dreams* was a Gothic Novel”, Young views Freud’s self-analysis (1897–8) as “the most famous case history in Gothic fiction” (*Derrida and Postcolonialism* 206–7):

> [t]he close of the nineteenth century witnessed a resurgence of Gothic novels and stories which particularly emphasized forms of psychological terror [...] Stevenson’s *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, James’s *The Turn of the Screw* and
Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. It has now become commonplace to provide “Freudian” interpretations of Gothic fantasy novels, but few have recognized that this exercise is essentially tautological. This is because Freud’s *Interpretations of Dreams* (1900) was in fact itself a Gothic novel to its logical conclusion: instead of portraying the psychological through a fictional narrative, he wrote a novel that pretended to be a real work of scientific psychology.

Raising this “labyrinth of analogous meaning” to a metaphorical and symbolic level, Freud’s dream story finds its full fruition in the guise of psychoanalysis. Moreover, we can see this labyrinth of analogous meaning from the very first paragraph of Chapter I of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “The Scientific Literature of Dream-Problems (Up to 1900)”, with a claim of what the soon-to-be informed reader is about to find throughout the rest of the book (183):

In the following pages, I shall demonstrate that there is a psychological technique which makes it possible to interpret dreams, and that on the application of this technique, every dream will reveal itself as a psychological structure, full of significance, and one which may be assigned to a specific place in the psychic activities of the waking state. Further, I shall endeavor to elucidate the processes which underlie the strangeness and obscurity of dreams, and to deduce from these processes the nature of the psychic forces whose conflict or co-operation is responsible for our dreams.

For the reader, the book’s genius lies in its tautological ability—the bourgeois affection for gaudy hyperbole—to draw upon the nineteenth century’s
preoccupation, adoration and sublime affection for the Gothic novel, which finds a morbid attraction in the spellbinding horror of its monsters and the scientific Gothic detective work of the novel’s protagonist, all heavily “overshadowed” by Freud’s presumption of the typical scientific analysis of the unconscious mind.

As literary works, Gothic stories have a scientific myth lurking at their core or at their outer edges. Poe’s *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* was about the hollow earth theories and the search for “Symmes Holes” that supposedly ran through the earth’s fiery core. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* brings the *necrosis* monster back from the dead through the harnessed power of God’s electricity and lightning. And Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* revolves around the “Mephistophelian” knowledge of the science of good medicine, bad medicine, and the devastating effects of the misuse of Faustian knowledge—all unconscious fears of the common lot of the average person who bears the brunt of the collective demands of the social elite.

On a rather literal basis, Freud used the reader’s reaction formation to terror and horror of the Gothic sublime, its mystical aura, to tell the Oedipal tale of his own autobiographical life, always keeping the suspicious reader confronted with the rhetorical, magical wonder of science (Brill 483):

> The free play of ideas following any chain of associations may perhaps occur in cases of destructive organic affections of the brain. What, however, is taken to be such in the psychoneuroses may always be explained as the influence of the censorship on a series of thoughts which have been pushed into the foreground by the concealed directing ideas. It has been considered
an unmistakable sign of free association unencumbered by directing ideas if the emerging ideas (or images) appear to be connected by means of the so-called superficial associations—that is, by assonance, verbal ambiguity, and temporal coincidence, without inner relationships of meaning; in other words, if they are connected by all these associations which we allow ourselves to exploit in wit and in playing upon words. This distinguishing mark holds good with associations which lead us from the elements of the dream-content to the intermediary thoughts, and from these to the dream-thoughts proper; in many analyses of dreams we have found surprising examples of this.

For the purpose of modern discourse analysis, Freud’s literary work and *Gothic novel*, as Robert Young (Marcus 206–8) categorised the book, not only gave psychoanalysis a birthright, but it also provided the lay and professional reader alike with the suspicious desire and somewhat misleading thought that they too could analyse the heart and the head, to find meaning in what is profoundly hidden in people’s minds about civilized society, regardless of the mundane, horrific thought or dream that was controlling their unconscious motivations. Symbolically, from within the physical covers of a book simply entitled “How To...” of dreams and dream-work interpretation, the all-encompassing and benevolent monster of psychoanalysis was unleashed upon the psychic consciousness of Western culture, stalking the very persona and life’s blood of its internal being, laying the heart and mind open for every professional and would-be analyst to subscribe to psychoanalysis’ inherent powers of creativity and subjectivity. For, if emotion lay
within the realm of the sublime and the Gothic, then meaning and praxis lay within
the process, determination, and bourgeois science—the clinical façade—of
psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory (Bonaparte 639):

Before embarking on our analysis of Poe’s tales, we wrote: “Works of art or
literature profoundly reveal their creators’ psychology and, as Freud has
shown, their construction resembles that of our dreams. The same
mechanisms which, in dreams or nightmares, govern the manner in which
our strongest, though most carefully concealed desires are elaborated, desires
which often are the most repugnant to consciousness, also govern the
elaboration of the work of art.” Freud, in *The Relation of the Poet to Day-
Dreaming*, has demonstrated the links which bind the daydreams of
adolescents or adults—so nearly related to the dreams of the night—to the
play-activities of children; both being fictive fulfillments of wishes. There,
too, Freud shows how daydreams and creative writing resemble each other,
since the latter gratifies the artist’s deepest infantile, archaic and unconscious
wishes in imaginary and, more or less, disguised form.

B. “The Uncanny”: Creativity to Theory to Freud’s “Navel” of Frustration
If Freud’s *otherness*—his poetic double—was a significant part of his intellectual
development throughout his life, then a critical viewpoint enhanced by Darwinism
and scientific rationalism was crucially important as well. Moreover, the desire to
use, expand and hyper-extend this creativity into a psychoanalytic concept of
pathology is never more evident than in Freud’s critical study “Das Unheimliche”
(1919, *Imago*, 5, [5-6], 297–324), of E. T. A. Hoffmann’s “Der Sandmann”. Freud’s title, “Das Unheimliche”, literally translates into English as the unhomely, but neither unhomely nor Strachey’s “The Uncanny” can capture the suspense—perhaps dread—of its original German meaning or the figurative context within nineteenth-century romantic folk tales of horror and trepidation (see “The Uncanny” 219).

Thematically, Freud’s study of uncanniness had wanted to explore the broader sense of the meaning, not just the study of the sublime and its uniqueness, but the measure of our sentiments as insights into the unconscious, namely the return of the repressed. From a historical timeframe, there are some critics who think that the writing of the original manuscript may have started as early as 1907, about the time of the publication of Freud’s first true literary criticism, “Delusion and Dreams in Jensen’s *Gradiva*”. In an editorial note to “The Uncanny” in Volume XVII of the *Standard Edition* (218), Strachey positions Freud’s study of uncanniness six years after he had written “Delusion and Dreams in Jensen’s *Gradiva*”:

This paper, published in the autumn of 1919, is mentioned by Freud in a letter to Ferenczi of May 12 of the same year, in which he says he has dug an old paper out of a drawer and is re-writing it. Nothing is known as to when it was originally written or how much it was changed, though the footnote quoted from *Totem and Taboo* on p. 241 [of “The Uncanny”] below shows that the subject was present in his mind as early as 1913.[1]

Even so, after a lengthy gestation period, “The Uncanny” was finally published in 1919 as a precursor to the concept of repetition-compulsion that appeared in the first draft of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Then the essay appeared as part of a

There are also allusions in "The Uncanny" that relate back to the doubling of the genitals and the manipulation of the genital symbols in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (see specifically *Standard Edition* V 357, from Strachey's note 235), and in the topic of children’s fears of the dark in Section V of Freud’s *Three Essays* (224). In relation to the early history of psychoanalysis, Freud consistently makes references to uncanniness in many of his most famous works and cases histories: "Rat Man", "Wolf Man", *Three Essays*, and in Section III of his paper "On Narcissism". Later, Freud further situates "The Uncanny"’s theoretical content within the ego ideal in Chapter XI of *Group Psychology*, and then as part of a discussion of the superego in Chapter III of *The Ego and the Id* (editorial notes from *Standard Edition* XVII 236).

Rooted in 20 years of psychoanalysis, Freud had encountered the oblique nature of uncanniness in myth and folklore in the *daemonic*, the look of the evil eye, the gruesome, the evil being, the ghostly, and the strangely hidden. Furthermore, "The Uncanny" literally posits the place of psychoanalytic theory and hermeneutics within its allusions, references and extended metaphors of language. In the writing of "The Uncanny", Freud found in Hoffmann’s "Der Sandmann" not only a Prussian tale of repetition-compulsion, but a *daemonic* character who takes the death instinct within his madness to its tragic climax of self-annihilation (Hertz in Harari 298–9).

From its opening paragraphs that mirror psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch’s essay "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen" ("On the Psychology of the Uncanny"),
Freud's search for psychoanalytic meaning sets up a struggle in the reader's mind between the polarity of meaning and non-meaning, and more importantly, between the language of aesthetics in a creative work and the scientific deductions and assumptions in a critical work of research. Using participatory research based upon the archaeological investigation of philology, Freud becomes consumed with his revelations about the aetiological origins relating to the German usage of the words *unheimlich* (unhomely, unfamiliar, frightening), *heimlich* (homely, familiar), and *heimisch* (native), while demonstrating the extent that he has gone to get to the aetiological meaning for his reasoning for naming his critical study of psychosis, "Das Unheimliche"—Strachey's "The Uncanny". Freud also wanted the reader to see that "The Uncanny" was written, much like Hoffmann's story, in an especially uncanny style, doubling the effects of the words and the horrors, thus enumerating their psychological meanings and connotations.

Especially in Part I of "The Uncanny", the first set of arguments consists of eight pages that are spent within philology, the aesthetics of beauty and feeling, the medical paper (medico-psychology, Freud's term) of Jentsch's essay (1906), other psychoanalysts who have studied the effects of the uncanny, namely Reik and Rank, and an 1877 version of Grimm's dictionary. Systematically in this section, Freud's hypothesis is constantly being reinforced by the subjective (Freud's œuvre) and not the objective (Freud's scientific argument). As the study progresses, each new reference that Freud brings to his argument for a scientific understanding of *unheimlich/heimlich* is merely a conceptual reinterpretation of the previous idea that
he is reinforcing—one hypothetical reference is no more entrenched in reality than the other.

This search for depth of knowledge—this digging for facts as if he was an archaeologist—was supposed to act as the basis for his scientific analysis: get at the actual, unconscious meanings of Hoffmann’s character as if Nathanael was a real person whose uncanny life is synoptic of the underlying currents—the grisly productivity—of the Victorian family. Ironically, both “Das Unheimliche” and its translation via Strachey’s redaction to “The Uncanny” become the uncanny scene of psychoanalytic investigation, wherein Freud’s hypothetical arguments create more poetic metaphors than scientific rigour—a place of writing where Freud tries to turn an aesthetic concept into a scientific equation. In her essay “A Homeless Concept: Shapes of the Uncanny in Twentieth-Century Theory and Culture”, Masschelein points out that Freud’s psychoanalytic argument “clearly assumes that there is a stable referent for the uncanny in reality: the uncanny exists and hence it can be described and defined” (2).

Because Freud saw a dynamic in aesthetics that he could build into a scientific hypothesis that would enhance psychoanalytic thought, “The Uncanny” has many of its origins within Freud’s hermeneutics upon creativity and, more specifically, his essay “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”. The first similarity between “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” and “The Uncanny” is Freud’s long-standing desire to understand the creative process (“Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” 143):
Our interest is only heightened the more by the fact that, if we ask, the writer himself gives us no explanation, or none that is satisfactory; and it is not at all weakened by our knowledge that not even the clearest insight into the determinants of his choice of material and into the nature of the art of creating imaginative form will ever help us make creative writers of us.

Secondly, so much of “The Uncanny” deals with domain: the domain of the Victorian family-setting, repressed memories from childhood about sexuality, dominance and love in the family triangle, and the creative inspirations of the young in their games, fantasies and recreations of real life. Hoffmann’s character in “The Sandman”, Nathanael (Strachey’s spelling), could be, from Freud’s psychoanalytic perspective, the author of his own psychotic mind that stems from his warped recreations of not only his childhood, but also the pathological environment of his Victorian family (“Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” 143):

Should we not look for the first traces of imaginative activity as early in childhood? The child’s best-loved and most intense occupation is with his play or games. Might we not say that every child at play behaves like a creative writer, in that he creates a world of his own, or rather, re-arranges [their world to suit their fantasies.]

Third, outside of Hoffmann’s tale of horror and the unexplained, and Nathanael’s psychotic mind, Freud is attempting to bring to light what he calls *ars poetica* (“Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” 153):

when a creative writer presents his plays to us or tells us what we are inclined to take to be his personal day-dreams, we experience a great
pleasure, and one which probably arises from the confluence of many sources. How the writer accomplishes this is his innermost secret; the essential *ars poetica* lies in the technique of overcoming the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between each single ego and the others.

Regrettably, no amount of Freud's theoretical manipulations within Hoffmann's folkloric tale can make us see any real explanation of what is going on in Freud's analysis, either scientifically or creatively, about the universality of the Oedipal Complex, Paternal Law of the Father, or the Castration Complex in Nathanael's family setting.

As a discursive argument, Freud had wanted to center "The Uncanny"'s subject-formations on what is friendly and known (the family), what is unfriendly and repressed (the Oedipal Complex, the Paternal Law of the Father, and the fear of Castration), and what is repressed (resolution of sexual anxiety and identification with the Father) and should have been friendly, even nurturing, but returns in a horribly dreaded fashion as a confusion of psychic cathexes (Freud used the German word *besetzen*, which was further translated from the Greek by Strachey as meaning to occupy a place; see also LaPlanche and Pontalis 62-5).

From a literary perspective, "The Uncanny"'s psychoanalytic place of writing becomes the universal scene/place of Freud's explanation of the return of the repressed—not Hoffmann's sad tale of misery and madness—and "it is because of this universality that its veiled presence in the story is capable of creating the double effect of the uncanny, of something that ought to have remained hidden and secret
and yet comes to light” (Hertz “Freud and the Sandman” in Harari 303). Thus, sidetracked by his own frustration and years of analysing the folktale vis-à-vis his own unconscious, Freud is ultimately forced into creating a literary study of terror, confident—but from time to time ambivalent—that psychoanalysis can lay Nathanael’s soul bare to the scientific truth by exploring an investigative process bordering on etymology, ego psychology, and Freud’s own creative licence. However, by attempting to find the psychologically traumatic moment, Freud can only find his own desires to inadequately deal with a work that defies and is resistant to psychoanalysis (see Williams for a psychoanalytic theorist who uses resistance as a theory within itself). As a result, not being able to write a psychoanalytic theory of repetition-compulsion from the story’s “uncanny” creativity, Freud’s analyses become circular, as the semantic, the paradox, and the work’s inherent doubt rule the discourse.

At first glance, the main character of the Germanic folktale, Nathanael, would be quite a unique figure for Freud to practise psychoanalytic theory upon. As readers, we see the horror and the adventure of the Gothic drama in “The Sandman”, and the larger-than-life complexity of its characters, especially Nathanael. In relationship to the profundity of Foucault’s “endless possibilities of discursivity” (Harari 154), Freud’s now famous statement, “I invented psychoanalysis because it had no literature” (Harari 296), seems to be exactly what he is trying to accomplish in his essay “The Uncanny”—to create a humanistic language of scientific access into the mind of a psychotic character who suffered the pain and anguish of mental illness.
While extremely conflicted at times, Freud’s critical study of madness, repetition-compulsion, and Nathanael’s eventual demise does have its merits as a literary reading of a tale of madness. Like its forebear, the Gothic, where fear has just as much of an attraction as repulsion—a beautiful delight—“The Uncanny”’s reading of “The Sandman” dredges up in the reader’s mind an eerie compulsion to subconsciously remember feelings of infantile dread about the Paternal Law of the Father, Castration, and the Oedipal Complex (Harari 301). This is a formidable part of the essay’s double reading, the study’s double effect. Through his critical study of psychoanalysis upon Nathanael’s grave ego, Freud’s analysis causes us to view the schizoid otherness of Nathanael’s eschewed mental processes, but by incorporating the anguish of Freud’s praxis into our own understanding of the folktale, we have to acknowledge those repressed memories, conscious and otherwise, that are recounted by Freud’s reading of the subject-formations that exist within our own psyches.

Unfortunately, if Freud’s over-preoccupation with the philology behind “uncanniness” slows down his critical study, its ambiguity of purpose brings the whole critique to a stop at certain theoretical points in the essay. This involves Freud drawing upon an intra-psychic model of explanation that offers to the reader two contradictory readings of the same story: (a) “either the story is about Nathanael being driven to suicide by an evil external power”, symbolically called “The Sandman” in the story; or (b) “it is about the progressive deterioration of someone fixated upon his father by his castration-complex”’ (Harari 304). Herein lies the basic problem inherent in Freud’s critical study of the pathology of the family setting: is “The Uncanny” an attempt to derive a hermeneutic about a psychotic
character by using an established theory—the Oedipal Complex—within the psychoanalysis of "The Sandman", or is it a literary study—an aesthetic criticism—of a folktale with Gothic overtones of horror and fright?

Freud's study is fraught with eerie problems—doubling of effect—as this thesis has already mentioned, right from the start of the essay's focus on ambiguity. Furthermore, at the essay's very beginning, Freud makes some startling omissions that are not only misleading, but do not make much sense from a scholarly standpoint. In the first paragraph, Freud writes ("The Uncanny" 219): "It is only rarely that a psycho-analyst feels impelled to investigate the subject of aesthetics, even when aesthetics is understood to mean not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feeling." For Freud, the subject of aesthetics has woven its way through all of his writings, starting with, as we have fully noted in our research, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", "The Moses of Michelangelo", and *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. There is also Jentsch's study of the aesthetics of beauty and feeling, "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen" ("On the Psychology of the Uncanny"), which became a starting scene/place of discourse for Freud's psychoanalytic essay. Further, Freud reinforces his point about the psychoanalyst and their thirst for knowledge and truth by writing (219):

But it does occasionally happen that he [the psycho-analyst] has to interest himself in some particular province of that subject; and this province usually proves to be a rather remote one, and one which has been neglected in the specialist literature of aesthetics.
Clearly we are viewing Freud's showmanship as a writer—his desire to create suspense and the poetic magic of psychoanalytic commentary—not the advancement of a scientific hypothesis. Ironically, Freud's particular province that he is speaking of—the Gothic story—was a well-established literary genre covering every possible topic and subject available to its writers and storytellers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In paragraph three, he also makes mention of Jentsch's 1906 study as the only one he knows about—excluding his works on aesthetics and the eerie—and admits that "I must confess that I have not made a very thorough examination of the literature, especially the foreign literature [on the subject]." Still, after going into great detail about Jentsch's study, Freud continues the argument's progression with his addendum on unheimlich (unhomely) and heimlich (homely). The distinction that Freud wants to make here is that this leads to a symbolic state where unheimlich/heimlich are supposed to be relative terms of eeriness, which can be brought to light under not only horrific circumstances, but based on a daemonic fear that becomes madness, further taking the soul to the brink of the abyss and beyond. Unlike Jentsch's uncanniness, and Rank's study of the double or doubling-effect, Freud is after the realm or meta-psychological state, where the symbolic or metaphoric of the compulsion to repeat can only be explored by the scientific methods of psychoanalysis and an explanation of Freud's theory of infantile sexuality through the hermeneutics of the Oedipal Complex, Castration, and the Paternal Law of the Father (LaPlanche and Pontalis 56, 78, 282, 309).
The purpose of analysing Freud's reading of Hoffmann's story in this thesis is to demonstrate that all of Part I—very nearly eight pages—is about Freud the writer of aesthetics, not Freud the psychoanalyst of neuroscience and psychic well-being. And also, in Part I, by totally investing his research in linguistics, literary criticism and discourse analysis, Freud never gets around to scientifically exploring his topic—his hypothesis, with induction, then deduction—until he can arrive at a conclusion of quantitative findings. It is in this first part that the reader begins to questions Freud's motives for writing "The Uncanny". Furthermore, this first part is where the ambiguity starts to develop concerning the direction of his thematic argument; with so much information, the essay sounds more and more like a catalogue or index rather than a critical study of repetition-compulsion that Freud could have put into a table or a chart.

By the end of Part I we begin taking sides in the essay's critical reading: one side follows the psychoanalysis of Freud's theory and subject-formation; another side debates the authenticity of the critique as literary criticism; and still another goes about attempting to interpret Freud's reading of Nathanael's madness and Freud's meta-psychological study of psychosis within the nineteenth-century family setting using the philology of unheimlich and heimisch to lay the groundwork for his theoretical concepts. Once these viewpoints begin to assemble themselves in our minds as points of debate, we start critiquing ourselves about where Freud's reading of "The Uncanny" is ultimately taking us—where does Freud's own authenticity as an author lie? Moreover, as readers and theorists, we also start analysing the author and his future intentions about the work's critical nature: in "The Uncanny", (a)
what does Freud come to know, (b) what conclusions are never going to be reached, and (c) as a theoretical argument, had Freud’s unconscious already breached these unknowns before—the Oedipal Complex and the psychopathology of the family—in many of his other writings over the first two decades of the twentieth century, and was he just not completely interested in re-analysing his own unconscious vis-à-vis Hoffmann’s “The Sandman”?

Thus, while seeking the veracity of the cause of Nathanael’s madness within the Oedipal conflicts of the family setting, Freud’s reading of the text creates, as we have previously noted, its own blind reading—its own ambiguous textuality and otherness, which prompts an esoteric debate of interrogation into the psyche (Felman *Literature and Psychoanalysis* 116–17). Without Freud being overtly aware of what is really happening as he writes the critique, the reader is wondering, is this a real extension—an academic work—or is this just mere annotation to Germanic folklore, nothing more? This failure on Freud’s behalf to grasp the “blind” reading that is being generated by the psychoanalytic place of writing and the reading-effect that reproduces itself dramatically is perhaps one of the reasons why he experienced a version of writer’s block, especially from his frustrations while writing “The Uncanny” (Felman *Literature and Psychoanalysis* 100–101; Freud “The Uncanny” 250–2).

As a paradox to Freud’s paradoxical reading of the text, his version of a writer’s block develops as a result of his inability to match his unconscious analysis with Hoffmann’s creativity, and the Freudian reading—in those passages that relate to a literary criticism—cannot speak of a meta-psychological theory of Nathanael’s
madness (psychosis) or his epileptic “fits”. In effect, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming” and “The Uncanny” are attempts to understand creativity as *a priori* of meta-psychological functions of the psyche. However, as we can also see now, Freud inadvertently produces an uncanny reading outside of the traditional Freudian reading because of his inability to explain the *daemonic* character of the unexplained “ghost” that permeates everything in his uncanny investigation of Hoffmann’s work (Felman *Literature and Psychoanalysis* 94, 101). What Freud’s hypothesis finds instead is that the “uncanniness” of art—the *ars poetica*—is resistant to the uncanny nature of psychoanalysis in this particular folktale as a result of Freud’s approach to the work’s resistance to a language of interpretation.

By 1919 Freud had written extensively about ego splitting, psychosis, and psychic dysfunction (Freud *Standard Edition* III 60, 174–5, see also "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense," [1894a] 58–61, and specifically “On Narcissism,” [1914c] 69-103). Because of his training in medical neurology, Freud was well aware of German psychiatry and its grave setting in state-run institutions and mental facilities. Psychosis, as a medical term, had been around in German psychiatric literature from as early as 1845, specifically from Feuchtersleben’s work “Lehrbuch der ärztlchen Seelenkunde” (“Principles of Medical Psychology”), and its intuitive rather than systematic definition had academically formed the Zurich school’s concept of social maladjustment and the need for hospitalisation throughout the latter half of nineteenth-century European psychiatry (LaPlanche and Pontalis 369–72).
As an essay based on the psychoanalytic theory of infantile sexuality from a pathological perspective, “The Uncanny” seems more like an overt attempt to bridge Freud’s diverging theories of psychoanalytic hermeneutics, adding an addendum to Beyond the Pleasure Principle while he was completing “The Uncanny”. Theoretically, why not approach the essay from the perspective of mental illness within the family as chronicled by a well-known German folk story? The answer to that question may lie within the subject of discourse analysis. Still, after two decades of psychoanalytic discourse, Freud had not written about the cultural or sociological aspects of mental illness or the family to any great extent. Up to that historical point, Freud’s discourse had dealt specifically with the case history or a grouping of case histories that were similar as a psychopathological symptom, disease or psychoneurosis. Consequently, his discourse of a family’s psychopathological state was severely limited as far as psychoanalytic theory was concerned. Perhaps “The Uncanny” would have been better served if it had been relegated to Freud’s notebook—the metaphoric and symbolic “A Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad”—rather than a full study of scholarship.

As a rule, aesthetics is an outright rejection of science, logic and pure fact because, for the most part, so much of the artistic mind is meant to capture the sublime and the unexplained, the lived, the dreaded and the hoped for—the dynamic aspects of existence on this earth. Contrary to this universal truism about art, Freud tried to write through the irrational experiences of the character’s psychoses by using a meta-language of psychoanalytic discourse instead of scientific fact. And although “The Uncanny” is stimulating and artistic in its own fashion, in the end the
essay tells us more about Freud and the ability of psychoanalysis to inadequately
analyse a character in a story than it ever could Hoffmann’s character Nathanael. By
attempting to make “The Sandman” speak a form of Freud’s literary “meta-
language” steeped in psychoanalytic and clinical theory, the text’s resistance to a
psychoanalytic reading is impenetrable and overwhelming, and Freud must concede
that maybe—perhaps for theory’s sake—the uncanny exists in the arts as a sanctum
sanctorum of uncanniness, and not in everyday life (“The Uncanny” 249–51).

From a literary standpoint, “The Uncanny” operates on many different levels
as a genre of modern discourse. From its basic premise of investigation, we see (a)
the complicated mystery of an art medium; from another standpoint, (b) we get to
view a Gothic reading of German folklore as literary criticism; and finally, (c) we
are presented with, in an analytical essay, the emergence of a strain of how creativity
tries to work and scientifically investigate a piece of literature. As a theoretical
argument about the family, Freud had wanted Hoffmann’s “The Sandman” to write
its own conclusion, to speak to its readers of “The Uncanny”, the psychoanalytic
scene and place of writing, and the maddening, internal workings of an infantile
psychosis, returning at various stages of a character’s thematic development.

To rewrite his failures—his writer’s block—in “The Uncanny”, Freud would
have had to change the whole premise of the hypothesis. To do that, he would have
had to induct a whole new line of analytical meaning and reasoning—new characters
and events to overcome the text’s inherent resistance to psychoanalytic subject-
formulations (see, for example, Williams 186–7, 197–8). This new essay of
deconstruction would have stood as a companion piece to Hoffmann’s work, and
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together, Freud’s artistic efforts and Nathanael’s characterisation would have informed, one upon the other, the relevant psychoanalytical tenets that Freud had wanted to convey in the first place, something that Jacques Lacan did decades later in “The Purloined Letter”, which put back what was lacking in the letter: the psychoanalytic transitions that Freud had consciously left out in “The Uncanny” (Johnson 464–5, Wright Psychoanalytic Criticism 131–4). However, this new theoretical approach—leaving Freudian écriture aside and concentrating on applied psychoanalysis instead—would have changed Freud’s argument for repetition-compulsion completely, and he would have been faced with the task of creating uncanniness outside of the domain of creativity, fantasy, infantile sexuality, and the family. What would have been left would not have resembled “The Uncanny” at all.

From the standpoint of a writer’s block, the lack of interpretation and psychoanalytic subject-formation can be clearly visible because Freud asks psychoanalysis to completely capture Hoffmann’s literary text, and in a totalitarian fashion. On an unconscious level, Freud’s inability to write a theory of repetition-compulsion can be construed as an unconsciously self-imposed writer’s block, with Freud trying to match neuroscience with creativity, taking Hoffmann’s creative “fire” and turning it into Freud’s “Promethean knowledge” of modern discourse and a theoretical approach to infantile psychosis. Take, for example, the following subject-formations that Freud developed between his hypothetical phase (1895–1905) and shortly thereafter. In the creation of the Oedipal Complex, Freud does not take issue with Sophocles’ play Oedipus Rex, only what happens and the forces of emotion as they pertain to the character traits of Oedipus, his father King Laius, and
his mother Queen Jocasta. In Freud’s critique of creativity and religion in “The Moses of Michelangelo”, by using literary metaphor and psychic projection, Freud willfully inhabits, as an otherness of his own psyche, the famous statue with its haunting gaze by psychoanalysing Michelangelo’s intentions better than he could—or that is what we are led to believe from his written work. Once again, in “The Moses of Michelangelo”, Freud is proving that he can become Michelangelo, the sculptor of modern language and aesthetics, through the psychoanalytic “word” according to Freud.

Theoretically, we are forced to ask ourselves the following question: why does Freud not have the same critical problems with Jensen’s novel Gradiva? Reading “Delusions and Dreams in Jensen’s Gradiva”, Freud’s energy to write, explain and extend his psychoanalytic interpretation is flowing in every direction. In the final analysis of Freud’s creative powers, “The Moses of Michelangelo”, not “The Uncanny”, seems to be his pivotal work on creativity, the aesthetics of artists and their artwork, and religious motifs and genres. Even in the 1927 psychobiography “Dostoevsky and Parricide”, which was published nine years after “The Uncanny”, Freud takes issue with Dostoevsky’s psycho-neurotic personality vis-à-vis his creative texts. Then, predictably, the psychoanalytic issues from one symbolic realm inform the other, causing the text and Freud’s inductive/deductive process and psychoanalysis to speak, not through his attempt to creatively find ars poetica or demonstrate Freudian écriture.

Moreover, this self-imposed writer’s block is brought about by Freud’s own hypothetical constructions—the stylistic elements of his discursive arguments.
Firstly, the most important subject-formation of psychoanalysis was Freud's treatment of the unconscious as a reality: the unconscious exists, and it could be scientifically examined and explained through applied psychoanalysis. The next problem for Freud was his desire to maintain scientific rigour, but while his hermeneutics were all explored, discussed and exposed within a subjective discourse, scientific rigour became transposed into the dynamics of aesthetics, where creativity, fantasy and German Romanticism ruled his figurative, not literal or scientific, language.

In psychoanalysis, figurative language is crucial to an understanding of Freud’s writer’s block because the science of the body is biological, while the dynamic of the subjective human experience is the emotions—desires, sentiments, and the sublime. Thus, Freud was always troubled by his desire to find the scientific concept in human thought processes, but he could only express these concepts through poetic metaphor and creative licence, using myth, folklore, mysticism and religious history. Once Freud created the psychoanalytic metaphor (the ability to explore the unconscious) in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, he was forever bound to argue his subject-formations through the dichotomies of literal meaning and figurative meaning, denotation and connotation, and the scientific reality of a neurological topic juxtaposed with a psychoanalytic concept of heuristic phenomena (Masschelein 2).

Rarely, if ever, did Freud call into question a separation of any of these cerebral, discursive, philosophical or academic gradients that always caused his writings to inhabit a particular kind of subjective place where psychoanalysis and
psychoanalytic hermeneutics were formulated into subject formations (Masschelein 3). Consequently, Freud was forever compelled to discuss, explore and express a scientific topic with whatever dynamic aesthetic/concept was available; basically, in Freud’s case, the whole spectrum of humanistic learning and writing since the formulation of recorded history—the psychoanalytic book of Freudian écriture.

Unfortunately, by the essay’s conclusion, neither Freud nor the reader can answer the esoteric questions of (a) what do we make of art as a subjective force in nature, or (b) does Nathanael’s fictional reality only exist in Hoffmann’s mind and nowhere else in the real world? Furthermore, in “The Uncanny”, can we not assume that psychoanalysis and its scientific hypotheses have finally reached the illusionary sentiments that Freud speaks of in The Future of an Illusion, where “The Uncanny”, as literary or psychoanalytic criticism, is more deconstructive than constructive? Instead of forming a literature of psychoanalysis, he is separating his textual analysis of Hoffmann’s folktale into dissected parts of culture, linguistics, sociology, family history, and folk storytelling. Nowhere in “The Uncanny” does Freud heed the warning that art does not have the same kind of innate force found in the natural, physical world.

Artistic irrationality and bizarre thoughts in the world of fictional stories do not have the same physical application or mental embodiment, regardless of Freud’s scientific use of his unconscious knowledge or what he has learned from his patients in analytic sessions. Philosophically, as a paradox, they may have similar theoretical forces on some metaphysical plane as unconscious thought processes, but as a scientific topic or a primary force of the natural, quantitative world—Darwinism—
they are meaningless. What the detective does in the literary story through inductive/deductive logic and crime-scene investigation is doubled in Freud's essay, as he takes the introspective logic of psychoanalysis and uses a fictional character and Hoffmann's text to produce an analytic write-up of clinical theory based on the bizarre actions and thoughts of a psychotic character named Nathanael.

In short, our expectations precede the criticality of Freud's own writing and reading of the subject-formations in the essay's theoretical progression. By trying to create theory from a series of discursive arguments in "The Uncanny", no amount of romantic interpretation or creative inventiveness on Freud's behalf—dragging out the Freudian book on psychoanalytic hermeneutics or Freud's attempts to create *ars poetica* and Freudian *écriture*—can cause Nathanael to speak a universal, psychotic language of repetition-compulsion, as Hoffmann's story does an adequate job of fulfilling that artistic function through his creative licence.

Finally, as a theoretical argument, "The Uncanny" is a highly complex work, broken into segments that form one large hypothesis, wherein Freud wanted to situate repetition-compulsion in the psychoanalytic scene and place of the pathology of the European family by applying his theoretical formulations of the Oedipal Complex, the Paternal Law of the Father, and the Castration Complex. As we have seen in this chapter and in some of his specific works on creativity—for example "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", "The Moses of Michelangelo", and in some of his more famous case studies, "Rat Man" and "Wolf Man"—subjective concepts, metaphoric language, and narrative structures are central elements in trying to understand a Freudian reading of a work because Freud is always trying to transform
the unconscious (Nathanael’s psychotic mind, for instance) into a definable reality that can be logically accessible to the reader. While a transformation must take place for Freud’s theoretical argument to complete itself (in the analytic session it is the talking cure), as readers we cannot quite trust Freud’s analysis of “The Uncanny” because he emphatically relies upon myth and folklore to convey the meaning of the subject-formation within his hypothesis. Contextually, this is a critical point to be reiterated within a Freudian reading and the field of writing and psychoanalysis.

As a theorist, Freud seems to be drawn to myths (religious, Greek and mystical) because he sees the psyche—which is the biggest myth of all—as bound up with the imagination, creativity, self-delusion and prevarication, so that the self only appears to the psychoanalytic argument in the tales that are told about it. Thus, we only come to know about the Freudian reading of Hoffmann’s characterisation of Nathanael’s bizarre behaviour by the corroboration of tales, myths and archetypes that are told about his madness and crazy, violent actions. Moreover, Freud brings the hypothetical argument full circle: the veracity of the self (Nathanael’s psychotic characterisation) becomes confirmed by not deviating from the fictitious accounts of myth and folklore that stand as its only proof. Furthermore, as readers we cannot quite trust the myths and horrific moments in Hoffmann’s “The Sandman” because Freud’s discourse analysis cannot suspend our notions of reality; moreover, they are fictions—Freud’s *ars poetica*—and consequently do not confirm a systematic referent of reality in our minds. In short, we never stop knowing that Nathanael is a fictional character whom Freud is trying to fit into a theory of psychoanalysis.
By trying to grasp creativity, myth and folklore through scientific *a priori*, Freud ends up expressing his own frustrations with creativity and aesthetics once again, a subject that he spends a lifetime trying to subjugate to psychoanalysis and the illusiveness of creative thinking ("The Uncanny" 219–56, 249):

The uncanny as it is depicted in *literature*, in stories and imaginative productions, merits in truth a separate discussion. Above all, it is a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides, something that cannot be found in real life. The contrast between what has been repressed and what has been surmounted cannot be transposed on to the uncanny in fiction without profound modification; for the realm of phantasy depends for its effect on the fact that its content is not submitted to reality-testing. The somewhat paradoxical result is that in the first place a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life; and in the second place that there are more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life [Freud’s italics].

Freud does find in his theoretical study a sense of uncanniness, but unfortunately that sense of the eerie and the unexplained is only attained because we come to understand those factors of his Freudian reading that fall short of our expectations. Ironically, Freud’s uncanny reading succeeds by him not putting in all that psychoanalysis could offer to the study of a German folktale; clearly, uncanniness is attained by what is ignored in Freud’s discursive essay: the “loss of eyes [should have been] a metaphor for [the] dismembering of the self-image and subsequent loss
of identity”, Freud’s hermeneutics on narcissism are “relegated [...] to the status of three footnotes”, and Nathanael’s desire for Olympia, the automation, are never explored, which was a severe blow to his “cathexed” and narcissistic ego (Wright Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal 132–233).

As a final note, aesthetically the Freudian reading of “The Uncanny” has become, paradoxically, the genesis—the modern trope—for all contextual studies of uncanniness in post-Freudian psychoanalytic theory of literature and culture (Masschelein cites Bergler, Cixous, Hertz, Clair, Wright, and Jay). Thus, having descended in “The Uncanny” to a form of self-imposed writer’s block, Freud feels that he has reached what can only be described as the Freudian “navel”, the reference to an umbilical attachment of analysis and interpretation that denotes in his investigative process that point where enlightenment finds its speechless void and the soul experiences the return of the unconscious abyss of language and meaning—Freud’s fight with his own death instinct, literally and figuratively (Brill 199 n. 2).

**C. Freud’s “Navel”: The Displaced Conceit of Writing and Psychoanalysis**

Very early in his career as a theorist, Freud unknowingly created the metaphorical end-point for the psychoanalysis of a subject-formation while engaged in the discourse analysis of dreams and dream-work in the seminal The Interpretations of Dreams. As a now famous iconoclastic example of the “hermeneutics of suspicion” (see Ricoeur Freud and Philosophy), Freud refers to a symbolic “point” contained in a footnote (The Interpretation of Dreams 199 n. 2) and then again in a short passage (480, see also Standard Edition V 525) as something bordering on a meta-
psychological boundary—a mental space of psychic suspicion. Freud then writes of these two completely separate instances in rather aesthetic terms, making the reader feel that they are romantic allusions to mountaintop fences gazed from afar, beautiful but elusive and distant.

Although brief and mysterious, in these two references, Freud’s love for the poetic conceit—using “landscape metaphors” and the “model of an imaginary walk”—overpowers any scientific language that he could generate during his écriture of psychoanalytic interpretation. The first note comes early in The Interpretation of Dreams in “Chapter II: The Method of Dream Interpretation” during Irma’s rejection, and it demonstrates clearly how Freud developed the need for a hermeneutic of suspicion in psychoanalysis by searching endlessly for a language of interpretation (The Interpretation of Dreams 199 n. 2):

I suspect that the interpretation of this portion has not been carried far enough to follow every hidden meaning. If I were to continue the comparison of the three women, I should go far afield. Every dream has at least one point at which it is unfathomable; a central point, as it were, connecting it with the unknown.

At this point in his renowned book of 51 dreams, Freud has not given the navel a specific name or any reference to a psychoanalytic subject-formation. Manifestly, this epicenter of the unknown is a displaced metaphor, without a reference from his life experiences that Freud could attach thought to that would add meaning to his discourse analysis on a symbolic level, and the navel would not have much meaning to the reader of his as-of-yet unpublished dream-book.
As a space for an unfilled hermeneutic, Freud’s footnote (*The Interpretation of Dreams* 199 n. 2) is another example of his intensity to synthesise his discourse to a level bordering on the sublime, giving the unknown a language of poetry by creating a conceit for unconscious concealment. Thus, in the first example, the generative language of the navel becomes the surreal object of Freudian *écriture*—the bizarre object of the uncanny flesh of the human body. In the second example, the subsequent naming of the navel (“keystone” in Brill’s translation) and its association to mushrooms come much later in “Chapter VII: The Psychology of the Dream-Process” during Freud’s explanation of the function of the “Forgetting of Dreams” (470–85). In this short paragraph, we can see that Freud has given the navel a subject-formation, and furthermore, he draws a comparison between the navel’s epicenter of the human body that is then juxtaposed to fungi from the folklore of the forest’s floor (*The Interpretation of Dreams* 480):

In the best interpreted dreams, we often have to leave one passage in obscurity because we observe during the interpretation that we have here a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unravelled, and which furnishes no fresh contribution to the dream-content. This, then, is the keystone [Strachey’s translation: navel] of the dream, the point at which it ascends into the unknown. For dream-thoughts which we encounter during the interpretation commonly have no termination, but run in all directions into the net-like entanglement of our intellectual world. It is from some denser part of this fabric that the dream-wish then arises, like the mushroom from its mycelium.
For the past century, these two short references to the navel, the mushroom and its mycelium roots have raised considerable speculation as to Freud’s metaphorical conceit and its allusion to the little mushroom from the deep and dark recesses of the forest’s underworld. Moreover, on a literary level, Freud’s navel reminds us of a talking character from the Brothers’ Grimm and their canon of children folk stories (see ‘Die Rübe’ ['The Turnip']). Most critics, however, view the two passages on the body’s navel as personal references to Freud’s highly scrutinised personal life—the navel as a hidden door to Freud’s psyche. Their critical writings—more appropriately, the politics of critical dialogue—read along the lines of flamboyant and penetrating generalisations that I have taken the liberty to compress into the following excerpts. Moreover, for Freud’s creative licence to flourish, his symbolic and metaphoric *oeuvre* depended upon his psychic ability to not confront the Faustian “navel” of frustration and depression.

Secondly, despite its obvious meaning as that point in Freud’s mind where he could not take psychoanalytic discourse any further in discovering the unconscious realities of the traumatic moment, the symbolism of an anatomical centre of the human body serves the poetical purpose of a conceit—in essence, the detachment of the umbilical cord. Thirdly, the navel was symbolically the last psychic step on the metaphorical road to the abyss, where language and meaning could not penetrate the darkness or the void in Freud’s mind; furthermore, it was that place in its creator’s mind where he had to accept an impasse—a writer’s block for sure—and return to the “light” of theoretical inspiration by putting pen to paper upon another new, creative topic that interested his unsatisfied need to write,
explore, and compose his style of Freudian *écriture*. We also see in this third example that specific examples of his critical discourse link Freud's anxiety to a historical time-line of when *The Interpretation of Dreams* was in its creative stages (1898–1900) to the period of Freud's self-analysis just after his father's death.

Fourth and finally, on a meta-psychological level, the navel is symbolic of Freud's own free-floating anxiety about his creative abilities, that metaphorical place in the creative process where his screen memories came to a conscious end and Freud's search for the traumatic moment in the analytic situation is conflated through poetics to a metaphorical realm of figurative language that becomes the end point of thought and speech. While such sweeping claims of definition evoke a language of the all-knowing and the all-encompassing, they are as much acts of hyperbole and creativity on the critic's behalf as they are science and truth. Highly sensationalised, these accounts are designed to draw the reader into definitions of Freud's complex personal and professional life while propagating a theoretical proposition. Nonetheless, the majority of us would agree that most of the declarations from the previous sentence could wholly, or at least partially, apply to any scholar or author who writes critically or creatively as a livelihood. And surely, most of us would also agree that there is a metaphorical end-point—a void in the mind—where the abyss of non-meaning is recorded as a boundary of psychic existence within all our lives. In Freud's case, however, I might further add that an abyss, a void, of non-meaning was a self-proclaimed mental space for his self-imposed writer's block.
If I may digress for a few moments and take an alternate course, let us re-evaluate the two passages from the praxis of psychoanalytic subject-formation and dream interpretation, but not concerning what we as critics or interested readers think or feel about Freud's unconscious psyche, or where his thinking was causing his mind to wander while he was writing *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Let us analyse the poetic navel from the complexity of neurology, German Romanticism, and the newly created academic field of *psychical-analysis*.

To start this discussion, we need to make some generalisations that draw us closer to an interpretation of the navel as a symbolic metaphor of both science and the humanities. First off, ironically, like Freud and his critics, we will be trying to fill a hermeneutical space because our own creativity has informed our critical sensibilities that one surely exists. By using the conceit as a symbolic metaphor of place, Freud was recreating through language and discourse the unthinkable, the unknowable of the Faustian realm of the unspoken. Likewise, the prized antiquities and figurines (for example, exotic artefacts from the Countess Marie Bonaparte) that Freud surrounded himself with in his offices in Vienna and London were also symbolic of his momentary trips of inspiration into his uncanny unconscious that acted as foreign objects (Freud's *otherness*) of his primordial spirit to define language and meaning in his own soul.

Romantically, he spent his entire life wanting to be the archaeologist and anthropologist of the modern psychic landscape; without the ancient ruins of Greece and Egypt to discover, Freud becomes the archaeologist of the unconscious (Flem 28–9). Similarly, letters and written notes to friends showing his fascination with
Italy and the Renaissance, despite claims of Catholicism being his arch enemy in Vienna, are other examples of displaced models of Freud's spiritual mysticism. In these examples, Freud acts as the Renaissance traveller of psychic language, whose discourse analysis has the meta-psychological ability to create a mystical void that can be later filled with his detective handiwork using the science of psychoanalysis.

And can we not view this metaphorical abyss as further inspiration of Freud's theoretical ability to generate still another psychoanalytic interpretation to combat the resistance that his hermeneutics of suspicion and the subject-formation of his discussion are generating in the first place? Most critics have pointed out that Freud's discovery of his master-plots of the unconscious and the Oedipal Complex came as a result of his analytic sessions with his patients; likewise, the subject-formations that followed were deductions theoretically developed by his discourse analysis involving written accounts of his hermeneutics of suspicion (G. D. Robinson 2–4).

Arrived at by unravelling the real from the apparent, on an unconscious level, Freud's psychoanalytic subject-formation of the navel takes us into the world of the mind and the imagination as somehow lacking any presence of physical matter, excluding appearance. Ironically, on the other hand, the metaphorical symbol inhabits a mental space that is capable of moving the science of the body aside and replacing its cold, factual nature with an emotional and subjective dynamic that raises its iconoclastic meaning to the level of poetry (Young Mental Space 7–8). In effect, Freud has created a scientific meta-psychology of language that is theoretically used as a meta-psychological conceit, which creates a psychic reality
that does not exist except as a mark or a trace of its former self, which further becomes topographic through the process of human thought conflated with humanistic language, not scientific deduction (Young *Mental Space* 5).

On a personal note, Freud took a special interest in the metaphorical space of the navel because of his love of mushroom picking while trekking. The romantic journey was also combined with the ethereal qualities of the dark, rich beauty of the forests of the Alps and Freud’s love of walking. As a symbolic absolute, the navel for Freud was the inner and the *other*—the hidden door to the unconscious that stood as a transitional point between chaos and thought, between the biological and the psychic. For Freud’s psyche, the navel also represented his conflicted feelings of desire for his umbilical mother, real and imagined. Moreover, as a figurative “cleft”, Freud passionately understood the private meaning of the mark of the navel as his dream-passage alone: the secret entrance to his mother’s womb.

Biologically, the thought behind the word for the navel was Freud’s maternal bonds to his Lacanian *(m)other*, a realm of thought where he could rewrite in symbiology the language of the unconscious drives—both his and the common lot of everyday people. Thus, for Freud the dream-traveller, the navel’s knot is the end point for consciousness but not desire, as non-meaning—the abyss—and the unspoken become the unsatisfied and the vanquished—the unrealised in language and thought—but not the haunting and wanton streaming up from his unconscious desires.
Chapter VI: Conclusion

Freud’s Psychoanalytic Discourse on Creativity, Religion and Aesthetics

As we have explored, Sigmund Freud constructed a model of creativity, aesthetics and discourse for the modern mind—poetry, art or literacy were no longer simply the property of the brilliant or divinely inspired. And, on a humanistic level, his desire was to creatively inspire people’s existence with language and meaning by constructing a scientific—albeit aesthetic—explanation of the mind. Thus, by the time his writings had become popular and readily available to the public in the 1920s and '30s, Freud had gone one step further and was declaring that every man and women had been a creative and imaginative being all along (Totem and Taboo 97–8):

Our psycho-analytic approach to the subject, however, is from another side. It is not to be supposed that men were inspired to create their first system of the universe by pure speculative curiosity. The practical need for controlling the world around them must have played its part. So we are not surprised to learn that, hand in hand with the animistic system, there went a body of instructions upon how to obtain mastery over men, beasts and things—or rather, over their spirits. These instructions go by the names of “sorcery” and “magic”.

Theoretically in the 1890s, Freud’s professional move from neurology to a less mechanistic view of the mind involved a decade of scientific and scientifically informed publications that culminated in his self-analysis and creatively inspired
work *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud’s aesthetic transformation would cause clinical aspects of psychoanalysis and the hermeneutic characteristics of psychoanalytic theory to be forever locked in language and folklore, artwork and religion, and archaeology and history—the aesthetics, not science, of cultural history. From its inception in the *fin de siècle*, Freud created the hermeneutics behind psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic theory, and writing and psychoanalysis to evaluate and critique the hidden meanings of literary artefacts. Later, he also formulated the psychobiography to chronicle the neurotic manifestations and symbolic embodiments of the artistic ego. These theoretical employments would be fully documented and critiqued in essays such as “Dostoevsky and Parricide”, “The Moses and Michelangelo”, “Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming”, “Psychopathic Characters on the Stage”, Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood, and his three longer works concerning culture and psychoanalysis, *The Future of an Illusion*, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, and *Moses and Monotheism*.

As historiography, it is also generally agreed that *The Interpretation of Dreams* and the year 1900 marked both the birth of applied psychoanalysis and the genesis of the academic field of psychoanalytic theory, benchmarking Freud’s conversion to a totally artistic and poetically inspired explanation of the mind. Further focusing his discourse on aesthetics in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Freud aligned himself philosophically with a growing number of young theorists and philosophers who began to see and want to change the failing role of Cartesian dualism, nineteenth-century philosophical objectivism, and the tenets of Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, which posited the sphere of art and
subjectivity as anything but aesthetic consciousness. For example, his use of the symbolic metaphor of the navel as a poetic conceit in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (199): “I suspect that the interpretation of this portion has not been carried far enough to follow every hidden meaning. [...] Every dream has at least one point at which it is unfathomable; a central point, as it were, connecting it with the unknown[.].” In this respect, we view Freud’s historical vision along poetic and mimetic lines: an illusion, an analogy, a metaphor of cultural knowledge, striving against other positive and negative forces of history and its cultural impact upon the drama and intrigue of the first modern century.

At his core, Freud was a man in love with the book as something of a romanticised love object. The birth of this philosophical desire started as early as age seven with his father’s intellectual and religious emphasis upon the Book of Books, the Philipsson Bible, and the writings of Jewish mysticism. Moreover, a significant part of Freud’s desire for creative inspiration must be lodged with his father’s own love for the arts, classical learning, and the Judaic teachings of the kabbala. During his formative years, Freud read or had listened to many of the finest children’s stories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that combined the best oral traditions of European folklore with the intellectually potent myths of ancient Greek and Roman literature. For Freud, Greek and Roman tragedy provided a convenient psychological framework for the theoretical foundations of psychoanalysis because it was metaphorically arranged with unconscious meaning that was emotionally charged with an original, potentially traumatic moment, for example the Oedipal Complex, that Freud could conflate into master-plots and
universal theories about psychic existence. In fact, just from Oedipus' name, "swollen feet" and "swollen head", the dramatic irony of the ancient myths of god-like sexual powers and god-like hubris would have been endless for Freud's amusement and ironical nature.

Combined with the Greek and Roman classics, Freud used the poetic language of conceptual space as a corpus of being that had been first incorporated into the nineteenth-century embodiment poetry of the romantic Walt Whitman (1819–92) in his poem "Song of Myself" (Brooks et al. 403). Hypothetically taking embodiment to a meta-psychological level, this erotic desire to write the unknown of the unconscious—to probe, prod and punctuate with his poetic phallus for an aesthetic truth in science, medicine and philosophical reason—completely takes over Freud's conscious and unconscious sensibilities when he puts his pen to writing tablet (Totem and Taboo 22):

Psychoanalysis has taught us that a boy's earliest choice of objects for his love is incestuous and that those objects are forbidden ones—his mother and his sister. We have learnt, too, the manner in which, as he grows up, he liberates himself from this incestuous attraction. A neurotic, on the other hand, invariably exhibits some degree of psychical infantilism. He has either failed to get free from the psycho-sexual conditions that prevailed in his childhood or he has returned to them [...] Thus incestuous fixation of libido continue to play (or begin once more to play) the principal part in his unconscious mental life.
More importantly, Freud's theoretical constructs and analytic writings did not end with a simple praxis of people's psychic life. In the writing of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud further aligned psychoanalysis with the spiritual quest for truth—a common bond with religion. Then, systematically, he took his theories of humankind's mental existence on a journey of psychoanalytic commentary while creating in his historic style of writing a meta-psychology of language and meaning. By elevating his theoretical concepts and hypothetical constructs to a hyper-textual level, he could then formulate a discursive style of what basically amounts to journalism, German Romanticism, cultural criticism, and participatory research. Brought together by Freud's literary ability to create a historical synthesis, he further cloaked his hermeneutics in the medical sciences of the day.

By the time he was a young man in medical school he had developed a scholarly interest in the kabbala, and Freud's technique of using a historic mode of writing inherently contained a schematic structure that ranged widely from the known to the unknown, and more significantly, from the profane to the sacred. Reinventing the romantic aesthetics of the Gothic writers of the 1840s and '50s, Freud began consistently following the teachings of the ancient, interpretative traditions of the kabbala and Talmudic learning, discovering in the very act of writing a spiritual intrigue and a kind of secret, cottage thinking which idealised the German Romanticism of the sciences of the spirit and poems as a link to the mystical and the holistic of a pagan counterculture: *Beauty is the manifestation of secret natural laws, which otherwise would have been hidden from us forever.*
Contrary to the stern and brooding figure that we see in his portraits and snapshots, Freud considered himself an unbound, dilettante artist at heart—medical doctor by profession, novelist by desire. On one of his ritualistic walks through Vienna’s Old City and the Ringstrasse late in his life in 1934, he openly admitted to Giovanni Papini, the Italian writer, that throughout his adult years his constant desire had been to be “a scientist by necessity and not by vocation” (Flem 104). Neo-Freudian Wilhelm Stekel related the following conversation that he and Freud were having during an afternoon trek at Berchtesgaden in 1934 while discussing their careers as proponents of psychoanalysis: “[i]n my mind, [Freud speaking to Stekel] I always constructed novels, using my experience as a psychoanalyst; [...] my wish is to become a novelist” (Flem 104). This reflective note, just five years before Freud’s death, illustrates Freud’s lifelong desire—down to the last months of his life—to succeed as a psychoanalyst on the one hand and creative writer on the other.

In Chapter I of this thesis we explored the relationship between Freud’s neurological writings and the aesthetics of psychoanalytic discourse, works that were primarily published long before Freud’s self-analysis (1897–8) and the publication of The Interpretation of Dreams (1900). Of primary importance was Freud’s transformation from a science of neurology and physiology during the 1880s and ’90s to a journalistic science of aesthetics and humanistic endeavours. Chapter II ascertained the neurological and psychic scene of writing in neurological works such as “Report on my Studies in Paris and Berlin”, “Preface to the Translation of
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Charcot's *Lectures on the Diseases of the Nervous System*, Freud's translation of Charcot's French lectures into German, "Observation of a Severe Case of Hemi-Anaesthesia in a Hysterical Male", *Hypnosis*, and "A Case of Successful Treatment by Hypnosis". Furthermore, these research studies were quickly followed by "Sketches for the 'Preliminary Communication' of 1893", *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, and Freud's collaboration with Josef Breuer that was formulated into the critical work *Studies on Hysteria*. It is at this point in Freud's career that he took his writings to a transitional point between neurology, physiology and psychoanalysis, contained as notes, afterthoughts and short essays in the difficult and ambiguous *Project for a Scientific Psychology*.

Chapter II also explained what has been called psychoanalysis' hypothetical phase (1895–1905), during which Freud's notes and analytical writings from *Project for a Scientific Psychology* influenced his theories and subject-formations for some of his most important case histories: "Anna O", "Dora", "Little Hans", "Rat Man" and "Wolf Man". The section concluded with a brief discussion of Freud's "Early Writings, Notes, and Letters on Creativity", starting with commentary about the Oedipal Complex and *Hamlet* in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, to a psychoneurotic character analysis from Conrad Ferdinand Meyer's story "Die Richterin" ("The Woman Judge"), to Freud's psychoanalytic study of psychopathic characters in a dramatic production in "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage", and the chapter ended with Freud's first literary criticism in "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*".
Chapter II began with Freud's theories on creativity, specifically as a historical account of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic literary criticism in the following critical works from the Freudian canon—"Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, "The Moses of Michelangelo", "Dostoevsky and Parricide"—and the lesser-known works on creative criticism: "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" and "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva". As a chapter specifically focused upon Freud's theories on creativity and aesthetics, we discussed the psychoanalytic artefact, the artist as daydreamer, the use of psychobiography to analyse the artist's psychoneurotic personalities, and Freud's acceptance speech for "The Goethe Prize", wherein he compared the creative endeavours of Goethe with da Vinci.

Researching Chapter II we discovered that Freud's theories on creativity become a means for him to discover his own covert fantasies concerning his intellectual need to write and theorise about the hermeneutics of psychoanalysis. While combining aesthetics and the religious art-object, Freud had first delved into the subject of religion, biblical law, and the life of the prophet Moses in the early essay "The Moses of Michelangelo", in which he is more interested, from a latent standpoint, in Moses' psyche as the biblical law-giver than he is in Michelangelo's sculpting of the famous prophet from the Old Testament. This over-determination with the content and subject of his theory's subject-formation would further find its way into Freud's most important critique of literary criticism in the psychobiography "Dostoevsky and Parricide". And, as we saw in Freud's critical study, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of Childhood*, the intensity of the psychoanalytic subjectivity
employed in the discourse analysis had to be theoretical, located not only in the formal properties of the artwork or the artist's life history, but in the analyst's covert analysis of the artwork's ambiguity or the artist's psychoneurotic ego: the subject-formation's hyper-textualised interest factor of intrigue, mystery and personification.

Moreover, in Chapter III this thesis identified a discursive bridge between creativity, aesthetics and civilization's new creation account: Freud using psychoanalysis to propose what could have happened in his writing of the Moses story from the book of Genesis. And, to fully explore creativity, religion and psychoanalysis' new creation account, we had to touch upon Freud's religious childhood and his adult life as an atheist, to his own malady of clinical repression, to his rewriting of his father's Judaic heritage as an attempt by Freud to master his family's Oedipal conflicts—his Jewishness. In doing so, we have crossed paths with Freud the archaeologist, Freud the Renaissance purveyor of art and literature, Freud the historian, Freud as the Brothers Grimm, and Freud the rewriter of his own Oedipal Complex creating a new riddle for his ego as a modern Moses—all quite noteworthy personae, I would like to add, born into the psyche of one man whose life straddled the history of nineteenth-century literature and the determinism of twentieth-century scientific rationalism.

In Chapter III we also discussed at length major cultural works such as Moses and Monotheism, Three Essays on Freud's re-conception of Moses in the biblical Genesis, and Totem and Taboo as an anthropological, folkloric and philological account of how tribal law, the primal father, and "civilized" society began in primitive, totemic systems. From Freud's critique of creativity and religion,
we also incorporated other pertinent readings from the Freudian canon: "The Moses of Michelangelo", Civilization and Its Discontents, "Obsessive Acts and Religious Practices", "The Taboo of Virginity", and the unconscious formations of the psyche as a working and continuous metaphor for the written structures of the text in Freud's essay, "Note Upon the Mystic Writing-Pad".

Chapter IV explored psychoanalysis, religion and Freud's use of cultural theory as the psychoanalytic place of writing. This chapter began with the discussion of the place of psychoanalytic discourse, with Freud's cultural commentary on people's need for religion and the Jewish God Yahweh because of their helplessness, hopelessness, and fear of death and nothingness—the human void of non-meaning. Freud theorised that this psychoneurotic fear had reduced people of every civilized age to nothing more than helpless, needy children, thereby causing individuals, tribal societies, and governments to develop the cultural, psychological and ritualistic need for organised religions, which would resolve their Oedipal Complexes, giving them catharsis from fear and dread. Specific works covered were The Future of an Illusion, Moses and Monotheism, Civilization and Its Discontents, and the preface to Bonaparte's The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-Analytic Interpretation. The preface to Bonaparte's traditional Freudian interpretation of Poe's writing and psychobiography was included because it demonstrates Freud and psychoanalysis' intellectual place in 1930s literature and language in Europe and America. While exploring Chapter IV, we also learned that Freud was developing the "psychoanalytic scene", and consequently the "psychoanalytic place", as early as his collaboration with Breuer while writing Studies on Hysteria (1893–5), and
Freud's two sketchbooks, "Sketches for the 'Preliminary Communication' of 1893" and *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895).

As a summary of the thesis, in Chapter V we began our discussion with the topic of Freud's symbolic *other*—to use the Lacanian concept of the "(m)other" bond—as a metaphor for his own creative talents as a writer. We also explored Freud's displaced models of symbolic language in writing and psychoanalysis, and the psychoanalytic and Freudian conceit—for example the "navel"—as an enhanced metaphor for the place of writing: that place that does not actually physically write, but clearly filters meaning from non-meaning, the conscious from the unconscious, and the body from the psyche. To completely explore the scope of the thesis through a summation in Chapter V, we made use of a wide range of psychoanalytic concepts covering four decades of Freudian discourse: the Oedipal Complex, Castration, Law of the Father, and repetition-compulsion from Freud's theoretical phase (1895-1904); Freud's study of psychotic characterisation in a nineteenth-century folktale, "The Sandman", as an attempt to find a universal theory of the Victorian family; and, the unconscious/conscious symbolism of "the navel" as first mentioned in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Chapter V was also supplemented by a discussion of Freud's literary need for a "Gothic" language that would support his psychoanalytic subject-formations while he was discussing the complexity of the meta-psychological processes of the psychic domain. Of primary importance in this critique was Robert Young ("Freud: Scientist and/or Humanist?"), who made several significant findings that relate to Freud using his *otherness* not only for his own creative satisfaction, but more
importantly for the historical consequences of the failure of a scientifically informed language to fully express or accommodate psychological states of existence. Further, in Chapter V we synthesised the arguments of this thesis, bringing them together in a hypothetical circle of qualitative research. We focused upon Freud's literary style of using the motifs and genres of romantic literature that he found, from his own boyish delight, in the detective logic and suspense of the figurative tropes of Edgar Allan Poe's horror stories, which allowed Freud to bring his meta-psychology of psychoanalysis to its fullest fruition.

Thematically, Chapter V is the most important subdivision of this thesis because in its passages we have brought together Freud's career as a neurologist, his and other artists' creativity, their writings that have affected modern aesthetics and religion, the significance of psychoanalysis as the place of fin-de-siècle writing and the new creation account, and Freud's own self-imposed problems—his writer's block—with his creativity and psychoanalytic discourse. Crucially, Chapter V deals with Freudian écriture from all aspects of critical commentary—meaning and non-meaning, science and aesthetics, the body and the psychical apparatus—and the imaginary, outer limits of the navel as the boundary between darkness and chaos and socialisation and order, the metaphoric cleft within Lacan's (m)other.

Finally, with Freud's last three works being completely concerned with group and cultural psychoanalysis—The Future of an Illusion, Moses and Monotheism, and Civilization and Its Discontents—during the last two decades of his life, Freud created a hermeneutic of psychoanalytic theory that has clearly become a theory of existence. Within the same historical timeframe, its academic
counterpart, psychology, was evolving into a quantitative disciplinary field strictly placing the individual squarely into the behavioural and social sciences of modern social learning theory. After Freud’s death in 1939 and by the 1950s, the two fields of psychoanalysis and psychology were already starting to separate, one disdaining the other’s theoretical approach to human thought processes. Like most fields of extreme analytic speculation, any philosophical theory resides within its approach and how its approach becomes a conscious subjectivity in the reality of the literal world and is consequently viewed as an objective force in the academic world.

Theoretically, psychoanalysis creates through its heightened sense of subjectivity—its talking cure and confessional—an explanation of the irrational mind’s processes as an element of the unconscious and its attachment to language, while behaviourist psychology, on the other hand, discovers and relates to its observable research inherent in the causal relationship between the ego of the person and the reality operating outside of the client’s mental environment. To separate their differences, modern psychology had not the place or aesthetics in its quantitative assumptions for the literary speculation of Edgar Allan Poe’s horror tales, the anthropological ruins of Ancient Greece and Rome, or more specifically, anything resembling a “Wolf Man”, an uncanny Nathanael, much less a “Dora”. Modern client-centred, behaviourist and ego-centered psychology makes absolutely no allowances for subject-formation in quantitative analysis. If it is “uncanny” in modern psychology, then it is quickly labelled as outside observable psychology— or a momentary oeuvre of the creative sensibilities—which renders it removable from any theoretical quantitative explanations of a science of the mind, directly
counter to the bourgeois applications of Freud's subjective hermeneutics and the complete authority of the psychoanalytic text.
Notes


3 Other informative works that will be included in these multifaceted and intricate discussions are Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Bonaparte’s *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, Andrew Smith’s *Gothic Radicalism: Literature, Philosophy and Psychoanalysis in the Nineteenth Century*, Clive Bloom’s *Reading Poe, Reading Freud: The Romantic Imagination in Crises*, and Harold Bloom’s theoretical work on theory and aesthetics, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*.

4 In the acceptance speech, Freud points out other references from Goethe’s works: *Iphigenie*, *Campagne in Frankreich (Campaign in France)*, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften (The Elective Affinities)*, and *Faust*. 
Another crucial factor in understanding Freud's use of creativity and religion—Western civilization's biblical history—is his utilisation of psychoanalytic theory as a new creation account, while relying upon significant anthropological, historical, archaeological and classical writings. For us to cover Freud's rewriting of creation, we will explore his most theoretical work on the history of biblical writings, *Moses and Monotheism*. We will also refer to Freud's critical study on how tribal society developed from the "wandering hoard", Primal Law and the Primal Father in his anthropological study in *Totem and Taboo*. These works will be examined from the theoretical and hypothetical standpoint of Freud's rewriting of the biblical tenets of ancient, Israelite documents and his historical, journalistic account of tribal archaeology and anthropology. Further, we will begin our explanation of the psychoanalytic account of creation by concerning ourselves with the critique of *Moses and Monotheism* as Freud revisiting his own Oedipal crossroads. Historically, the only other short papers that relate to religion and psychoanalysis during Freud's life writings are the brief, four-page essay "A Religious Experience", which originally appeared in the 1928 edition (10:1) of the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, where Freud turns a letter writer's own concern for Freud's atheism—his religious darkness and consequently Freud's soul—into the psychoanalytic place of writing about science and spiritual belief. On one final note, there is also the short piece entitled "A Note on Anti-Semitism", written after Freud had arrived in London in exile, that concerns itself with the Jewish religion and how Freud perceived its anti-Semitic message from the perspective of a psychoanalyst.
Importantly, Freud willfully lodges his theories within certain biblical and religious documents as if they were symbolic places of locale. He then creates a Freudian *topos* of *locus* where a rationalism of cerebral subjectivity could be juxtaposed with the sacred and the profane, the mythological and the rational, and whatever other credible sources that he could find to make reference to from other accounts of creation and ancient history.
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PART THREE:
BRIDGING THESIS

THE METAPHOR OF MEANING: THE UNCANNY
NATURE OF DISCOURSE IN MODERN NARRATIVES
Written as a hermeneutic evaluation of my doctoral research, this essay will form a bridging thesis between my scholarly work, “Psychoanalytic Theory and Creativity: Freud, Otherness, and the Historical Hermeneutics of Modern Subject-Formations”, and my creative novel, *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop*. Theoretically, this essay will evaluate the following: (a) how Freud’s “The Uncanny” impacted upon my writing of *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop*; (b) why creativity’s hidden phantoms of suspicion—as discussed by Hélène Cixous in her essay, “Fiction and its Phantoms: A reading of Freud’s ‘Das Unheimliche’”—affect a work’s ability to generate the aesthetics necessary for a complete poetic reality; and more importantly, (c) how and why the scholarly thesis moulded my writing approach in the creative novel, which has in turn influenced my ideas about what constitutes writing theory as a practice.1 Ultimately, in this bridging essay I must answer the question: How has my study of Freud influenced my ideas about creativity and the practice of writing as theory?

I might also add that the importance of focusing this essay upon Freud’s writing of “The Uncanny” lies within my desire to establish a writing theory between scholarship and creativity as I attempt to untangle the *uncanniness* in my own literary works. Moreover, it is my belief that a writer’s creativity generates *uncanniness* by virtue of the way that the artist enters into an aesthetic relationship between the psyche, the work of art as a creative venture of self-expression, and the unconscious/conscious poetic reality that is being created. As we shall examine in this essay, finding truth, especially in aesthetics and scholarly writing, involves Oedipal concerns/repressions about one’s psyche while confronting the uncanny
metaphors that the discourse generates from the unconscious depths of the writer’s mind—not only from the standpoint of the author of the work, but also the symbolic father of the work.

To situate our enquiry, we must first begin with Freud’s monumental task of using discourse analysis for the purpose of creating the hermeneutics for writing and psychoanalysis as a metapsychology. Writing and rewriting “The Uncanny” as a scientific hypertext, Freud spent the better part of 10 years trying to develop the truth in fiction of a young character’s (Nathanael’s) psychotic mind in Hoffmann’s Der Sandmann, while incorporating the theories of the Oedipal Complex and the return of the repressed. Historically, “The Uncanny” comes at the end of a two-decade period of Freud using his uncanny metaphors of meaning to create the theoretical field of psychoanalysis and institute a discourse analysis that used aesthetics to generate hypothetical theories about human thought.

These analyses were insightful and highly innovative, adding a scientific, if not bourgeois, account of the mind for early practitioners of psychoanalytic theory. “The Uncanny” would not only be a famous psychoanalytic study about Freud’s theories composed within his writing practice, but also a showcase of the multitude of thematic problems that writing and psychoanalysis would experience attempting to create links between its theories and the field’s hermeneutics (Wright 128–9). In “The Uncanny” Freud had wanted to create a de facto scientific consciousness out of his written deductions and paraphrases while overwriting the perfect gothic account of exactly how Nathanael’s madness came into being (Wright 120–34).
While formulating the manuscript into some kind of publishable form for the psychoanalytic magazine *Imago* ("The Uncanny" originally appeared in *Imago*, 5, [5–6], 297–324, in 1919), Freud recognised that his hypertext was not a psychoanalytic extension of Hoffmann’s folk story as he had hoped for, but a synoptic overview that possessed very little in the way of scientific knowledge that could take psychoanalysis to a new *praxis* of learning about madness and the unconscious mind (Bloom 108–9). Hoping to create a superstructure, Freud expected that his hypertext would produce an analytical situation wherein the patient/text would begin to unconsciously/consciously respond to Freud or the analyst in what amounts to a doubling effect, as if he and Nathanael, the folk tale’s main character, were in an analytic session. Freud puts the crazed boy’s mind on a metaphorical couch, only to find Hoffmann’s poetic licence still controlling Nathanael’s unconscious mind, no matter whether Freud views his patient/character in canny or uncanny terms.

Metaphorically, in not being able to rewrite Hoffmann’s classic folktale, it became impossible for Freud to achieve any sense of (literary) transference or (rhetorical) transition in his discourse analysis, as he could not create an aesthetic relationship that succeeded as a comparable poetic reality. This deficiency in his writing practice creates another problem for Freud’s theoretical arguments: each layer of discourse generates and necessitates another layer of metapsychological text. And, because Freud struggled to synthesize the two aesthetic realities, he became entangled in his own state of affected repression, unable to differentiate
between the repression of his writer's block and Nathanael's repressed unconscious, which created a psychological otherness/doubling effect in the work's poetic reality (Bloom 118-19).

Freud's repressed unconsciousness caused his discourse analysis—his bourgeois hypothesis—to be unable to control what his psychoanalytic investigation is ultimately striving to attain. This prompted Freud to end up chasing his hypotheses by seeing his writing develop into what Hélène Cixous called "the phantoms of suspicion", which undermine every subject-formation of Freud's quasi-scientific hypothesis (Cixous 525-48). Unlike the ease with which he found a theoretical metaphor in Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Freud endeavoured to find and relate the universality of Hoffmann's tale to the unconscious childhood memories of a crazed young boy that everyone in a small Prussian village knew all too well, who lived a terribly frightened life of pain and misery.

In wanting to experience Hoffmann's gothic folktale and not Freud's theoretics, the reader starts making their own phantom reading of Freud's story as they begin carrying out their psychoanalysis of Freud's detective work *avant la lettre* (Wright 120-3). Contextually, we become lost in Freud's many attempts to translate a psychoanalytic reading from *Der Sandmann* to the "The Uncanny", to his removal of whole passages of Nathanael's madness fused into "The Uncanny"'s rendering of the "Sandman"'s unconscious memories via Freud's genre of the uncanny and canny metaphors of meaning. Once this happens, the schisms are never ending, and the phantom work seems haunted by what is lost—the symbolic
metaphors that Freud leaves out, but silently return to haunt his theoretical arguments. At a loss to understand this confusion, the reader never recovers from the loss of Freud's unconscious meanings or Hoffmann's creative account of madness and the abyss.

As a failure of writing practice, Freud's "The Uncanny" can be likened to my unpublished novel Slabbers, which will be discussed shortly in this essay, because both Freud and myself end up chasing what could have been, not what was. The unpublished work is important to an overall discussion of my dissertation because its psychological repressions, haunting words and unfinished metaphors have plagued my development as a writer since the early 1970s. This haunting otherness/doubling became very evident in the writing blocks that I faced while writing the novel Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop. Similar to the writing problems that I faced in Slabbers—but was able to overcome in a simple, psychological novel about a truck stop—Freud never truly developed a gothic sense of time, place or being, much less a poetic or scientific reality, as "The Uncanny" falls far short of the level of language and creativity that we come to expect from reading Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood and "The Moses of Michelangelo". Unable to express the language necessary to overcome the unconscious resistance in the work, Freud can only articulate his writing failure and Hoffmann's aesthetics in terms of what the work and creativity does, not what creativity is ("The Uncanny" 249, italics in the original):
The uncanny as it is depicted in literature, in stories and imaginative productions, merits in truth a separate discussion. Above all, it is a much more fertile province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides, something that cannot be found in real life. The contrast between what has been repressed and what has been surmounted cannot be transposed on to the uncanny in fiction without profound modification; for the realm of phantasy depends for its effect on the fact that its content is not submitted to reality testing. The somewhat paradoxical result is that in the first place a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life; and in the second place that there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life. [...] The imaginative writer has this license among many others, that he can select his world of representation [...] 

Thus, by “The Uncanny”’s conclusion, Freud understands quite well the fragile bond that exists between trying to use discourse analysis as scientific determinism in a hypertext in order to finitely develop a research hypothesis (“The Uncanny” 251–2, italics in the original):

[... the storyteller has a peculiarly directive power over us; by means of the moods he can put us into, he is able to guide the current of our emotions, to dam it up in one direction and make it flow in another, and he often obtains a great variety of effects from the same material. All this is nothing new, and has doubtless long since been fully taken into account by students of
aesthetics. We have drifted into this field of research half involuntarily, through the temptation to explain certain instances which contradicted our theory of the causes of the uncanny.

To examine how Freud's writing failures in "The Uncanny" have affected my writing of the novel *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop*, we need to digress and start at that point where my attempts at serious forms of creative writing began. After flirting with creative writing in high school, I left military service after a four-and-a-half-year stint, barely 23 years old. Rather innocently, I had spent the first couple of years in the Air Force working adjacent to the Old Morgue at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, sending home remains from the Vietnam War. Perhaps because of my naivety, I left the service thinking that I could write a great, compelling novel about my experiences. Enthused, in my fantasies I could see Oliver Stone's 1986 movie *Platoon* reworked from my novel, only told from a non-combat angle. Certainly, the fury and the confusion from the American public were there—those vehemently for and against the war. Here, in one accessible setting, you had the symbolic body of the strategic failure of U.S. foreign policy in the late 1960s being sent home in wooden boxes every day of the week. What more could a writer ask for? Even to my limited understanding of the writing craft at that time, the creative angle seemed easy—too easy, in fact. All I had to do was string the right *vignettes* together, and I would have a decent novel—or so I thought.

For the past 35 years I have struggled with all of the unpublished versions of *Slabbers*, and its shortened version, "In the Shed", which was published in 1986 in
the literary anthology The Pearl, in Baltimore, Maryland. My first fault was that I
wanted the story’s theme to say too much, to be too esoteric. I wanted the novel to
be a final statement of the plight of the American GI in Southeast Asia during the
1960s and '70s, written as a series of reflective epiphanies, as if the novel was on the
stage as a Shakespearean play. Laughable yet profound, the morbidity on the one
hand and the auditory sounds of Shakespeare’s language on the other speak volumes
about my love of literature as a profane and yet sacred exercise in daily life. The Old
Morgue’s horrid setting would be in sharp contrast to countercultural celebrations of
sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll on the sunny Californian coast. And I, through the guise
of the book’s man character Jason Drinkwater, would be the great voice of angst for
all the dead GIs of my generation.

Like Freud’s theoretical desires in “The Uncanny”, the story’s theme was
incongruent with my ability to construct the language, to express the creativity in
metaphorical and symbolic terms of meaning that the reader could understand. I
truly lacked a metaphor of meaning to carry the story’s theme from opening
paragraph to closing sentence. Very nearly haunted and ghostly in an uncanny
fashion, I sometimes got the feeling that I was a character in my own work, a lost
voice that could not find or control itself. And no matter how hard I tried, I could not
bring a true poetic reality into the consciousness of the characters that I had created.
Still, no matter how frustrated I became, I clung desperately to the words of my
more glorious passages, hoping for a miracle of sorts to take hold of me (Kuntz “In
the Shed” 65):
We rolled them over one by one. The afternoon ticked away in the stuffy, suffocating Shed. We began to get downright filthy and to smell like embalming fluid and dried blood. After three sets, Michael volunteered to carry some paperwork up to the front office. He took off his grimy T-shirt and slung it over his hairy shoulders. I followed him out into the sunlight and walked around to the break area on the shaded south end of the Shed. I sat down on a garbage can lid and leaned against the hot cinder block building. In the dense, seemingly motionless air, a whiff of a cool breeze brushed across my face. Momentarily I felt a weakness and noticed the huge blood and fluid stain on my right thigh. Already the sun had begun to alter and the evening haze was casting a faint hue deep into the flat horizon. For a few minutes I watched the stream of cars out on the highway; the noise of the airplanes came and went. I tried thinking about what would have happened if St. John had missed us, and we had gone into Dover. Somehow the images would not stay in my mind when I put them there.

As a writer's tool, a teaching book could be written about the ideas behind creativity and the writing craft from my years of frustration while writing and rewriting *Slabbers*. Hard-bitten, angry, and in some ways uncompromising and psychologically resistant, if you just took a scene, a movement of sorts, you would have a beautiful *vignette*, but once the *vignettes* get going, they seem to undo the last scene, the last emotional experience, as they would lose their metaphor of meaning that was supposed to carry them over to the next horrid event. I remember spending
the two-and-a-half years working through the miserably cold winters and hot humid summers in the small, one-storey, white cinder block buildings. As I wrote and rewrote, I became unable to create the right revisions. At that point, it seemed as if I was haunted by two ghosts: one talking to me about what took place in reality, and the second came from not being able to transcribe the grim reality of a mortuary into an artistic reality that would make sense to anyone beyond my familiar perceptions. Because I had been a GI at the Old Morgue, I could understand the processing of the remains, but I am sure that the reader could never be satisfied with such schizoid writing or the brittle, sensationalised scenes I created.

Then, as the years passed, I became further depressed by a third, more powerful and uncanny character: the work’s own ghost to succeed as a club-footed freak—a beast of what it should have been, stalking the reality behind the work and the critical desire that I had to write an aesthetic reality about a Godforsaken place at an airbase in Delaware. I had fallen into a trap that held me in a writer’s block as profoundly as Freud’s in “The Uncanny”. Worse yet, as an author, I started reading my own unconscious thoughts and the work’s trappings avant la lettre, trying to discover what had gone wrong, often blaming myself that I would never be a writer with novels like this to my credit.

Fragmented from a complete telling of the novel’s theme, I had become a suspicious hunter of the work’s metaphorical meanings and fragmented poetic reality. Using my own canny feelings about my military experience to write a novel, I had allowed my creative uncanniness to develop what Paul Ricoeur, in his work
Freud and Philosophy, theorised will happen when a suspicious nature develops in the writing once the poetic reality becomes something less than a believable form of aesthetics. In trying to develop the novel around a philosophical angst that I felt about the Vietnam War, I had constructed the story along the lines of hyper-textualised moments of anger, fear and hopelessness. This was further couched in vignettes/scenes that bordered on the absurd, with the hyperbole of the language that the characters spoke seeming comical.

As a one-act play it might have worked, but within the context of a novel, the writer had failed the larger premise of the story. I was telling the novel to the reader, expecting them to bring a military understanding to the work, not showing the reader what really took place as an aesthetic reality. Frustrated, I was bound by a critical desire to tell the story, but I seemed to not possess the language to put the context of the story into any metaphorical meaning. Sadly, as I can see now, I had put the metaphorical meaning of the work before the novel’s story was ever developed, and once begun, this has been a pattern that has haunted the work from its inception—deconstructing one poetic moment for the satisfaction of another, never developing the work’s aesthetics beyond a surreal vision of its philosophical being.

Without a track to run upon—a story for the reader to follow—Slabbers will never be any more than it is right now: notes, sketches, typed scripts of paper with painful war scenes. Another critical problem was the telling of the embalming of the war-dead. Once again, it was expressed in the novel in canny and uncanny ways, in symbolic terms that could only have come from my unconscious and the reading of
my poetic creativity in the work *avant la lettre.* In reality, if you clinically and methodically take bodies apart and put them back together again, under the laws of the land, what you ultimately arrive at is something as emotionally uncharged as an autopsy with the funeral home not far behind; not a novel or a television movie—unless of course the results of the autopsy are part of a crime detective story.

Early on in the completion of the writing of my scholarly thesis—specifically Section B of Chapter V, ""The Uncanny": Creativity to Theory to Freud's Navel of Frustration" (134–57)—there was a point at which I stopped reading and studying "The Uncanny" and started reading and dissecting the full account of Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann.* Curious, I wanted to read about the horror first hand, and not satisfied with Freud's rendering *avant la lettre,* I read and reread Hoffmann's account until I felt comfortable with his folktale. Thus, desiring a vicarious experience, I wanted to simply read the real gothic horror story, not Freud's failed exercise to understand a set of psychoanalytic hypotheses that only confuses his discourse analysis. Without a total revision of Slabbers' overall structure to carry the poetic reality to fruition, it has now become apparent that the more I dwell upon the Old Morgue and its uncanny/canny feelings that come streaming up from my unconscious, the more the place seems like a necessity to society, where the uncanny morbidity functions all too well within the old familiar (meaning canny) canyons of civilized society.

In 1989 I began writing a children's novel about the folklore in my family that my grandfather had told me about while I was a young boy. Afraid that I would
run into the same problems that I had had with writing Slabbers, I began writing what I considered to be the beginning of a simple short story that incorporated my family's past history. The story was about a distant uncle who had lived well over a hundred years ago, known as a great hunter in the mountains of Tennessee during the 1880s and '90s. As a folklore motif, the story was told in present tense through the eyes of a little boy, Thor Whitehead, who was still in grade school, aged about 10, whose imagination exceeds even the six-thousand-foot mountains of Eastern Tennessee.

After writing the initial three-dozen pages of loose paragraphs, complete with sideline notes, I was surprised to realise that the basic story had a poetic reality that wanted to complete itself through the little boy's imagination. Compared to the frustration that I had felt in the three decades of writing and rewriting Slabbers—with its burned, torn and mutilated bodies of dead servicemen—writing Tennessee Tiger became such a rewarding aesthetic journey because I could see the possible conception of a children's book with a gratifying ending: physically, a beautiful children's book.

Once Thor, the story's main character, falls into the icy waters of upper Tiger Creek and ends up on the other side of his family's mountain farm, the first few pages create a drama that causes the main character to deal with the exciting spectacle of a new reality. His imagination comes into contact with a wise old owl who has heard of a famous tiger; a mouse named Johnny who is also looking for companionship; a box turtle that Thor calls Boots who is always afraid of being
stepped on; and an old man named Mr. Crawford, who polishes gemstones as precious moments of spiritual enlightenment. Ironically, the only feline that Thor ever comes into contact with in the story is Mr. Crawford’s big grey cat, Socrates, who acts as the old man’s eyes and ears, especially when he is bringing the true crystal brilliance out of his gemstones.

When the first draft was originally finished, the children’s story contained the following basic storyline: little boy gets lost on the other side of an icy creek; while on a dark journey to find his way back home, he meets new friends he never thought existed; and after crossing a bridge searching for his home, he is reunited with his family and his grandmother. Then, the next day, to his surprise, his father shows him the real “Tennessee Tiger”: his great, great, great uncle, who had killed 99 bears during his lifetime. Rereading it, however, I had this uncanny feeling that it has a strong poetic voice, but the story just seemed to lack something—some deeper meaning, something that would take over the whole story but would also add to its folkloric being. Still, if the little boy’s entire story had been told, what was the story lacking? I had a poetic reality, rising action, and two good, strong conclusions—one for the present tense and one that reminds us of our historical lives and where we came from. Overall, the story read extremely well, and it seemed to have no outside influences—except its author. Structurally, it starts with a folk mystery, goes on a journey, reconnects itself, and completes itself with historical fact—the great, great, great uncle’s tombstone. But, as the author, I was unsure that I had told every last bit of the story—its unconscious meaning.
As I kept perusing the story—reading the work *avant la lettre*—I felt mysteriously compelled to create a fable about two fish families that lived in this pond high up on the mountaintop above where Thor lives—a mystical, placid pond on the surface, but within the pond’s depths, an extended story about what happens between the haves and have-nots within the philosophical confines of social and religious conventions. However, I was unsure, so I kept asking myself, what does a fish story have to do with a dead hunter who killed 99 bears during his lifetime, only to save a cub from a town clubbing because the townspeople had wanted the hunter to kill 100 bears?

At the end of the story we know that the old hunter is now dead (1903 on his tombstone), but at the same time, from the way that the story is told—present, to past, to present—we can visualise the old hunter on his deathbed, saying to the persistent townspeople that he didn’t get his bear that way, and he wasn’t going to kill a white bear cub because it made some valiant, folklore sense to his mountain neighbours. From an outside perspective, formulating a fable into a legend that has very little to do with the original story on a conscious level did not seem to make any practical sense to the poetic reality of the basic structure of the story. I was, at that point, a suspicious hunter of my own writing (Cixous 525–48).

However, enticed with the narrative possibilities of creating some deeper poetic reality, I rewrote the last two chapters of *Tennessee Tiger’s* structure—after Thor has been found and reunited with his family—to include a chapter entitled “Mommy on the Duck Pond”. On an aesthetic level, “Mommy on the Duck Pond”
becomes a psychoanalytic fable about the rainbow trout family and the horney-head fish family, and is told by the psychoanalyst of all great psychoanalytic storytellers, Thor's grandmother, who holds dear the family's heritage in her retelling of the folkloric accounts of life in the Appalachian Mountains. Not unlike Jesse Stuart's *The Thread That Runs So True*, through the grandmother, *Tennessee Tiger* becomes an extended folk story where the folkloric tradition requires other folktales to complete its sense of purpose. The children's book becomes a written account of storytelling as the art of mountain people who live close to the land. Fortunately, in *Tennessee Tiger*, Cixous' phantoms of suspicion become what the retelling—actually the success of language—work out as motif, metaphor and symbolic conclusion for the book's characters who deal with their uncanny/canny feelings through the genre of folklore and its simple wisdoms. Unlike my failures in *Slabbers*, in *Tennessee Tiger* I let the characters work out their suspicions—their feelings about the darkness of the abyss—as an aesthetic of self-expression and a belief in a higher power.

As a result of my father's wayward romanticism, I grew up always wondering what was just down the road, around the corner, or beyond the next state line. Like him, I started wanting to create scenes from all the stories that he told me when he came in off the road, his clothes fumigated with diesel fuel. Because he talked so much about the South, read many of the popular books of the day, and drove through many of the novel's settings, after a while I began to think that books such as Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* and *Light in August*, situated in the
mystical, Indian Yoknapatawpha County, near Oxford, Mississippi, Thomas Clayton Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*, just over the Appalachian Mountains from East Tennessee in Asheville, North Carolina, and Erskine Caldwell's tar-paper shacks in *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*, were extended recountings of my father's Southern sensibilities. For above the profane/sacred being of the folks that I was raised with, I started to love the dichotomy of the gothic South overlaid with the language of Shakespeare from my readings of *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* in high school. As a result, I began writing because my father never did, cataloguing all those stories, tales and *vignettes*, adding to them my own fanciful creativity. And making things right, I tried, as sons will, to make sense of his experiences, trying to read him *avant la lettre*. Such is the history of a son's love for his father.

For a writer, therein the problems begin—the dead cannot return in any guise without a shadow of their former self, and the phantoms of suspicion that they create will always haunt your words as symbolic metaphors of the unconscious. Now, everywhere I look in my writings, there is the travelling "blackjack" of my father staring back at me. Allegorically, these phantoms of suspicion become the stalker of the very creativity that generates the mimetic experiences that I bring back into my consciousness as language and desire. Thus, as a paradox of creativity, these experiences create, but can also repress and deconstruct, as Lacan theorises, the very writing subject that brings the poetic reality into being (Wright 120–1).

Throughout the writing of the novel *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* I have had to continually question the limitations of my own creativity because of these
paradoxes of creativity, especially trying to understand how they will affect the practice of my writing. Does all writing produce somewhere in its arbitrary nature an uncanny effect—a shadow of its authorial existence? And does this uncanny effect always have the power to deconstruct the very structure that the writing is trying to create—its own deconstructionism—with every stroke of the author’s imagination?

Five years ago, when I began writing *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* as the creative work for my dissertation, I wanted it to be a psychoanalytic study about my experiences as the son of an over-the-road truck driver who had spent 40 years of his life driving through the United States and Canada. From growing up around my father, although I was actually closer to my grandfather, I had plenty of experiences with the drivers, mechanics and waitresses who worked at the hundreds of large and small truck stops that dotted the American roadways. From wanting to get started on a topic that I had always wanted to write about, I quickly dashed off five thousand words that began with a character named LeRoy Vann Clough, who worked as a diesel mechanic at a rural truck stop on the old US Route 40, situated beyond the Appalachian Mountains in Western Maryland. But, just as soon as I got LeRoy and the action of the story going during a snowstorm, I had one of my father’s friends killed in a icy truck crash down the side of Fire Tower Mountain.

I started the second chapter in another direction—same driver, but my father was in the story as well. Without giving it much thought, I began rewriting the novel from a different setting as if it was five years earlier in 1956, using my father and the dead truck driver, now alive, as the main characters. Having an impulse to explain a
new topic, the story was concentrated in Northern Alabama, and I was writing about the early days of NASCAR and super-modified racing on dirt and small oval tracks in the South. Now, to my amazement, the story in the second chapter was more focused on racecar driving, and mysteriously this new chapter was something altogether different than LeRoy Vann Clough or the truck stop up in Western Maryland. But, I didn't give it much thought; as I kept writing and writing, the words and vignettes kept piling up.

On an Oedipal level, the misery of truck driving was so deep in my unconscious that it seemed like all I could do was write about how unsettling truck driving was to the drivers and their families who waited for them to show up at some ungodly hour of the day, tired beyond belief. Unconsciously, I was feeling the pleasure of being able to finally write about the stories that my father had told me, but I was also mimicking what truck drivers do on the road: they drive for endless hours at a time, sleep when they can, and fuel up at truck stops to eat in the proximity of total strangers who find pleasure in each other's folk tales as if they had delivered an autobiography of their life. Then they climb back into a truck and start the process all over again, as the reality of the moment is forever destroyed by their over-the-road lifestyle.

In the early stages of Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop I also produced "Torque Wheels", "Lonely Vigil", "Soup of Stones", and the novella Truck Driver, every manuscript directly or indirectly related to my father, who is by all accounts one of the most interesting characters that I have ever met. But, because of his
estrangement as a father, it seems that the only thing that I can ever write about him is his uncanniness—the uncanny ability that he had to be strange and unique in the history of my life and our family.

Then, unexpectedly, the crash came, and I could write no more. Psychologically, at that point I didn’t know what to do. Feeling barren and dejected, I felt that all the stories had been written but there was no novel to speak of. Where had I gone wrong? I had four manuscripts and an opening chapter to what I thought was going to be a novel about truck driving and a truck stop with personality. Feeling depressed, I silently knew that I was back to the writing problems that I had had with Slabbers and an earlier version that I had called Dead Men.

Until the children’s book Tennessee Tiger, my creative output had been to see how much I could write, not whether it was ever going to be published or understood by a reader. From the experience of having two severe bouts of writer’s block, I can now relate my experiences to Freud’s undermining of his writing in “The Uncanny”, where he overlays every account of his primary intent of explaining uncanniness in the pathology of a character’s mind by undercutting his authorial voice with more theory or theoretical subject-formations, because he never attains a poetic voice that acts as the voice of reality in the passages of his arguments.

Similar to Freud’s malaise in “The Uncanny”, in the earliest stages of Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop I thought that with each new page I wrote there would be a new and interesting level of meaning. In actuality, without knowing it, I was deconstructing my authorial voice, which would quickly destroy the reader’s ability
to follow the ebb and flow of the story’s development. Buying into my own demise as a writer, I had created LeRoy’s character in the book’s first chapter, only to leave him as dead and cold as the truck driver who had died in the black ice storm down the western side of Fire Tower Mountain.

At this point, I am sure that my creative writing supervisor found all these disjointed manuscripts quite amusing. Returning a long letter about how to develop and write the narrative for a modern novel, his advice was simple and to the point: go back to the characters—LeRoy, Shirley and Ruthie—and the place where the trucker, Duley Hartmann, is killed on the side of the frozen mountain. Stick to the development of their characterisations as part of the truck stop’s topos of locus. Your creativity knows the characters and the story better than anyone else. Reading the letter, however, my thoughts about the writing craft did not seem to be satisfied so easily. I did not want to accept that the writing of the novel was really that straightforward. For that matter, life with my father had never been that simple, especially the tormented relationship that he had had with my mother.

Discouraged, I could feel great conflict in my thinking that had very little to do with my supervisor’s advice—a bit angry, I could see and feel that much. Still, all I wanted to do was write. Why couldn’t the writing take care of itself? In my mind, I could hear myself saying: What does literary scholarship have to do with the way that real truck-driving men are, anyhow? Feeling depressed, I kept telling myself that only I knew about my father’s love of scotch, the fighting, and his hard life. As
one can see from my thoughts and words, when life gets real, it’s hard to talk about reality and fiction in the same breath—especially when it’s your flesh and blood.

As is always the case, good advice sometimes sounds so simple that it’s hard to swallow, especially when it’s tied to your emotions and unconscious motivations. Somewhere early in the writing of the novel, I had to admit that I had my own uncanniness working against me, that creativity is an uncanny undertaking and that a literary work of art must be created, developed and honed like any art/craft before it can be presented to the public domain for every critical eye to peruse.

So, more cautious than before, I began writing again. After the success of my children’s novel Tennessee Tiger, I just couldn’t figure out how I was thrown once again into the uncanny cauldron of deconstructing my authorial voice and its symbolic and metaphorical meanings that the story and the characters were trying to develop. For the first month after reading my supervisor’s comments, this feeling of what I was losing and gaining kept me in turmoil. I slowly realised that I had to return to the beginning and create a topos of locus that surrounded the poetic reality of the truck stop, not an Oedipal reality surrounding my father’s few saving graces or his worst family disgraces.

Grudgingly, I began concentrating on developing the characters that were introduced in the first chapter or had a relationship with the setting of the story, the Pure Oil Truck Stop at the corner of US Route 40 and Little Orleans Road. Then, while settling into some productive writing in Chapter 2, I began to see the need for my sensibilities to develop the idea of practice and craft that would counter-balance
the therapeutic necessity that I have to write about my father. Fortunately, once I began to recognise my own uncanniness in my writing, and how it was deconstructing the aesthetics of my creativity, then I could focus upon the characters in the novel and how they must be developed as part of an overall narrative structure. Once I had symbolically put my unconscious writer's block up on a metaphorical shelf, I could begin to create a poetic reality with the repression and Oedipal implications of our relationship. Renewed, I went back to work on LeRoy Vann Clough's character at the truck stop as topos of locus, circa 1961.

In essence, my creativity became the aesthetic otherness of my father's cluttered and neurotic lifestyle without losing my own ego-centered desires to write a story about what he did for a living and the people that he met while travelling the roads of America. But, as I will explain later in my brief section on joke irony, this statement is not altogether true either, because my father's own joke irony was in the humour of the novel from start to finish. While writing the second chapter again, it became apparent through the practice of writing that the more fiction that I generated, the more I could create.

For writers there is always the fear that you will never say enough. As part of the original 200,000 words, these passages might not end up in the final manuscript, but they were there for my selection as part of the writing and editing process. I realised that the quickest way to turn from struggling with Oedipal implications and repression in my creativity was to turn Freud's theory of the Oedipal complex upside down. I did this by creating a character (LeRoy Vann Clough) that honours and
respects his mother for who she is, but on an unconscious level he does not see her with any sexual identity, nor does he idealise her as an older woman of femininity. This dysfunction in the mother–son relationship starts with their cryptic dialogue in the very first scene of the original manuscript of *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* and sets the tone of their relationship for the rest of the novel, even though it does not appear in the final edition of the work. However, this isn’t totally true either, as I will explain later in my brief section on Freud’s joke irony.

As a grown man—an “old boy” as Southerners refer to them—LeRoy Vann Clough, 31, still lives at home with his aging mother because he cannot find a suitable or desirable wife. With only a small railroad pension to live on, this is compounded by his mother’s pitiful existence, since her husband has been dead for five years now, and LeRoy’s sister has her own family to worry about and does not live close by. With the story set in 1961, and the woman being a widowed housewife, this is an understandable arrangement, however difficult and unfulfilling it might seem to modern Americans under the age of 40. Starting out as the original novel’s first scene, what is not understandable in this passage is how incongruent their relationship is: Is it son as the new father of the family, mother as patriarch, or a grandmother who care takes for LeRoy shortcomings as a man to find a wife?

In the end this became outside information for myself as the author to know about, but this first scene helped me to develop an unconscious feeling about the characters as a dysfunctional mother and son. Outside of the father–son relationship between Shirley Yarrow, the man who owns the truck stop, and LeRoy Vann
Clough, the jitterbugging mechanic working in the garage, the caustic relationship between LeRoy and his mother drives and underpins all the other relationships that the novel develops through the whole work: Shirley–LeRoy, LeRoy–Miss Ruthie, Krebs–Brittingham, and, briefly towards the end, LeRoy–Brittingham.

In the first scene, listening to them argue as the story of the snowstorm enfolds, we are almost tempted to believe that LeRoy is trying to take the place of his deceased father. But, later on in the novel’s development, we see this disjointed relationship as somewhat normal for that time and place, living in the mountains and countryside of a coalmining and railroading region of Western Maryland. Still, our thoughts linger over this first scene because, with so much anger then submission on each of their parts, and then more angry words from his mother—for his sanity LeRoy is always ignoring her—we start to see two individuals who are driven more by their unfulfilled desires and sexual needs than by the immediate reality of an approaching snowstorm that will shut them into their small, wood-framed house for a week. LeRoy’s mother, who is only 50 years of age and still pretty enough to attract a man if she would only fix herself up, has made herself, by her words alone, into a grouchy old grandmother without a husband, a job by which she could earn a living, or any grandchildren to fuss over.

From these few original moments, with LeRoy smoking barefoot out on the back porch in the early morning cold, we immediately start wondering about who is wearing the pants in this family, since authority and sexual identity seem to be such an issue for the both of them. Thematically, with such uncanny characters, it is
almost impossible to not have *uncanniness* and fear of the unknown as an unconscious part of the story's underlying meaning. Moreover, because of my research studies and Freud’s "The Uncanny" as part of the fabric of the novel's sad irony, the writing of *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* took on the makeup of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, and how uncannily normal our metaphysical quirk's are when compared to most of the world's weird personalities.

Once situated in the consciousness of my writing practice, both mother and son are definable not by what is sufficient in their lives, but by what is abnormal and deficient—their egos, as far as sexual needs are concerned. Thus begins the pairing of the relationships that make up the book's characterisations of doubles and doubling. For example, LeRoy's mother, Cora Ann, is just the opposite of the truck stop's lustful and desirable waitress, Miss Ruth Ellen Fain, who LeRoy generates, through his fanciful mind, into a symbolic Oedipal relationship with his father figure, the truck stop's owner, Shirley Yarrow. As a narrative practice, this is a relationship that, once created, runs through all of the other relationships in the entire novel. And Miss Ruthie, as LeRoy calls her, is the stuff that truck stop legends are made of. Working alone out in the garage, the thought of her skirt sliding upward and inward or her blouse drooping a little too low brings LeRoy to the brink of drooling ecstasy. Put out in the lonely garage, where his days are filled with hard labour on engines and truck tyres, the ability to create fantasies about Miss Ruthie and her desirable body is what makes his meagre existence interesting.
In *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* there is also the unconscious metaphor of LeRoy's father being present, metaphorically and symbolically, in a lot of the relationships that LeRoy comes into contact with throughout the telling of the story. Because his father was a railroad man who commandeered steam and diesel engines for over 30 years, to LeRoy a man is the result of how much hell he can endure while working at his taken trade. This unwritten abstraction in the story's narrative is something that the reader comes to understand once the story's intricacies are developed between LeRoy and the other characters, especially his mother and his father figure—Miss Ruthie and Shirley—are formulated.

LeRoy's highly sexualised talk, even about cars, reinforces the reader's belief that his mental makeup has an unconscious spontaneity of a libidinal nature. And, although he will stick to an avenue of normal thought, there is no surprise when he takes a detour and runs up to Cumberland, which is 20 miles away, to act out a sexual, machine fantasy with Jasmine Bright, the gypsy store owner of Carney Town Shoe Store. Ironically, although LeRoy teaches Sunday school at his mother's insistence, he is not above spending a few bucks on a good-time thrill with the town's gypsy-madam, who is a business woman in her own right, as she keeps up on all the town's gossip, especially about the mayor and the local sheriff. Jasmine's leathery-smelling establishment fronts the railroad tracks in Cumberland and is, at the same time, within visual distance of the town's railway station, which hints at a sexual liaison between his father's wilder days and LeRoy's unrepressed infantile fantasies about his repressed sexuality.
Unlike LeRoy's uninhibited characterisation, in "The Uncanny" Freud creates Nathanael's character not by what the discourse analysis justifies, but by what Freud chooses for us to see and understand in his metapsychological hypertext. These redactions of Nathanael's mental disorder consequently stop any generative or spontaneous subject-formations that could have developed during the course of Freud's hypothetical constructions. Because Freud theoretically saw the human mind as being inscribed by its perceptions of reality, neurologically his understanding of the unconscious mind was directly related to what could be deducted from the mechanical images in the brain's focal centres (Wright 123). Moreover, in "The Uncanny", Freud's deductions about Nathanael's psychosis become relegated to a cause and effect relationship. Once Freud makes certain causal assumptions, he cannot reverse his retelling of the story because Nathanael's mind, at that point, is being totally driven by the unconscious motivations that are generated by Freud's reductionism vis-à-vis Hoffmann's aesthetics. Through all of this heavy-handedness, the reader begins to see a joke irony developing in Freud's hypothetical assumptions that, taken together, begin to sound as if they were bordering on Freud's illusions and not any scientific evidence that he could produce.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, in *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* I give free rein to the joke irony of *uncanniness* in truck stop folklore. I combine the playful, sexual energies theorised in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, with Freud's anticipation of his theories on narcissism and ego psychology contained in *On Narcissism*, which comes fully to rest within the illusionary power
of the truck stop folk tale, where even the governor of Maryland's fortune can be deconstructed over a blue-plate special at a truck stop diner (Wright 124–5). Rather than getting bogged down in psychoanalytic concepts, I use them as artistic metaphors of humour and uniqueness. Systematically, writing a novel through the telling of a folk tale does require a certain amount of reader participation—prior knowledge of the way that the characters are constructed and not deconstructed by what the author has to say about their psychological development.

In "The Uncanny", without realising it Freud deconstructed Nathanael's psychosis to demonstrate the uncompromising power of the unconscious and how it drives Nathanael to fulfill Freud's theory of the death instinct. However, this approach of conceptualising a writing theory through a writing practice was not without its rhetorical consequences. Nowhere in "The Uncanny" do we ever get the story's full treatment of why Nathanael died at such a young age, or better yet, why he had a narcissistic desire to live out his miserable loss of self-image and identity. Because Freud is so preoccupied with his theoretical details, he never deals adequately with Hoffmann's creative licence or what Der Sandmann could or could not do for a psychoanalytic reading of its hermeneutics. From reading Freud's account, we never come to understand why Nathanael is a lost character that is destined to suffer and die from the painful consequences of his leap into the abyss of madness, ironically caused by a fictional destiny that exploits in words the delaying effects of an uncontrollable fear of losing his eyes (castration). Simply, from the reader's perspective, Nathanael dies from a predictable series of fictionalised events
that once started, empower his literary demise, not his psychological death instinct—if there was one prescribed by Freud’s biology of the day.

The point that I am making here is that Hoffmann’s story is shock provoking, generative and never allows us to forget its fear factor—the spontaneous reaction that it creates in us as readers. On the other hand, Freud’s paradigm for the uncanniness in life reveals an author (Freud) who is caught in the grip of his own repetition-compulsion (the single motif of Nathanael losing his eyes, ultimately leading to castration) that causes the work’s generative qualities in theory and practice to be defeated before the work can get started (Wright 128–9). Because Freud ignores Hoffmann’s narrative strategies and contextual tricks in the telling of his character’s horrible death, Freud runs afoul of the more masterful side of aesthetics, and this causes his scientific rendering of the folktale to be a bourgeois retelling, minus some very important passages left out of the original story. Without a full discussion of Nathanael/Olympia’s narcissistic elements in Hoffmann’s plot, Freud presents us with a psychoanalytic reading of a folk tale that falls short of some of his other more significant case histories and literary artefacts. Nonetheless, the inception of a completely new discourse analysis of applied psychoanalytic theory would have been required if Freud was to have come up with the symbolic metaphors to develop hypotheses to support the hermeneutics behind any new conceptual thinking in psychoanalytic theory.

The psychological link between the psychic reality of theory, aesthetics and discourse demonstrates how the problems that Freud encountered in “The Uncanny”
and the unconscious issues of creativity affect every turn of a writer's hand. As a deconstructed reversal, in *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* I allow the main character, LeRoy Vann Clough, to be just as narcissistic as he can afford to be, because his narcissistic moments are realised more for what they really are: attempts to be accepted and wanted by simple farming and mining people. As writing theory, this illusionary desire is relegated to all the characters that the novel produces, so you do not have one crazed character as in Freud's "The Uncanny", but surprisingly numerous candidates who are all vying to tell their uncanny moments/folk tales all at once. In effect, they all see existence as an experience in language and folk history from the other human beings they come into contact with, which brings my writing right back to my father. Like my father and the two main characters of the novel, LeRoy Vann Clough and Shirley Yarrow, the question is not how hard it was, but did you survive to tell the tale? In LeRoy's mind, if you didn't survive, there was no story to tell, which meant in a symbolic fashion that you were not a man and you did not have a history of yourself or your life in the working world.

With a personality as tough as Tennessee hickory wood, my father could drive a truck 20 hours, drink half a bottle of scotch, sleep five or six hours, and then drive 20 hours more. As an over-the-road romantic, he was a rolling stone who gathered no moss. Carrying a shiny pistol and wearing black wellington boots, he was the picture of a working man in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, coming back home after being a paratrooper in the Second World War. Although we saw him as a
roustabout, a gypsy, always on the loose, to many in the small village that we lived in, my father was a breath of fresh air on the worst of days.

This image of him as the Southern cowboy is not the only thing that he left with me. To a fault, he had a passion for reading, eating oysters, and telling you stories about what happened way back when. Once I incorporated this living metaphor into my formative years, from then on, practically everything had a storybook flavour to it, no matter how trivial or mundane the actual story was. Comically, there have been two facets of his life that have constantly remained with me since his death in 1991: he never met a shot of whisky that he didn’t like, nor a song he couldn’t dance to. Unfortunately, at times his alcoholism, profane lifestyle and disregard for the small town’s sense of good taste and piety were a source of pain and misery for all of my family.

My grandfather, the family sage, would laugh at my father’s antics and tell me that he had lost his father during the great flu epidemic of 1918, walked halfway across the country during the Great Depression of the 1930s to pick peanuts, and fought all the way to Germany in the Second World War. Of course, my grandfather’s wisdom and soothing words would soften my disgusted feelings about my father’s erratic and often dysfunctional behaviour. I suppose my grandfather was expecting me to say that I understood my father’s self-imposed misery. Similar to the fragile bond between the uncanny nature of life and the reality that it reflects, children have a hard time being rational about their own place in the cosmos and their relationship with their parents; need will always follow the desire for primal
satisfaction, not another displaced need within the critical shortcomings of a parent as a provider.

However, on an unconscious level, the return of the dead did not end so easily as I have written here, meaning that I understood what all this meant to me or that I could deal with it on an adequate basis. While working on LeRoy's characterisation for over five years, the more that I wrote about him and the characters in the novel, the more I wanted to write. And, once the novel was completed, I continued to write more narrative even while I was trying to edit the novel down to some sort of readable size. To illustrate, I would like to extract the following narrative from the pages of the original *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop*, which illustrates my libidinal pleasure from creating scene after scene of LeRoy, Ruthie and Shirley's Oedipal triangle.

In the story, after Krebs has been officially counted among the dead from drowning, Brittingham has taken the last of the photographs from the truck wreck with its freight of dried beans. Dropping LeRoy off at the truck stop, Brittingham heads back to Cleveland, taking a detour through southern Ohio to try to come to grips with losing his friend while they were on a detective assignment. The action begins with LeRoy standing in front of the garage watching Brittingham's big black Lincoln Continental head west up the side of a mountain behind the truck stop (*Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* 180-1):
Soon after Stewart Brittingham had left that afternoon, Shirley called the Truck Stop wanting to talk to LeRoy. Frenchy came over and got LeRoy, and LeRoy went over to the little office where the telephone was.

"LeRoy, my boy," Shirley said. "Did our young investigator say anything about what they are going to do about that truck and trailer out there?"

"No, no, no boss, he didn’t," LeRoy answered.

Shirley was puzzled. "He didn’t say anything at all?" he asked. "Not one damned word?"

"No, Boss, he didn’t," LeRoy answered again. "I guess he was still upset about the old Hound Dog. You know, they were friends?"

"He didn’t say when we were going to get paid?"

"Boss, he just wanted to get out of town—be by himself driving west," LeRoy said, wanting a Marlboro in his mouth. "I took him to the different bridges where he wanted to take pictures, and that was it."

In his mind, LeRoy remembered the scene of Shirley driving the tractor pulling the flat railroad car with the burning moonshine still on it across the railroad trestle. He almost slipped and told Shirley that he had seen him this morning—just for kicks. But, he knew that the Boss would have been mad—mad as hell. LeRoy wasn’t supposed to be down there, doing detective work.

LeRoy could hear Shirley puffing his cigar—thinking.
"Well, leave it out there then," Shirley finally told LeRoy. "The weeds can have it. If I don't hear something soon, I'll sell it myself for parts. It will be leftover salvage."

LeRoy didn't say anything. He just listened.

"Let me talk to Miss Ruthie."

"Okay, Boss. She is in the kitchen, hot as hell—boy, I'd like to make that kitty purr—"

"What!!! Wha, what'd you say? I didn't...

"I, I, I, I, I, I said that, that...it is as hot as hell in the kitchen. I'm, I'm, I'm going to make Frenchy's car purr..."

"Oh..." Silence. "LeRoy, you sure been acting crazy as hell lately. Dammit."

Silence.

"I, I, I know, Boss. It must have been them G-Men being here, and me worry about you and the Truck Stop. You know, Boss, you can never be too careful with the government breathing down on your neck—whoring you?"

"LeRoy, you let me worry about running the Truck Stop," Shirley said. "You take care of the friggin' garage. Now, go get Miss Ruthie. We got business to finish. I'm not afraid of any damned G-Men."

Putting the receiver down, LeRoy tiptoed into the hot, steamy kitchen where Frenchy was frying ham steaks. Passing the big, black man, he eased into the diner. He pointed to Ruthie, making a telephone sign up to his ear.
She was wearing a blue apron over her all-white outfit. LeRoy could see the truckers drooling; the wild looks on their rough faces—just like their mamas were coming to feed them.

Back in the second bay, LeRoy started changing a truck tire. He wanted to work off some horny energy and cool off, afraid of what Shirley might do.

_Blam, Blam, Blam, Blam._

LeRoy hit it hard with the long, steel rim-buster feeling his nuts cinched up. Knowing Shirley couldn’t sit still for too long, the truck and trailer wouldn’t be out there much over a week. It wasn’t in Shirley Yarrow to wait too long for anything, especially a buck or two. Boy, Miss Ruthie looks good in all white, especially her feet wrapped up in those leather sandals. I wonder if I should go over and eat some ham and biscuits right now? _Blam, Blam, Blam._ Wonder what Shirley will tell Miss Ruthie?

Psychologically, I didn’t want to stop writing about LeRoy’s little idiosyncrasies with the machinery, thinking of women as iron and steel—sexual intercourse as something mechanical. I have gone back and looked at the original manuscript. Even before the first chapter is over, I can see the beginnings of my writing about LeRoy’s joke irony, finding my own libidinal pleasures in his laughable dalliances with Ruthie that are serious stuff for LeRoy but are completely comical to the reader. Loving every bit of his quixotic humour, this discovery of pleasure in writing presented a monumental task once the gigantic novel was finished. How was I going to edit it down into a readable piece of work, one that an
editor might want to publish? This unconscious desire haunted me through four severe and painful editions of the work with my writing supervisor.

I can remember myself saying, “But, I can’t take that out…” Then I would come up with some visionary experience that I had had with my father and his terrible sense of joke irony. Still, I did not fully sense this until I started working on this bridging thesis, months after I had completed the last edition of Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop. As one can see, my father had the last word all the way to the bitter end. Throughout the whole writing and editing process, his ghostly apparition, coming in late at night after being on the road for a week smelling of diesel fuel, was unconsciously hidden in every word—his laughter and sometimes sad demeanour permeating every page of hard luck, ribald liaisons, and rascality.

In summary, Freud’s inability to provide a veritas of meaning to the weird and unexplained nature of the human mind in Hoffmann’s Der Sandmann exemplifies a psychoanalytic work that is a written accord of Freud’s problems with writer’s block when he was confronted with levels of subject-formations that were resistant to psychoanalysis (Williams 186–97). As a theory of writing practice, Freud’s “The Uncanny” has become the springhead of authority on the subject of the uncanny and uncanniness in modern literature (see Wright’s appraisals of Lacan’s “The Purloined Letter” and Derrida’s discussion of Kafka’s parable “Before the Law” as extensions of Freudian theory in her work Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reappraisal 120–3).
Repetitiously, we are treated to Freud’s fragmented accounts of the obsession to repeat and Nathanael’s fear of Oedipal castration that creates its own *unheimlich* of suspicion about “The Uncanny”’s scientific formulations and Freud’s inability to create an aesthetic relationship between the folklore of madness and the hermeneutics of psychoanalytic theory. Because he paraphrases much of Hoffmann’s creative accounts of the folk tale, Freud metaphorically goes from “drinking” and thinking about the evil powers of the *Die Elixire des Teufels (The Devil’s Elixir)*, to becoming the very essence of darkness and the abyss—what the French refer to as *mise en abime*—as Freud cannot overcome his self-inflicted writer’s block to find Hoffmann’s truth in fiction.

As writing theory, we have examined how Cixous’ phantoms of suspicion—referring to Freud’s writing practice in “The Uncanny”—were not unlike the same theoretical problems that I had written into my unpublished novel *Slabbers*. By examining writing practice and theory, we also examined that, in my writing of *Slabbers*, there was the power associated with the desire to create, but this same desire also created repression, in my case Oedipal repression. Thus, writing is a deconstructed practice of our conscious and unconscious minds that, in the process of creating words, creates desire, in the Derridaen sense of the word (Wright 120–1). And, although the passages in *Slabbers* could be extremely powerful and thought provoking, the overall story could be just as confusing and baffling as it was rewarding to the reader’s immediate sensibilities.
This led us into a discussion about poetic reality, and how important it is to not allow a work’s poetic reality to become an Oedipal reality or a regression into Freud’s return of the dead, because the familial impulse is always there in our unconscious minds, as I briefly explained in my libidinal desire to go on creating LeRoy’s sexual fantasies, even when they were unnecessary to the novel’s overall structure. In the last chapter of the novel, conveniently entitled “Gypsy Bus Stop”, my real father was symbolically in control of the work’s sense of his joke irony about the harsh realities of life. We briefly talked about how one of the strongest bonds in the Freudian theory of psychosexual development was the mother–son relationship. Contrary to the Freudian account of the Oedipal complex, in my writing of Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop, what should have been the strongest bond becomes the weakest—that of the truck mechanic, LeRoy Vann Clough, and his mother, Cora Ann Clough, who both attain some sense of normalcy through their pitiful, comic relationship. Unable to psychologically bond or feel Oedipal desire for his mother’s sexless personality, LeRoy sees his mother not as a woman, but someone who exists in the shadows of what she tries to do with herself in the community through the church and local school.

We also discussed the most important part of my development in the theory and practice of writing—that of identifying when unconscious forces and the return of the dead were leading my writing astray by inserting phantoms of suspicion into a novel’s thematic structure that can deconstruct its poetic reality. I saw evidence of this from the Oedipal implications/repressions that my writing was exhibiting while
I was trying to take the novel beyond the original crash and Chapter 1. Without being consciously aware of its implications, I completely abandoned the poetic reality that I had constructed originally and began a new reality, oddly enough, with the flashback of a dead truck driver being brought back to life after he had already been killed in the first chapter. By experiencing this phenomenon and correcting its deconstructing effects, I covered how important it was to allow *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop* to generate its own sense of narrative form by keeping my father out of the novel’s development, although ironically the novel is indirectly about him and what he did for a living for almost 40 years of his life.

I further concluded that the initial writing of *Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop*—the unedited 200,000-word manuscript—was as a result of what I did not allow to enter into the work’s structure. Although I was tempted to stray from the work’s true narrative practice from time to time, in the end I did not allow my creative text to become a symbolic psyche or unconscious breeding ground of my father’s life as a truck driver. More accurately, I did not create the action of the story to mirror any Freudian accounts of psychoanalytic concepts that would have explained why my father was the way that he was.

In terms of writing theory, the creative texts came first and their psychoanalytic implications came as an afterthought—something to muse about. This musing about the novel in psychoanalytic terms was quite informative and accommodating because (a) the 1960s setting of the truck stop provided unique insight into that period of American history before malls, suburbs and fast-food
restaurants; (b) once I had overcome my initial feeling of repression, I felt free to construct a novel using plot and character structures that created a coherent story without getting my feelings and memories about my father into the creative makeup of the work; and (c) in terms of the aesthetics of form and narrative, I was able to create a novel that was shaped by the demands of fictional conventions and the necessity for the writing to respond to the poetic reality that was unfolding as the work was written.

Understanding this writing process was not only helpful but also illuminating because I could think through the writing of the novel in psychological terms without internalising it as some sort of self-imposed neurosis. Thus, in the end I came to understand—perhaps not completely from a psychoanalytical standpoint of unconscious motivations—how Freud’s problems with writer’s block and “The Uncanny”’s discussion of its Oedipal inferences and its haunting fear of the return of the dead had profound implications in the developmental stages of the writing of Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop, if only through comedy and the joke irony of the Oedipal triangle.

Ironically, all of the characters in the novel and the relationships that they have with each other are between a unique brand of people as a result of the stories that they have about their lives and where this folklore has taken them. Furthermore, most drivers are just passing through, and the next truck stop that they are going to stop at will be pretty much just like the last place they left, while their truck driving folklore, in the guise of work misery and momentary happiness, will become a
transportable commodity similar to a load of freight taken from one destination to another.

Once the novel began to write itself through the characters’ transformation of metaphor and symbol, we begin to identity with their mundane, abundantly comical lives lived in quiet desperation, which somehow transpose themselves in illusionary moments of power, deceit and desire, as if they were somehow on the same level of importance as the governor of the state of Maryland. Moreover, the desire to seek some sort of internal happiness through their romantic illusions becomes such a motivator that it almost borders on the absurd and laughable. Comically, when their strivings lead them astray, the reader finds amusement and pleasure in how they are able to retrieve some sense of their former selves through the telling and retelling of their thoughts and compulsions using the resources of the telling of a joke, which is meant to be passed on as the folklore of compassion and the never ending consequences of human existence as an over-the-road truck driver.
Notes


2 In the highly theoretical work "The Uncanny" (*Das Unheimliche*), Freud draws together the writings of Jentsch, language excerpts from Theodor Reik's psychoanalytic Ph.D. dissertation, Sander's *Worterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, Grimm's dictionary, Schiller's poem on Herodotus, the word interpretations of Otto Rank, and Hoffmann's two German horror tales *Die Elixire des Teufels* and "The Sandman". Taken together, this research collection forms what are, essentially, diagnostic sketches of a complete analytical essay upon psychoanalytic theory's concepts of repetition-compulsion and Oedipal castration.

3 As I can see from these examples, Freud had dozens of literary accounts that came from patient case files that were directly related to the psychoanalysis of their clinical histories: "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year Old Boy" ("Little Hans"), "Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis" ("Rat Man"), and "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis" ("Wolf Man"). Historically, "The Uncanny" comes at the end of a decade-long period of Freud using his uncanny ability to psychoanalyse to
create a dialogue of psychic explanation using aesthetics, ancient plays and biblical characterisations, and literary or biblical figures, or to create a characterisation from his analytic sessions with his patients, to add insight into humankind's mental life.

4 If one takes the time to peruse Laplanche and Pontalis' book of dictionary essays, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, there is much of the same type of explanatory writing that Freud does in "The Uncanny", except that the essays are broken out by alphabetised psychoanalytic terms within the context of psychoanalytic concepts. Nowhere in Laplanche or Pontalis' work on the psychoanalytic discussion of language does the concept of *uncanniness* appear except in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and in Laplanche and Pontalis' expository dialogues it is listed under obsessive-compulsive and death instinct and not the conception of *uncanniness*. In *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, even the term obsessional neurosis has no connection with the uncanny or *uncanniness*, nor is it cross-referenced with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The psychoanalytic term's closest psychic association is in the reference to compulsion to repeat, which is further defined as repetition compulsion (Laplanche and Pontalis 78–80).
Works Cited


PART FOUR: NOVEL

ROUTE 40 PURE OIL TRUCK STOP
US Route 40

PureOil

Truck Stop

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Part One – Winter and Spring
Chapter I

Wildcat Trucker in Black Wellington Boots

Sunday, January 22nd, 1961, Western Maryland

LeRoy lit up another Marlboro in the bitter cold, hearing the Warm Morning stove starting to sing with soft West Virginia coal. Ring...ring...ring...ring... Who in the hell could that be? His mother? Probably. But she usually didn’t call.

LeRoy dropped the four-pronged lug wrench onto the shredded truck tire and walked over to where the greasy black telephone was on an oily workbench. “Rou, Rout, Route 40 Pure Oil,” he stammered, coughing from the acid cigarette smoke.

“Dammit, Jitterbug,” a man’s voice said. “Where have you been? I’ve been trying to call you for the last hour. The party line has had this line blocked up. You’ve got to listen for my special phone once in a while. If you would just turn that damned jukebox down, you might be able to hear something, dammit.”


“Anybody there?” Shirley asked. “Jitterbug, you’ve got that damned jukebox on? I can hear it all the way over in the garage.”

“...No. No. Shirley, it’s just me and Duke. I’m working on the tire that Joe Tipton left here Friday afternoon – the one that was shredded all the way to the rim.”

LeRoy heard Shirley wheezing and puffing on a cigar. “I don’t know what I would do without you, LeRoy,” Shirley said. “You are a diamond in the rough. I wouldn’t take...
a million for you, but I wouldn’t want another one, either. I used to have an old Colonel say that to me all the time. You remember Elvin McBee at the Maryland Military Academy?"

Being in the Guard, Shirley was always sending LeRoy coded messages. Both of them had to be careful because they were on the Little Orleans Road party line that most everyone from the truck stop all the way south down to the Potomac River was connected to.

"Now, listen up, LeRoy, I’ve got a special mission for you – a Twenty-Niner mission."

"What’s up, Top? You know I’m always good for a Blue and Gray mission…"

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

When LeRoy wasn’t stuttering, he was laughing this hideous sick laugh he had.

"LeRoy, drop what you are doing right now," Shirley said. "I want you to cease and desist and get focused on what I am about to tell you."

"Okay, Boss. I’m ready."

"Last night in the black ice, there was a bad truck wreck that we got to take care of before this storm gets any more out of hand. It’s got to be done ASAP."

"Where?"

"Down at the bottom of Fire Tower Mountain. Some poor trucker slid all the way down the three lanes until he couldn’t hold her wheels any more. He ended up in the trees by the bridge."

"Wheeww. God forbid! That bad, huh?" LeRoy liked driving for the Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Company, but he hated bad wrecks and retrieving corpses.
“Yep, it’s pretty bad.”

“What, what...The trucker is dead? Is he frozen stiff?”

“If not, then close,” Shirley answered. “One of the farmers called the Sheriff’s Office in Hancock, then Sheriff Reimes called me. The black ice is so bad that Reimes can’t get over Fire Tower Mountain. And they’re going to close Route 40.”

“Boss, Boss, what do you want me to do?”

“I want you to take the British Lorry and go see what you can do out there.”

“Boss, why can’t I take Big Pecker? That little Mack Bulldog can go to hell and back and not get stuck. It’s the best wrecker that you’ve got.”

“No, no, no, Jitterbug, Big Pecker is too small. Plus, where are you going to put the trucker? With this storm coming, you’ll be lucky you get there even with chains on. Now, this is what I want you to do,” Shirley said. “Lock up the Truck Stop and make damned sure that everything is off, especially that friggin’ jukebox – and don’t leave Duke in there to crap the place up. If he messes up Miss Ruthie’s diner, I’ll wring your neck. Besides, Duke’s got Army blankets under the floor where the oil furnace is. Next, go to the Firehouse and get the British Lorry out. Son, I think the Lorry is the only thing that will get you there. It’s also got medical supplies in it. Tell me, did you leave the chains on the front tires?”

“They’re, they’re, they’re still on, Boss.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, yes, yes, Boss,” LeRoy lied, not knowing whether the chains were on or not.
“Good, good. I will call some of the farmers out at Sidling Creek Bridge to meet you,” Shirley said. “Major Hogans has one of those new dual-wheeled tractors that can pull eight plows. That ought to get him there, plus it’s got a cab on it, so he won’t freeze his ass off.”

LeRoy broke out laughing.

“I’ve already called Bub Calloway and that new boy Bobby Pyle,” the First Sergeant said. “Bub is going to run the radios at the Firehouse, and Bobby can go with you in the British Lorry.”

“Boss, Boss, what are we going to do if he is frozen stiff?”

“LeRoy, you worry about getting the Lorry from the Firehouse to Sidling Creek Bridge and back again. And I’ll worry about the trucker. It’s bad, LeRoy, that’s all you need to know.”

“Okay, Boss. You know me. I’m on board one hundred per cent. I’m a can-do GI.”

Shirley puffed his cigar. They both could hear the party line clicking.

“LeRoy, I’m down at the Canal House. Any traffic on the National Road out there?”

“I haven’t heard or seen the big snowplow,” LeRoy said, craning his big head around so he could look out the garage windows.

“And LeRoy…”

“Yes, yes, Boss.”
“Do exactly like I tell you to do. There’s nothing that we are going to do here that should necessitate you or anyone else getting hurt or freezing to death. Do you hear me?”

“Yes, yes, Boss, I hear you. I’ll call you when we get near High Bridge Road. Oh, oh, Boss! I think that your wife was looking for you last night. She called my mother’s house around midnight.”

“Shhhh! Watch what you say, Jitterbug. We got ears on us.”

“Okay.”

“Don’t worry. Everything is all right. I worked down here until three in the morning. Lulu was sick, so I closed up the Canal House – drunks and all.”

“You know me, Boss,” LeRoy said. “I’ve always got my ears low to the ground.”

“Good, good. Now, LeRoy, don’t do any more than I told you to do – nothing more, nothing less. Do you hear me?”

“Yes, First Sergeant.”

With the party line listening in, their telephones went dead.

LeRoy left the lug wrench on the shredded tire and closed up the Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop, making sure that the doors to the restaurant and the fuel shop were good and locked. If he hadn’t been in such a rush, LeRoy would have stayed by the jukebox and listened to Patsy Cline’s *Walking After Midnight*. But he had to get moving.

When LeRoy opened the outside door from the restaurant side, the big Labrador watchdog hit the cold air and the deep drifts, going crazy in the flying snow. Duke hadn’t seen this much snow since he was a puppy, and he was enjoying the Truck Stop all
to himself. Over in the little kitchen behind the diner, LeRoy found a hambone in one of the refrigerators. Taking Duke out back, he slid it under the door. Already, the snow was drifting onto the south side of the Truck Stop. LeRoy felt like a kid again – like he was going to miss school for a few days.

Sputtering back out onto the snowy roadway in the cold Lorry, LeRoy and Bobby Pyle drove back up Little Orleans Road to where it intersected US Route 40. The Truck Stop was still empty, and the only glimmer of life was the lights on the blue and white Pure Oil sign out by the corner. You couldn’t even tell where LeRoy had plowed it less than two hours ago. The bitter wind was blowing the snow around, drifting up against the banks and anything that it could catch onto.

Making a right turn, LeRoy headed east on Route 40, meeting the big, V-shaped snowplow heading back west up the mountain towards Cumberland. Pulling over, the big plow rolled a six-foot high wave of snow and ice all over the side and top of the Lorry. Meeting it had confirmed to LeRoy that the eastbound lane over Fire Tower Mountain had closed. Up ahead in the drifting banks, all they could see was the low ceiling of gray-white clouds and the blinding snow blowing in every direction.

The drive from the Truck Stop to Sidling Creek Bridge was a good five miles. The long, square Lorry that looked more like a metal pickle with windows than a rescue ambulance trudged along, as the chains on the front tires clanked like a broken windmill.

With his red hair almost in the windshield, Bobby Pyle was all eyes and ears. A couple of times, he tried to talk to LeRoy, but LeRoy was feeling somewhat unnerved. Outside the temperature was dropping like a block of ice, causing the wind chill to
penetrate the metal sides of the ambulance. Hellfire, LeRoy did not want to get stuck driving back with a dead trucker and have to call in to Bub or Shirley and wait for them to rescue their butts. In this weather, the trucker had to be already dead, frozen stiff. Shirley just didn’t want him to think about it, that’s all.

At High Bridge Road, they got out to clean the ice crystals off the square windows. The bitter cold was settling in. They could see the beginnings of Fire Tower Mountain in the gray-white snow. Neither one of them was looking forward to spending any time at the crash site, beating and banging on a mangled wreck trying to pry a stiff body from behind the steering wheel. If all else failed, LeRoy would simply build a big bonfire to keep warm. That should do it. The morbid thought made him want to laugh.

The time was nearly one o’clock when the Lorry got to within half a mile of Sidling Creek Bridge. They still could not see the wreck or any of the farmers that Shirley had promised. Rounding a bend, they came upon three kids all bundled up in heavy parkas and rubber boots, playing along the side of the plowed roadway. Every few seconds, they were looking in the direction of Fire Tower Mountain. Passing the three bundles, LeRoy blew the Lorry’s air horn, and the sudden, shrill noise in the muffled snowfall startled what you could see of their beet red faces.

Up ahead, LeRoy saw the bridge at Sidling Creek first, and then the bright, red tractor bent over against the snow-covered trees. Slowing down, he could see a group of farmers standing at the back of the trailer, beyond the hump of the WPA’s concrete bridge. Further up Route 40, where the road curved to the right and headed up Fire Tower Mountain, there was a gravel access road that came in from the left side. LeRoy made out what he thought was a dual-wheeled farm tractor pulling away with a load of
straw. As they came closer to the bridge, the farm tractor and the wagon of straw disappeared from sight, and a group of heavily clothed farmers came walking toward them carrying a blanketed object.

"Whew. What a wreck," Bobby Pyle shouted. "Look, the whole front of the cab is smashed in."

LeRoy drove the Lorry right up to the hump in the middle of the concrete bridge and stopped. The big rig lay over on its left side, half in and half out of the trees that lined the creek bed. You could see fresh, gnawed marks on the trees where it had crashed through the tree limbs. Just before the bridge, it had met a thick, white beech on the driver's side of the cab. The red GMC Tractor, windshield broken and frame bent inwards, looked eerie in the falling snow. Everywhere LeRoy looked, dried beans were scattered all over the ice-covered creek bed, the roadway, and the snowy bridge. Paper and plastic bags were blowing about. Looking at the trailer, LeRoy could see a gash midway up that had slashed the left side of the trailer.

The farmers carrying the body stopped at the far end of the bridge. A man bundled up in an Army overcoat, brown hunting boots, and a Navy watch cap walked up to LeRoy's side of the Lorry. LeRoy recognized the silver and black moustache of Major Hogans, and rolled his window down.

"Buddy boy, you cold? You need to get out of this weather?"

"LeRoy," the Major said, his voice deep and crackling. "I want you to pull past the end of the bridge, turn around in that wide spot where the plow turned around, and we will load the trucker's body into the back." He rubbed his jaws and shivered. "Hurry, I
want to get these folks home, and out of this weather. Your butt is riding around in this warm Lorry."

"Will do, Major, will do."

Major Hogans was the only real military officer that the Little Fire and Rescue Squad had. As a World War II veteran, he had taken his commission at St. Lo as a Second Lieutenant when a sniper in a hedgerow had killed his platoon leader. He had retired the previous year as the Engineer’s Battalion Commander at the National Guard Armory in Oakland.

"Oh, I almost forgot," Major Hogans said. "After you turn around, I want you to talk to First Sergeant on your radio. He is pissed off because you didn’t turn your damned radio on. You know better than to go out on a mission and not turn your radio on." He motioned for the group of farmers to move to one side of the bridge.

From out of the bone gray limbs and trunks of poplars, gums and beeches, the swirling wind swooped down into the creek bed blowing a fine mist of white crystals. All along the bridge, LeRoy could see the OD green color of laurel bushes shriveled up and rocking in the windy gusts.

"LeRoy," Bobby Pyle said. "Let me get out and help you back up."

When Bobby opened the door, the inside of the Lorry was transformed into a metal freezer in a matter of seconds. Cautiously, LeRoy dropped the clutch, pulling across the crown of the bridge. Once on the other side, Bobby directed LeRoy to the spot opposite the wrecked tractor and trailer. The snowplow had cleared an area for the Lorry to turn around. With each minute that passed, the asphalt pavement was beginning to drift over again. When the window slid back, LeRoy could hear electricity sing through the wires
that hung heavily on the telephone poles. Shivering, he could hear the pines needles
singing above the laurel bushes that grew around the little frozen creek.

Once LeRoy had turned around, he eased the Lorry back up to the top of the
bridge. Then his heart sank down into his stomach. The group of farmers closed in with
the body of the dead trucker wrapped in dark green Army blankets tied with light yellow,
hay-baling twine. Trying not to look, LeRoy could see was his black Wellington Boots.
Boy, it must have been something getting him out, all mangled and frozen, blood burnt
brown by the cold.

In the rear, Bobby Pyle opened the back door to the Lorry. With frozen breaths,
the farmers slid the trucker's body in, feet first, pushing it until LeRoy could hear his
boots hit the metal bulkhead behind his seat. The rear door slammed shut, jarring the
Lorry's metal body.

Major Hogans reached through the passenger's door for the two-way radio. He
flipped a couple of switches mounted on the dash in between the two front seats. All you
could hear was static and an occasional electrical moan of a deep voice crackling: Wha,
Wha, Wha, Wha. Then — "...Dammitt, LeRoy, turn on that got-dang radio – come in,' the First Sergeant boomed. "Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Squad, come in any station?"

"First Sergeant, First Sergeant, this is Ben – Ben Hogans. The Lorry had its radio
turned off. My radio on my tractor is down too low in a ravine. How do you copy this
station?"

"Loud...Loud and clear." Then, the radio's signal reverberated in and out:
whaaaaaaaaam, whaaam, zzzzzrrrr. "Tell ...to keep the radio on – and, I mean up and
running. Tell LeRoy to take the trucker to the storage shed behind the Firehouse, and...mmmmmmooooo...”

“Yes, Chief,” Ben Hogans said into the hand held microphone. “Did you copy, Chief?”

“That’s affirmative, Sidling Creek,” the voice replied. “What’s your ET for getting the rescue squad and the farmers back home?”

“ASAP,” Major Hogan’s voice answered, cracking. “Chief, we have the trucker out, and the Lorry is about to return to the Firehouse. Copy?”

“Ben, Ben, What’s your ETD?”

“Soon. Within five minutes. The temperature is dropping fast here.”

The voice on the other end sounded elongated and weird like a wavy monster. “Ben, get LeeeeeeRooooyyyyy out of there immediately. ...Get yourself and the other folks out as well. I don’t want you or anyone else staying out there too long and risking your necks. I called the National Guard Chopper for possible pickup tomorrow. Do you copy?

‘Affirmative, Chief,” Ben Hogans said. “We’ll be Twenty-Niner safe and sound – I’ll see to it.”

The voice on the other end went away. With gloved fingers, Ben Hogans began trying to adjust the signal.

LeRoy could feel the cold creeping into his bones. Slowly, he turned around and saw the wool Army blanket in the rear compartment, the body lying on its side.
"...Ben, Ben, are you still there?" the radio crackled. "Tell them to bring all the identification that you have on the trucker. How, how does the area look? You've got tomorrow..."

"Copy. Much of the freight is scattered all over," he said. "There is a big gash all the way down along the left side of the trailer. A lot of the beans were thrown into Sidling Creek. Copy?"

"That's a good copy, Major Hogans. Wrap things up there, and get the folks home. When the storm lets up, we'll do a recon. Did you copy?"

"Copy, Chief."

"LeRoy, LeRoy, call me at High Bridge or I'll cut your...off! Chief Yarrow, over and out."

"Will do, Chief," Ben Hogans said.

The Major hung up the microphone on a metal clip on the right side of the radio.

"Did you hear that, Jitterbug? First Sergeant is pissed at you."

"Major Ben, Ben, Ben, Ben," LeRoy stammered. "I'll have Bobby do the calling."

The fear of doing something wrong started LeRoy thinking. Just one damned time, LeRoy would like to tell folks around here what to do. Wasn't he here today, like the rest of them? I know I haven't been in the War, but I'm still a Twenty-Niner.

"Bobby," Major Hogans ordered. "Get your young ass in there and get moving up Route 40 for the Fire Station. Now!"

"LeRoy, just one more thing," Major Hogans said. He put his face up into the Lorry's opened window on the driver's side. "I put the trucker's wallet, log book and Bill of Lading for the freight between his legs. I also counted how much money is in his
wallet. There is no reason that you or anyone else for that matter needs to go into Mr. Duley Hartman's drawers from Huntsville, Alabama.” He stared at LeRoy hard. “Do you understand me?”


From the other side, Bobby Pyle jumped into the Lorry, slamming and locking the door. With the door closed, LeRoy saluted and started pulling out. Picking up speed, the Lorry made its way back up Route 40 towards the Truck Stop and Little Orleans Road. At High Bridge Road, Bobby Pyle tried to call Chief Yarrow at the Canal House, but all he got was static and quacking noises. Bobby kept saying that they were okay, hoping that the Chief would hear them. Behind a high mountain, the Lorry was thirteen miles from the Canal House and the Potomac River Gorge. At the halfway point, Bub Calloway’s old crazy voice called in from the Firehouse. He told them that he had gotten their message, and he would patch their transmission through to the Canal House.

By the time the Lorry reached the Truck Stop, the only thing that LeRoy could make out were the little lights shining up onto the blue and white Pure Oil sign. Turning left onto Little Orleans Road, he headed south down towards the Potomac River. Bobby Pyle continued calling Chief Yarrow. But, all they could hear was the Chief say that the site was clear and Bub Calloway was waiting for them. Did they copy? When the storm blew its hardest, the radio became seized with the flurry of static and garbled radio signals.

Passing the old high school, the snow was banked up three feet deep at the front door. From Little Orleans Road, all you could see were dark windows and the sweeping flurry of snowflakes hitting the old red brick. Smiling, LeRoy knew that there would be
no school for his nephew tomorrow — that meant that he could have the Truck Stop all to
himself.

Once the Lorry reached the Firehouse, LeRoy drove around to the back of the
station through the foot deep snow to a large storage garage. Bub Calloway pushed open
a side door, and Bobby Pyle jumped out into the snowdrifts and helped Bub transfer the
dead trucker from the Lorry to a table inside. Nothing, not even the wildcatter's body,
was going to waste away in this storm. Hopefully, in a couple of days, the storm would
let up, and the National Guard helicopter could get in there to transport the dead trucker
to the State Police Barracks at Hagerstown. For the next couple of days, not even salt or
cold dust could burn its way through the hardened, black ice that covered Route 40 or the
frozen asphalt over Sidling Creek Bridge where the freight load of beans lay scattered all
over the blowing snow.
Chapter II

Blue Plate Specials

Enjoying a warm sun breaking through dark rain clouds, LeRoy fixed two flats, changed the oil in a GMC long-nose, and welded a metal strip that connected one side of the fifth wheel to the frame of a Mack Thermodyne Tractor. The constant pulling and shifting of a loaded forty-thousand-pound trailer was beginning to rip off one side of the fifth wheel and its metal flange. LeRoy sparked the welding rod to the frayed metal strip and had it welded back in place before the driver could get a blue plate special and a toothpick.

In the blue metallic smoke of the electric welder, LeRoy pushed his welding helmet back up on top of his wet curly hair and realized that it was dinnertime. He wanted to be in and out of the diner before the usual crowd of truckers showed up.

Laying the metal helmet on the workbench beside the greasy sink, he shot three or four squirts of cleaning gel onto his grimy hands, making sure the gel got under his grimy fingernails. Washing his face, he could smell the fried chicken cooking in the kitchen.

Next to his mother’s cooking, LeRoy loved truck stop Grade A cooking, especially when Buster French cooked Maryland fried chicken, Texas meat loaf, or Southern sugar-cured ham steaks with pineapple. Shirley had told LeRoy that only certain truck stops could claim that they had A-1 cooking. The new sign out front read: Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop: Grade A Blue Plate Specials, so all the truckers could see it. This past October, Shirley had also installed a small bunkroom behind the garage with four military bunk beds in it. It had its own latrine, dressing area, and a shower room for five or six diesel-, cigarette- and butt-smelling truckers that needed hot showers and fresh shaves.
LeRoy wiped off his wet face and hands with some brown paper towels. He was ready for his blue-plate special, coffee and tea included—don’t hold the butter, salt or pepper. He felt happy today. The Baltimore Orioles baseball season wasn’t far off, and all the local folks had stopped bothering him about the beans out back. He was sick of telling them: No! They couldn’t have any free beans. This wasn’t the government, you know.

Walking through the fuel shop, LeRoy pulled out a Marlboro and lit up. Going on through another door, he walked into the diner, where the jukebox was playing a soft ballad by Jimmy Rogers entitled Kisses Sweeter Than Wine. Because it was that quiet time between breakfast and dinner, the booths were empty. By the cash register, LeRoy watched a driver from a red and white Interstate Transfer truck pay his bill and leave.

In a light blue dress with a white handkerchief pinned to her left breast pocket, Miss Ruth Ellen Fain had returned to her dishwashing back in the kitchen. Walking alongside the booths, LeRoy sniffed at the air laden with the smells of fried chicken and hot cornbread. He eyed the last booth. The dirty dishes were still sitting on the table. Tiptoeing, he eased down to it, breathing hard, and moved the dirty plate aside. Looking back to see if anyone was watching, he thumbed through the change, picking up two quarters. Then he stepped over to the Wurlitzer jukebox, its lights flashing and throbbing. Without looking through the selections, he started punching in the numbers of the 45s he wanted to hear. First, there was the Everly Brothers singing Crying in the Rain. Next, he chose Johnny Cash’s Ring of Fire. The last three selections were from a molasses-and-corn-syrup-voiced singer named Patsy Cline, whose smiling picture was on an insert inside of the jukebox. Johnny Cash’s gravedled and gusty Ring of Fire came up
first, making LeRoy think about how hot an engine got when it was overheating.... “I fell into a burning Ring of Fire...”

“LeRoy, you damned old dog, you,” he heard a voice cry out. “Did you take my tip? I had to give him a couple of bend-overs!”

Ruthie walked over to where LeRoy was hovering over the big jukebox and began hitting him over the head with a wet, dirty dishrag. Laughing, he covered up his greasy head.

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

“Ah, Ruthie,” LeRoy said, “I’m playing us some forty-fives.” He dropped down in a clean booth still laughing.

“Dammit, I told Shirley I was tired of you,” Ruthie said, her teased blond hair flopping about her forehead – finger curled with dippity-do gel. “As much as he protects you, you would think that he took you to raise. Look LeRoy, I’m taller than you are, so I know that I can beat your butt.”

“He did, Ruthie. He did. The Boss pays me $2.25 an hour. That’s good money for around here. Besides, I am the best damned truck mechanic east of the Mississippi. And you know it”

Ruthie got up into LeRoy’s face with a steak knife in her right hand. “Well, Mr. Rich Man,” she bellowed, “stay out of my tips or I’m going to take one of them butcher knives and cut your daddy-bag off.”

Her butt swinging, Ruthie began walking away from him with an armful of dirty dishes. “If you or another trucker gives me any more shit today, I’m going to hit the first person I see with a pot of coffee. That ought to set their asses on fire.”
LeRoy followed her. "Ah, Ruthie, don’t take it so seriously. Don’t be mad. I was only kidding you.” He pulled out his big trucker’s wallet with the silver chain attached to his belt, opened it up, and took out a dollar bill. “Here, here,” he begged. “Here, take this. I only owe you ninety cents, but I’ll give you a dollar for your trouble. See, see, I mean it.”

Ruthie snatched the dollar from his hand. “You took some of my tips last week. Don’t lie. I know you did. Now be honest, you little prick.”

“Ruthie, for this dollar, we are even,” LeRoy said. “I don’t know anything about last week – promise. So help me God.”

“Get out of my way,” she said. “You don’t know anything about God. You ought to be ashamed of yourself for calling His name.”

LeRoy quietly walked back to the booth and began reading over the day’s blue-plate specials. Already knowing what was on the menu, it didn’t take him long to decide on Maryland fried chicken. Through the picture window, he could see two oversized freight trucks that were used for hauling city freight. Both cabs painted a bright green, they pulled up to the pumps, one behind the other, and stopped.

“Go on, Mr. Rich Man,” Ruthie mocked him with a kiss, “you know what you are going to order, anyway. It isn’t a secret, you know.” She put her hands on her hips. “LeRoy, I can read you like a cheap book,” she said. “Stop wasting my time, you little creep.”

“Fine, fine, give me my usual, with lots of tea and coffee. Good-looking, I’m hungry today.”
Miss Ruthie called back, “LeRoy, when aren’t your little nuts ever horny? If you had a real woman, you wouldn’t know what to do with her.”

Two drivers followed Dude Thompson into the restaurant. Smoking a cigarette and wiping his hands on a greasy rag, Dude walked up to LeRoy’s booth.

“LeRoy, these drivers want to pick up the beans.”

Not paying attention, LeRoy was humming along with Johnny Cash and *Ring of Fire*. “What beans?” he asked. “I ain’t got no beans for them to pick up.”

Dude was sober today, and that made it his special day. His face was all red and wind-burned. LeRoy could see from the bulge on his right side that he was packing his .38 Special Combat Masterpiece.

“You know, hammerhead,” Dude said, “the ones in the wreck out there.”

“Oh, oh, those beans. God, Shirley has been waiting for them for a month.”

“Do you have the key to the locks on the trailer?”

LeRoy batted his eyelashes, stuttering. “I, I, I told Shirley about it. He said that everything went with the trucker’s body to Montgomery, Alabama – log book, wallet, fuel bills – everything.” He looked at the men behind Dude. One was tall and skinny, and the other man was short with a big gut. The gut man wore a Pittsburgh Pirates baseball cap. The taller one had a thin moustache and was wearing worn-out cowboy boots.

“They want the keys to the trailer, not the truck.”

“No, Dude, I’m not the one that locked it up. You’ll have to cut the lock,” LeRoy told him. “Cut it. Go ahead, I don’t know what else you can do.”
The two men had blank looks on their faces. Then the taller man said to the short, fat one: “Did we bring a hacksaw?”

“No,” the other man said.

“Well, we’ll have to burn it off with a torch,” the tall man replied. “Didn’t we bring a cutting torch?” They turned to leave the restaurant.

“Hey, Dude,” LeRoy called out. The smooth, deep voices of the Everly Brothers started singing. “Get the big lock-cutter in the bunkhouse,” he said. “That thing can cut anything.”

They walked into the fuel shop and on into the garage. If these truckers asked him for help, LeRoy was going to charge five dollars an hour. He had had all he wanted of them dried beans and that wreck. Everyone knew that insurance men and adjusters had money.

When Patsy Cline came on, Ruthie dropped his tossed salad in front of him. Soon, LeRoy was at home, reading a day-old newspaper from Cumberland and listening to the Queen of Country Music. While he was chewing on a blackened chicken leg that was dripping into the mashed potatoes, the two drivers came back, stopping their freight trucks just out front of the diner

Opening the door, the tall, skinny driver came running up to LeRoy’s booth.

“Hey, Bud,” he said, “has that trailer been unlocked?”

“Nope,” LeRoy answered, wiping the chicken grease off his face. “It’s been right here, twenty-four hours a day, since we pulled it out of the creek.”

“Well,” he said loudly, “unless I’m blind, there ain’t no beans in there – none at all.”

"Bud, I'm telling you there is about ten thousand pounds of beans out there -- at most. Jesus, what am I going to tell my boss?"

"That trailer was supposed to be carrying 44,500 pounds of dried beans," the heavy driver said. "There's more snow and trash in there than anything else. Our boss in Wheeling is going to be pissed."

Dude Thompson came up behind them.

"They're right, LeRoy. Most of the freight is gone. Hellfire, I'll bet some of them damned farmers stole it."

LeRoy had to think about this for a couple of seconds. He starting to feel like it was his fault. "Bud, Bud, Bud, the rest of the beans must have spilled all up and down the creek," he said. "They're scattered in the snow, you know, along the bank of Sidling Creek where the wreck happened."

He started toying with his mashed potatoes and dragging gravy up over top of them. Over in the corner behind the cash register, Ruthie was making signs that she was going to go call Shirley. "I'm telling you," LeRoy said. "There was this black ice storm. And, this trucker was coming down the mountain out there, the, the, the, the truck, truck...it hit a row of trees before it ran off a bank into the creek. Didn't you see how tore up the top of the trailer was?"

"Hey, we're not accusing anybody of anything," the taller one said. "But doesn't this look suspicious to you? I mean, we figured that there would be thirty, maybe forty thousand pounds of beans. We came prepared to stay at least a day or two loading up."
“When you come in here, I, I, I, I thought that you two were adjusters,” LeRoy said. “Insurance men. The Boss said that the adjusters might come any day now, but he’s been saying that for a month. He wants his money for the wrecker bill.”

The short, fat driver lit up a cigar, a cheap Tampa Nugget. “Adjusters?” he asked. “What’s an adjuster?”

“You know,” LeRoy answered. “The finance men who pay off for fires and insurance wrecks. Didn’t the load have insurance papers?”

“It was insured,” the tall one said. “But when there’s salvage, you got to go get the salvage first. Insurance companies don’t like to foot the whole bill. Now I don’t know what our boss is going to get.”

“ Somebody is going to jail,” the short one said. “Our boss will be mad as hell at us. We’re just drivers, you know?”

“Hey, Buddy boy,” LeRoy said. “I don’t take you for anything except a truck driver with piles and a Budweiser beer gut.” Heh, heh, heh, heh.

“Look, monkey wrench,” he fired back. “I don’t take you for nothing except a coalmining hillbilly who can’t find a job so he works at a place like this.”

LeRoy started batting his eyelashes. “Unload them damned beans yourself. I ain’t got your friggin’ beans, and I don’t know where they are.”

“Hey, hey, hey,” the tall driver said. “Everyone cool down, now.”

“I’m telling you that nobody is going to accuse us of anything,” LeRoy said. “We brought that wreck up here just as we found it. Ice and all.”

Ruthie said: “I’ve, I’ve just called the owner, and he said that they can talk to Sheriff Reimes, if they want to.”
“Okay, okay, for Christ’s Sake, everybody just settle down,” the tall driver hollered. “You don’t have to call in the goddamm cavalry. Hold on! Just tell us where this creek is.”

LeRoy started chomping on the rest of his salad. “It’s just up Route 40 before you get to that mountain there,” he said, pointing through the picture window. “Take Route 40 East at the corner out there, and before you get to the base of the mountain out there, that is where Sidling Creek Bridge is. You’ll see where the wreck was.”

“You’re telling me that’s where the wreck happened – there or in the creek?” the tall driver asked.

LeRoy bite off a piece of chicken leg. “The truck left the road, traveled down onto the bank and was stopped by a giant beech. When I got there the beans were everywhere – bags and all. They were even down into the creek among the laurel bushes.”

“Well, we’ll go see what’s there,” the tall driver said. He brushed his thin hair back and looked up into Ruthie’s eyes. “Hey, Sweet Lips,” he said. “Go make us two coffees to go. And, sweeten it up with a couple of your fingers, baby doll. And if you are ever in Wheeling, look me up.”

Ruthie’s mouth fell open. “For starters, Mister Wheeling T. Truck-Lines, you can kiss my royal ass. Where do you two clowns get off? Now get the hell out of my diner before I take this man’s pistol and shoot both of your nuts off. Get out. I mean it.”

Behind them, big, burly Buster French came out of the kitchen, his black eyes glistening with fire.
The two drivers backed up. Without taking their eyes off anyone, they turned and headed out the door.

LeRoy, Ruthie, Dude and Buster all stood and watched the two men pull their red and white freight trucks down to the corner of Route 40 and Little Orleans Road. Waiting for traffic to pass, they pulled out onto Route 40 heading east.

LeRoy could picture what they were going to find: mush, burlap, and rotten paper sacks. Like everyone else in the valley, he knew that the beans were long gone.

Ruthie propped her hands on her hip. “Both of them need a boot up their asses,” she said. “Somebody ought to shoot both of them with a shotgun.”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

“They were getting mighty close,” Dude Thompson said. “I’ve got my piece right here ready to go.”

Beads of sweat on his black face, Buster French stared at Dude Thompson. “I’d keep that thing in my trousers, if I was you. Them two aren’t worth it.”

“Sit down right here,” Ruthie said to Dude. “You haven’t had your blue plate special today. Go ahead, sit down. Buster will get the chicken going, and I will get you some coffee.”

In a few moments, Miss Ruthie came back with Dude’s salad, ice water, and coffee. She sat it on the table before him. With a final thump, she sat the vinegar and oil next to the salad.

“Ruthie,” LeRoy said, now eating some green Jell-O, “give me a quarter so I can play us some songs.” He looked at her sideways. “Please. You make all them big tips
from the drivers. You know, when I bend over, nobody sees anything. With you, they
get... all shook up, un hum. Yeah Yeah. All Shook Up.”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

Ruthie sat her tray down on the counter.

“What in the hell did I put on that chicken before I gave it to you?” she asked,
frowning. “LeRoy, you want some hot stuff?”

“Yea, yea, yeah, baby,” LeRoy groaned. “The hotter the better. I need some hot
chicken, tonight — Baby doll. And make sure you use your fingers.”

Dude Thompson started laughing, shaking his head. Ruthie threw a wet dishrag
at Leroy, as she turned and walked towards the kitchen. In the back, Buster was
laughing, throwing floured chicken into a cast iron skillet.

“Ruthie,” LeRoy called out. “Play us some music on the jukebox.” He burst out
into one of the Everly Brothers’ melodies: “…neva knew what I missed, until I kissed
yah. Hummh, hummmmmhh...bulumpyboom...until I kissed yah...bulumpyboom...until I
kissed yah.”

Ruthie came back with a large, square piece of white cake with creamy white and
red-blotched icing and blue sparkles sprinkled over the top.

LeRoy saw the red, white and blue colors and dug in. In less than a minute, he
had the cake eaten. Then he started yelling. “Ruth-Ruthie, Ruthie. Dammit, woman,
what did you do?” His throat jerked, and he started coughing up eaten cake. Moaning, he
gulped down his coffee, then the glass of ice water. Sliding out of the booth, he ran for
the kitchen, where he grabbed the large metal pitcher full of ice water.
"Grrrrrrh! Buster, she burnt me up – she burnt me up, Daddy-O. Whew!"

LeRoy jumped around in a circle. “Look at my mouth, my lips are on fire. They’re burning hot. Already, I can feel them swelling.”

Ruthie came into the kitchen, her arms folded. LeRoy had his head under the faucet, guzzling water. Next he tried a big chunk of ice, holding it to his tongue and lips.

“Wha, what did you do to me, Ruthie?” LeRoy asked. “What was in that cake, an, an Atomic Bomb?”

“Well, Mister LeRoy, you said you wanted some hot stuff. How does that hot stuff feel way down in your shorts now? Your nuts getting hot?”

“Oh, Ruthie,” LeRoy said, his eyes watering. “I only wanted you to play a couple of songs. His lips were already swelling from the cayenne powder that Ruthie had made up. “Ruthie, you take everything so seriously. Look, look, baby-cakes, I’d never do that to you. Would I, Buster?”

About twenty minutes later, Shirley Yarrow showed up in his Chrysler Imperial, smoking an El Producto. He was mad as hell. LeRoy ran to the garage and started turning wrenches and banging on anything that he could find. Finally, wondering what was going on, LeRoy got up the nerve to take a break. He had just finished fixing two truck tires and welding a plow back on a farm tractor. Washing his hands and drying them, he threw water on his face and combed his hair, spitting out some water to freshen up his breath. Then he rolled up his sleeves and stepped cautiously into the fuel shop. Through the glass door, he could see a couple of drivers eating and talking. In the first booth,
Shirley was going through a stack of bills. Up on a barstool with her legs slightly parted, Miss Ruthie sat talking. LeRoy pushed open the door

"Hey, Boss," he called, "I got them two tires from that Mason-Dixon truck fixed."

Shirley puffed on his cigar. Behind his black-rimmed glasses, he smoothed his graying hair back. Swiftly, he was all business.

"LeRoy, my boy," Shirley said, winking at Miss Ruthie. "Before the afternoon is over, drive that GMC cab over into the garage and pull its transmission. I drove it yesterday, and it has got some bad gears in it. Pull it and I will get a used transmission from a junkyard up in Pennsylvania." He looked at LeRoy still holding the bills. "And, please don’t do the sawdust trick on me?"

"Okay, Boss. When do you want me to work on that big green Freightliner? It needs a new front end."

"Hold off on that one. That trucker is not getting his tractor until I get my back money." He burst out laughing. "What in the hell happened to you, Jitterbug? Been French-kissing one of them exhaust pipes, again?"

It had been a long time since LeRoy had French-kissed anything.

"You’d better put some axle grease on your lips, just to make sure they don’t leave town," Shirley said, still laughing.

"Ruthie, can I have a cup of coffee?" LeRoy asked. "This is one time you owe me. It’s about time you started acting like a waitress around here."

"Hey, hot stuff," Ruthie called back, "take your burning ass back there and get your own damned coffee."
LeRoy got up dragging his feet and went towards the big percolator.

"Shirley, Shirley," Ruthie said, pointing out the picture window into the muddy truck lot. "Them two clowns are back from West-by-God-Virginia."

Ruthie, Shirley, and now even Buster craned their necks out the big window, as the two freight trucks pulled slowly by the fuel pumps. They drove right up to the front of the diner.

Shirley put a big frown on his face. "Ruthie, would you please go get me some coffee?" he asked. "And would all of you let me handle this. I’ve called Sheriff Reimes."

A black Ford Sedan rolled by the fuel pumps and parked on the lower side of the two trucks. Flinging the car door open, Proctor Reimes got out, his black cowboy gun belt hanging by his side.

Ruthie got Shirley a quick cup of black coffee and sat it down in front of him. From his blue shirt pocket, Shirley took out a new El Producto, and lit up, filling the restaurant with the smell of sweet tobacco. LeRoy and Buster found themselves a spot at a booth down near the jukebox. The other two truckers in the back of the restaurant walked up to the cash register and quickly paid their bills.

The two freight drivers filed into the restaurant. The tall, skinny driver was smoking a Camel, held tightly between his thin lips. "Are you the owner of this here Truck Stop?"

"Yes, yes, Shirley Yarrow."

"Well, I guess we need to talk."
“You boys caused quite a stir a while ago,” Shirley said. “I don’t like calling Sheriff Reimes if I don’t have to. He’s a busy man. Seems you boys don’t know how to talk to a lady? And you’re worried about your beans.”

The tall one eyed the group, especially the grizzly-looking Sheriff walking around outside.

“We – me and Bill here, didn’t mean nothing by it,” he said. “Miss, I was only teasing you. I know, I know, I was being a smart-ass. And I’m sorry for that.” His mouth forced a laugh, showing that he had two teeth missing. “I hope there was no harm done. I apologize for what I said.”

The two of them waited for Miss Ruthie to say something. Buster French wiped the sweat off his forehead and lit up a Pall Mall Gold. He crossed his massive forearms.

Miss Ruthie’s voice started quivering. “I don’t like it when you drivers come in here and think I’m a cheap floozy or something. I ain’t cheap.”

“Go ahead,” Shirley broke in. “You boys take a seat right over there. Now, Ruthie, these boys are truly sorry for what they did. Aren’t you, boys?”

Shirley waited for them to start mumbling.

“Everything is all right now. Please, Ruthie, bring these here truckers some of your good hot coffee. They look cold and wet.”

Uneasily, the drivers eased into the second booth, rain still dripping off their coats. Shirley sat across from them, holding the cigar in his left hand and sipping his black coffee with his right.

Shaking her hips real good, Ruthie came back with their coffee. She sat two coffee mugs down in front of them.
The tall man began sipping the coffee, blowing it two or three times. “Don’t get antsy, boss man, just hear me out. I’m nothing more that a driver like everyone else that comes in here. My boss sent us out here from Wheeling to pick up what was left of a truck wreck that your Truck Stop was supposed to have. Then we get here, break the lock with metal cutters, and inside the trailer we find about one-fourth of what our boss thinks we should find.”

This time he was making sure his voice didn’t get too loud. By now, Sheriff Reimes was standing at the door, wanting his coffee.

“You got to admit, fella, that something looks awfully fishy from our viewpoint. Where in the world would twenty – or even thirty, thousand pounds of beans go? That’s a lot of gas, if you ask me.”

“Listen, Bub,” Shirley said, “I know how you must feel right now. Your boss is going to be mad, as hell, when you get back home for something you didn’t do. Am I right or wrong?” He let that soak in. “I know the trucking business. You’ve got the President who pushes the railroads and big business. That makes it hard for us truckers to make a little money. So we do what we can to make things easier for ourselves. I know, you come here and get most of the load. Then your boss claims that he only got half or a third of it. Right? No one wanted that black ice storm we had, or that two feet of snow that lasted two weeks. A poor trucker from Huntsville, Alabama, lost his life because of that storm.” Smoke from Shirley’s El Producto rose up into the hot diner. “There are only three things that I can tell you.”

The drivers leaned a little closer.
"Number one, I put a green GMC Tractor and Fruehauf Trailer in storage. Second, the doors on the trailer were already padlocked when LeRoy there pulled the wreck into the junkyard. I'm swearing that the wreck out there has been out there ever since. And no one, and I mean no one, has been near it."

"But, 44,500 pounds of beans? Three-fourths of the load is now gone. Mister, you've got to help us."

"The last time I was at Sidling Creek," Shirley said, "10,000 pounds of them beans were down under the laurel bushes in the creek. Some bags of beans were floating down the creek. There were frozen beans scattered all over both sides of the roadway. Did you pick those up?"

"We couldn't. Two old women were out there scraping up packs of muddy beans. They had a little girl down in the creek with rubber boots on. At first, we tried, but it was no use. So we gave up. What was left had been stomped into the mud. It was hopeless."

Shirley put out his cigar in the ashtray. "Dude, get me that wrecker bill on that GMC."

Dude Thompson walked into the fuel shop, and returned with a handful of different sized bills stapled together.

Shirley took the stack of bills and thumbed through each one. "Here it is. The wrecker bill came to $585.00. The storage and salvage bill is $3.00 per day." He took out a ballpoint pen from his shirt pocket and started figuring the totals on a napkin. "You can tell your boss that he can have everything out there for...oh... $700.00 in cash – on the barrel head."
The tall driver finished his coffee and lit up another Camel. "Mister, all we came
for was the freight. The wrecked tractor and trailer belongs to someone else. Maybe these
adjusters that this here man was talking about. But me and Bill here, we're just freight
drivers and grips. We don't pay any bills. We just drive trucks and haul freight for a
living. You didn't happen to see the Bill of Lading for the freight—did you?"

The Sheriff had perched his huge body up on one of the bar stools. Buster
brought him a ham steak with pineapple sauce.

"Well, who can I give this bill to? I need my money to pay my bills, too. I had to
hire two wreckers from Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, to help us get that wreck out of
the creek bed. It was full of snow and ice. It was as cold as hell. I got some money
invested in this, as well. And, I can't claim any insurance. Don't worry, I'm not blaming
you boys. You're just truck drivers. I understand that."

"Mister, we don't want no trouble," the tall driver said again. "But we got to end
this now. Our jobs are on the line if we don't. We can't pay you because we don't have
any money. But we got to take some beans back to Wheeling."

"Well, let's do this," Shirley said. "You take all the beans out there. I mean take
all the paper and plastic bags with you to show your boss. I will keep the truck and trailer
as collateral. That way if you get fifteen thousand, your boss can still write off thirty-five
to forty thousand. If I was him, I'd write the whole thing off. The insurance company or
the Interstate Commerce Commission will never know the difference. That should make
him some extra money."
The two drivers smiled. "Ah, one more thing," the tall one said. "We'll probably have to stay here overnight to get them beans loaded up. You don't mind if we use your bathrooms to clean up? We can sleep in the trucks."

"You boys be my guest," Shirley told them, laughing. He wasn't about to let them stay in the bunkhouse. "And to show you that there's no hard feelings, I'll start things rolling. Ruthie get these drivers some Tennessee ham steaks and collards. It will keep them regular — you know what they say about truck drivers. On my tab, two blue-plate specials on the house. And, make sure they get some birthday cake — without the LeRoy special. Looks like we got a lot of hungry folks today."

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

When LeRoy stopped laughing, everyone in the restaurant was looking at him. Sheriff Reimes was shaking his head. "Someday I'm going to get you a straitjacket," Sheriff Reimes said, sipping on a black coffee that Miss Ruthie had laced with some of Shirley's West Virginia sour mash.
Staying late one Wednesday night in early April, LeRoy was fixing a truck tire for a Mack dump truck. Wednesday nights his mother and Shirley’s wife, Miss Clarissa Grove Yarrow, had Bible study together at the All Saints Freewill Church in Hancock, and he and his mother had supper late.

*Blam, Blam, Balaam.*

Above his head, the air compressor came on in the back of the garage, making a beating noise.

*Blam, blam, blaaammm.*

"Break, dammit, break," LeRoy hollered.


He looked up from the truck tire, leaning on the rim buster. In the background, the air compressor shut off, leaving a sudden stillness in the diesel-smelling garage.

"LeRoy," Ruthie said. "Shirley wants me to clean up the bunkhouse. Now don’t you let any truckers come back there.” Her blond curls jerked about on her forehead, the bangs falling down. They were wet with sweat. "You hear me? I mean it. Don’t let anyone come in there.”

"All right, all right, Ruthie” he answered. "The only man here is that Preacher, Reverend Hoyt, that Shirley hired yesterday. And he’s down at the pumps. Baby-doll, is anyone over in the diner?"
“Buster is getting ready to leave. And there’s that new girl that comes here with Reverend Hoyt. That’s all.”

When Ruthie walked on into the little hallway, LeRoy grimaced and returned to the rim buster: *blam, blam, blam.* Busting a split, steel rim, taking out the filthy, stinking tube, and patching it was something that he could do in his sleep. For safety, he had chained the rim to the steel hub making sure that the tire did not blow up into his face.

The air compressor came on again, hammering out a pumping sound that made him think of wild sex. He didn’t hear Shirley walk up behind him. He was wearing a clean, white shirt, and the smell of Aqua Velva swept over the dirty floor.

“LeRoy,” Shirley shouted. Take this padlock out to the trailer and lock the side door. I don’t want anyone messing with that truck or trailer. It’s in storage, and it belongs to me until somebody pays the salvage bill.”

Dropping the rim buster, LeRoy took the lock, pushed up the overhead door, and walked around to the side of the garage. Outside, the sun had set and a cool night was falling. As he walked past the bunkhouse, he couldn’t help but notice the bright yellow light coming from the head-high windows. Once, LeRoy thought that he saw Ruthie’s head bobbing around.

Duke came out from under a wrecked car. Without barking, he jumped up onto LeRoy and began licking the side of his rough, greased-stained face. LeRoy rubbed his shaggy mane. Walking to the wrecked trailer, he could feel dew falling all over his hot face. He made sure that the second lock that he had put on the rear doors was still there. Then he led Duke around the rear of the trailer to the side door. Reaching up, he put his
hand squarely on a big lock. He checked it again. Thinking that Shirley had made a mistake, he headed back for the garage slipping the lock into his jeans.

Back inside the garage, LeRoy went back to fixing the tire. A couple more blams and the rim sank down below the steel hub. After splitting the rim, the next step was turning the tire over, unwrapping the chain, and pulling out the metal hub.

Behind his back, a strange voice called out: “LeRoy, hey, LeRoy, someone wants you on the telephone in the office.” It was the new night waitress, tall, thin and looking tired out.

Wiping his hands on a oily rag, LeRoy followed her back over to the diner. Inside the little office, he picked up the telephone.

“Hello...hello...LeRoy here.” He waited. “Hello.” Silence.

He walked back through the kitchen and into the diner. It must have been his mother. No one else would just call and hang up.

LeRoy went back over to the garage. Picking up the hub, he looked through the glass overhead door, and he could see Shirley’s big Chrysler switch on its headlights. Under the lights of the fuel pumps, the silky-smooth Chrysler eased down to Little Orleans Road, pulled out onto the roadway and headed south for the Potomac.

Miss Ruthie had just came out of the little hallway by the sink in the corner.

“Ruthie, Ruthie,” LeRoy said. “Where did Shirley go?”

“I don’t know, LeRoy.” Ruthie’s face was glowing, as if she had been mopping for a week. “I guess he went home, but I know he said that he had to go down to the Canal House first. Lulu needs some help.” She realized that LeRoy was staring at her pink
dress. "Hey LeRoy, didn’t you tell me that you made $2.25 an hour turning a wrench. Right?"

"Yeah, that’s good pay for a railroader’s son."

"Well, don’t ever forget that I can ring the damned cash register any time I want to: Ka-Ching. Ka-Ching. And I can keep ringing it as long as I want to."

"Ruthie, I guess you can pick up some big tips," he said. "There is no way that I can do that – do what you do. Nobody ever gives a grease monkey tips for anything – unless it’s stolen or hot property. Me, I make my money by the hour. You know, girl, what I mean?"

"Yuh-huh," Ruthie said, a big smile on her velvety lips. "Boy, you’ll never know what I can do, until I put my mind to it. Someday, LeRoy, I might even own this place."

LeRoy arrived at the Truck Stop an hour early. He wanted to get the welding done before Shirley got there. Normally, Shirley showed up between 8:00 am and 9:00 am just to check and see if there were any money problems. By mid-morning, LeRoy pushed the fourteen-foot high doors all the way up, letting the bright spring sun sweep over the dirt and grime. After selling and putting on a new tire and pumping diesel while Dude Thompson ate breakfast, LeRoy pulled a big Diamond Reo Tractor into the far bay and started pulling the 16-gear Road Ranger transmission. Around noon, he ate some pork chops, Pinto beans, buttermilk biscuits, and Southern fried apples from the restaurant’s blue plate special. Picking his teeth with a toothpick, LeRoy went back to work on the Diamond Reo’s transmission, sliding under the tractor’s frame on a creeper.
By 2:00 pm, LeRoy had the transmission lowered onto a jack-stand under the fifth wheel of the Diamond Reo. He was about ready to come out from under the truck when a big black Lincoln Continental with suicide doors pulled up to the last bay and stopped. Two men in dress trousers, white shirts, and ties got out. LeRoy sensed that these men weren't from around here. They must have been from Baltimore or Washington, DC. What would two G-Men be doing out here in the middle of nowhere, unless they were after a moonshiner's still or hunting down criminals from the big city? It was obvious they didn't need gas or a blue plate special. Jesus Christ! This must be about Shirley. He had told the Boss not to buy them tires from that trucker, or take government cheese from the Miner's Welfare Program when the truck was parked here last month. Yessiree, I tried to tell him. How about that diesel fuel that Shirley bought from that jack-legged dealer down in West Virginia last fall? Fifteen thousand gallons of diesel and not one red cent in taxes. Still, how would the FBI find out? Hellfire, maybe I've done something wrong? They always try and arrest a boss's right hand man, first, if they can. Maybe they want to grill me?

LeRoy ignored them. If he had to, he would pretend to be someone else, and then send them over to the diner. He could always take the back window out of the bunkhouse, and then he could hide out between his mother's house and the church. No one would ever think to go there to find him.

There was an older, hound-dog looking man with black glasses and a younger, middle-aged man with a dress hat on. They drifted over to where LeRoy's boots were sticking out.
"Hey, Buddy," the younger man said, bending over. "Can you help us out? We need some information."

Seeing the men standing over him, LeRoy decided to slide out.

"Can you help us out? We're looking for a Sheriff named Reimes. Nobody seems to know where he is today."

LeRoy must have been staring at them with a blank expression, because they started asking the same questions all over again.

Breaking in, the heavier, hound-dog-looking man asked: "Can you tell us where a man named Shirley Yarrow hangs his hat? He owns this Truck Stop, I believe?"

LeRoy got up from the creeper and started wiping his hands.

"Shirl, Shirl, Shirl, Shirley owns the Route 40 Pure Oil," he said.

"I'm Stewart Brittingham," the younger man said. "And this is Marley Krebs. We're investigators from Cleveland."

They started to shake hands, but LeRoy held out the side of the cloth that had grease on it. "I'm, I'm, I'm LeRoy Vann Clough," he said. "I, I, I, I help run the Truck Stop."

Marley Krebs threw his head back and started laughing, exposing a gold tooth on the upper left side of his mouth. "Big name," he said. "You must do something important around here, besides fixing trucks?"


"Well, suffice it to say," Marley Krebs broke in, "you should be able to help us." He unzipped a large, brown leather notebook. "Since we can't find the Sheriff, we need
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LeRoy looked each of them in the eyes. “Out back, we have the truck and trailer,” LeRoy said. “I don’t know anything about any salvage rights.”

“No kidding,” the younger man said, smiling. “You know, when things get lost, somebody has to pay. It’s the government.”

What does he mean by that? LeRoy was thinking.

“Look at it this way,” Marley Krebs said. “If we find out what’s been going on here, we are not going to take it easy on anyone – no matter who they are.” He let that sink in. “But, if someone comes to me and tells me the truth, then I can help them,” he explained, his dark eyes on LeRoy. “Son, Marley Krebs knows a man who’s no fool when he sees him. And you’re that man.” He laughed, exposing that gold tooth once more.

LeRoy did not know what to say. He had no idea what they were talking about. He knew that G-Men were from all over the country. The television said that they got their orders from the Capital and the Big G-Man, J. Edgar Hoover, who LeRoy had seen in a Movie Tunes once firing a Tommy Gun. He ran the back of his hand over his chapped lips, then stuffed a rag back into his left pocket. “The Boss, Boss is down at the Canal House, next to the Potomac River,” LeRoy mumbled. “I’ll go call him. I’m sure he knows more about this than I do.” LeRoy waited for them to say something else. They stared at him. Feeling their eyes like daggers in his wool shirt, LeRoy walked across the two lifts and stepped up onto the landing that led to the fuel shop. Before he opened the
door, he flipped on a switch that started the air compressor pounding, building up the pressure that raised the lift out of the ground. The compressor wheezed, made a grinding noise, and then began pounding loudly: wham, wham, wham, and wham.

Inside the fuel shop, Ruthie and Dude were waiting by the desk. They wanted to know who had died. Were they undertakers?

Shutting the door, LeRoy told them to be quiet, that he would call Shirley. And don’t say anything, they are G-Men from Cleveland – you know, government dicks.

Having gotten Dude’s and Ruthie’s attention, LeRoy walked through the diner and into hot kitchen.

Frying pork ribs, Buster whispered: “Are they from down South – you know, Birmingham?”

LeRoy shook his head. “No, you’re clear.”

Inside the little office, he dialed 3502.

“Canal House,” a deep voice answered.

“Lulu, Lulu, this is LeRoy. Tell Shirley I’ve got to talk to him – I mean, right now. Tell him it’s Twenty-Niner Intel.”

“Car wreck?” Lulu asked.

“No, no, no, worse yet,” he whispered into the telephone. “They look like they are G-Men – God forbid, the FBI.”

“What do they want from us? Did you rob a bank?” she asked, laughing.

“LeRoy, we don’t have anything that the FBI would want. Now really, why are they here?”
“Lulu, I don’t know,” LeRoy replied. “But they want to speak to Sheriff Reimes – if they can find him – or Shirley. I’ve got to talk to the Boss.”

“Hang on, LeRoy,” Lulu returned. “Shirley is asleep upstairs in one of the suites, he calls them. Hold on, baby, I’ll go get him.”

LeRoy could hear the receiver hit the wooden bar. In the background, muffled talk came from the small crowd that had gathered for their afternoon ritual of beer, pickled pigs’ feet and tobacco smoke.

It took Lulu Creel about ten minutes to get Shirley up, dressed and downstairs to answer the telephone.

“Hello, hello – dammit, LeRoy, what’s up? What G-Men? Have you been at my moonshine again?”

“No, no, no, Boss,” LeRoy answered. “They’re G-Men. But only from Cleveland. I’m not sure, Boss. But they could be FBI. You know, Feds.”

“I’m afraid to ask. What in the hell is going on up there at the Truck Stop? Why didn’t you call me before I went to sleep? Where is Miss Ruthie?”

“They just got here, First Sergeant,” LeRoy said. “There’s two men all dressed up, driving a black Lincoln Continental. One of them big cars? Ruthie, Ruthie, is right here. Everything is holding steady – for the moment. They wanted Sheriff Reimes, you know, like they were going to arrest someone.”

“So what? I’m supposed to wake up for that? Come on, LeRoy. I don’t give two craps about J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI! What’s the problem? What do they really want?”
"Boss, they want to talk to you and Sheriff Reimes. They say they are
government investigators from Cleveland. I didn’t know what to tell them. They say that
you got the salvage rights on the wrecked truck and all them beans. I guess they come to
take it over – you know, search and seize?"

"Listen, listen, LeRoy," Shirley began, his voice breaking up. "Don’t be stupid
right now – I mean don’t tell them anything until I get there. Did they say anything about
paying the wrecker bill – the storage for the truck and trailer? Damn, how am I going to
get my money out of these two dick-heads?"

"No, no, no," LeRoy answered. "They’re acting all high and mighty, like they are
from the J. Edgar Hoover Building or something. I guess they are the adjusters."

"Whatever you do, don’t let them back into my office. They might find some
other business deals I’ve got going on – you know, trucking business. Hot Rod, don’t be
an idiot and tell them anything until I get there."

"Don’t worry, Boss, I’m not going to tell them about the hot tires you bought last
week. I’m, I’m, I’m not that dumb.” LeRoy’s face felt flushed, overcome with sweat.
Suddenly he was afraid that he could go to jail, too.

Shirley didn’t say anything for a few seconds. "Thank God we’re not on the party
line? Are we?"

LeRoy looked around. He heard Buster in the kitchen, the grease sizzling. “No,
Boss, I wouldn’t be that much of a hillbilly.”

Then – "Boy, boy, boy, boy, boy – ” Shirley said at the top of his lungs.

I know how to keep my mouth shut.”
"LeRoy," Shirley said, "have you ever heard of Fort Leavenworth?"

"You mean the prison?"

"Yes, that's it," he answered. "You got the correct address out in Kansas. With the way you like to talk all the time, I could be in Leavenworth before I can drive the nine miles up Little Orleans Road."

"Boss, Boss, Boss..."

"LeRoy," Shirley said. "Close your mouth and stop stuttering. And listen for one damned second."

LeRoy felt his throat tighten.

"Now," Shirley mouthed slowly. "We need to keep this Twenty-Niner business. Go get Ruthie and tell her to offer them a big blue plate special – steak and fries. Tell her I said to put some honey on it – tits and all."

"Honey?"

"Yes, honey. Tell Ruthie I said to keep them occupied in the big booth. I don't want them going anywhere until I know what's going on. I will be there shortly. I've got some things to wrap up here, West Virginia business."

"Okay, Boss," LeRoy said. "I'll tell her everything you said, especially the part about the honey and the tits. Are you sure you want to give these feds steak and fries for free?"

"You know me, son," Shirley said. "I've got to take care of my interests. You tell Buster I said get one of them special steaks from the freezer in the bunkhouse."

"Don't worry, Boss," LeRoy said, thinking about the fat steaks. "I won't tell them nothing – unless you want me to?"
“Jesus, no,” Shirley shouted. “Wait till I’m ready for you to talk to them. Don’t worry, I’ve got plans for you, Twenty-Niner plans.”

“Sure, Boss, sure, you know me – I can be trusted,” LeRoy answered, hearing the telephone go dead.

He went back into the diner and motioned for Ruthie. The two well-dressed investigators had walked back outside to get away from the air compressor’s banging noise. They were standing by the black car. After LeRoy had told Miss Ruthie what Shirley had drilled into him, they walked outside into the spring day.

“I, I, I just called the Boss down at the Canal House,” LeRoy said to the younger investigator named Stewart Brittingham. “He said that he’s got to hide, hide, hide, damn, I, I, I mean, tighten up some things. Then he will be right here.”

Leaning against the side of the car, Marley Krebs broke out laughing. “Don’t be too easy now,” he said, his hound dog jowls quivering.

In his late fifties, the older investigator had fine, groomed hair and a clean-shaven face that was braced with the strong smell of shaving lotion. He winked at Ruthie, propping his hands on his hips.

“Boy, I like a good fight, especially when I see it coming,” he said.

“Hot dang, G-Man,” LeRoy said, starting to stutter. “The Boss ain’t up to nothing.”

Ruthie had on a yellow summer dress with baby-doll white sandals. With a little imagination, you could almost see through where her legs came up. Her golden hair was in a swirling stack and little curls came falling down onto her forehead. Smiling, both G-
men began undressing her with their eyes, particularly the older investigator with the gold tooth. He was jumping around like thirty years had been taken off his life.

Ruthie smiled that innocent girlish grin that she could whip out like a loaded gun. “Where you boys from?” she asked, laughing. “I’d like to tell you that I am from Jackson, Mississippi, and I’m hotter than a pepper sprout, but I’d be lying. I’m just a country girl from Oakland, Maryland, and I’m always wide open for suggestions. What’s your pleasure, baby-cakes?”

Marley Krebs’ old hound-dog face lit up, as his head jerked back. He was all mouth, his gold tooth gleaming. With his cordovan winged-tip shoes, he had an air of white-collar money about his person. Putting his hand up to his mouth, he pretended to hide what he was about to say to LeRoy:

“Son, I’m packing, and I’m a gear jammer from way back. And I know a girl worth twenty-five dollars when I see one. Is she as hot as she acts?”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

Stewart Brittingham, the younger dick, had a cooler head than his older partner. “We’re from Cleveland,” he said politely. “Like we told your mechanic, we got a lot of investigating to do around here. Let me begin by saying that I’m not accusing anyone of anything, but somebody has been eating a lot of beans.”

Ruthie winked. “Around here, I wouldn’t be looking under too many skirts to get to the bottom of anything, if I was you,” she said softly. “You never know what you are going to find – it might bite you.”

LeRoy couldn’t stand it when Miss Ruthie started talking that jazzy stuff.

The older investigator was beside himself with laughter.
“We’re crackerjack investigators from the big town by the lake – Cleveland,”
Marley Krebs said. “Darling, I’ve never met a woman I couldn’t dance with – on or off
the floor. What’s your pleasure, and how many greenbacks will it cost me?” He leaned
against the long hood of the Continental, toying with the hood ornament.

“Well, big boy,” Ruthie said, “you never know, you may have to put your money
where your gold tooth is.” She reached out and grabbed him by his thin, black tie, which
had a Masonic crest about two-thirds of the way down. “Now, tell me,” she said, her hot
breath up in his face. “What is a smooth-talking detective like you doing in a nowhere
place like this?”

The older man looked over at his young friend, winking. “I’ll never tell. I only
share my secrets at bedtime.”

When Shirley showed up in his silver Chrysler Imperial about an hour later, Miss
Ruthie had them eating cheap steaks and fries with applesauce, and talking as if they
were royalty in the big booth. Shirley parked on the upper side of their Lincoln
Continental and began casing the inside of the car. LeRoy was in a back booth by the
jukebox. Little Richard, was screaming out Good Golly, Miss Molly, at the top of his
lungs. Suddenly remembering that Shirley didn’t like the music to be too loud because it
upset the customers, LeRoy eased out of the booth and clicked a switch. He had to do it
twice until he came up with some soft folk music: Greenfields, by The Brothers Four.
When LeRoy came back to the booth, he could see Shirley talking to Dude Thompson in
the fuel shop. He figured everything was okay for the time being; so LeRoy went back to
his steak, enjoying the fried fat.
When Shirley pushed open the door, he stared directly at LeRoy. Even from this distance, LeRoy could see that he was upset. This was the second time that day that LeRoy had eaten.

Once inside of the door, Shirley’s voice rang out: “No, no,” he said. “Don’t get up. Enjoy your blue plate special.” He was puffing on an El Producto Blunt, held tightly between his teeth. “I hear you boys want to talk to me – I’m Shirley Yarrow.”

“Yes, yes we do,” the younger man said. “You’re a hard man to find.”

Before they could get up, Shirley shook their hands. He looked around at the little crowd that had gathered: Ruthie in the next booth, Buster French behind the counter, Dude Thompson behind him, two truckers at the far end of the counter, and LeRoy, looking like a chipmunk with swollen cheeks, sitting in his favorite corner down by the jukebox.

The younger investigator spoke first: “I’m Stewart Brittingham, and this is Marley Krebs,” he said. “We’re Special Investigators for the Cleveland Fire and Casualty Company. We are here to investigate the truck accident that happened back in January.”

Shirley looked at him rubbing his chin.

“Officially, we’re here to salvage everything, including any freight that the truck was pulling – wherever that might be.”

“We got a report from a freight company in Wheeling, West Virginia, that most of the cargo was lost – or confiscated afterwards,” Marley Krebs said. “Except for ten thousand pounds of freight, they filed an insurance claim that basically says that they lost thirty-five thousand pounds of beans. We’re here to protect our client and serve the law.”
Shirley took the El Producto Blunt out of his mouth and tapped the ashes into a metal ashtray. Then, he said business-like: “You all gave us a start, when you showed up a while ago. I know you want to get your business done. But what I want to know is, who is going to pay me $950.00 for the wrecker and storage fee? I’ll make my part simple, you give me $700.00 in cash and you can have everything that’s out there. The sooner that wreck is out of here, the better we’ll all feel. At this point, it’s just taking up space. I’m sure that you can understand, I’ve got to move it.”

“Well, I don’t think that will be a problem,” Krebs said. “But first we have to get this investigation over with. Cleveland Fire and Casualty insured the truck, the trailer, and the freight that the driver was carrying. So we got some money tied up, too.”

“Like I said,” Shirley broke in, “someone owes me at least $700.00 before that wreck is going anywhere. We wouldn’t even be involved if Sheriff Reimes hadn’t called us. The Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Squad got the driver out, and we sent all his personal belongings with the National Guard Helicopter. It took four wreckers to pull the rig out of the creek and get it up here. The Sheriff said get it out of Route 40, and we did just that.”

The two drivers sitting in the booth next to LeRoy got up, walked past Shirley and the two investigators, and paid their bills. Up on a bar stool next to Buster French, Ruthie uncrossed her legs for Marley Krebs’ benefit and followed the drivers over to the cash register. LeRoy eyed the tip they had left.

“After talking to your mechanic here,” Brittingham said. “I figured that we’ll be here three or four days, and everything should be cleared up by then. He seems to know a lot about this area.”
LeRoy slid sideways and reached for the jukebox.

"If you turn that damned thing on," Shirley yelled, "I'll choke you right here and now. You won't have to worry about dying in your mother's bed at ninety-nine. Sooooo," he continued, "you've been talking to Mr. LeRoy, have you? He knows more about the wreck than anyone else I know. He watches the wreck day and night. If anyone has been passing gas lately, it's him."

"Watch out, LeRoy," Marley Krebs said laughing. "Your Boss is trying to feed you to the hogs." He turned around and winked at LeRoy. "I have a feeling you'll know all we need to know. It shouldn't take too long to get to the bottom of what really happened to that freight load of beans." He smiled at Ruthie who had returned to the bar stool, her legs crossed, the yellow dress riding up on her thighs. Shirley reached into his shirt pocket, pulled out a cigar, and threw it towards LeRoy.

"Here," Miss Ruthie said, carrying a glass coffee carafe, "let me heat your coffee up." She bent over the table in the low cut dress. She breathed deeply, as her breasts rose up and rounded out.

Marley Krebs had a big smile on his face. "Sweet nothings, I bet you can set a dance floor on fire? What's your pleasure?"

"For a man nearly sixty, you sure act like you got a lot of fire in your furnace," she said. "I'm surprised your wife lets you out of Cleveland, especially at night. Where does an old alley cat like you go for something to do?"

"Mmmmmmmh. Darling, I've got so much fire in my furnace that I'm uninsurable," Krebs said. "I figure I can buy this whole damned place for ten thousand dollars. You in?"
“I’m worth ten,” Shirley joined in. “How about you, Buster? Ten thousand sound about right to you?”

Buster headed back to the kitchen. Near the door he said: “Krebs, are you sure you are worth ten grand?” To LeRoy, Buster was always cool. He didn’t impress easily.

Marley Krebs threw his head back. “Ten thousand dollars, a good bottle of scotch, and that Continental out there – and, you can throw in a good, leggy dancing-woman for good measure. I’m a leg man, you know.”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

“See, see, see Ruthie,” LeRoy shouted out. “I told you, you could get all the good tips. Not me. I never get anything. Nothing.”

“Get a bottle of perfume,” Ruthie said under her breath. “That might do it – and scrape off some of that monkey grease.”

Shirley, Marley Krebs, even Buster French in the kitchen started laughing.

“Hey, Boss,” LeRoy said. “Can I listen to some music while you all are laughing at me?”

“Yeah, LeRoy,” Shirley said. “Play some Jimmy Rogers, Kisses Sweeter Than Wine. Then go out there in that garage and start kissing the transmission on that Diamond Reo. Hut, one-two-three, four-uppp. Hut.” Shirley had a stern look on his face: “Jitterbug, you’ve got the old 29th Division coming out of me. Twice in the Mess Hall is it for you today.” He motioned for LeRoy to get back over to the garage.

LeRoy eased out of the booth.
“Since you say he knows more than anyone else,” Marley Krebs laughed, “what would you say, if we talked to your mechanic here, first? He probably knows the scuttlebutt on practically everyone around here, including the governor.”

“Scuttlebutt. Navy, I figured,” Shirley said, chewing the end off his cigar. “Too slick to be a Marine or in the Infantry. Couldn’t get down in the trenches with the rest of us.”

Marley Krebs crossed his hands over his belt buckle, laughing in that easy sort of way he had, as if he was up to something and only he had the answer to what it was. “In my day, I’d rather fight a Jarhead than eat. But you know what happens when you get over the hump.” He turned sideways and winked at Ruthie. “Actually, I was a Fightin’ Seabee.”

“Yes, sir,” Shirley said, “Mr. LeRoy can give you all the help you need. He was there when they picked the dead trucker up – beans and all.”

“What! Oh, really,” Stewart Brittingham broke in. “When was that?”

“Sunday, the next day after the ice storm,” Shirley replied. “But I’ll let him tell you all about it. He can fill in the gaps that I don’t even know about. I never saw the wreck until four days later. So Mr. LeRoy here was my eyes and ears.”

Marley Krebs turned and towered over LeRoy’s stocky frame.

“So, LeRoy, where’s your castle?” he asked.

LeRoy moved his eyes from Shirley to Ruthie, then to Buster standing in the doorway to the kitchen.

“I, I, I live down Little Orleans Road about a mile,” he stammered. “It’s the first house on the left past the Firehouse.”
“Well, leave the front porch light on,” Marley Krebs’ said. “That way we’ll know we have the right house. Seven tonight a good time?”

LeRoy looked at Shirley. “They only have three or four days,” Shirley said. “You can help them out a bunch. You’ve got all the answers, Jitterbug.”

“Sure,” LeRoy mumbled, rubbing his rough hands. “Sure. Seven is fine. I’ll tell my mother that you are coming.”

About 4:00 p.m., Shirley came to the landing and began shouting at LeRoy, who was back under the Diamond Reo. The air compressor was back on, banging out a loud noise. LeRoy slid out from under the tractor on the creeper.

“LeRoy,” Shirley said, flipping the air compressor off. “I need to talk to you out back in the junkyard. I want to show you something.”

LeRoy dropped the heavy, foot-long screwdriver, pushing himself up from the wooden creeper. Shirley walked the few steps off the landing, continuing out of the garage into the warm sunlight. By the corner of the garage, Shirley began toying with a pocket full of cigars. When LeRoy joined him, they started walking alongside of the garage for the open gate that led to the junkyard. LeRoy waited for Shirley to say something. He was afraid that he was still mad at him. While they walked, Shirley took out a cigar, unwrapped it, and wetted its whole length in his mouth. Then he struck a match to its end, the flame jumping up and down.

Out in the junkyard, Shirley rounded the corner of the ripped open trailer and, in one swift motion, wheeled around: “If you ever do that to me again,” Shirley shouted in LeRoy’s face, “I don’t know what I’m going to do with you. G-Men. FBI from the
Capital. They act like a couple of salesmen to me, and you want to call them Federal Investigators?"

Angry, Shirley waited for LeRoy to say something. LeRoy folded his arms and stood there unspeaking, rubbing the toe of his worn-out boots in the dirt.

"Shirl, Shirl, Shirl, Shirley," LeRoy stuttered. "I was afraid about them tires you bought last week that I hid in the shed out there."

"LeRoy, don't talk like a damned fool," Shirley said. "That driver sold us them four tires because he couldn't buy any diesel fuel. If I hadn't loaned him some money, the rig would still be parked over there by the Pure Oil sign. FBI, LeRoy? At times you surpass yourself and my patience. Quit acting like a damned fool. No wonder you can never find a woman. You don't have any pecker sense."

LeRoy didn't say anything for fear that he would only make Shirley worse.

"Did you smell that scotch on old hound dogs breath?" Shirley asked. "While you were inside stuffing your face, I canvassed out their Lincoln. Not one, but two bottles of Johnny Walker Red were under the passenger’s seat. What we've got to find out is this: Are they really from the insurance company or are they hired detectives?"

LeRoy's face became one big smile. Shirley shook his head. "Sometimes, LeRoy – even as hard as you work, you come across as a dim-witted fool. Don't go scaring me with any more bad information. I get enough of that from my wife and your mother's gossip."

"Boss, Boss, Boss," LeRoy said. "Do you want me to take a lot of the stuff you have bought in the last six months out to one of the barns on yours and Miss Clarissa's farm?"
Shirley rolled his eyes. “No, no, Jitterbug. I don’t want you to move anything.”

Shirley motioned for LeRoy to follow him down to the trailer. “For all they know, I am a respectable businessman – I’m not going to tell them anything to the contrary.” Shirley stopped at the back of the trailer. “Well, well, I guess they opened the back doors and had a look for themselves. That’s good. They can start at the same place that the freight drivers did – at Sidling Creek.” Shirley waited while he made sure that LeRoy was paying attention. “LeRoy, I, I need your help. I need you to do something for me that is a life and death situation.”

Without talking his eyes off LeRoy, Shirley reached into his shirt pocket and pulled out a Phillies cheroot. He handed it to LeRoy who smiled like a little kid, unrolled the cellophane, and wetted the end. Shirley struck a match and eased it up to the blunt end. “You know, these two insurance investigators are here,” he said, “so they can cheat me out of my wrecker money. LeRoy, if I don’t get my money, then I can’t pay you.”

Shirley put his right hand on LeRoy’s shoulder. “I know, Boss,” LeRoy said. “You’ve got to watch G-Men like that. They’ll do you in every time, bung hole and all.”

Shirley shook his head slowly. “That’s right. They’ll try and get out of the wrecker bill, saying I wasn’t officially told by the insurance company to pull the wreck out of the creek. Son, it will be on me then. I’ll be out the money for the work that we did.”

LeRoy started to stammer, but Shirley cut him off.

“LeRoy,” Shirley groaned, “you’ve got to tell these investigators everything – everything in your own words.” Shirley was nodding his head as if he was saying yes.
LeRoy had to look at Shirley twice.

"And, I mean everything, LeRoy. You can’t hold anything back. It would be a sin not to tell them everything that the Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Squad did that day." Shirley let that sink in. "You men were heroes. Going out into that snowstorm. And Ben Hogans, and his boys – I haven’t seen that much courage since D-Day. Damn, it’s what the Twenty-Ninth is all about!"

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

When he stopped cackling, LeRoy answered: "I do, do. I do."

"Yes, you do," Shirley stated. "Tell them how cold it was. How the tractor and trailer were blocking the roadway for four days." With LeRoy going on full speed, Shirley stepped back a couple of feet. "God forbid, LeRoy. We couldn’t leave that dead trucker out there, could we? For everyone that came by to see him. We are bound by a code of honor in the Fire and Rescue business. We have to carry our dead home."

"I know, Boss, it’s a heavy burden," LeRoy answered. "I’m working on all the articles from the newspaper. I’ve even got the newspaper from Berkeley Springs. Them West Virginia folks love a good story."

"Good, good, good!" Then: "Here," Shirley said, pulling out a cigar, "take another cheroot. And don’t forget, you’ve got to tell them everything that you know – and don’t leave nothing out, because it’s important to all of us. If you want to, you can show them the Company book on all our missions. That ought to impress them."
LeRoy left work early before the April sun had set. He shaved, put on a clean, white shirt and pressed jeans, and even washed his hair three times trying to get out all the grease and diesel fumes. He tamed its unruliness by smoothing on some creamy Wildroot tonic to give it that Pelvis Pompadour look, doing the usual flip so the curl would fall down in the front. Clean all the way down to his toenails, he went as far as polishing his worn-out boots, wishing that he could have bought another pair—a pair of engineer boots, like the ones his father had worn on the railroad. On the back porch, LeRoy stared at the blue outline of Fire Tower Mountain and waited for the G-Men to start knocking before he put out his Marlboro.

"Hello, hello. I'm Cora Ann Clough, LeRoy's mother. Do come in."

"Glad to meet you," a man's voice said. "This is Marley Krebs. And I am Stewart Brittingham. We are investigators for Cleveland Fire and Casualty Company."

LeRoy walked through the dark kitchen and into the small hallway. Partly hidden, he watched the two men. Marley Krebs had a big smile on his flushed, red face. He was wearing dark rimmed glasses with his ever-ready smile. The younger agent was standing back, listening to his partner.

"Your husband?" Brittingham asked, picking up a framed picture.

"Late husband," Mrs. Clough answered.

"I'm sorry to hear that," Brittingham responded quickly.
"You don’t get too lonely, I hope," Marley Krebs said. He winked. "Why, a woman with your looks doesn’t need to be lonely, you know."

Mrs. Clough laughed. "Don’t worry about me," she said. "Lord knows, I’m not lonely. I have church, and I have LeRoy. We have family all over the valley."

Since leaving the Truck Stop, Brittingham and Krebs had changed into slick, dress coats. They were here to do business.

"LeRoy, oh LeRoy," Mrs. Clough called. "There you are. These nice men are here to see you."

LeRoy walked over and shook their hands, offering them the couch with a green chenille spread over it. "Did you have any trouble finding us?" he asked. He turned and eased himself back into a rocker.

"No problem at all," the younger investigator replied. "There are not that many houses out here. This is sure enough the back country."

Marley Krebs covered his mouth with his right hand. "I bet you drink a lot of scotch in the wintertime," he said. "Mrs. Clough, do you ever cut a rug?"

"Mr. Krebs, it has been a while," she laughed. "I’m probably as rusty as an old tin roof. I’d need some oiling up."

Marley Krebs winked at her. "Well, we could take care of that."

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

LeRoy’s chuckles got the whole room’s attention. Stewart Brittingham unzipped a leather briefcase.

"We want you to know that we will not keep you long this evening," Brittingham began. "But for us to fully investigate what happened here back in January, we need to
understand everything that went on. That’s why we decided to talk to you first, LeRoy. You were one of the first rescuers to get to the wreck. Isn’t that correct?”

Marley Krebs stared over at LeRoy. “I know you can help us,” he joined in smoothly. “You’re a down to earth kind-of-guy, and you will pretty much tell us what took place, without lying to us. We know most folks around here are God-fearing – we can see that.”

Brittingham started writing down notes with a shiny fountain pen. “It’s no secret – and I’m not accusing anyone when I say this – that practically everyone associated with this wreck thinks that the freight was stolen outright.”


“Well, I hate to point it out, but there isn’t much money around here. You’ve got a lot of poor miners and hard luck farmers eating fatback and lard biscuits just to survive. Anybody around here could use a washtub of beans to get them through the next couple of years. Do you see my point? It might be a lot of gas from the old buttocks, but it will keep you alive.”

“You can’t go around arresting folks for picking salvage up off the ground, especially when half of it is floating down the creek,” LeRoy said. “The Maryland crabs will be good this year for all the beans that will wash down the Potomac.”

Marley Krebs had his ballpoint pen up to his lips. “Answer me this, then: How could that river down there…” he said, pointing south, “carry anything that large, especially in plastic bags, all bound up in paper. Now, that’s a mystery to me.”
LeRoy’s face turned red. He hated G-Men who thought that they had all the answers.

“You don’t know how the Potomac can get when the spring rains come,” LeRoy’s mother broke in. “It melts all the winter snow and washes the topsoil from the land. I’ve seen the Potomac when it’s 30 feet above its banks, taking out all the railroad bridges. How do you think it chewed itself through these mountains? Every spring, the rains takes what it wants, and God leaves us to make do with what’s left over. I guess you don’t have a big river in Cleveland?”

Everyone except LeRoy joined in the laughter. Marley Krebs opened his briefcase and began thumbing through some paperwork he had, studying one particular yellow-colored piece of paper.

“Is that yours?” Stewart Brittingham asked Mrs. Clough, pointing to a plastic record player sitting on a small table. In the corner, the record player sat all by itself.

“Boy, that sure is a lot of 45s.” The stack of records must have been a foot high.


Seeing LeRoy with a big smile on his face, Marley Krebs jumped into the conversation. “LeRoy, I took you for a Be-Bop Swinger in your younger days. You know, Sinatra, Mel Torme, and a little big band. Don’t tell me you’re a dancer, now?”

“No, no, no, no,” LeRoy started stuttering. “I like Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, and do-whop.”
Krebs frowned. "Kids’ stuff. They’ll never make it. Rock ‘n roll is just a phase the country is going through. Now, if you ask me, swing and jazz, that’s where it’s at. Good music, a little dinner and dance, and a good mixed drink. That’s what the good life is all about. Tell him, Mrs. Clough, tell him about how life was good right after the W-W-Two."

Mrs. Clough crossed her legs. "Well, I don’t know, Mr. Krebs. Everything seemed to settle down after our boys came back from Europe and the Far East. LeRoy was in high school right before Korea and played a baritone in the high school band. He was actually quite good. But now, I think all this rock n’ roll makes him crazy. I told him it was the devil."

"So you played the baritone in a marching band. I bet that was something. Big man with a big horn on his shoulder. Too bad you don’t have it right here – we’d let you play for us."

LeRoy began stuttering. "No, no, no, I lost my lips years ago. Besides I don’t like Big Band no more." He started to get up from the platform rocker. "Do you want to hear some Elvis? How about Great Balls of Fire? Or, Lucille by Leather Lungs, Little Richard? I got Hound Dog right there on top of the stack?"

"Hold on there, Cowboy," Marley Krebs said, pointing the ballpoint pen at him. "Don’t get up on my account. We’ve got an investigation to run."

Stewart Brittingham leaned forward. "Well, we’ve had plenty of time to get to know you," he said. "Now LeRoy, I want you to tell me exactly what happened."

"Before you start, I’ll go put on some percolator coffee," Mrs. Clough said. "I have some calls to make to my friends."
She got up from the big, easy chair, her frame as thin as a reed. Out of politeness, none of them spoke until they could hear her working in the kitchen.

“Hey, LeRoy,” Hound Dog said, whispering loudly. In the background they could hear the water running in the sink. “Do you want to work a little behind the scenes for Cleveland Fire and Casualty?”

“What, be a, be a detective? Oh, boy!”

It was hard for either of them to keep a straight face.

LeRoy saw himself as David Jansen, the private eye in the *Richard Diamond* television series. He was wearing a dress hat and an overcoat and it was misty and raining as he strolled down the street corners of America. In this episode he was on the trail of a group of smugglers down at the seaport. All of the girls loved him, especially the leggy telephone operator, Mary Tyler Moore. LeRoy bent forward. “You wouldn’t tell anyone, would you?”

“No,” Marley Krebs replied. “No, I won’t even tell your mother. It will be our little secret.”

“Buddy boy, what do you want me to do? Do I get paid?”

“God, you can’t be a detective without getting paid,” Marley Krebs told him. “All I want is the truth – from the inside. You can get that for us. I bet you know everything.”

LeRoy began thinking about the proposition. He couldn’t help but think about Jasmine up in Cumberland. Now, she could run a deal. Still, Shirley might find out. But how? LeRoy wasn’t going to tell him.
Sticking his hand up to his mouth, Marley Krebs whispered, “You give us good inside information, and I mean the truth about this truck wreck, and I will give you twenty dollars for starters.”

“What, what, what did you say?”

“Don’t be a greedy detective,” Krebs said. “I’ll give you twenty bucks to begin investigating, and money over the next few days. When we leave, I’ll give you my telephone number, so we can keep in touch. I can already see that you will be a big help to us.”

LeRoy couldn’t believe his ears. With twenty dollars, he could buy that pair of engineer boots with the silver buckle and the safety toe that he wanted from Jasmine Bright’s shoe store up in Cumberland.

“And to show you how serious we are, here’s the money right now.” Krebs got up slowly, moved over towards the coffee table, and handed LeRoy the money in a folded wad. LeRoy wanted to laugh, but he knew that his voice would alert his mother in the kitchen. He covered his mouth with his hand and slid the bills into his jeans.

“See, I knew you would help us,” Marley Krebs laughed.

“For starters, what time did you get to the wreck?” Brittingham asked.

LeRoy thought for a second: “It had to be after one,” LeRoy answered. “Bobby Pyle and me left the Firehouse well after noon in the Lorry. The way things were going, it had to be half past one when we got to Sidling Creek Bridge.”

“Lorry?” Marley Krebs asked. “Like a British Lorry?”

“Yes,” LeRoy answered. “It was an old British Army Ambulance that was given to the Firehouse by the British Embassy in the early 50’s. War surplus or something?”
"Then what happened?" Brittingham asked. "Is that Bobby P-Y-L-E?"

"Pyle," LeRoy replied. "He's a new man who lives above the truck stop next to the Pennsylvania Stateline."

"Go ahead - we want to hear whatever you have to tell us," Stewart Brittingham said. "You never know when it might come in handy, especially when dealing with a man like this Shirley character."

"Did you take any beans, LeRoy?" Marley Krebs asked.

"No, I didn't," LeRoy replied. "And I don't know anyone else who got any beans except those two old women who have been scraping the ground by the creek bed."

"See, you don't have anything to worry about," Marley Krebs said. "You are free and clear. So, anything you tell us will just be facts, and not any guilt or innocence on your part."

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

"Was it a lot of trouble getting to the wreck?"

"My Lord, it was awful," LeRoy replied. "With the black ice and everything! Th, th, th, the place was a mess when Bobby and me got to Sidling Creek. The Major had just gotten there - Major Ben Hogans."

LeRoy looked up to see if they were still listening. He noticed that Marley Krebs wrote down very little, just watched LeRoy with his dark, smoky eyes.

"Were the doors to the trailer ever opened?" Brittingham asked.

LeRoy started scratching the back of his head. "There was no need," he answered. "The beans and bags - even the big paper wrappings, they were all over the creek bed. Snow was blowing everywhere. You could see bags of beans, paper and
plastic bags for at least a hundred yards back up the side of Route 40 where the tractor and trailer had first started to hit the trees.”

“Whew, sounds bad to me,” Marley Krebs said, staring up at Mrs. Clough who was carrying a tray of cups and saucers. On a red-checkered tea towel, she had neatly placed a can of evaporated milk and a box of sugar blocks.

“Just when we needed some relief,” Marley Krebs said, smiling. “You can come over to my house and cook any time you want to.”

Mrs. Clough laughed and walked back for the kitchen. The three men took turns fixing their coffee. For LeRoy, that was lots of sugar and Pet Milk coming over the sides of the cup. He even slurped the coffee from the saucer.

“You say that there was freight all over the creek and the side of the road?” Brittingham asked. “How did that happen? Did the limbs of the tree crack the trailer open?”

“Jus, jus, jus, just, just beyond the end of the bridge,” LeRoy stuttered, “there is a big beech on the left side of the bank. The truck hit the beech, and it was lying over on its side, down into – into the creek, when we got there. I suppose, that’s how all the bundles and bean bags got thrown down onto the ice and snow.”

“Oh,” Stewart Brittingham murmured. “You being a mechanic can probably figure this one out: how much of the freight would you say was outside of the trailer?”

“Well, that’s hard to figure,” LeRoy answered. “But, it looked like most of the load was either in the creek bed or strewn along the side of the road.”

“Was the road blocked?” Marley Krebs asked.
"Part of the east bound lane was," LeRoy said. "But, but the road over Fire Tower Mountain was closed. It was snowing so hard you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. The road was covered with a foot of snow. Everyone was worried about getting back home. Man, things were closing in fast, so fast a man could freeze to death if he stayed out there. We got the dead trucker back to the Firehouse just in time."

"So you don't know what happened after you left?" he added.

"Major Hogans was in charge of the rescue," LeRoy told them. "I'm just a Lieutenant driver on the rescue team."

"Really," Marley Krebs said. "Well, I guess that we're talking to Lieutenant Clough here."

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

"Why didn't the Sheriff call the Truck Stop?" Stewart Brittingham interjected. "For a wrecker, I mean?"

"It, it was Sunday morning. The Truck Stop is closed on Sundays. I guess, all that we could hope for, was to get the trucker out - alive."

"Were the doors ever opened?"

LeRoy shook his head. "There was a lock on the side door and the back door. Both doors also had those silver, aluminum tapes on them. Those tapes were never tampered with until the two freight drivers came here from Wheeling, West Virginia. Shirley made me make sure that nobody bothered the wreck until he got his wrecker money."

"I'm going to ask you an important question," Krebs said. "Where around here could you hide that amount of beans, I mean, if you had stolen them?"
LeRoy grinned. "Well, if I was going to hide something, I’d use one of the railroad tunnels – like Indigo Tunnel down by the Canal House. It’s a mile through the mountain. It’s creepy down on that river, especially at night. A man can be taken to glory before he knows it. I’d wouldn’t go down there unless I had somebody to look out for me. There’s sink holes all over the place."

Krebs laughed. "It’s a river, boy. It’s a river. You should see the Great Lakes when a storm whips up.”

“I noticed today that your Boss was pretty upset over this wreck,” Stewart Brittingham said. “Is he that worried about his wrecker money?”

“That’s pretty much it,” LeRoy laughed. “He guards every dollar he makes. Ruthie says that Shirley Yarrow has the first dollar he ever made.”

“And once you moved the wreck to the Truck Stop, no one ever bothered it?” Krebs asked.

“Nope, not one soul. Duke and I been keeping an eye on it ever since it got there.”

Marley Krebs laughed that deep, throaty laugh. "Who keeps an eye on you, Mr. LeRoy?"

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

"Nobody. Why, who keeps an eye on you, Mr. Hound Dog?"

“My wife, LeRoy. She won’t even let me go around the corner for a beer,” Krebs said. “She tries to keep me from getting in a good dance every now and then.” Then he whispered, “Hey, LeRoy, who does Ruthie go with?”
“I don’t know,” LeRoy answered. “You got to watch out, though. Her ex-husband is as crazy as a bed bug. Sometimes he used to hang around the Truck Stop waiting for Ruthie to get off work. A couple of times, Shirley had to call Sheriff Reimes.”

“What?” Marley Krebs put his hand up to his mouth. “You tell her, if she wants to go dancing and have a good time, then I’m at the Riverbluff Motel in Hancock, right by the bridge that goes over to West Virginia. Well, I guess we’ve taken enough of you and your mother’s time,” he added, talking loud enough so that Mrs. Clough would hear him. “Thank your mother for the coffee and her hospitality. I guess we need to know where this Major Hogans lives?”

The two investigators got up. LeRoy sat his empty coffee cup down, and opened the door. “Hey, come back anytime,” he called out. “My mother and I were glad you stopped by.”

On the small porch, Marley Krebs said, “Now remember, you work for us now. Anything, anything at all, that you can remember, will certainly help us out.”

As they walked down the steps, LeRoy called after him: “You can count on me. Just don’t tell anyone, that I’m working for you and the G-Men.”

“It’s our secret,” Brittingham laughed. “It’s just between us guys.”
Next day, LeRoy crested the last high mountain and drove down into the railroad and river town of Cumberland, Maryland. Drooping low, heavy clouds pressed in against the sides of the steep mountains. Using back streets, LeRoy drove Route 40’s Truck Route passing through hillside streets that had torrents of gushing rain pouring from them. Down in the middle of town by the railroad tracks, he turned right onto Potomac Street heading west then stopped his Ford pickup on the left side of the street next to the railroad yard. Getting out, he crossed the street, dodging deep puddles of water. Feeling goose bumps on his bare arms, he looked up at the big, flat sign above the glass-fronted doorway: *Carney Town Shoe Store*. Under that was: *A shoe for every foot — with a second hand price!  Jasmine Bright, Proprietor.*

Opening the glass door, LeRoy was greeted by the sounds of little shrill bells and his nose was overwhelmed by the warm smell of leather and hard rubber. The store was empty. Now, in her late 40s and sporting a few extra pounds, Jasmine Bright was stocking shelves with two older black women in the rear. Besides selling new shoes and boots with a repair shop, the two adjacent rooms were filled with aisles of outlet shoes, that weren’t perfect but still serviceable. Usually, the imperfection was a stitch out of place or extra sewing on a toe to patch up a mistake. Nonetheless, Jasmine’s footwear was good enough to take care of your foot.
"Well, well, well, look what the cat just drug in," she called. "Long time no see, stranger – what has it been, four, maybe five months? What did you come for: your birthday present?"

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

LeRoy walked between the rows of shoes. He wanted a Marlboro, but when he reached for one, he had left them in the truck.

Jasmine was tall and big-boned, her jet-black hair sprinkled with gray. "Hey, cowboy," she said, "it's not good for you too stay away from your favorite gypsy too long." She turned around and spoke to the two older women, who were staring at her. "Why don't you two girls go in the back and take those new shoes out of that big box we just got in? If you're hungry, go and get some lunch. Things are slow today."

The two women stopped what they were doing and walked through a curtain into a back room.

"Shhhhh. They're both church-ladies," Jasmine said, turning around to LeRoy. "You've got to respect their suspicions – you know what I mean." She looked at him with soft, brown-black eyes, her long dress flowing with every move her tall body made. "So, cowboy, what brings a trucking man like you to Cumberland? I can smell the diesel fuel and the wind in your sails. You must be up to something. That's what happens when you stay away too long. You start forgetting what it feels like. Huh? Remember when we ran away to Chattanooga, Tennessee? Remember when we went up on top of Lookout Mountain and saw all those lights down in the city. We stayed at those little cottages high above the Tennessee River. Huh? What you need is some pure Carney fun, like we used to have."
Heh, heh, heh, heh.

LeRoy was laughing so hard tears streamed down onto his cheeks. God! He loved her when she did this to him. Hellfire, he wouldn’t have liked it any better if Jasmine had told his fortune for free.

“Baby, I saw your girlfriend, last Sunday,” Jasmine told him. “She was at the Presbyterian Church, walking all by herself.” She stopped, waiting for LeRoy’s attention. “That Lizanne’s a pretty woman, but she don’t know how to treat a man – I always told you that. Too much good taste. To keep a man, a woman has got to know how to cook sawmill gravy, fry eggs in the oven, and roll butter-milk biscuits. A man don’t like good taste, he likes a woman who tastes good!” She smiled.

“Jazz, Jazz, Jazz, she never could do much for me. I didn’t like it,” he said, lying. He had met Lizanne at a church social in Cumberland six years ago. He was twenty-four, well past his prime dating years, and she was twenty-three, fearing that she was going to be a spinster for the rest of her life. After a year of hand-holding, they discovered that both of them liked sex, and LeRoy stole rubbers from his boss’s hidden room. Jasmine finally told him about Lizanne meeting up with this US senator’s aide one weekend in LaVale, Maryland, up the gorge from Cumberland. LeRoy looked on his Farmer’s Almanac and decided that that was the same weekend she said she was going to see her aunt down in Hot Springs, Virginia. A little hurt, he didn’t bother to return her telephone calls because, as he came to realize, he hadn’t been quite honest with her, either. “She never talked to me the way you do,” LeRoy continued. “You know how you get me going?”
"Now, LeRoy, don't lie to Madam Fortune," Jasmine laughed. "I've never had any bad sex - have you?" Madam Fortune was one of Jasmine's Carney names that she used when she read palms. It made her sound like she was a real gypsy from Europe.

"I, I, I, I, I, I don't know," he answered. "But some I could do without - like Lizanne."

Jasmine cocked her head sideways, smiling. "I told you, it's all in the foot. You massage a man's foot, and it will give him fits. Baby, you should let me try it on you sometimes? Like I used to do back in the carnival?" The top button on LeRoy's faded blue shirt was open, and the gypsy reached in and pulled a thumb full from the curly mass.

"Oooooouch," LeRoy shouted. "That hurts. Now, now, now, don't be messing with me, now, gypsy girl."

Jasmine looked irritated. "All right, all right, I know what you came for. It wasn't for me, I know. They're over in the next room. I've been saving them for you."

"Hey, girl, I got some detective money," LeRoy said. "I'm doing some detective work on the side."

"You didn't quit your job at the Truck Stop, did you?" she asked. "Madam Fortune still talks to Ruthie once in a while. Don't worry, I'll never tell her that you come here for my special treatments, especially for your back and feet. You'd better watch out, though, I'm going to find you a wildcat some day. Working on trucks will be way down on your list of priorities."

The only wildcat that LeRoy had ever gone with was Jazz, and that was years ago. He would have had her around all the time, but his mother was always complaining,
especially since he was a man who always went to church on Sundays. “Lord no,” he answered. “I’d never quit the Truck Stop – I’m too much of a sucker for a diesel engine and a blue plate special.”

“Detective money,” the gypsy said. “Now, that’s a switch for even you. Sometimes, cowboy, I don’t know what to think about you. Don’t worry, I’ve got them right over here. Engineer boots, for a railroad man.” She pointed in the direction of the other room where the blue plastic curtains were hanging on a sliding rod. “You’re going to be the cock-of-the-walk when you slip these babies on. They’re going to make you look hard, like a working man.”

They walked across the red and white checked linoleum floor that sounded in LeRoy’s ears like a tight-skinned drum and into the other room. At the curtained doorway, he stopped, looking at the hundreds of pairs of working footwear.

“They’re right over here,” she said. “They haven’t moved since you were here last fall – I’ve been dusting them off regularly.”

LeRoy stepped up and took one of the big engineer boots off the rack. They were exactly like the ones his father and uncle had worn on the railroad – black with a shiny steel buckle and a safety toe.

“With all this detective money that you are making, I don’t know whether I should charge you more or not,” she said, laughing. “Oh, don’t worry, I’m still going to give them to you for $29.95 – and for these boots, that’s a steal.”

“Jazz, Jazz, can I try them on – like last year?” LeRoy asked, trying not to stutter, his eyelashes batting uncontrollably. “Can I, please, before I have to buy them?”
“Come, my boy, come,” the gypsy breathed deeply. “Come over here and sit in one of these chairs. Let Madam Fortune size you up.”

LeRoy grabbed both of the heavy black boots and followed her to a row of wine-colored chairs with chrome arms. She drew up one of the foot-measuring stools and straddled the low seat as if it were a saddle on a horse. Then she pulled her long dress up between her legs so LeRoy could put his foot up there.

“I’d better measure it first, to make sure you are buying the right size,” she said. “Let me have your right foot, cowboy.”

Madam Fortune smiled, taking the flat silver foot-measure, laying it on top of the incline before her. LeRoy pulled off his shabby old leather boot that was broken over on its sides. He had washed his feet this morning and put on clean white socks. He gingerly put the white foot up on the incline seeing the inside of her thighs and her pink underwear with her hair poking through. “You know, LeRoy,” she said, “I used to travel all over, as I’ve told you before. When I was a young woman, my mother taught me how to read palms and tell fortunes, how to please men.” Jasmine stared into LeRoy’s batting eyelashes. “I wish I had a dollar for every man that I had met, that didn’t know what to do with himself, especially when they were down on their luck.” LeRoy could see up between her big long legs.

Jasmine brushed back her grayish, black hair. “My mother always told me, you show me a woman who knows what a man wants, and I’ll show you a woman without a hem in her dress, doing what the church don’t want her to do. Please yourself first, she would say.”
It had been many, many years, but LeRoy had heard all of this before. When Madam Fortune got like this, LeRoy couldn’t help but feel uneasy in her presence. Why was she always after something, trying to get inside of his brain?

Madam Fortune smiled, taking the flat, silver foot-measure and moving it to the top of the incline before her pink panties. LeRoy felt a sudden rush of blood to his face.

“You’re a little tense, cowboy,” she said, breathing hard. “Let me massage the bottom of it before I measure it.”

LeRoy turned his head to both side to make sure that no one was watching.

Grabbing his jeans, she started massaging him until it started feeling wet. “Come on now, baby, work with me,” she said. “Baby, we had such good times together. Remember? I certainly do.” Jazz was rubbing and smoothing it hard now.

Moaning, LeRoy turned his head from side to side, making sure that no one was watching. What would he do if someone saw him and Madam Fortune like this? What would the gossip say if it got back to Lizanne and his mother? His mother would accuse him of fornicating with a devil-woman. And Shirley would be teasing him for sneaking around.

“Work with me now, baby,” she said again. “Those boots will be coming in a minute. You’ve got to let me have my way. You know how good it feels, when mama takes the baby in her hands.”

LeRoy closed his eyes, continuing to gasp for breath. He felt like hot putty in Madam Fortune’s muscular fingers – turning him to hot saltwater taffy until the explosion of sweetness filled his brain.
“Shhh! Put yourself up, LeRoy, before someone comes in and catches you. You’ll be the town per-vert.”

LeRoy was sweating hard. He was feeling Jasmine with one hand and rubbing himself with the other. “I can’t. I can’t. It feels too good. Please let me be.”

After a few dark, swirling moments, LeRoy could feel Madam Fortune take his right foot and lay it on the foot machine. On the silver slide, Madam Fortune ran the two metal knobs, first down from the top until it met the nail, and secondly, from the side until it was firmly against the joint of the big toe.

“13 D,” she said. “LeRoy, you ought to be in the circus. You know what they say about men with big feet?”

“What?”

“I ought to call the other two women in here to look at your feet,” she threatened. “They’d be talking about you on Sunday in church.” She kept laughing until one of the older women stuck her head in through the curtain, to see what was going on. Madam Fortune’s big breasts were heaving so much with laughter that she could not tell the woman what was happening. Still gasping for air, she took the tall, black boots from the stand besides the chairs. Sitting them in front of LeRoy, she handed first the right boot, then the left, watching him pull them on.

LeRoy stood straight, staring at the big boots in a slanted floor mirror. They gleamed like dancing slippers in the mirror that only showed the body from the knees down. He smelled the fresh, tanned leather. Boots like these were on the order of a fine perfume. They made a man a man; and more importantly, they told those who saw him what he did for a living. LeRoy liked the way the boots made him stand tall, and the way
the buckle wrapped itself across the top of the foot ending up on the side of each boot reminding him of a cinch on a saddle. With a two-inch heel that curved downwards, these boots made him feel he was shouting out loud and clear that the man inside wasn’t going anyplace, except to work.

He looked around at the row upon row, and rack upon rack of shoes and boots, some dusty, some so odd that LeRoy wouldn’t have worn them if he was going to be doing the jitterbug. A few pairs appeared to be reaching back into the early 50s and 40s. Shoes that LeRoy called zoot-suit shoes, high-heeled sneakers, and a few pair of military boots from Korea and World War II, brown paratrooper cap-toes and Tommy-gun boots that had a top flap with two buckles that wrapped around the shins. It was a cathouse for shoes, a cradle of love for the foot; Madam Fortune could accommodate all shapes, sizes and colors. One last time, LeRoy stared at his boots. This was the first time in his life that he had bought first class.

In a far off world beyond the curtain, he heard the little bell on the front door sound.

"Is there anything else, I can take care of?" Madam Fortune asked, eyeing the curtain. "Hey, cowboy, any time that you want to spend some of that detective money, let me know. Madam Fortune will find a way to please you – you know that? Just don’t stay away too long."

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

Seeing the same woman come from the other room, LeRoy said: "Now you’ve taken all my money from me. But a detective like me can always get more."
“Come here, trucker,” Jasmine said. “Let me see that hand. When are you going to wash that thing?”

Jazz was laughing like old times in the carnival. “You need to come see me more often.”

LeRoy eased up to the gypsy with his right hand outstretched. She took it and started rubbing the heavy calloused palm. "See, I told you," she said. "There’s another gypsy coming after you. One day, mark my words, a real wildcat will show and tear the shirt off your back!"

LeRoy started laughing like a fool. He wanted Jazz to tell him more, pump him up again.

Jasmine winked at LeRoy. The curtain parted and the older black woman with graying hair stared at both of them, as if they were hiding something. Leaving his old boots on the linoleum floor just where he had dropped them, LeRoy was ready to bolt out of there and head back to the Route 40 Pure Oil.

“Hey, before you leave the countryside, we need to take care of that $29.95 and give the governor his two cents,” the big gypsy woman called out to him. “That will keeps him in Annapolis and away from us law-abiding folks out here in the mountains.”

A happy man now, LeRoy couldn’t have agreed more. Keep the governor in Annapolis with the beans, the beer and the Maryland blue crabs.
Chapter VI

"God is Great…"

When Ruthie came over to the garage in a pink skirt and white blouse, LeRoy was changing the fuel filter on a White Freightliner, up to his elbows in diesel fuel and grease. Frowning at her, he wondered why Shirley hadn't called him on the party line in the garage. Mindful of the fact that he had promised his nephew that he would eat lunch with him at the elementary school, he didn't want to promise to do any more special details. He had to also ask Shirley for some time off this afternoon to escort Brittingham and Krebs down to the Indigo Tunnel on the old C&O Canal.

Passing the cash register, LeRoy listened momentarily to a soft ballad by the Ames Brothers that was dreamily drifting out of the jukebox. In the middle booth, a couple of haggard-looking truckers were on the verge of falling asleep in their plates. LeRoy sidestepped Buster French and went into the rear office. He picked up the private telephone hidden in a desk drawer.

"Hello, Boss, LeRoy here."

"LeRoy, my boy, how's it going?"

"All right, I guess. You down at the Canal House?"

"Yes, yes I am. LeRoy, I need you to do something for me. I just found out that the Uncle Sam welfare truck is going to be at the Truck Stop this afternoon."

"You mean the miners’ truck?" LeRoy asked.
Shirley was puffing on a cigar. “Yep. They’re going to be giving out government cheese and oleomargarine. They might also have some military beef in number ten cans.”

LeRoy yawned. “No, kidding, food,” he answered. “I think I read something about that in the Cumberland newspaper, yesterday.”

“Now, here’s what I want you to do,” Shirley said. “I don’t want them parking on the restaurant side of the Truck Stop, so let them park over by the Pure Oil sign. Okay?”

“Yes, Boss,” LeRoy said. “Boss, I got to go…”

“And, here’s what else you do,” Shirley broke in. “About the time they start to pack up and leave, you go over and tell the state agent that we feed a lot of free blue plate specials to the local folks and destitute truck drivers.”

“What? Do you want me to give them some free blue plate specials?”

Shirley was thinking on the other end, puffing deeply on his cigar. “That’s not a bad idea. When they come, tell Ruthie to take them out a pork chop dinner with some of Buster’s cathead biscuits. Some fried apples ought to get them to thinking. Before they pull out, see if you can’t get us some free cheese and butter.”

Silence. “Boss, I ain’t any good at begging.”

“Dammitt, LeRoy, I know you’re not a begging man. But your family, like mine, was miners. Son, we’re always feeding some poor soul that is trying to get up and down the road. Do you think that President Kennedy worries about a hungry truck driver, like we do? Not on your life. LeRoy, we got to take care of our own. Trucking and Route 40 Pure Oil are all we got. Remember that. Besides, the Kennedy’s are rich.”
"Well, well, well, yes, Boss," LeRoy stammered. "But, Boss, my family never begged – no welfare for us. We'd rather go hungry."

"LeRoy, son, it isn't begging," Shirley hollered. "It's CYA. It's surviving. Now do what I'm telling you to do. We're only going to get stronger, if we take care of our own. How do you think I know all this?"

"I, I, I, I, I don't know, Boss. Really, I don't know."

"Because I was the best Supply Technical Sergeant in the 29th Division," Shirley told him. "If a Top Kick First Sergeant or a Commander needed something, then they came to me. I could have traded the Jerries out of the Remegen Bridge, if they'd let me negotiate." Stopping, Shirley put the cigar back into his mouth, starting to puff. "Just listen to what I tell you to do, and you will be just fine. I want that damned food in the freezer."


Creeping its way past Buster French's kitchen and into the back office, the sounds of Elvis singing *GI Blues* could be loudly heard from the Wurlitzer Jukebox.

"LeRoy, have you got that damned jukebox turned up all the way?"

"Boss, it ain't that loud," LeRoy said. "I know, Boss, I know, it's not your kind of music."

"LeRoy, I can hear that jukebox all the way down to the Potomac," Shirley said, loudly. "Turn that thing down. I'm surprised Ruthie hasn't told you already."

"She told me, Boss," LeRoy told him. "I was just getting ready to do it when you called. I'll do it in a couple of minutes." He knew Shirley was about to hang up. "Boss,
Boss, the G-Men asked me to go to Indigo Tunnel with them this afternoon. I’m a
detective - ”

“What? What did you say? What do a couple of flatfoots want to go inside of a
mile-long tunnel for? It’s cold, wet and full of snakes.”

“Because yesterday, when I was thinking, I wanted to get them two bird dogs off
our trail,” LeRoy explained. “I figured that going to Indigo Tunnel would take the better
part of a day. Boss, they got to get out of here in a couple of days. These G-Men aren’t
going to find anything in a dark hole in the side of a mountain, believe me.”

“Hellfire and damnation. Next time you start thinking, let me know first. There
are times – I wouldn’t take a million dollars for you, but right now, I wouldn’t want
another one, either. Jesus H. Christ! LeRoy, you know that good, sipping moonshine that
I’m always talking about, that I’m always telling everyone that is made over on the West
Virginia side of the Potomac.”

“You mean the stuff you sell from under the counter. Un-huh.”

“Well, it’s made right here in good, old Western Maryland – on this side of the
Potomac River,” Shirley said.

“Where?”

“Well, that’s the sixty-four million dollar question,” Shirley answered. “Some of
it is made in parts of the tunnel, so Sheriff Reimes doesn’t have to see it. He gets a gallon
when he needs it. That makes him happy.”

“You’re burning a fire and cooking a still in a tunnel filled with water?”

“Oh, no, no. I have a flat rail car that we covered with steel plates and bricks,”
Shirley told him. “I can move it in or out with a farm tractor. It’s easy, my boy. We
move it over the old rails during the night, going all the way down towards Hancock.”

Shirley was laughing now. “I told you I was the best damned supply sergeant in the blue and gray. I learned everything I know about the supply business in the Division over in Europe.”

The telephone went silent. Shirley began hollering at a couple of folks that were at the bar in the Canal House.

“Boss, Boss, what are we going to do?” LeRoy asked. “I, I, I, I, I don’t want to get shot by one of them bootleggers, and I ain’t going to go looking for a bunch of beans either for these two stuffed shirts.”

“For one thing, I don’t want you do anything, but be your normal self. You stall them. If you bring them down here before three o’clock, I will wring your neck like a chicken bone. Now, listen very carefully—”

“Yes, yes, yes Boss—”

“You bring them down Little Orleans Road about three. You pass by the Canal House and drive them under the old concrete bridge,” Shirley told him. “Then you tell the skinny one that the best place to park out of the way, is up on the hill right above Little Orleans Landing. Are we good, so far?”

“You mean where the aqueduct goes under the canal and the old railroad tracks? I got it, Boss.”

“When you get them to park, make sure they aren’t any trees between them and the river. After that, you walk with them down the old B&O Railroad bed to where the tunnel starts. You let me take care of the rest. And, LeRoy,” Shirley said. “If you start
thinking again, without calling me, you'd better bring some rope down here to hang
yourself."

For the better part of the next hour, LeRoy filled a new battery with acid and
installed it into a Mack dump truck. Then he hurriedly fixed a flat on the Fruehauf trailer
pulled by an International tractor. Before someone started looking for him, he cleaned up
at the wash sink, face, hair and elbows included. While Dude was topping off a Mack
Bulldog down at the pumps, LeRoy pulled his pickup next to the pumps and shouted out
that he was going to eat lunch with his nephew at the elementary school. Seeing the
diesel fuel ooze down the side of the saddle tanks, LeRoy drove off before Dude even
had a chance to start cursing.

Only about a half a mile down Little Orleans Road, LeRoy drove to the
elementary school. The two G-Men from Cleveland sure had the whole valley in an
uproar. Everyone was talking about them and their big, black Lincoln. LeRoy had not
seen this much commotion since the federal revenuers began attacking the local
bootleggers in 1953. Before going to bed last night, he had listened in on his mother's
telephone, getting the latest from the party line. Every time that the G-Men left one farm,
the party line was tracking them, even up into Pennsylvania. There was nothing that
Krebs and Brittingham did that the folks around Little Orleans Road didn’t know about.

At the front door of the old high school, LeRoy met a young principal all dressed
up in his Sunday suit. He knew most of the teachers because he had gone to school with
their brothers and sisters. Out front, everyone was laughing and talking as the teachers
and kids assembled. They were having what LeRoy would have characterized as a
Spring Harvest Festival Holiday. The rest of the grade-school students had their little faces pressed up against the windowpanes from the classrooms.

Seeing his nephew show up at the front door, LeRoy’s spirits lifted and his cloudy mood quickly disappeared. He would deal with the G-Men this afternoon – not now. The boy’s father was a coal miner who worked down in West Virginia and only came home on weekends. LeRoy could smell hot food coming from the lunchroom downstairs. He knew most of the cooks because, when the Fire and Rescue Squad did service during the week, all the members of the Firehouse would eat breakfast and lunch with the school children. Some of the school’s cooks had been around since LeRoy had been in high school, and he was already dreaming of some of Ma Thurmont’s yeast biscuits with hot butter.

LeRoy felt the tug of a small hand pulling on the side of his fade denim jeans. His freckled-faced, red-haired nephew was pointing straight ahead at the big Continental pulling into the school’s driveway. Out stepped the two G-Men as if they were local politicians. They had on starched white shirts and thin, gray ties.

“Aren’t you Mr. Payton, the principal?” Stewart Brittingham asked, sticking his hand out.

“Yes, yes.”

Old Marley Krebs wasn’t far behind, his Aqua Velva preceding his every step. “I remember when I was a kid,” he said. “I got a whipping every day for being ornery.” Marley and the principal laughed. “LeRoy, LeRoy,” Krebs said, “I’m glad you are here. We’ve got some more detective work for you. Relative or son?”
The words froze LeRoy. He didn’t want any of these folks thinking that he was
doing detective work for them.


Marley Krebs took the kid’s hand and shook it. Joey stood there with a blank
look on his freckled face.

"Son, are you going to grow up to be just like your uncle, here?" Krebs asked. "I
kid could do worse, a Lieutenant in the Firehouse like you. We’re not getting much help
from the grown-ups around here," Krebs said. "So we thought we would come by and
have lunch with the kids. LeRoy, you know kids. They say what’s on their minds – no
keeping secrets from them. They’ve got hearts as pure as driven snow."

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

The laugh startled everyone. LeRoy clammed up, once he realized what he had
done. "Yes, they do," he answered.

Krebs put his hand up again, his voice cracking out of the side of his big mouth.

"We’ll be by the truck stop at two. Did your gypsy girlfriend up in Cumberland take care
of your daddy-bag?"

From atop the school’s steps, the principal was announcing that lunch was about
to be served in the gym. Who did he learn about Jazz from? Dude – the old drunk?

"No, no, no, no," LeRoy stuttered. "I can’t leave until three – three. It’s got to be
three."

Instantly, Marley Krebs looked dejected, his big jowls falling.

"What’s up? Is something going on? Yarrow doing something?"
LeRoy stared around to see if anyone was listening. “No, no. I’ve got to get a White Freightliner that is in a ditch up on top of the mountain,” he lied. “I can’t leave until three – three o’clock.”

The older G-Man stopped walking. He pushed his black-rimmed glasses back. Everyone else had started crowding into the doorway.

“Well, I guess as luck would have it, we’ll have to go without you. A tunnel a mile long can’t be that hard to find.”

“No, God forbid, don’t do that,” LeRoy said. “It’s, it’s, hard to find the entrance – overgrown. You might get lost! There are some hillbilly families down there on the mountain and by the canal. You don’t want to wander onto their property. You might get blasted from a 12-gauge shotgun. You can’t go without my, my, help.”

Krebs smiled nervously. “Okay. We’ll be by the Truck Stop at 3:00 p.m. Remember, those new boots that you are wearing, are because of us – right?” He looked at the crowded doorway that was disappearing into the building. “I guess you want another $10.00?”

“No, no,” LeRoy answered. “This one is on me. You need my help.”

When Marley Krebs heard him say that, he threw back his big head and began laughing. When the younger G-Man had caught up with Krebs, he was still laughing.

As LeRoy and his little redheaded nephew were about to enter the hallway, the principal was in his office announcing the arrival of the guests over the intercom. The kids ran for the old gymnasium where all the hot, cooking smells were coming from.

Inside the cracker-box gymnasium, LeRoy and Joey lined up with the rest of the students. Smiling and playing with all the kids that came around him, LeRoy had a
twinge of emotion from remembering all the basketball games that he had seen played there, when it was a high school. Because Marley Krebs and Stewart Brittingham were guests from a big city up North, they got to get in the front of the serving line.

Noticing that the two guests were about to start eating, the principal waved from mid-court for a tall skinny body in faded overalls and pea-green sweater to come forward and say the blessing. LeRoy knew the willowy youngster with unruly blond hair. He was one of Lizanne’s relatives from up on top of the mountain. LeRoy could see that the big thirteen year-old was acting silly. Now all the kids were watching him. When he got up next to the principal, LeRoy made sure that Joey bowed his head. In a loud voice, the big boy sang out:

*God is Great.*

*God is Good.*

*By His Hands we are fed.*

*Let us thank Him for our food.*

And hurriedly he shouted, his fair face turning beet red with excitement and mischievousness: “And God bless those folks at the Capital for taking care of our beans!” Lost in the explosion of hilarity, for once LeRoy’s hideous laugh could not be distinguished very well. LeRoy caught sight of the G-Men. It was evident that they were wondering what was going on.

A big raw-boned woman slapped down ladles of government food on cheap, white plates: greasy, fried pork chops, mashed potatoes, green beans, applesauce, and some of Ma Thurmont’s yeast rolls.
When LeRoy and Joey were moving to their seats, the two G-Men were ready to leave. Eating, and buttering his rolls, LeRoy could hear Brittingham and Krebs walk around and pump the kids for information. Some of the kids were giving out directions to their friends' houses, not theirs.

Upon leaving, Marley Krebs made a detour for LeRoy and Joey's table that was down at the end of the basketball court under an orange goal. Old Hound Dog came over as close as he could get and bent over the table.

"Hey, LeRoy," Marley said. "Green beans – now what does that tell you?" He frowned. "As hellfire and damnation would have it, too much to ask for the school to serve dried beans with salt pork. But them rolls were out of sight. See you at 3:00 o'clock. I want to see this mile long tunnel. Sounds like cowboys and Indians to me."

After the two G-men had left, LeRoy looked around at the gym. Everyone was staring at him. A couple of little boys in faded blue jeans sat pointing at his table. They were obviously impressed that LeRoy seemed to know the two government men from up North. LeRoy took up a silver knife and began spreading heavy, white oleomargarine on his hot yeast roll.
Chapter VII
Indigo Tunnel

At exactly 3:00 p.m., LeRoy saw them pull off Little Orleans Road and drive slowly by the Pure Oil sign. When they pulled up, he was going to tell them that he was much too busy to leave the Truck Stop. Seeing black clouds, LeRoy thought that might do it. He grabbed a creeper and slid under the axle of an Autocar dump truck that needed an air hose repaired on the drive axle. Before he could get completely under the truck, the Lincoln drove right up to the Autocar’s rear wheels.

"LeRoy, get out from under that truck," Marley Krebs shouted. "We don’t have all day."

They must have been sitting across Route 40, spying, or up on top of the mountain at the overlook across the road from the Greenmont. That was it, they were going back to the Greenmont any time that they had time on their hands. Drinking and smoking in the hotel’s lounge, all they had to do was cross over the road, take out a pair of binoculars, and observe everything that went on down here.

"LeRoy, you little crumb-snatcher. Hey, that truck can’t hide your big feet."

"All right, all right," LeRoy said. "Christ almighty, all right, I hear you."

Pushing himself up, LeRoy walked over to the sink and cleaned his hands and arms. Krebs got out of the Lincoln and walked quickly for the diner. When Krebs came back, LeRoy was talking to Stewart Brittingham from the back seat. Getting into the passenger’s side, old Hound Dog turned around to LeRoy.
“Boy, that Ruthie is a hellcat,” he said. “I told her I would give her thirty dollars if she would go dancing with me. She almost hit me with a pot of coffee. Then she started cursing me out.” He straightened his wavy hair with a small comb. “Don’t worry, I’ll get her yet.”

Brittingham drove the Lincoln in a wide arc that took them over by the Pure Oil sign and the government semi where the cheese and canned Army food were being handed out.

“What’s this, LeRoy?” Marley Krebs asked.

“Gov, gov, govern, govern — “

“Come on, spit it out before I give you a butt stroke from a Seabee stinger.”

“Government food for the miners and farmers,” LeRoy answered. “To get it, you have to be on welfare and food stamps.”

The car pulled out onto Little Orleans Road, heading south, as low, puffy clouds opened up and the rain showers came down in sheets bouncing off the roadway.

“Tell me, something, LeRoy,” Krebs said, “Do these red-necked farmers and miners really need forty-four thousand pounds of beans? Looks like they got plenty of government pork barrel and welfare cheese for themselves, without having to rob trucks on a US highway.”

Without thinking, LeRoy almost told him why he would have taken the beans. But he caught himself in a stutter. “I, I, I, I don’t really know. Probably not. I told you them beans went down the Potomac.”

Hound Dog slid around in the seat. “That’s not what you told us yesterday.”
"I, I, I know," LeRoy stuttered. "I'm, I'm just guessing they are in the tunnel."

For a few seconds he did not listen to them. "It was only a tip, you know."

"Oh, really," Marley Krebs said. "Nothing but a tip? Well, we're going to have a
look for ourselves."

The car passed his mother's house, then the Pentecostal Church. It was raining so
hard now that the rain drops were splashing off the asphalt.

"Hell, the next thing you know, money won't mean anything to anyone. It'll be
like we're all equal or something. Hey, I didn't fight the Japs to give everything away.
Trust me, by God, somebody is going to pay for those damned beans."

The road took them through a series of curves to the village of Little Orleons,
within spitting distance of the old C&O Canal and the Western Maryland railroad line.
Everywhere that LeRoy looked, the rain was sending small streams of water off the sides
of embankments, rock over-hangs, and through flooded ditches. In some places, the
brown water cut across the tarred roadway.

LeRoy kept wondering what Shirley was going to do. He figured it was going to
be good. Around there, everyone owned a shotgun with rock salt. Or better yet, Shirley
would pull their distributor cap off or pour sugar in their gas tank.

At a T in the roadway, the dozen or so houses and buildings of Little Orleons
came into view. Stewart Brittingham turned the Lincoln to the left, and drove past the
Canal House perched on the side of a steep hill. At one time it had been a three-story
farmhouse with a front porch and a long flight of concrete steps. A hundred yards further
down the street, the Lincoln slowed down and maneuvered through a one-lane underpass.
Exiting the short railroad tunnel, the young G-Man turned the car to the right, crossing
the remnants of the old C&O Canal looking for a level place to park. Through the trees and bushes, LeRoy could see that the Potomac River had covered the whole inlet landing with ten feet of floodwater.

Brittingham drove the front end of the Lincoln right into the swollen river so that the brownish waters swirled up next to the Lincoln’s doors.

Marley Krebs turned around, a whiskey flask in his right hand. “Did we scare you, little man? Did we? Tell that to the rest of them hillbillies around here.”

“It’s, it’s, it’s best to park back there – under them trees by the Canal,” LeRoy said, pointing to a small hill that overlooked the flooded inlet. Brittingham backed up, the wheels spinning mud.

His heart still pounding, LeRoy opened the door and got out onto the wet grass. A slight breeze fanned the rain onto the side of his face. Stewart Brittingham checked the electric windows and the two G-Men got out of the Lincoln. Both of them were carrying black, foot-long flashlights. Marley Krebs had rolled his trousers up about three notches. Against the rushing waters and the side of the mountain, LeRoy could still hear the train, clanking iron on iron. As the diesel engines headed down through the gorge, the shrill whistle blew, then again.

The mountains went up and up until the dark, gray clouds seemed to rest on their ridgelines. LeRoy followed them over the top of the old Canal. He wondered why they had insisted on him coming along. Even without his help, the investigators seemed to know exactly where they were heading. As they climbed up the side of an overgrown bank of vines and small trees, he let them push ahead. At one point, the pile of crushed rock was so steep that they had to crawl and pushed themselves up to the top where the
railroad tracks were. On top of the railroad berm, the front porch of the Canal House was less than thirty yards away. And standing out front, his foot propped upon a porch rail smoking a cigar, stood Shirley Yarrow with big Lulu Creel.

"Well, LeRoy, are you coming with us, or are you going to slow us down?"

Brittingham asked. He had turned to his right and was heading due east. "According to everyone we've asked," he said, "the tunnel should be at the base of that mountain. The one that runs out into the gorge like a finger."

"Yes, Detective Man," Marley Krebs laughed. "Why doesn't your Boss come with us? I thought he was the protector of the neighborhood – the Army War Hero from D-Day? Everyone's Mister Right. I surprised he's not the mayor around here."

Before LeRoy could answer, the two G-Men started walking in the direction of a crease in a high mountain. Up above, the spring clouds broke open and a shaft of daylight descended onto the river. In a couple of hours, it would be dark.

They all soon became covered with sweat. Marley Krebs appeared to be hurting the worst. Stopping a couple of times, he drank from the flask of whiskey.

"So, LeRoy," Krebs began, stopping and resting at a huge bolder that had rolled down from one of the sandstone cliffs. "How does your boss get the moonshine over from West Virginia?"

Stewart Brittingham stopped walking and came back to them. "Are you doing all right?" he asked. "Is your malaria bothering you? You can stay right here, you know. I've got LeRoy to show me the rest of the way."

"No, no, no, I'll be all right," Krebs answered. "I just need to rest from time to time, that's all. The Japs didn't get me down, and a bunch of hillbillies won't either."
"They bring it over in small flat motor boats at night," LeRoy answered. "They have been doing that since before the Civil War. They pull right into the inlet, just down from where you parked. At night, Shirley goes down in a pickup and loads it up."

"Your Boss is something else," Brittingham said. "Doesn't this Sheriff Reimes get wise to what's going on?"

Looking down off the steep railroad bed, LeRoy could see the eddying floodwaters, as they swirled about the tree trunks and flattened bushes. With the rain blowing, he blew smoke up in the wet air. "To what? Folks around here got more things than moonshine to worry about. What is there to get wise to? Sheriff Reimes gets his bonus every week or two."

"Bootlegging," Krebs said. "It's against the law, you know? Doesn't this Sheriff Reimes ever arrest anybody?"

"Drunks and thieves – bank robbers," LeRoy told him. "Running whiskey is not against the law, if you don't get caught. Besides, it's just folks around here trying to make some extra money to live on. That's all. Them big politicians in Washington waste more on parties and dinners in a week than I make in a year." LeRoy looked up from his cigarette. "I guess folks around here think that they got to have a little of the cream because they sure get plenty of the hard cheese."

Krebs now looked in the direction of his partner who was wiping his face with a clean handkerchief.

"I told you this morning that we had come to the dark ages," Krebs moaned. "You'd have to arrest the whole damned countryside to ever find out what happened to them beans. It's like incest; it's in their blood."
Brittingham laughed, twirling a twig in his thin hands. He took off his tie and stuck it into the pocket of his trousers. "You know, LeRoy," he said. "If we can't solve this thing, we might just have to call the Federal Bureau of Investigation to come out here."

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

"What's funny?"

"Folks around here think that the two of you are FBI agents. And folks around here don't like G-Men from the outside stirring up trouble."

"Oh, I get the picture," Krebs said. "The local yokels, with the straight-as-an-arrow family tree, do whatever they please. Never mind what's right and wrong. Taking a truck load of dried freight is salvage for the savages - right?" He hunched his shoulders, shivering.

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

"Where did you learn to laugh like that?" Krebs asked. "At a funny farm?"

"Folks around here are different," LeRoy said. "You two don't know who you are messing with in these mountains when you start nosing around. Look, I'd say that Sidling Creek and the Potomac got most of them. And if you were lucky enough to find the rest, well, that will be like stumbling over a four-leaf clover. I'd fill out my papers and head back up north, because them beans won't be worth anybody's grief."

Marley Krebs passed gas, cocking up his right leg. "Look grease-monkey, I'll be totally honest with you. We are G-Men, as you call them. But we don't work for an insurance company. Both of us are special agents for the Interstate Commerce
Commission – ICC Agents. We have the same powers as US Marshals do. So we’re not backing down.”

“I told you we should have brought our service revolvers,” Brittingham said. “I bet they’re out here somewhere waiting for us.”

“Probably.” Krebs turned to LeRoy. “You know what happens in prison, don’t you? A little man like you will have a window for a bung hole and a windmill for a set of balls. And that won’t be pretty.” Krebs unknotted his tie, pulled it over his head, and stuffed it in his shirt pocket. “Stewart, I told you that I would try,” he said, “but, as you can see, we have no takers. I guess the chips will fall where they may.”

They resumed walking the iron rails and old wooden ties of the Western Maryland Railroad. Soon LeRoy could make out the huge concrete entrance to Indigo Tunnel. Fifty feet below sat the old C & O Canal. Determined to keep the railroad on the northern side of the river, the railroad company had carved the tunnel straight through the mountain, meeting the canal nine-tenths of mile on the other side.

Seeing the concrete abutment come into view, the two G-Men quickened their steps. LeRoy could hear it in their breaths. When they reached the massive concrete entrance, the rain came straight down out of the low, dark clouds. LeRoy couldn’t even see halfway up the mountains. A wave of cold air was coming out of the tunnel’s mouth. LeRoy could smell the damp and the sourness coming from inside. While Marley Krebs sat down upon a iron rail breathing hard, LeRoy continued into the 30-foot high tunnel that had been lined with railroad-sized ties to prevent the roof from caving in.

In the darkness, walking the rails and uneven ties became tricky. The rail bed was a three-foot high mound of limestone and granite rock chips, lined with trenches of cold
spring water. There was no place on either side of the tracks for the beans to be stored. Going deeper, LeRoy heard sounds of frogs, snakes and raccoons splashing about. Far off in the wavy distant pinhole of light, for a moment LeRoy thought that he could make out human figures. Blinking his eyes, he looked again, then the hazy image was gone.

LeRoy turned around, walking fast. In a few minutes he was out of the dark hole, feeling the musty air rushing passed him. He walked over to where Krebs and Brittingham were sitting, their cigarettes almost gone.

"There’s nothing in there but icy water," LeRoy said.

Marley Krebs pushed himself up, moaning. "Well, we came this far, we might as well have a look for ourselves," he said. "If there’s nothing in there, then we know where we stand. Right, Stewart?"

Brittingham shook his head. "I guess that’s right," he answered. "If we turn over the last rock, then we know we’ve done everything that we could while we were here."

Marley Krebs clicked on his flashlight. He walked underneath the concrete entrance. Stewart Brittingham began walking fast, closing the gap between himself and the older man. Once they were well inside the tunnel, Marley Krebs turned around.

"Aren’t you going with us – Detective Dick?"

"I told you, they aren’t any beans in there," LeRoy said. "It’s just an empty old railroad tunnel filled with ghosts and snakes. And that’s all you’re going to find."

Marley Krebs swore. He turned and started walking into the blackness.

At first, LeRoy could hear their voices. Soon it was quiet, except for the steady rain. Then their outlines disappeared.
LeRoy waited for very nearly an hour. The shotgun blast of rock salt or double 00 buck never happened. The rain came down in torrents, and LeRoy moved a few yards inside the tunnel, building himself a makeshift seat out of rocks. He wished he was back at the Truck Stop listening to the jukebox: Elvis, Buddy Holly, or his favorites, the Everly Brothers. But all he could hear was the rain splattering down on the trees and the streams gushing off the sides of the mountains.

Then the two of them came stumbling out of the tunnel. Marley Krebs was gasping for breath. Both of them were wet up to their waists. Krebs plopped himself down onto the makeshift seat that LeRoy had built. Too tired to talk, he took off his black glasses and tried to clean the coal grime off them.

"Well, we walked all the way to the other end," Brittingham said. "Then we walked a half of a mile out the other side. Once we got near the other end, there were a few snakes splashing into the god-awful, freezing water. We also saw a couple of raccoons. But that was it. Oh yeah, on the other end, it looked like someone had dug a big fire pit. All that remained were a couple of burned-out logs. Otherwise nothing. No beans. No moonshine. Nothing. And the batteries in our flashlights died on us, too."

With his voice creaking, Marley Krebs weighed in: "Damn this God-forsaken place," he stormed. "Well, your tip about got my ass froze off."

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

"Only you would laugh at a time like this," old Hound Dog moaned. "You got a muzzle for that snout?"

"Cheer, cheer up," LeRoy said. "What you need is a couple of shots of the Boss's moonshine."
In the hazy darkness, LeRoy started walking back up the tracks towards the Canal House.

"LeRoy, tell me one thing – “

LeRoy kept walking. “What’s that?”

“How did you get to be you?” Krebs asked.

LeRoy walked as fast as he could. A couple of times, Brittingham had to stop and help Krebs who was at the point of breaking down. About halfway up the tracks, a heavy mist came down the sides of the mountains, adding to the chill in the air. LeRoy could make out the yellow lights of the Canal House, perched like a square beehive above the railroad tracks. It was the only light he could see.
Chapter VIII

The Potomac

Waiting on the railroad berm across from the Canal House, LeRoy stopped for Krebs and Brittingham to catch up. All he could think about was getting home and eating some hot supper. Soon his mother would be calling the Truck Stop wanting to know why he was late. It was Wednesday night and he knew she would be leaving with Miss Clarissa for Bible study in Hancock promptly at 7:00 pm.

Once the investigators came up to where LeRoy was standing, both of them needed a rest. Underneath the railroad berm, a lone car passed beneath them going through the small tunnel and parking up in front of the Canal House. While Marley Krebs was swigging the last of his whiskey, LeRoy watched the front of the Canal House. In the fog and haze, the rear taillights and yellow headlights went out right at the front steps. The car door opened then shut. LeRoy squinted, trying to make out the driver of the familiar Ford Fairlane, a gaunt figure wearing a black, leather coat and a tan fedora rocked back on his head. Once he had climbed the stairs and come into the yellow-white light on the porch, LeRoy could make out the face. It was Dude Thompson, and he disappeared through the front doorway going into the bar side of the Canal House.

LeRoy heard the momentary throb of soft music coming from inside the bar. Where had he heard that song? Turning around, he made out the whirling sounds of the dark, unseen Potomac, rushing through the flooded landing, hidden by the green expanse of spring foliage. Then the baritone voice of Pat Boone rushed into his head, singing the
Part Four: Novel

ballad, "Moody River...Moody River, more deadly than the faded light...Moody River..."

"Come on, Swabby," Stewart Brittingham said. "We'll get you to the Lincoln, and then we'll get our asses out of here. Tomorrow, you won't remember what happened or how cold you are right now."

Walking over the railroad ties, LeRoy came up beside them. Brittingham was supporting Marley Krebs by his right arm.

"I've forgotten exactly which way we came up," Brittingham said to LeRoy. "Hey, LeRoy, lead us down the side of this rock pile."

"We've got to go this way," LeRoy pointed in the dark, slanting off the pile of rocks and slag that scooted out from under his feet as he walked. "Don't go over there. The railroad tracks pass over a creek, and it's about thirty feet down to the water. Follow, follow, where I'm going. The Lincoln should be right over there."

Cautiously, they descended the dark side of the steep berm, their steps crunching and sliding. At the bottom, LeRoy led them onto a muddy road that traveled over top of the Canal and headed down to the flooded landing, where the sounds of the Potomac's rushing floodwaters could be heard. Walking under the wet trees, the darkness closed in around LeRoy. They were on the other side of the abandoned railroad tracks, and the fog and the built-up railroad tracks blocked out the light from the Canal House. LeRoy strained his eyes and tried to make out where the Lincoln was parked. He stuck out his hands, feeling into the darkness. No car. Nothing. A few more steps, and he found bushes and the sounds of rushing water. Still no Continental.
LeRoy came to the end of the hill next to a line of trees and felt his feet starting to go steeply downward. He was afraid that at any moment he would feel the ground give way, and he would be sucked into a sink hole. Behind him, Brittingham had left Marley Krebs standing in the middle of a dark, open area on a steep bank. He was also feeling around for the car mumbling something to himself that LeRoy could not hear.

LeRoy eased back up the hilly slope, one boot at a time. "It's got to be right here," he heard Brittingham say. "I know, I parked the car right here. Right here at this spot, dammit."

"What's happened?" Krebs asked. "Where's the Continental? Stewart, I lost my glasses out of my pocket when I fell the first time in the tunnel. I can't see a damned thing. Where are you?"

"I'm right in front of you," Brittingham answered. "I parked it right over here, just over from where the road curved down to the river. I know that much."

The gray outline of his thin frame disappeared over the bank into the sea of darkness. Into the low roar of rushing water, LeRoy called out, "I'd, I'd, I'd watch what I was doing, if I was you." He stood there listening to Brittingham running up and down the bank. Then he heard him walking and splashing in the river's edge, at the bottom of the small hill that led down to the landing.

"LeRoy, walk over that way to where the road is," Krebs' voice commanded. "I bet it's over there. It's got to be."

"Okay, Bossman," LeRoy answered. He walked at an angle towards the little dirt road that curved downward.
“Here, it’s here—it’s here,” Stewart Brittingham cried out. “Holy hell, the Lincoln is off the bank and in the river. Do you hear me? I found it!”

LeRoy and Krebs went running, feeling in the darkness for Brittingham’s voice. LeRoy followed the side of the road down a steep incline, as Krebs eased sideways off the top of the steep embankment, cursing himself and anyone else that he could think of. Somehow the Continental had drifted off the top of the steep hill and plunged its front end into three feet of swirling, dark water. Its rear wheels were still resting on the tarred roadway.

“Didn’t you put the damned thing in reverse when you parked it?” Marley Krebs shouted. “It’s got a parking brake, you know.” The older man eased down into the water behind the trunk. “Oooooohhh. God, it’s bitter-assed cold. My right leg is killing me. Stewart, how did this happen?”

“I, I, I thought I put the brake on,” he stammered. “I thought I even put the emergency brake on.”

“If we lose this car, then we’re both duck soup,” Krebs said. “We’ve got our damned service revolvers in the trunk. We lose our weapons, and we might as well retire. God forbid, I’ll bet while we were down at the tunnel, the sonofabitches were jacking the car up and running it into the river. I’ll kill ’em, if I find them, every last one of them.” He slipped and fell down onto one knee, then grabbed the rear bumper with a right hand and pulled himself back up to his feet, his teeth clacking.

“Let me try to back it out,” Stewart Brittingham shouted, opening the door on the driver’s side. He got in behind the wheel, the dark river flooding the car’s open doorway. LeRoy waded in and stood behind the left rear wheel as the cold rushing water filled up
his new boots. He feared the worst. First the engine had to crank over and start, and secondly the rear tires had to have enough traction for the heavy car to back itself from its tilted position. With his Ford pickup truck and a heavy chain he could have done it.

The engine rolled over and the fan on the radiator began splashing the water. Like a flash of lightning, the lights on the dashboard blinked on, and the hood started coughing and lurching from the big 496-cubic-inch engine, jerking the car's square body as it spat water out of the tailpipes.

"Hey, hey!" Brittingham shouted. "Both of you, get over on the sides of the car," he screamed out. "I don't want to run over you, if this thing starts backing up. I'm going to gun it."

LeRoy got away from the left rear tire and watched Krebs push himself around the back end. On that side, the rushing river must have been up over his waist. Brittingham's leg stomped downward on the accelerator. LeRoy could feel the back tires churning up currents, grinding on the edge of the pavement. Every few moments, the tires would grab some pavement, mud and rocks, slinging everything that it could grab against the metal wheel wells.

Brittingham started leaping up and down in the front seat hoping that his weight would land the rear tires on the flooded pavement. "Sit up on the trunk - put your weight on the trunk," he shouted. "We need more weight. Both of you grab the rear end. Dammit, do something, LeRoy! LeRoy, put some weight on the trunk."

LeRoy sloshed through the water and got behind the left rear tire. Gripping the panel with both hands, he leaped, turning his body as he pushed up himself up to the side of the trunk. He could feel the rear tires spinning on the muddy pavement. On the other
side, Marley Krebs tried desperately to do what LeRoy had just done. Looking back over his shoulder and trying not to get thrown off the side of the trunk, LeRoy saw Krebs push his weight up above the right rear tire, once, twice, three times. It was taking all his strength. At his third attempt, the tires screamed and gripped into the mud, sand and asphalt. The Lincoln lurched backwards, shooting up out of the dark currents, backing halfway up on the bank before Brittingham could slam on the brakes.

With the door still open, Brittingham shouted with glee and clapped his hands as water began pouring from underneath the car’s chassis. “Hang on, hang on,” he shouted. “I’m going to pull up a little, then I’m going to back up again. I want to keep the engine going full speed.” He moved forward toward the river, turning the steering wheel to the right. LeRoy held his breath. Once more, the front bumper was back under the swiftly flowing currents of the Potomac. Straightening the wheels out, Brittingham began backing up the dark roadway slowly and methodically, his head hung out the open doorway looking backwards. When the car got up on the small hill, the sudden flash of the headlights blinded LeRoy. Brittingham screamed. “Marley, Mar-ley…God help us!”

The Lincoln stopped, flinging LeRoy off the side of the car and down onto the ground. Brittingham slammed the gearshift into Park, leaped from behind the steering wheel and ran headlong for the flooded river into the headlights. His arms and legs thrashing frantically in the rushing, brownish water, the older G-Man was grabbing for any tree limbs and drowned branches that would hold him. On his old hound dog face was a vision of mortal fear. Then he blinked from sight amongst the tree limbs and swift currents.
Brittingham rushed into the river, the water creeping up to his waist. “Marley, Marley, for God’s sake, hang on,” he shouted. With the headlights probing into the rainy night, the river was captured as if projected onto a giant drive-in screen at a movie theatre. In moments LeRoy was standing beside Brittingham, his heart pounding. They stood amongst the partially submerged saplings, hoping that Marley Krebs had been able to grab onto something before the Potomac took him out and down into the gorge.

“Marley, Marley,” Brittingham kept shouting, “Marley, Marley...Where are you?” He started crying like a child.

“Let’s, let’s, let’s, drive down the towpath,” LeRoy shouted. “Maybe he was swept over next to the canal. He might have grabbed a tree or something, you never know!”

They ran for the Lincoln. Brittingham put the transmission in reverse and backed up to where the C&O Towpath crossed over the access road. LeRoy pointed for him to turn to the left. They pulled onto the overgrown path that wasn’t much wider than the car’s wide body. Driving wildly, Brittingham followed his headlights through the saplings that slapped the sides of the Lincoln. The canal’s waters were mere feet from flooding over top of the towpath.

“Stop, stop,” LeRoy shouted. He had put the electric window down. “Stop. Let me get out. I thought I heard something. We ought to check every hundred yards or so. If we don’t do that, this is useless bus-business.”

Brittingham braked. Feeling the cold rain drip down his wool shirt, LeRoy cupped his hands to his mouth. “Hey, Marley, hey Krebs. You out there? Hey!” LeRoy
waited. Hearing nothing but the swirling river, he called out once more. “Hound Dog, you out there?” Straining, they both listened together. LeRoy whistled shrilly. Nothing.

“Marley, Marley, for God’s sake,” Brittingham yelled. “Marley, can you hear us? Shout, whistle or something – if you can hear us. Marley. Marley...Be there.”

“Let’s drive down further,” LeRoy said.

Again they got into the Lincoln and drove down the towpath hearing little else than the windshield wipers rubbing back and forth on the wet, leaf-strewn glass. As Brittingham drove, LeRoy shouted and whistling out the open window. After a while, his lips got tired, and he stopped whistling. Brittingham began increasing the distance between each stop.

The towpath passed beneath the entrance to Indigo Tunnel, turning sharply to the right. Then it turned completely to the left, going around the finger-end of the first mountain just south of the Canal House. After two more stops, the towpath had reached the other end of the tunnel, on the opposite side of the mountain.

“We’ve got to turn around,” LeRoy said. “There’s, there’s not many places to turn around down this far. If we don’t, you’ll soon run into Sidling Creek where the aqueduct is. You can’t drive over the aqueduct. It will be full of mud and water. Do you hear me?”

“LeRoy, we don’t know where he might have stopped,” Brittingham replied, crying. “Marley is no quitter, by God!”

“I know, G-Man. I know. But the river flattens out below the tunnel. There’s few places for him to grab onto something. It’s just a flat river here. If he’s already down this far, then he’s going all the way to Harper’s Ferry.”
"But LeRoy, we can't leave him out here. He doesn't deserve to die this way?"

Brittingham was pleading, almost screaming. Suddenly, he stopped the Continental and just sat there. "You've got to understand, it's my fault. Why didn't we leave the car in the river? Why, why, you could have pulled it out tomorrow with a wrecker. It's all my fault. Now, now he's gone!"

He began driving again. Then the brakes locked and the big Lincoln slid sideways. Up ahead, the towpath disappeared.

"We're all the way down to the aqueduct over Sidling Creek," LeRoy said. "See, see I told you, what would happen. Great God Almighty, you almost kil, kill, killed us."

"How, how do we go on from here?" Brittingham asked.

"We don't," LeRoy answered. "I'm going to take you back to the Canal House. We'll let the First Sergeant call Sheriff Reimes and the Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Squad. Believe me, they are good at finding dead folks!" They changed seats. LeRoy adjusted his seat, and spent the next five minutes backing up and turning, backing up and turning, until the Lincoln was headed safely in the other direction.

When LeRoy saw the yellow lights of the Canal House, he wondered if Shirley was still around. But once they came out from the underpass, up on the porch, he saw a small dot burn red, and he knew that the Boss Man had been there all along, waiting for them to return.
Chapter IX

Truckin' Business

"It’s her," Ruthie said. "Shhhhh!"

"Who?...Who are you talking about?"

"You know," Ruthie moaned.

"What? For God’s sake, Lizanne?"

"No, no, LeRoy. The queen of Sheba. I don’t normally talk to her, but I think she didn’t recognize my voice. So I played along. It sounded like your mother was on the other telephone."

"Miss Clarissa? What does she want? Did she say what was up? I don’t have any time to deal with her today."

"No, no. She’s snooping, you know that. Clarissa and probably your mother want to know where Shirley is. Real abrupt. I told her that he wasn’t here. Now, she wants to talk to you. I guess you’re the only person she trusts."

LeRoy glared at her. Then he followed Ruthie’s perfume through the fuel shop and into the diner. Turning right, he went through the kitchen to the little back office.

"Hell-o, hello, LeRoy here."

"LeRoy, this is Clarissa, Clarissa Grove Yarrow."

"Miss Clarissa, is that you?"

"Yes, of course, it’s me."

"What’s up? Did you and Mom have a good time last night at Bible study?"
"Probably better than you. For a long time, your mother and I have enjoyed each other's company. We have become such dear friends. I must tell you that we have grown quite close recently."

"That’s, that’s good." LeRoy quickly got away from the topic of his mother.

"Did you hear? Boy, it was pretty terrible what happened. I drove all up and down the towpath looking for that G-Man."

"I know, LeRoy. Our prayers go with him. You never tempt God on that river. You know that?" LeRoy heard someone breathe deeply. LeRoy figured that his mother was on the other telephone in Miss Clarissa's house. "LeRoy, have you seen Shirley today?"

"Not, not, not in the last couple of hours," he answered. "I saw him last night about midnight down on the towpath. He sent me home with Brittingham, the younger G-Man. He told me to get some sleep."

"Now, tell me the truth, LeRoy. Did Shirley sleep there last night? I, I couldn't find him all night."

"Oh, no. Shirley only sleeps here, when he has to work late on the books – you know, paying bills and reconning the freight around here. That's the only time he isn't with you. He’s got a lot of paperwork to keep up on."

"Oh, really. What freight?"

"You know, what we trade for from the truckers," LeRoy answered. "Miss Clarissa, Major Hogans recently called me this morning and told me that the Cracker Box and four or five men from the Firehouse were still down on the towpath below Sidling
Creek. I'm, I'm, I'm pretty sure they haven't called off the search yet. The Guard even had one of its scout choppers out this morning, still looking."

"I know, I called your mother this morning. She told me."

"Do you want me to drive down to the Potomac and tell Shirley to call you?"

"No, no. You stay there and run that Truck Stop. It's part mine, you know."

"What? Oh, yes, Miss Clarissa, I know that. My mom tells me all the time."

"And you tell Shirley, when you see him, that I need to talk to him about some financing at the bank. Who's that woman that just answered the telephone? Was that that girl Ruthie Fain?"

"What woman?" LeRoy asked. "That a, a, a, girl. One, one, one of them waitresses," he said. "You know, from the railroad tracks up in Cumberland. She's just learning the ropes, Miss Clarissa."

"What ropes? What are you talking about, LeRoy?"

"Okay, will do," LeRoy said. "As soon as I see him. As a matter of fact, I'm going to call Lulu at the Canal House right now."

"Oh, LeRoy, you can't lie for him forever. Anyhow, thanks LeRoy, for being such a good boy. I don't blame you. I'm going to hang up now."

"Okay, okay, Miss Clarissa. I'll call, I'll call —"

The telephone went dead.

In the kitchen Frenchy was cooking chicken and dumplings in a big steel pot. Through the serving window, he saw Ruthie in a booth reading a movie magazine. Over in the corner, Brenda Lee's raspy voice started belting out *Sweet Nothings* putting a little rock in the big black man's shoulders and hips.
"Frenchy, you got any breakfast left over?" LeRoy asked.

Frenchy turned around, a big spoon in his right hand. "LeRoy, what do you have in that paper towel? I've already fed you once today."

"Biscuits and fried fatback," LeRoy answered.

"Here, give it to me," Frenchy said, wiping his hands on his apron.

Frenchy took a plate, unwrapped the biscuits, and laid them in the middle. From the corner of the smoking grill, he took a tin saucepan and scooped out the last of the morning gravy, daubing it on the cold biscuits. From a skillet on the stove, he slid a spatula under a couple of hard fried eggs, dripped them, and laid them beside the mound of gravy.

"You got the time to give my Chevy a tune-up?" Frenchy asked, laying a black brick of scrapple over top of the eggs. "Here."

"When?"

"Man, it's missing pretty bad, and I got to go up into Pennsylvania this weekend to a dance," he said.

"I don't have the right spark plugs," LeRoy replied. "If you get me the plugs, points, and condenser, I will give her a tune-up this afternoon. Here, go into Hancock at the Parts Store by the Phillips 66. They'll have them. Get Champions, they spark real good."

The big cook from Birmingham, Alabama, looked at him with dark, watery eyes. "I could probably get them this afternoon – when the trucks stop are running. Are you with me?"
“Make sure the sparking gap is already set,” LeRoy said. “I don’t have a timing machine. Make sure the plugs are already set for a 327 Chevrolet block.”

Frenchy laughed. “You got it.”

“Hey, Frenchy, do we have anything for Duke to eat?”

Frenchy looked at LeRoy sideways. “I’ve already fed him once, too. He’s like you, LeRoy. Every time he smells chicken and dumplings, he starts barking. I don’t know who eats the most, him or you.”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

With the gravy plate in one hand, LeRoy stopped and fixed himself a cup of coffee, adding plenty of sugar and cream to cut the chicory. When he was finished stirring, he smiled and walked past Ruthie going straight for the back booth, so he could hear the music better.

Two hours later, Stewart Brittingham was sitting in the back booth by the jukebox, smoking. On the Wurlitzer, Frank Chacksfield’s *Ebb Tide* was oozing out. When LeRoy opened the door from the fuel shop, the young G-Man smiled tiredly and motioned for him to come on back and sit down. With a fresh shave, shower and white shirt and tie, he was a little more himself this afternoon. Walking past the first booth, Ruthie came back by LeRoy carrying a carafe of coffee.

“Ruthie, are you playing all them slow songs again?” LeRoy asked. He walked over and dropped in the booth next to Brittingham.
Ruthie came back to get his order. “Go wash your hands,” she shouted, slapping him over his greasy, curly haired with a wet dishtowel. “I hate dirty little men who need their mamas to tell them to take a bath all the time.”

LeRoy got up laughing, covering the top of his head, his feet dancing every time she slapped him with the rag. “My hands aren’t dirty. See. They’re clean for a working man.”

“I know where you’ve been,” she said. “Wash them with some scouring powders. At least Jasmine will keep you from going blind from reading all them *Playboys*. I’d hate to see your bed sheets.”

LeRoy’s face turned red. The truckers and Stewart Brittingham were laughing their heads off. “Stop messing with me, Ruthie,” he called as he pushed open the door to the fuel shop. “I haven’t done nothing to you lately.”

In a few minutes, LeRoy came back with his shirt sleeves rolled up and his hands bleached white from the scouring powders but still with some black stains on them, especially the nails. Frankie Lane was wailing out *I Believe*. There was a thin strip of tears running down Brittingham’s cheeks.

“Ruthie, what’s up? Are you having your period or what?” LeRoy said. “What’s with these sad songs? Play *Tossin’ and Turnin’* or Del Shannon’s *Runaway*. Do you want me to sing it for you?”

Brittingham started laughing again, wiping the hot tears.

LeRoy stared at him. “Oh, man, I’m sorry. I’m always teasing her about the songs she plays. I like the rocking’ numbers. That’s why Shirley calls me jitterbug.”
“LeRoy, I’m bringing you your usual,” Ruthie told him. “What else would you order? For a woman, you’d be an easy man to keep locked up.”

“Ruthie, tell Frenchy not to hold the chicken or the dumplings.”

Ruthie came back with LeRoy’s sweet tea. “Looks like someone has been working hard,” she said. “LeRoy, where did you get your boots polished? Ummph-hun! I told Shirley to dock your pay every time you run up to Cumberland for a polish job. Where were you a couple of afternoons ago?”

“Polished? No, I didn’t get a polish job, Ruthie.” Then to Brittingham: “You can’t keep anything from her. I’m sorry, man. Wheew! Last night was pretty rough?”

“That’s, that’s all right,” Brittingham answered. “I’m feeling really low today. I had to call Marley’s wife this morning and talk to her, spent an hour going over the same damned thing. She wanted to know every detail – bit by bit. Then our I.C.C. office in Cleveland wants a report every half hour. I guess they think that he is going to be found alive. I got sick of it. So I just ducked out of the motel room. I told them I had to finish the assignment now.”

Ruthie went to the first booth and cleaned off the table where the drivers had been eating.

“Hey, Bud, we did everything we could,” LeRoy said. “I, I, I still don’t understand how it happened. Man, it was a freak accident, almost like that trucker getting killed on the black ice.”

“I, I, I know. I can’t believe that it’s happened, either – just can’t believe the old dog is gone. Now he will never see his retirement. Twenty-five years as a Cleveland Cop and five years with the I.C.C. Now this. He fought all through the Pacific from one
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end to the other as a Navy Seabee. Wounded twice by the Japs, separated from his Company for a day, now this? Just doesn’t make any sense to me.

Ruthie plopped the steaming plate of chicken and dumplings down onto the table. It was so full you couldn’t even see the blue circle near the outer edge of the plate.

“Hey, thanks,” LeRoy said. “Look, Frenchy made biscuit dumplings. Hell, you can’t get food like this just anyplace. Not even in Cleveland.”

“I know,” Brittingham said softly. “The food is pretty good here.”

“Yeah, Frenchy sure knows how to cook home cooking—don’t you agree? Hey, Frenchy, where did you say you lived in Birmingham?” LeRoy was talking loud enough for everyone in the place to hear him.

Frenchy came out of the kitchen. “Hey, man, what’d you want? You got my chicken and dumplings? What else do you want?” He was wearing an apron and a white shirt. He had tied a small white towel around his head. He had a large, flashy gold watch on his powerful left arm.

“Didn’t you say you were from down South?”

Frenchy cocked his head sideways. “Yeah, I was raised just down from the furnaces in Birmingham,” he answered. “We all called it the Furnace Flats.”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

“He’s going north, after he cooks awhile,” LeRoy said. "He’s a bass singer. He sings to the jukebox all the time.”

Frenchy laughed. “Hey, man, he’s like Duke, only inside the house. He goes on like this all the time. I’ve told them all, I’m going to Detroit, when my money gets right.
I have an aunt and uncle up there. I just had to get out of Alabama. There's nothing to do there except work in the steel mills.”

LeRoy began digging into the creamy dumplings, stuffing his mouth full and making sounds in his throat.

“What made you stop here?” Brittingham asked, sipping some coffee.

Frenchy wiped his hands with a towel that he had draped over his right shoulder. “When I left Birmingham, I stopped near Lookout Mountain. Then I drove all the way up from Chattanooga through East Tennessee, then the Shenandoah Valley. I came this way to get to Pittsburgh. I missed the turn to Breezewood to get onto the Turnpike, and my '49 Pontiac started knocking. I was stuck here for two weeks until LeRoy there had the motor rebuilt.” He let out a big chuckle. "I couldn't pay the bill, so I started cooking and sleeping in the bunkhouse. Then one thing led to another, and Shirley kept paying me more money to cook and take care of the beverage business. And I haven't got up the nerve to tell him I'm leaving. So here I am cooking at the Pure Oil and living up on a hillside in Cumberland. Beats Dixie and the Klan right now, that's for damn sure.”

“I'm sure you're right,” the young G-Man said. "What beverage business are you talking about?"

Three more hungry truckers drifted into the restaurant. It was unusually busy for mid-afternoon. Stopping and looking up from his biscuit, LeRoy could see their rigs parked in a line down by the fuel pumps.

Heh, hch, heh, heh. Shirley's money.

"Let's say that Shirley keeps their throats well soothed with spirits," Frenchy said, winking at him. "I'm just the delivery man."
Down at the pumps, Dude Thompson was swearing and nipping at his bottle, running between the line of trucks. He would be pissed because he would think that they were having a party up in the restaurant.

"Frenchy, can you go out there and pull your '55 Chevy into the second bay," LeRoy asked. "I'll get my hands on that cherry as soon as I have finished eating. Did you get the right spark plugs?"

"They had three sets left," Frenchy answered. "Let me get out there and get my baby in before a truck shows up. I know you're hot to get your hands on her."

Frenchy winked at LeRoy and started walking for the front door. The three drivers had pushed themselves into the second booth by the picture window waiting for their menus and Ruthie to show up in her pink outfit to add a little *crème de la crème* to the blue plate special that day.

"You don't want that," Ruthie called out, a pen in her right hand and the ticket pad in the other. "You want to try our blue plate special: chicken and dumplings—they're already hot back there. You boys won't be disappointed. I'll guarantee that. Those dumplings are about as hot as I am."

LeRoy continued to eat, drowning the dumplings with big gulps of sweet tea.

"LeRoy, I need a favor," Stewart Brittingham said, clearing his throat. "I need someone to go with me tomorrow."

"Sure, sure. Where? What's going on? I can handle it."

"The insurance company and I.C.C are shutting the case down," Brittingham told him. "The investigation is basically over. I'm leaving as soon as I get some pictures."

"Pictures? Of the wreck?.."
"No, no, not the wreck," Brittingham replied. "Because Marley thought that we would find the beans, we didn’t worry too much about taking any photos. Marley never was much on paperwork."

Le Roy stopped eating. "What do you want me to do? Scrape up some beans or something?"

"No, no," Brittingham answered. "We’ll leave them for the old ladies. Three days ago, I picked up a county road map. I just need you to drive me to all the places where the beans would have washed up. We’ll start at the Sidling Creek Bridge and then follow the creek down to the Potomac River. I’m betting that if we look hard enough, we’ll find evidence of the beans, bean bags, and paper and plastic all over the place."

Brittingham said.

Le Roy took a biscuit with butter and shoved it in his mouth.

"You lead me around to the places that I want to go to, and I’ll take the pictures that we need," Brittingham said. "I don’t want to get lost. I can close this investigation. It will be simple, and I will pay you ten bucks."

"Fifteen."

"Shhhhhhh," Brittingham whispered. "I don’t want anyone knowing that the case is closing. Once I fill out the government report, I’m out of here."

"Okay, I won’t say a word," Le Roy assured him. "You can trust me. What time?"

"Don’t worry, I’ll pick you up about 9:00 am," Brittingham whispered. "I figure by noon we’ll be finished." He got up from the booth to leave. "Hey, I almost forgot one thing," he said. "Tell the boys at the Firehouse that I really appreciate what they are
doing. I'll see to it that an official letter is sent from the Cleveland Fire and Casualty
Company to them...."

LeRoy felt like the young G-Man was almost his buddy now. The Little Orleans
Fire and Rescue Squad was getting an official letter from the president of a big insurance
company. That was something special. They could hang it in the trophy case out front in
the waiting area by the front door.

Brittingham picked up his ticket. "I'll see you in the morning," he said. "Then
I'm out of here."

When LeRoy finished eating, he slid out of the booth, sticking a toothpick in
between his greasy lips. Picking his teeth, LeRoy walked past Ruthie.

"Now, what were you two whispering about? If I was you, LeRoy Vann Clough,
I'd make sure that I didn't start something that was going to get me into any more
trouble. It might catch your butt on fire."

Looking at Ruthie's big, hazel eyes, he broke into his idiotic laugh. "Nothing, girl
– nothing at all, but trucking' business."

Out in the second bay, LeRoy popped the hood up on Frenchy's mint-green
Chevy and cranked up the engine. Sticking his head under the hood, he wanted to listen
to the way the engine throbbed and groaned when it ran down and dirty. He could
compare how it purred afterwards when he had tuned it.

LeRoy was a truck mechanic. He didn't get much of a chance to work on cherry-
rods like this one that had all Frenchy's finery on it – even the crap balls hanging on the
rear-view mirror and the tachometer bolted to the steering shaft. LeRoy got horny just
looking at her.
After he had changed the spark plugs, the condenser and the timing points, he gave the ’55 Chevy the tune-up on its three deuces, complete with chrome air-breathers. When he had finished changing the oil and oil filter, he screwed off the two caps to the short exhaust pipes, which would pull the hot gases from the pistons. Fired off and revved up, the noise from Frenchy’s cherry was so loud it sounded like a bomb going off. LeRoy had to punch it a couple of times to see how well it would run with the rpm’s up high.

He continued revving the engine hard until he saw Frenchy standing behind the upper glass doorway leading to the fuel shop. The Chevy was shaking up the whole Truck Stop with its vibrations. A couple of drivers on their way back to their trucks came over and listened to LeRoy’s orchestration in the garage. Dropping the hood, LeRoy shut the rod down, proclaiming that it was ready for a trip up-country to see Suzie Q.

Parking the Chevy alongside of the pickup, LeRoy took the keys back inside to Frenchy who was sweating away in the back kitchen. Seeing LeRoy, he frowned. “Man, are you punching my Lady too hard?” Frenchy shook his head. “If you are this hard on women, I can see why you aren’t married.”

“French, French, Frenchy,” LeRoy stuttered. “I’ll never hurt her. She’ll run good for six months now. I was just pumping out the old carbon. Besides, you need a little bit bigger cam in her.” He laughed. “A bigger cam will make her quiver when you want, too.”

“What?” Frenchy pushed a blue plate special up into the receiving window.
"I can smell gas coming out of the side vents," LeRoy told him. "A bigger cam will make her burn all the gas that your deuces are pumping into her. That's why sometimes she is flooding out on you. You're not using all your horsepower."

"All right, all right," Frenchy said. "When I get back from the woman I want to see up in Pennsylvania, I'll talk to you about a bigger cam. Man, it will be bitching bad then."

Before Frenchy could say anything else, LeRoy started dancing in the close confines of the steamy kitchen. Jimmy Jones' *Handy Man* was kicking the white clapboard siding loose on the outside of the restaurant. Frenchy wasn't about to let this moment pass. He caught Ruthie as she came into the kitchen, a cigarette in between her lips, grabbed her hands, and started dancing a slow jitterbug with her.

"For a big man, Frenchy, you sure are light on your feet," she said. "You should come to the Armory dance in the fall." Then to LeRoy she said, "Go call your Boss. He wants to talk to you. LeRoy, what makes you think that Brittingham is a friend of yours?"
Chapter X

Close Enough for Government Work

LeRoy went around the front of the Continental and got in. "Buddy boy," he began, "it looks like you've got the kitchen sink in here."

"Everything but the pictures," Brittingham answered. He backed the Lincoln up a few feet and turned around going past LeRoy's truck and the bunkhouse. "I guess there's no word on Marley, is there?"

"No, no, no, I haven't heard a word," LeRoy replied. "Don't worry, the National Guard and the State Police are still looking. As soon as the flood goes down, he'll pop up..." He didn't mean it quite that way. He was sorry that he had said it. "The river can be terrible sometimes," he said. He pulled out a Marlboro. "In the spring, it can rain like a maniac. When summer gets hot, it shrinks, and it is as calm as a baby. I've seen it so low in July and August that it's hard for boats to come over from West Virginia."

The big car eased past the idling rigs. At the crossroads, Brittingham waited for a yellow Mercury and a GMC cab over pulling a stainless steel milk hauler to pass by. Then he turned east, heading for the mountain and Sidling Creek Bridge.

Once they got going good, LeRoy started fidgeting. "Well, what kind of investigative work do you want me to help you with?"

Brittingham had put on a dark pair of sunglasses, and turned the lenses toward LeRoy. "We've got some problems to solve. In the ICC, when you have problems, you just lay on more paperwork. That usually does it."
Driving down into the ravine, the car slowed as it crossed Sidling Creek Bridge. Everywhere LeRoy looked, the spring foliage was out. Still, there was no hiding the damage that the force of the metal cab had done to the gray beech.

“Aren’t you going to stop?” LeRoy asked.

“I’ve already got the pictures that I need from here,” Brittingham answered. “I want you to take me to all the places where Sidling Creek crosses over a bridge. That way it will be easy for us to get to where the beans washed up as they traveled down Sidling Creek.”

“Well, there’s only two,” LeRoy said. “The first is on Woodmont Road, and the second is the old aqueduct that we almost ran into last night.”

Brittingham pushed the accelerator to the floor. In moments, they were gliding down the other side, underneath the tall metal fire tower that stood on the crown of Fire Tower Mountain. LeRoy pointed to where he wanted Brittingham to turn right onto Woodmont Road.

For the next fifteen minutes, they drove along the narrow road that turned back through the ravines and mountains towards the Potomac and Little Orleans. The young G-Man slowed down and drove cautiously, especially coming to steep banks and hillsides where rainwater still showered down onto the roadway. Through the sparsely populated farms, the drive seemed endless. Finally, driving up a small hill and rounding a sharp curve, LeRoy could see Sidling Creek, the aqueduct, and further out in the gorge, the Potomac River. Cruising down the other side, they could see an iron bridge that crossed a deep, rocky stream.
Part Four: Novel

“At the end of that bridge, turn right onto a gravel road,” LeRoy said. “And don’t go back up too far. Great God! Look on the banks, the water here was over our heads.”

At the end of the one lane bridge, Brittingham turned sharp right. Under the trees, he slowly drove until they could see the rushing creek going over top of a low point in the roadway. On both sides, the flooding had flattened the rye grass, weeds, and small bushes.

“Look at her.” LeRoy pointed.

“What?”

“That cliff up ahead, covered with rocks and moss,” he said. “She’s almost 500 hundred feet high. When I was a kid, my uncle used to take me up there hiking. When I was about seven, I saw a brown bear picking berries, and it scared the doo-key out of me.”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

Brittingham took off his sunglasses, staring through the trees to the towering bluff. “Boy, that is something,” he said. “When you told me this was a Wilderness Area, I thought you were kidding. Where is the Boy Scout Camp?”

“You go further up the road about a half a mile until you come to Lil’ Aaron Strauss Wilderness Camp. The Scout Lodge is up on top of the mountain behind the entrance. It has some of the best rock formations and climbing spots around here. All the Adirondack Sites are along a spiny ridge that runs down from the lodge to Sidling Creek Aqueduct. I’ll show you if you want me to?”
“Boy, that was a mouthful,” Brittingham laughed. “No, that won’t be necessary. I need to finish the investigation so I can get back on the road. If I had time, it would be a nice idea. I’m not totally a city-slicker, you know.”

“And I am not totally from the country either,” LeRoy told him. “I went to Tennessee with a carnival when I was nineteen.” When LeRoy had stopped batting his eyelashes, he noticed that Brittingham was looking directly at him. “I was kind of walking on the wild side, you know. I was the two-headed man from Borneo who had been born in the wild and raised by an elephant.”

The young G-Man broke out laughing. “That was so good, it hurts,” he said. “No kidding. Did you run away from home?”

“It was before I joined the Guards,” LeRoy told him. “I was hot-to-trot for this woman that worked in the carnival. When I got back, my mom about killed me.” LeRoy followed Stewart back to the wide trunk of the Continental. He had taken off his tie and wrapped it around the metal hangers in the back seat of his vehicle. “For two weeks after I came home, my mom grilled me every night. She wanted to know who this woman was that I had run off with. I guess she knew that she wasn’t a churchwoman, and that bugged her. I had to join the military and start working in the coal mines to get her off my back. It was that bad.”

Brittingham was looking the area over, especially down by the bridge where the water sliced underneath between two, concrete pylons. They parked and got out. Opening up the trunk, Brittingham took out a camera with a flash attachment.

“Grab about ten packs of beans – mix them up,” he said.

“What are they for?” LeRoy asked. “Hey, where did you find these beans?”
"I bought them last night at the grocery store in Hancock," he answered, screwing a bulb into the flash attachment. "We’re going to need them. I can’t take evidence without some pictures of beans."

LeRoy began stacking the one-pound bags of beans in the cradle of his arm. When he had an armload, he followed Brittingham up the marshy, muddy trail. Stopping occasionally, Brittingham stared around at Sidling Creek, his eyes darting across to the other side of the rushing stream. Momentarily, he looked confused.

"Well, the bridge or the other side is not going to do us any good," he stated. "As Marley often said, a good lie is hard to create. This will be harder than I thought."

Coming to a small rivulet running through the woods, Brittingham stopped and rolled up his pants. Groaning, he stepped out into the two-foot deep branch. "Hell of a way to ruin a good pair of wing-tip shoes," he said.

LeRoy held up the armload of beans up, crossing the small creek right behind Brittingham and the large black camera.

"I’m hoping that there is some sandy soil up there," Brittingham said, turning. If not, we’ll have to use a flat, rocky space." When they had walked about two hundred yards, he stopped, staring over at the cliffs on the sharp bend in the river.

"I wouldn’t," LeRoy said. "The currents are pretty strong here, even when it’s low in the summertime."

"Okay, let’s take a shortcut across through the trees. The whole place has been under water. I bet it was something? You were telling me about this woman in the carnival?"
“Oh.” LeRoy dropped his dark, curly head. “I still see her from time to time,” he confided. “My mother doesn’t know it. But I do. She owns a shoe store in Cumberland – a few miles west of the Truck Stop. I go see her when I need to. She’s a gypsy.”

“Well, if you still see this woman, why don’t you run off with her and get married?”

“Are you kidding me?” LeRoy returned, blowing out his breath, his nostrils flaring. “My mother would kill me.”

“Why?”

“Well, Jasmine is about fifteen years older than me,” he explained. “And she is a gypsy woman who tells fortunes. When I was nineteen, she was exotic-looking. You know, with big balombas and nice, shapely legs. Back then, I guess it was the thing to do. My Heavens, she looks more like my mom, right now. Everybody in Cumberland knows her for who she is. My whole family would disown me. The church, you know?”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

“Sounds like you’ve already thought about it?”

“A couple of times – years ago. It really bothered me, when I first came back, and she was still down South. So, to get over it, I started going down into a black hole in the ground to mine coal for a living, with my cousin. Down there, you get over a lot of things quick, especially childish love.”

In half stride, Brittingham stopped walking and looked at LeRoy, smiling. “I just don’t imagine you in love, LeRoy,” he said. “So she was leading you around by the stacking swivel?”
"I guess so," LeRoy answered. "I did a lot of praying at the church to get it under control. But sometimes I wonder what I have under control. All the other women I've been with, they just don't seem to do much for me. I guess them gypsies have hot blood in them?" Heh, heh, heh, heh. "I can't imagine being married with kids."

"Well, I can't vouch for that one," the young G-man said. "I have three kids, and they keep my wife and I very busy. I live a pretty quiet life."

They continued walking until LeRoy found a beaten path in the weeds and bushes where the river had cut through the trees. Cutting catty-corner, they came out under the shade of the trees into a small clearing, next to the swollen stream. Before them, they could see what was left of a wet sandbar.

"This will have to do," Brittingham said. "Now here's what I want you to do. Go over to the stream and rip open the bags. I want you to throw beans and the plastic all over the sand. Make it look real, real good."

"Why, what are you going to do?" LeRoy asked.

Brittingham looked over at LeRoy and started laughing. "Odd as it may seem, this was one of Marley's old tricks," he said. "Marley always told me, give them what they want, and they will be forever grateful. And that's what I am going to do, exactly what Marley would have done."

LeRoy threw the eleven packs of beans on the ground. They spent the next thirty minutes dressing up the scene, and then taking a couple of shots from different angles, changing the bulbs in the flash attachment. Brittingham had LeRoy punch some holes in three bags of beans and dip them in the stream for about five minutes, so they would get wet, mushy and wrinkled-looking. In another scene, they partially buried nine or ten
plastic bags, with different beans strewn about, and the young G-Man took some close-ups of the drowned mess. When Brittingham had finished, they left the beans and plastic, just as if it had really happened that way. Now, once the report was filed, it would be official.

Back at the Lincoln, Stewart Brittingham put his camera in between the two suitcases in the trunk. One of them was large and dark blue. LeRoy figured that that one belonged to old Hound Dog. Brittingham had thrown a couple of ties and a pair of nice brown slacks on top of Marley’s bag. There was even a bottle of scotch stuffed into a pair of penny loafers.

Heading back across the bridge and up the steep mountain, they drove back down Woodmont Road. Parking under some trees, the young G-Man locked the doors, and they headed due south across a farmer’s field for the old railroad tracks, the C&O Canal, and beyond that, the flooded Potomac River. From hiking around here as a boy, LeRoy could easily find a back route that would take them directly to the aqueduct that crossed over top of Sidling Creek. Hidden by tall trees and thick brush, it wasn’t much more than a quarter of a mile from where they had parked. LeRoy took the lead, heading across the overgrown and sage-filled cow pasture. Coming to the tree line on the other side of the pasture, it was still cool in the early morning air. Shuffling at an angle, he led the G-Man down a steep bank onto the old railroad tracks.

“Are these tracks ever used anymore?” Brittingham asked. “They look almost new.”

LeRoy crossed the single line of tracks, entered a line of trees on the other side, and headed down another embankment to the flooded Canal. “The Western Maryland
hasn’t been used for a couple of years now,” he answered, bending over and inspecting
the rails’ shiny tops. “The Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad bought out Western Maryland
and moved all the tracks to the southern side. Now, the farmers and the hill people who
live around here only use this track in bits and pieces. Someone must be using this part
of the track.”

“Why did the rail company do that?” Brittingham asked.

“See that mountain?” LeRoy said, pointing due west to the sharp mountain ridge
that stood out against the blue sky.

“That one.”

“Yes. That’s where Indigo Tunnel is. At the bottom, in the crease of the mountain.
That is where you and Marley came out the other night.”

“I don’t believe it. Doesn’t look like the same place.”

“On the northern side of the river, there is only enough room for a single track.
On the southern side, they have constructed three or four tracks.”

They were now right above the aqueduct and below the railroad trestle. From
here on, it was tough going, oftentimes nearly straight down.

“For the railroad company, the tunnels were a problem, too. There’s four or five
of them just between here and Cumberland. Most of them were built over fifty years
ago.”

LeRoy led Brittingham along the side of the bank coming close a couple of times
to the very edge of the blackish-green canal filled with fallen trees, vines and decaying
refuse. He climbed up the side of the gray sandstone blocks and proudly stood on top of
the massive aqueduct that carried the waters of the canal some twenty feet above Sidling
Creek. Brittingham stayed right behind him, his wet trouser legs falling down over his muddy dress shoes. They walked the one hundred and twenty feet to the other side of the creek.

“This is where you almost ran into the water,” LeRoy said. “See, because of the flood waters, the car would have sank out of sight.”

Brittingham halted and looked at the point where the one-lane towpath headed off into the black waters of the flooded aqueduct. “It must have been awfully dark,” he said. “In daylight, it doesn’t seem so scary. Hey, look. Over there, you can see how high the river was. Just beyond the towpath, the flood came almost across the top of the canal.”

Faint at first, the sound came closer and closer. It came rushing down the swollen waters.

_Clickety-clack, clickety-clack, clickety-clack._ It was a long freight train heading for Baltimore or Washington, DC. Because of the trees on the other side of the river, they couldn’t see it, but the sounds it made floated in waves across the swirling currents.

LeRoy stopped for a rest. “See that big tree out there,” he said, pointing. “When it’s low water in July and August, that’s a great place to fish. There’s a sandy point beyond there, where you can throw your line one way and be fishing in Sidling Creek, and throw it another, and you are fishing in the Potomac River.”

“What’s that?” Brittingham said, pointing out beyond the big tree.

LeRoy jumped to his feet. “What?”

“See that big black clump out there?”

“Where – just as the creek runs into the river?”

“Yes, yes,” Brittingham answered, shaking. “Is that a body?”
LeRoy sat back down. "No, buddy boy," he told Brittingham, frowning. "Log. It's a log. It's too long to be a body. Come over here and sit down, and stop worrying. You're going to make me jump out of my skin."

Still eyeing the black mass, Brittingham walked over and sat down on some rocks. "I thought for sure, it was.... something. For sure, I thought it was."

Once they got to the sand bar, LeRoy dropped the plastic bags on the wet sand.

"Hey, Boss Man, what do you want me to do with them this time?"

"Scatter them over there, on the point," Brittingham directed him. "I can take a picture from back here that will show the creek and the river together. Yeah, pour some wet sand on all of it. Not too much now."

LeRoy scattered the different types of broken and shriveled beans over a ten foot by ten foot area. He laid the plastic bags at odd angles, burying some of the ends in some sandy, black mud. Finally, taking up handfuls of sand, he stepped around dressing up the area, making sure he covered his boot print.

The young G-Man put a new flash in his camera.

"Well, I guess that's close enough for government work," he said, dourly. "Anyway, that's all they're getting from me."

LeRoy walked over and got behind the camera. Moving closer and sitting down on his hams, Brittingham took four pictures from different angles at varying degrees.

Then, in the stillness of the morning air, LeRoy stopped. He heard a strange noise drifting along the canal. It was coming from up above them, back across Sidling Creek, where they had just come from. "What is that?"
Brittingham came up to him, carrying the black camera. "I don't know," he answered. "It sounds like it is coming from over there." He pointed up above their heads to the railroad bridge, but there was still nothing to look at, only a loud metal sound. Together, they stood motionless. As it came closer, it sounded more like a tractor or the engine of a small truck, making iron rolling noises.

From the coal, slate and reddish sandstone embankments, the colors of the earth framed the darker railroad trestle that bristled in the morning sun. Slowly the rolling noise came closer. Then they could see what it was. It was a small Ford tractor that had been outfitted to ride the rails like a railway vehicle. Behind it, the tractor had two long iron bars that were attached to a platform. Coming out onto the open trestle, the rolling platform was a flat railroad car with a foot-thick bridge of bricks in the middle of it. Atop the red bricks a large copper still was burning. From the drifting waves of white smoke, they could smell the sweet smells of cooking mash. When it reached the midpoint of the train trestle, LeRoy and Brittingham could make out who the driver of the tractor was.

Smoking a cigar, Shirley Yarrow was driving along, the light breezes blowing his wavy gray-black hair around. They watched him, as the tractor and flat rail car with the burning still slid past into the trees at the other end. Then all they could hear was the little engine and the iron rolling noises again.

"Well, I guess we know what your Boss is doing today," Brittingham laughed. "That's one mystery we've solved."
Part Two – Fall and Winter
Chapter XI

“I’m so lonesome, I could die…”

Turning onto a dark, side street, the last Saturday in October, LeRoy pulled around back going through the gate to the rear of the National Guard Armory, seeing the concrete ramp to the kitchen lit up with yellow lights. He parked between Shirley’s Chrysler Imperial and Frenchy’s cherry ’55 Chevrolet. Seeing the two cars made LeRoy jitterbug hot as he straightened his coat on his stocky body. He stepped up the concrete ramp and onto a level area that led to the kitchen and the Mess Hall. Over by a storage room, Frenchy, Shirley and three young GIs were unloading the back of the big Deuce, their breaths blowing white in the bitter air.

“Wheeeew-wee,” Shirley called out, whistling and cat-calling, blowing cigar smoke.

“My God, man! You sure you’re not one of the brothers?” Frenchy said, laughing. “Check this dude out. All you need is a process and some thick and thin socks.”

On the concrete ramp, LeRoy started dancing, his knees pumping up and down and his big feet stomping around. “I decided to come as Jerry Lee Lewis,” he said.

“Boss, can I play the piano, tonight? Can I?”

Shirley pushed his glasses back on his nose. “I, I don’t think that you are on the program, tonight. Is Mr. LeRoy on the program tonight? Does anybody know?”
"Come on, Boss," LeRoy pleaded. "I can do a good imitation of Jerry Lee Lewis. I'll even bang the keys with my toes. Please, please. You know how crazy I can act. Folks will love it."

Shirley was puffing, smiling. "What do you say, Frenchy? Should I let this wild man loose on Cumberland, tonight? The women will never be the same, will they?"

In a nice gray suit and black tie, Frenchy picked up two wooden crates of sodas. "I don't know, Boss," he said. "Things might get out of hand if you turn LeRoy loose on this church crowd. The gypsy might show up."

"Come here, Jitterbug," Shirley commanded. "Let me give you some adult guidance, I mean your working orders. Right now, we need some help, not Jerry Lee on the piano going nuts."


"Well, you can work like the rest of us," Shirley said back to him. "We've got a lot of work to do in the next hour. And there's no place for your big horse to roam, except back here with the food. So put your pecker back in your pants and pretend that you are married."

"Oh, all right, First Sergeant. But I came stag tonight. Didn't you notice?"

Both Shirley and Frenchy started laughing.

"Don't worry," Shirley said. "We won't stand in your way, if you get lucky. Frenchy, I guess we have to turn this big stud loose tonight? The girls will be standing in line. The whole upstairs is yours, even the Training Office."
Frenchy flashed the gold watch on his left wrist, motioning for LeRoy to grab a box.

LeRoy helped unload the food trays that Shirley and Frenchy had brought from the Canal House, then put some lavender crepe paper on the top of the fifty tables that were set up on the gymnasium floor. After that, the First Sergeant had him greeting guests at the Armory’s front doors, where he charged a buck for entry into the D-Day Halloween Dance. LeRoy started barking, “That is one George Washington whether you are stag or drag.” Right from the start, the First Sergeant had a plan for LeRoy’s evening, escort duty. Since the Company Commander had charged the First Sergeant with the duty of keeping the whole affair moving in the right direction, including the five-piece rock ’n’ roll Band from Keyers, West Virginia, Shirley did not have time to formally sit with his secret date for the evening, the all-too-lovely Miss Ruth Ellen Fain.

Miss Ruthie arrived in her canary yellow Buick wearing a strapless, crimson ballroom dress with white high heels that sparkled in the dark. As soon as LeRoy saw her, he started dreaming. Boy, sometimes he wished that he had had a mother just like her. He had never seen a more beautiful woman in his entire life, not even Jasmine thirteen years ago. Jazz was a working woman, not a beauty queen. Shirley’s problem was that Miss Ruthie came stag, and she would have every available jitterbug, and any other GI who could drift away from their dates, wanting to dance with her, especially the slow hip dances. So Shirley made LeRoy Ruthie’s unofficial, official date for the evening. To set the stage, Shirley got LeRoy to laughing and that convinced everyone not to be around him or Miss Ruthie’s table for too long. To further keep her from the young stags, Miss Ruthie had been invited to sit up at the front table with the Company
Commander and his wife. For all that the invited guests at the head table knew, including Major Ben Hogans, LeRoy had finally struck it rich in the date department.

LeRoy was having the time of his life, dancing the jitterbug with Miss Ruthie, sneaking off from the head table when things were going slow and the band was out back smoking and drinking beer on the ramp, and running upstairs about the Armory like a big kid turning on the lights in the dark rooms scaring some of the younger couples into screams of delight. He boiled over a couple of Carling Black Label beers with some of Shirley's best West Virginia Moonshine.

By the time LeRoy stopped acting like the clown at the harvest ball, he was reeling from all the beer and moonshine that he had consumed. His clothes reeked of cigarette smoke and cheap perfume. He had never eaten so many pieces of celery, cream cheese, and olives in his entire life, smothered with his favorite hot sauce. There wasn't a continental sandwich or finger food that LeRoy didn't try on the five tables that had been set up between the Company Commander's table and the door leading to the Mess Hall. By one o'clock, he was sick and ready to explode. Now, he was beginning to wonder if he could drive home in this state. He didn't want to spend the evening sleeping it off upstairs in one of the classrooms where all the training manuals were kept. He decided to go back into the kitchen and find a safe cubbyhole, where maybe some of the booze and hot sauce could wear off.

In the institutional-sized kitchen, Frenchy was sitting on some empty crates of sodas, smoking, as sweat dripped down his face. Beside him, Lulu Creel was eating some fried pork chops, sipping on a Carling Black Label, the suds spilling over the neck.
She was waiting for Frenchy to finish up so he could take her back to where she lived near the Canal House.

"You danced out, little man?" Frenchy asked. He untied his tie. "This is a hell of a way to earn fifteen bucks. But I guess that the man takes care of all of us."

LeRoy was grabbing his stomach with both hands. "I drank too much, Frenchy," he moaned. "The hot sauce I put on the hors d'oeuvres is burning up my stomach."

Lulu Creel covered her mouth, laughing. Beside her, Frenchy lit up a small Tipperillo cigar. "Take some baking soda and water. That will kill the acid in your stomach."

"How, how, how much?"

"Heaping teaspoon in a big glass of water," Frenchy answered. "There's some over in that cabinet. Hey, man, Shirley's sick, too. For the Boss, the whole evening was a washout."

"What? The Boss Man is sick?" LeRoy asked, suddenly wondering why he hadn't seen Shirley for the last couple of hours bringing out food or talking to the young soldiers. "What, he's got the flu? Is his bowels upset, too?"

"No, man," Frenchy replied. "He says it's his asthma. He's had asthma ever since D-Day, you know."

"Where, where's he at? In the latrine?"

"He's in the storeroom, inside the reefer," Frenchy answered. "He says the cold air makes him feel good." Frenchy stood up, rising from the wooden crates of soft drinks that he had been sitting on. "LeRoy, Mr. Jitterbug man, I'm out of here. I've cleaned up everything I could. Tell the Boss, I'll see him when I see him."
Lulu already had her coat on. "LeRoy, I guess you’ll have to take him home to that wife," she said seriously. "He needs to get to the doctor. The woman never lets him get any rest. She’s on his case all the time."

LeRoy walked over to the cabinet with a large glass of water and mixed two heaping teaspoons of baking soda into the glass. He waved to Frenchy and Lulu as they walked out the back of the kitchen onto the loading ramp. LeRoy drank the whole glass at one time. Immediately, he started belching like a cow, his stomach rumbling and gurgling. In a couple of minutes, the lead weight in his guts seemed to dissipate, drop down into his bowels. But he was still drunk from all the beer, moonshine, and punch that he had consumed. After putting up the box of baking soda, he walked past the Mess Sergeant’s Office to the storeroom where the big walk-in reefer was.

"Boss, you in here?" LeRoy called out. Inside the reefer, it was dark and smelled of celery, cheese and beer. It was very nearly empty except for the two remaining trays of food that were left. The military had raw red potatoes and onions stored in the back in toe sacks. It was just cool enough to put a chill on food, not freeze it. Shirley sat huddled over in a corner, wrapped up in a greenish wool Army blanket. He had an unlit cigar in his mouth.

"Hey, Boss, you all right?" LeRoy asked. "The people are starting to leave now. Are you as drunk as I am?"

When he tried to speak, Shirley started coughing. This made LeRoy uneasy; he had never seen Shirley like this before.

"Is, is everything all right?" LeRoy whispered. "The Commander took Miss Ruthie home. Everyone else is pretty much okay."
“Damn, LeRoy, I, I, I feel like I’ve got the flu, a bad case of the flu. My guts feel like they are coming out of me.”

“Ruthie didn’t know where you were at, so I told her that I would tell you that she had went home. Why are you sitting in here? You’ll catch the death of cold. Come on, I’ll help you out of here.”

Shirley tried to stand, and LeRoy grabbed him.

“About an hour ago, I came down with this sick feeling in my stomach,” Shirley said, coughing. “I started shaking and sweating so bad I couldn’t breathe. I had Frenchy bring me in here. The cold air makes me breathe easier.”

“Do you want me to take you to the hospital?” LeRoy asked.

In the cold, damp darkness, LeRoy could smell the celery, olives and pimento cheese. He was starting to get hungry, again.

“No, no,” Shirley said. “I took a couple of them re-ser-pine pills the doctor gave me for my heart. He says my pressure is up a little. I told him if he had the problems I had, his pressure would be up, too.”

There were voices in the kitchen, the loudest being the Mess Sergeant’s, Old Sarge Chambers’. The D-Day Halloween Dance for 1961 must have finally and officially broken up. LeRoy could visualize the clean-up detail breaking down the tables and chairs on the Drill Floor. He had to find a way to sneak out the back before he got tasked. Why did he have to drink so much? He still wondered if he could drive home.

“Boss, Boss, do you want me to drive you home – I mean to Miss Clarissa’s?” LeRoy asked. Miss Clarissa had belonged to the Cumberland Nurse Auxiliary Corps
some years ago, and LeRoy figured that she could at least monitor Shirley’s blood pressure, if nothing else.

“God, no,” Shirley replied. “Right now, she’s mad at me. She’s mad because I wouldn’t invite her to the dance. Lord knows she never been to one before. Why would she want to come to a D-Day Dance? In the end, I told her that being the First Sergeant of the Guard that I had to work the dance, keep the food and drinks moving. That’s why I wouldn’t have much time to spend with her. So now she’s as mad as a wet hen at me. Lately, she’s been acting like she doesn’t care about anything. I don’t know what to make of it. It’s your mother, LeRoy. She’s putting all these ideas in her mind.”

“Boss, why don’t you go home tonight – surprise her?” LeRoy said. “That way she won’t be suspicious.”

“LeRoy, I was there last night,” Shirley said. “If I go home every night, then she will expect it all the time. We don’t get through at the Canal House until after one o’clock. I don’t feel like driving up Little Orleans Road and listening to her every night. That would kill me.”

Under the small red light in the reefer, Shirley looked ghastly. His black bow tie hung down on either side of his opened shirt, and his white blazer that he was wearing had a reddish stain on the right sleeve that LeRoy figured was catsup. Shirley took three or four deep breaths. He took the small white towel and began rubbing his face. The air conditioning blower overhead in the reefer came on. Again Shirley tried breathing harder, faster and much deeper. Finally he was able to stand up.

“I guess the medicine started working,” Shirley said. “That stuff sure takes the fire out of your ass though. I can’t get it up for a week. It’s that strong. I need a favor,
Jitterbug.” Opening up his white jacket, he took a leather strap off his black belt. It had a ring of keys on it. “LeRoy, I think I feel good enough now to drive home,” he said. “I guess I will go home and surprise Clarissa. And I need you to stay here and make sure that Sergeant Tolbert and his crew get this place cleaned up before they leave. There are eight of them. I paid them five dollars each. Here.” Shirley handed the massive ring of keys on the leather strap to LeRoy. “Make sure this place is shipshape before you release any of them.”

“I’m your man, Boss. You know me, I’m a Twenty-Niner in my heart.” LeRoy followed him outside into the storeroom. “What do you want me to do with the leftovers?”

Shirley cleared his throat. He was breathing easier now, and the sweats had left him. “Give it to the troops. Divide up everything, even the soda pop. No use taking it back to the Canal House or the Truck Stop. If Billy’s detail does a good job, then they deserve something. And LeRoy, make sure you run them kids out of here. Especially, check upstairs on the couches in the training rooms. I don’t want the alarm going off and Sheriff Reimes calling me. Hell, I won’t be able to come back the way I feel now. Sarge Chambers is going to be here a while, too. Jitterbug, I know you two can handle it.”

LeRoy followed Shirley through the doors out into the kitchen. Shirley stopped walking at Mess Sergeant Chambers’ Office. Steadyng himself, he lit up a blunt cigar, coughing. “Where’s Old Sarge?” he asked. “Well, I guess I can’t give you adult guidance forever. I guess you’ll have to do it. And I mean lock up every door. I don’t want the front door to the Armory left unlocked, so the mayor can call me on the telephone in the morning telling me the Armory is unsecured.”
“Boss, Boss, Boss, I know what to do,” LeRoy stuttered. “I’ll take care of the Armory and everything else. I’ll search upstairs in all the training offices before we leave just to make sure that nobody is hiding—you know, fornicating.”

“Fornicating?” Shirley looked at LeRoy sideways, grinning. “LeRoy, do you and Jasmine ever fornicate?”

“Boss, Boss…”

“Never mind.”

Together, they walked into the large kitchen where Old Sarge was getting ready to leave for Keyser, West Virginia, with a paper bag of food packed for the family. He was about five feet five inches tall, with a face full of wrinkles like dried out leather, and wearing a black overcoat over his Mess Dress whites. “I heard you got sick,” he said.

One of the young soldiers on the detail came in from the ramp outside, carrying an empty trashcan. The air that came with him was biting. “First Sergeant, where you been for the last couple of hours? Everybody from Kingdom Come has been asking for you? Boy, I had a good time tonight. We should do this on New Year’s Eve.”

Puffing on his cigar, Shirley slowly walked over to the huge galvanized steel sink that had three deep chambers for washing ten-gallon pots and pans. He ran cold water through a small towel, wringing it out. Then, he removed his glasses and wiped his reddened face off. Putting the cigar back into his mouth, he wrapped the wet towel around the back of his neck. “Son, the grippe has me,” he told the young soldier. “I believe I’m coming down with the flu or something. It’s made me so weak, I almost had LeRoy drive me home.”
"You need to get home and get into bed," the Mess Sergeant said. "I told you about this working too hard. This isn’t D-Day, you know, and you’re not full of piss and vinegar, anymore. Go ahead. Go home and rest up."

Shirley poured himself a small paper cup of moonshine. Slowly and carefully, he sipped the clear liquid. It made him cough like crazy once it hit his throat. 'LeRoy, I mean what I say, now. I want this place spick and span before you release that detail, and I want every door, including the motor pool gate, locked up. Boy, I should start a distillery. Is that stuff good or what?"

"Boss, Boss," LeRoy answered. "I'll take care of everything. You’ve taught me what to do, you know? If I run into problems, I got Old Sarge here. He’ll keep me out of trouble."

It was 2:50 on a cold Sunday afternoon before LeRoy finally got up and pulled on his jeans, reheating the drip grind coffee that his mother had made hours before. Before the coffee could get hot and he had finished his first cigarette, his mother and Miss Clarissa came in from church all dressed up in new coats. As soon as they saw LeRoy, they started talking about how good the dinner was in Hancock at Miss Clarissa’s brother’s restaurant. From the start, he knew that something was up with them. His head started throbbing from all the beer and moonshine that he had consumed last night. While they were talking, LeRoy snuck into the kitchen and retrieved his first cup of coffee, relighting another Marlboro with his head stuck out the back door. He could hear bit and pieces of what they were saying in the small living room.
“If you want me to go get my son to tell you what took place last night,” his mother said out loud, “you know that I will. He will tell you the truth, because he knows you are my dearest friend, Clarissa.”

“I know, I know, Cora Ann – the Lord knows I know,” the other woman moaned, starting to cry. “But I am so, so at myself right now, I don’t know what to do. I married this man, and he does nothing else but use me. I don’t think I’ve ever seen a time in my life that I have been so, so lonely. And here he comes in all used up last night. Then he gets into bed with me. I don’t know to God what I’m going to do. Please don’t hug me, I feel so low right now, so used up.”

LeRoy crept up to the doorway to the hall, pretending to be carrying his cup to the bathroom, stopping at intervals to listen.

“Lord knows, I shouldn’t be so angry – so upset,” Miss Clarissa said. “But, I don’t know what to do. The whole thing has got the best of me. I guess I can’t admit that I can’t keep a man like that. The only thing that makes me happy is you, Cora Ann. You keep me going.”

“Now, Clarissa, don’t talk that way. You are one of the finest women that I have ever known. The man doesn’t deserve you. Shhhh! He will never know the love you keep inside.”

“Let me go,” Clarissa said. “Let me get home. I’ll come by at six and pick you up for Bible study tonight. We’ll talk then. We’ll have a good time as we always do.”

LeRoy heard them embrace, then the front door opened and shut with a light thud. A few moments later, his mother came looking for him. By this time, he was out on the
back porch, smoking and sipping a fresh cup of coffee, his big feet biting cold from the frost.

The back door flung open. "I want to know the truth," she said, still wearing her Sunday hat. "Were you part of this plan last night to throw us off? I know you weren't with that harlot last night. Tell me the truth, son. Did Shirley Yarrow get you to cover for him while he gets himself lost from sight? We had a witness there last night, who told us everything. Now, what's your version of the story? Clarissa got her detectives, too, you know."

"Mom, Mom, Mom," LeRoy stuttered. "It isn't Shirley that goes with Ruth Ellen, it's me."

"Great God, son, that's worse than I thought. Good God Almighty, that harlot will carry you off like that gypsy woman did. Remember? And you'll be lost in the devil's sin! That big thing will get you lost forever, once you start sinning again."

LeRoy thought that his mother had finally gone crazy. "Mom," he begged, "you've got to let me have a life sometimes, you know. I don't have a life like you do. I don't have anyone that picks me up for church or Bible study. Where's my life? Is it up there at that Truck Stop where I am just a grease-monkey?"

"Well, it will never be with that woman, as God is my judge that woman is poison for you or any other man who crawls between her legs. I've, I've seen them before, son. Women like that can poison a man's body, and he is never pure again, now matter what he does. Look at your father. Even the church couldn't save a whoring man."

Chapter XII
Shades of Omaha

At first, the noise sounded like a cat crying, whimpering, then a screaming moan. Inside the garage, LeRoy couldn’t make it out. Worn out, he wanted to get the tire fixed and be out of there before another truck came in. Suddenly, he heard a scream.

"LeRoy. LeRoy, LEE-ROY!" the voice shrieked. "LeRoy!"

He dropped the air hose and hurried for the steps to the bunkhouse, wiping his hands on a rag.

"LeRoy!" the voice screamed again, as he rounded the corner and went down a short, unlit hallway. Opening the door, he entered the main room where the military bunk beds were. A small lamp was lit in the middle of the room next to the wall. On one bed, lying on his back, was Shirley’s outstretched body. His pale forehead was heavy with sweat dripping down his reddened face.

"Help me, LeRoy – God forbid, help me," Ruthie was screaming, her hair hanging down on her pink face. "You got to help me. Something has happened to Shirley. I don’t know. It happened all of a sudden, balling him up." She started crying.

LeRoy started shaking. In a second, he was beside him, propping his head up so he could breathe easier.

Ruthie tried hard to talk. "He was in here – helping me out with the cleaning. I think his heart gave out. You’ve got to do something, LeRoy. You’ve got to get him to the hospital."
Shirley was trying to speak, but the pain was too great. His whole chest was heaving every time he tried to talk. LeRoy felt his forehead and took his pulse. He was burning hot.

"Get me a towel, and wet it with some real cold water," LeRoy said. "Hurry. We got to get him comfortable, so he can breathe easier."

Ruthie got up off her knees and walked wobbly into the shower room, returning with a balled-up wet towel that she handed to LeRoy. He took it and began methodically wiping Shirley's face, neck and forehead. Then he folded it, laying it across his forehead.

"LeRoy," Ruthie cried. "Fix him up." She was pointing. "Pull up his pants. I don’t want anyone coming in here and seeing him like that. You know how that old bitch is? You know how selfish she can be."

Shirley’s pants were unzipped and pushed all the way down around his knees. His upper lip was quivering. LeRoy slipped his right arm under his back, trying to lift him up, but his dead weight and limp body were sagging in the middle.

"Damn, Boss, I can’t get your pants up over your crank." Even Shirley’s legs were trembling, drenched with sweat. "Boss, Boss, Boss, what’s happening to you? Are you all right? It’s hanging out like a flagpole."

"If, if, if," Ruthie whimpered, "if they see him like this, I’ll be embarrassed to death. You know what everyone will say?"

"Well, help me," LeRoy shouted. "Here, I’m going to roll him over then we will pull his pants up over his butt. Come on, Ruthie, help me."

LeRoy rolled Shirley’s sweating body over, then he and Ruthie pulled up his pants by lifting and tugging on his belt. While Ruthie was forcing the zipper over the
flared-out bulge, LeRoy propped Shirley’s head up with an OD green blanket. Ruthie closed his belt buckle and straightened him up.

“Ruthie, Ruthie, Ruthie, let’s let him rest for a moment,” LeRoy said. “He needs to settle down. His heart is pumping like crazy.” He pulled the cold towel off Shirley’s face. Shirley’s eyes began bouncing around, having opened up somewhat. He grabbed LeRoy’s arm, trying to talk.

“Le-Roy, Le-Roy,” he said, hoarsely, gasping for air. “Am I fixed up? Go, go, go get the Cracker Box. It’s got oxygen in it. Back, back, back it up to the garage here. I’ve got to get to the hospital in Berkeley Springs.” He began coughing. “And don’t turn that damned red light on. Do you hear me? I don’t want anybody knowing it’s me in there.”

“Boss, Boss, Boss, I’m going right now. I promise I won’t do anything crazy. Are you going to be all right?”

Feebly, Shirley nodded. “Ruthie, Ruthie – in my jacket. Give me a couple of my blood pressure pills,” he whispered. “God damn, LeRoy. My heart feels like it’s going to come out of my chest. Get the cracker box. Jesus Christ! The oxygen has, has to make me feel better, no matter what.”

Ruthie came back from the shower room with a cup of water and some pills in her right fist. While Shirley was taking the pills and sipping the water, he said to Ruthie, “Take my wallet. Take my wallet. It’s got everything that belongs to me in it. All my numbers. Hurry, take it. I can’t lose this!”

“Ruthie, I’ll be back in five minutes,” LeRoy shouted. “Keep the cold towel on his forehead – and keep him warm.”
LeRoy ran from the bunkhouse. The November night had turned to pitch black, and the Truck Stop was empty of its daily traffic. The lights over the pumps were filled with blowing sleet.

Huddling up against the bitter night, LeRoy ran around the corner of the garage to where his truck was parked. At the door, he looked around to make sure that no one saw him, then he climbed into the truck, cranked up, and drove quickly by the fuel pumps.

LeRoy had the pickup at the Firehouse before the truck’s heater was even blowing hot air. Hearing the chipped rocks of the driveway splashing up onto the underside, he drove up to the southern side of the building where a lone light stood guard over the front door to the office. Once inside, he pushed up the high garage door to the first bay where the square military ambulance, now painted red, was parked. He found the logbook to the vehicle, warmed up the engine, and was backing out onto Little Orleans Road in less than ten minutes.

Back at the Route 40 Pure Oil, Reverend Hoyt had the second garage door up and all the lights were now on. Buster French was in the bunkhouse with Ruthie.

Circling down to Ruthie’s Buick, LeRoy backed the red ambulance up to the open garage door. Leaping out, he ran around to the rear and pulled out a stretcher. Steering and pulling, LeRoy and the Reverend guided the stretcher through the garage, then the little hallway into the bunkhouse.

Upon seeing LeRoy, Shirley pointed to him feebly, mouthing out, “If you turn on that damned red light, I am going to kill you. Where’s my forty-five?” In the confusion of the moment, the Reverend and Frenchy were laughing, not at Shirley’s medical
condition, but the fact that his heart attack had come upon him in the line of bunkhouse duty.

LeRoy took his blood pressure, then put the cuff and the stethoscope down at the foot of the gurney. He started trembling and sweat broke out on his face. “It’s, it’s a little high, Boss,” he said. “Nothing, nothing, nothing a doctor can’t handle. Here, Rev, get in the front of the stretcher. Let’s get him out of here. He needs a hospital to take care of him now.” Shirley’s blood pressure was 284 over 160-something. Trembling inside, LeRoy figured that he could die at any moment.

Duke was there, too, and kept trying to climb onto the bed with Shirley. When they moved Shirley, he started barking like crazy. “Come on, Duke,” LeRoy shouted. “We got a sick man here.” Duke didn’t know what to think. He was smelling around the bunkhouse, his hair on end, like he ought to attack someone.

Together, the three of them pushed and pulled Shirley’s shivering body long ways out of the bunkroom, until they got him to the garage and the open ambulance. Then they picked up the wheeled stretcher, and slid it into the rear compartment of the ambulance. LeRoy almost forgot to lock the rear wheels so the stretcher would not roll around while they were driving. Shutting the doors with a double slam, LeRoy went around to the driver’s side and got up into the ambulance. He turned and fumbled around until he had placed a clear plastic mask over Shirley’s sweating face. Feeling for a steel bottle of oxygen behind the seat, he turned a knob one-half turn. Shirley slid his right hand up and pressed it tighter to his face. Soon LeRoy had the Cracker Box out on Route 40 heading east for Hancock, where he would take the Potomac River Bridge nine miles south to the hospital at Berkeley Springs, West Virginia.
LeRoy twisted his body around in the seat. “Hey, Boss, you okay?”

It was hard for Shirley to talk through the oxygen mask. Driving with his left hand, LeRoy felt over the top of Shirley’s head and down onto his face where he lifted the mask up.

“My, my chest is killing me,” Shirley whispered. “Le-Roy, Le-Roy,” Shirley mumbled, trying to sit up. “Push, psh-psh, push the pillow under my left armpit.” The jerking of the pillow being tucked into his armpit made him moan. “Over on my right side, it doesn’t hurt so God-dam bad,” he said through the mask. “Pull, pull the curtain back, dammit. I am not going anyplace I don’t know where I’m going.”

“Boss, there isn’t anything to see,” LeRoy said. “It’s just Sidling Creek and the mountain. That’s all.”

Shirley pushed the mask up. “I can see that, son. It’s going to be an early winter, LeRoy. Don’t forget that I told you that.”

LeRoy pushed the seat as far back as it would go. Turning around, he took the strap from behind the seat and gathered the curtain, snapping it into place. Squirming around, Shirley had rolled over on his chest, two pillows propping him up.

“Look, Boss, we’re where that trucker died last January,” LeRoy said. “Poor fellow, froze his ass off.”

“That, that ain’t all he froze off,” Shirley said through a whisper. “You know, LeRoy, I’m a fighting dog. I’ve been fighting all my life, even when I was a kid up in Bedford, Pennsylvania. Always fighting. God, I had to fight to get ashore at Omaha, and now I’m fighting just to be the man I always wanted to be.” He didn’t say anything for a
few seconds, then: “Still fighting, just to survive. Son, I am a man who has never escaped his past, or his women either.”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

“First Sergeant, you’re a Twenty-Niner,” LeRoy called out. “To me, you will always be the First Shirt.”

‘Not today, my friend,” Shirley said. “God, I’m feeling a little better. I guess them two reserpines and five aspirins I took back at Route 40 are working. If I could get rid of this pain in my side, I’d be okay. Whewwwwww.”

They were headed down the eastern side of Fire Tower Mountain. Shirley was taking big gulps of oxygen from time to time.

“There, there for a moment,” he began, in a breathy whisper, “I, I thought I was back in France – so help me God. The pain must have caused me to hallucinate. I could see myself being hit in my right shoulder, and I had to lie there in the surf for what seemed like hours. Goddamned, Omaha. Hell, all I ever saw of Omaha was the beach and the German pill boxes in the distance. That’s it. That night, they transported me back to Salisbury Plain where I stayed in a hospital for two months. I rejoined the Division up near Paris. Hell of a way to see a country, wouldn’t you say?” LeRoy had heard the story a dozen times.

Heading up the small hills just before Hancock, LeRoy smelled cigar smoke.

“Boss, put that cigar out.” he said. “Come on, Boss. You’ll set the bed on fire back there. You got oxygen in that mask.”

He slowed as they went by the apple orchards leading down off the mountain into the small town of Hancock.
"Don't, don't worry," Shirley said. "I, I turned off the valve. "Do, do you know why I lived? They thought I was dead, dead in the surf. LeRoy, I'm here to tell you that them Krauts don't give up easy." He sounded drunk.

LeRoy could hear a *ssscchhhh* sound, like a whisper of steam. He knew that the valve with the oxygen and gas was still turned on. With the lights of the little town at the bottom of the hill before them, he pulled over to the side of the road. Slipping the gearshift into neutral, he pulled on the handbrake. Then he turned the valve off. The end of the glowing red cigar was not more than a foot from the right side of his face.

"This is one time, First Sergeant, that I am taking care of you," LeRoy said.

Shirley tried laughing, but it was a half-hearted moan. "Why do you think that I keep you around, Jitterbug?" he said. "You're, you're the oldest kid I've ever met. But you're a damned good mechanic."

Laughing like a nut, LeRoy started driving again.

"LeRoy, the pain was so great, I couldn't believe I actually lived. I'll never forget the smell of the surf. It smelled in between salt and rotting seaweed. Raw and earthy. You never forget that."

LeRoy turned right onto a ramp that led up to the bridge that crossed the Potomac River. A light, flaky snow was falling, and three rigs were sitting on the right shoulder of the road with their trailer lights on. Pulling up onto the bridge, LeRoy could feel the front tires moving around. The roadway, especially on this long bridge, was beginning to freeze from the southerly winds that were blowing under its arches.

On the other side of the Potomac, West Virginia Route 238 traveled up a series of low-lying hills heading south. The snowflakes and freezing rain were falling in a
sweeping motion across the roadway. Staring out at the desolate country, LeRoy felt like he was driving into a tunnel.

"Lee-Roy," Shirley called. "Lee-Roy. I've, I've dropped my cigar."

"Hang on, Boss, hang on," LeRoy called out. "We're almost there."

"Where?"

LeRoy was pushing the Cracker Box hard. Cresting the top of the hill country, the ambulance began passing the open mining pits of the West Virginia Gypsum and Silica Company that lined both sides of the road with pure white troughs hundreds of feet deep.

"We're at the white mines," LeRoy said. "See all the white sand?" He glanced back at Shirley's subdued figure in the dark. "Here, here, put this oxygen mask back on your face," LeRoy said. He felt for Shirley's face, then his nose. Shirley started breathing deeply, and on a more regular basis. After a couple of minutes, his chest stopped heaving.

Then Shirley began talking through the oxygen mask. LeRoy took the mask away. Again Shirley tried to talk. LeRoy forced his mouth open and out popped the bitten-off end of a cigar. "...Just touch it to my lips," he said. "Gun-Bunny, just touch it to my lips. It, it, it will settle the pain. Please, I don't have much time left. The tide is coming in." Coughing, he said: "Just a little more. Just a little more. Son, I can't fight this pain no more. I just can't."

LeRoy wiped his eyes. Half turning around, he quickly laid Shirley's hand over his chest. "First Sergeant, we're almost home."
On the outskirts of Berkeley Springs, LeRoy drove the ambulance as fast as he could through the few streetlights that lit up the little spa-town. In the center of the village, he passed the Berkeley Springs Hotel and Spa, and within seconds he was turning left into the small three-story hospital, going directly to the right side of the building where the emergency room was.

Pulling up to double doors, LeRoy heard Shirley coughing in the back. Cutting the ignition and grabbing the parking brake, he opened the door and ran through the glass doors into the bright lights of the emergency room.

"Please, please, help, help, help me," LeRoy shouted out to two nurses behind the counter. "Please help me. I got a sick man in the ambulance. I need help."

The two nurses and another attendant ran up to him.

"I've got Shirley Yarrow from the Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Company," LeRoy told them. "He's having severe chest pains. I think he's had a heart attack."

While one woman went to alert the hospital staff, the two others ran for the rear of the Cracker Box. As Shirley's sheeted body came through the glass doors, LeRoy felt the blood drain from his head. He went back out into the cold air. He had to move the Cracker Box out of the way and put his white rescue squad hat on. Pulling through the overhead area that covered the entrance, he drove over to the right and parked under an oak tree.

Once he had his equipment secured, LeRoy went back inside. "Ma'am," LeRoy said to the woman behind the counter, "how's, how's, how's he doing."
The big raw-boned nurse looked at him. "The doctor is with him right now, Lieutenant. Do you know how this happened? Here, take this pencil and clip board and fill out all the information that you know. What's his name?"

LeRoy stared back at her. "It happened -- " LeRoy looked at his watch -- "a little over an hour ago. Major Yarrow was lifting some, some, some heavy stuff in the, the, the back room of the Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop." LeRoy didn't know what else to say. He didn't want to tell a white lie either.

"Major -- why do you call him Major?"

"He's the Major of the Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Company," LeRoy answered. "And he's my trucking boss at the Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop." He left out the part about him being the First Sergeant at the Company in Cumberland.

"Well, Lieutenant, take that clip board and go into the staff lounge, and write down all the information you know about the Major. We need a next-of-kin. Has anybody in his family been notified? What's his wife's name? Does she know?"


The nurse behind the counter pushed her glasses back onto her nose.

"Go into the staff lounge, have yourself a cup of coffee, and fill out the form as best as you can," she said. "And if you don't know something, leave it blank. I don't
want any bogus information. Do you know what happened to his wallet? He has no identification on his person. What’s his blood type?”

“It’s, it’s, it’s, it’s back at the Tuck Stop,” LeRoy stuttered. “Blood type. Oh, it’s on his dog tags around his neck. He always wears his dog tags from the war. He wouldn’t take them off for nothing. He’s a Twenty-Niner, you know”

For once, the nurse smiled. Then she went running for one of the rooms down the hall where, LeRoy supposed, they were fixing Shirley’s heart up, making sure that it didn’t come out of his chest.

LeRoy took off his LOF&RC hat and walked down the hall, stopping at the second room on the left where the staff lounge was. It was empty, but the coffee pot was still hot. They had a refrigerator, a small electric stove, and a corner cove where they kept free snacks for firefighters and rescue squad personnel. Quietly, LeRoy walked lightly over to the refrigerator where he took out an RC Cola. At the corner cove, he hunted through the snacks until he found himself a Chattanooga Moon Pie. Then he sat down in a chair under a lamp and began answering the questions on the Admittance Form.

Place of Birth: Penna.

Age: Fifty some

Are you allegoric to any drugs? Penicillin?

Have you been in the hospital in the last five years? No, I think?

Veteran? Yes, 29th Division from Maryland – in World War II. First Sergeant in Cumberland.

Are you a drinker? Sometimes.
Do you drink every day? Not if he can help it.

Do you take any drugs? First Sergeant Yarrow takes Serpine for his heart.

Next-of-Kin: Miss Clarissa Grove Yarrow (Wife) Little Orleans Road Little Orleans, Maryland. Telephone number in the book.

Have you ever been in a hospital? Yes, in England and Belgium for his two purple hearts – War Wounds.

What religion are you?

LeRoy had to think about that one. Every man had to have a religion. What was on Shirley's dog tags?

Christian.

That did it. LeRoy finished the RC and the moon pie and took the clipboard back outside. Reaching the desk, the nurse was talking on the telephone. LeRoy handed the clipboard to her.

"How, how is he doing?" LeRoy asked.

"There's two doctors in there now," she answered. The nurse took the clipboard from LeRoy. "I'll be honest with you, Lieutenant," she said. "He's had a massive heart attack. If he lives, he's got a long road ahead of him. Of course, you never know about this sort of thing. He may snap right out of it and be fine."

"Isn't there anything that you can do? We bring folks in here all the time. You give them some drugs, and they're okay in a couple of days." He looked around at the empty emergency room. "I, I, I see it all the time."
The nurse blinked. "I'll take this in to the doctor," she said. "Have a cup of coffee in the lounge, and I'll call you if something happens. I called his wife. She will be here in a little while. We're doing all we can, Lieutenant."

LeRoy lowered his head and walked back up the hall for the staff lounge. He fixed himself a cup of black coffee and sat down, rubbing his lips. Half an hour later, the gray-haired nurse walked into the room followed by a doctor wearing a three-piece suit. He took off his stethoscope, folded it up and put it into the pocket of his suit coat. The nurse flipped a switch that brought bright lights into the long, narrow room. "I'm sorry, Lieutenant, there was nothing that we could do," she said. "Doctor Welsh can tell you more. I've seen you in here before, haven't you, doctor? You're from the Little Orleans Squad, aren't you? Little Orleans - good bunch of guys."

"Yes, yes, yes. I'm from the Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Company. The, the, the First Sergeant was in charge. Now, I don't know what we're all going to do. He, he, he, he, was everything to us." Raising a hand to his lips, he could feel moon pie crumbs. "Shirl, Shirl, Shirley was the big man just over the mountain," LeRoy stammered. "Nobody could run the Route 40 Pure Oil the way he did...Or, the Canal House down on the Potomac..."

"Oh, yes. You're talking about the Truck Stop on the way to Cumberland," the doctor said. "I've stopped there before. Do you want us to call someone - someone from the station - to help you get back over the mountain to Little Orleans? It's snowing hard outside."

LeRoy didn't reply.
"I know that this is difficult for you. This time the call was for a friend." The doctor put a hand on LeRoy's shoulder. "It was just too massive."

"I just want to see him before I go," LeRoy said. "Can I do that? Can I?"

"Okay," the doctor said. "I think a few minutes won't hurt either of you. Nurse Shub, take the Lieutenant down to see his friend." He opened the door for them, smiling.

LeRoy walked into the hallway, his engineer boots clomping on the gray tiled floor. Nurse Shub took him right to the door, opened it, let him enter, and closed it quietly behind him. He remembered the first funeral he had gone to as a child. It was a distant uncle, and all he could remember was how sad everyone was, and the pianist kept playing *Just As I Am, Just As I Am* over and over again. LeRoy's hands felt itchy, numb with pinpricks. He pushed back the curls and put the white service hat squarely on his big head.

In the stainless steel room filled with electrical machines and gadgets, Shirley lay on a wheeled table covered by a heavy starched sheet. His Wellington boots along with his stripped socks had been pulled off, and his feet were sticking out the rear end of the table. Already his feet and big toenails were turning blue. His large, round shoulders were bare, and LeRoy could make out little round suction circles from the EKG machine, accented by a clear, shiny jelly. The doctor had closed his eyes, and Shirley appeared to be in a state of deep sleep.

It was the commotion outside in the hallway that brought LeRoy around. Another ambulance had arrived. There was a lot of loud talking with Nurse Shub shouting and giving orders while he could hear running feet up and down the hallway. At any moment, Leroy expected the voices to burst into the room that he was in. He wanted to
leave right then, but he couldn’t. Reaching under the sheet, he felt for Shirley’s right hand and found the ring finger. He pulled off his Masonic ring and tried to put it on his own finger. It only came up to the second knuckle so he slipped it onto the little finger of his left hand. Then he reached up and pulled gently at the chain to Shirley’s 29th Division dog tags, snapping them and putting them in the left pocket of his jeans. Getting ready to leave, he reached over onto the floor and picked up Shirley’s Wellington Boots admiring the shine on them. Holding them over his chest, LeRoy stared down at the sleeping figure, crying.

“I, I, I, I don’t want to let you go, Boss,” LeRoy said. “But I guess I don’t have a choice. Save a place for me at the Blue and Gray roll call when I get there.” Transferring the boots from his right hand to his left, he gave a quick salute, turned, and ran for the door. Down at the end of the hall, Nurse Shub was behind the counter. LeRoy ran past her big frame and on out through the glass doors, clutching the boots under his arm.

Fluffy snow was coming down through the barren oak trees. Over in the main parking lot, he could see his mother and Miss Clarissa, walking for the main entrance. They hadn’t seen him. Throwing the boots into the cab, LeRoy fumbled for the keys. Shaking, he cranked up the ambulance, backed up, and drove around to the back of the hospital. Once the cracker box was hidden, he took a side road around to the right, following a steep incline, and drove down onto a back street that cut back north of the hospital. When the ambulance came back down to the main road, LeRoy waited, giving them more than enough time to get inside the hospital and out of sight. Once he was sure that they were inside, he drove past the front of the hospital.
LeRoy waited until he came alongside of the silica mines before he reached up and flipped on the emergency bubblegum light that threw red flashes all over the white sand as specks of freezing rain and ice pelted the back of the ambulance. He drove all the way back to Little Orleans Road as fast as he could.
Driving for the end of the garage, LeRoy caught a glimpse of Ruthie’s sad face hanging in the picture window of the diner. Parking the pickup, he opened the door and stepped out into two inches of snow and frozen sleet. Inside the bunkhouse, all the lights were still on. The bunk beds were straightened up, and there was no trash to be found in the trashcans. Even the latrine was bare, smelling good and clean.

LeRoy could hear music coming from the big Wurlitzer Jukebox, Patsy Cline’s Walking After Midnight. He pushed the door open to the empty diner. “...I've got your picture, that you gave to me; and, it still looks the same, as it did before; ...the only thing different, ...the only thing new, I've got your picture, she's got you...” He stopped near the cash register. No one was around except Ruthie sitting in the third booth. As he made his way over to her, she got up, walked past him, poured herself a cup of coffee, then walked back to the booth without saying a word. Her eyes were red and her blondish curls had fallen down over her forehead.

The big jukebox stopped playing and searched the oval rack for the next selection. The flying colors came to a stop, then LeRoy heard the ssssshhhhhhh of the 45 grinding. It was Patsy Cline again, singing I Fall to Pieces. Brittle crystals of ice hit the wooden side of the Truck Stop making the building shudder. Duke started barking at the glass door and LeRoy went over and let him in. Duke galloped through the kitchen, heading for an old GI blanket on the floor in Shirley’s office. There was a hot air vent back there, and he could park his ribs on it and get warm.
Down at the pumps, an icy blast of wind stirred up the dust and snowflakes, and LeRoy saw Reverend Hoyt with his Army Korean hat on. As the nozzle pumped diesel into the saddle tanks of a Freightliner, Rev did a dance of one leg, two legs, stomping so he could get the blood flowing. Before LeRoy could shut the door, Duke darted back out the door. It was obvious that he knew that something was wrong. Before the night was over, he would need another blue plate special to quiet him down.

Ruthie sniffed. “Your mother called. I wouldn’t, wouldn’t talk to her. She was nasty to me! LeRoy, you know, I didn’t have anything to say to her.”

“She – my mother called? When?”

“Oh, a good hour ago,” Ruthie said. “She wanted to know where you where. Yep, she called from the hospital. She, she, she – that’s when she told me that Shirley had died…” She started sobbing. “When, when she couldn’t find you, she started telling me to get out…get out. She kept screaming into the telephone for me to get out. That the Truck Stop was going to be closed, anyway. I told her that she was crazy. No business like this just closed overnight. But she kept telling me to get out. The bitch kept telling me to get out…Like I was nobody and had never worked here – even been here. But to her that didn’t matter. Then she threatened me. She shouted into the telephone, ‘Get out or I’ll put the law on you. Your whoring will get you put in jail!’”

The jukebox stopped again. Ruthie continued to talk, about something that had happened three years ago, when she had first come to the Route 40 Pure Oil. It was all garbled, about her and Shirley – when they had first met. They had taken a day trip up to Camp Dawson, west of Cumberland in Terra Alta, West Virginia, to sightsee. That was the day she knew that she was in love with Shirley Yarrow.
While Ruth talked away in the booth, LeRoy went back into the kitchen. Thank God, it was clean. Frenchy had cleaned everything up, leaving only the scraps for Duke on the grill in an aluminum pot covered with tin foil. In the little office, it was dark and pretty much the way Shirley had left it. It had a couple of Rum and Crook cigars sitting beside the black telephone. Back in the diner, LeRoy walked up to the cash register, not really understanding why, pulled the handle back, and opened it with a loud ring. All the paper money was gone.

"I took it. I took it all, LeRoy," Ruthie said. "After tonight, I don’t have anything. Nothing at all. Sixty-four dollars and fifty-one cents. I took it all. I won’t even have a job!"

LeRoy didn’t say anything.

"Before I go, LeRoy" she said. "Can I hear *Someday Soon* by Ian and Sylvia? Then I’m going to listen to *Amazing Grace*. Shirley always liked that song. His mother used to sing it in church when he was a boy."

"Sure, sure, Miss Ruthie," LeRoy answered. "You know that I sometimes listen to them cowboy songs." Heh, heh, heh, heh. "I am a cowboy at heart."

Ruthie pushed herself out of the booth and walked in her stocking feet over to the jukebox. You could hear the quarter clink downward until it hit the change box on the side. Staring at the selections, she selected six songs, punching the numbers in. Slowly, as the music started, she went back over and slid back into the booth, lighting up a filtered Camel.
As the folksong started playing, Reverend Hoyt came into the diner all wrapped up in heavy clothes and the pile cap. When he stopped walking, he looked like a manikin from the Salvation Army Store.

“There’s hardly any traffic on Route 40,” the Reverend said. “Considering things, do you want me to lock up?” From under the felt Army cap, his black eyes stared at LeRoy, his face red from the cold.

It was the first time that the Rev had ever wanted to lock up early.

“Sure, sure,” LeRoy answered. “I guess I’ll see you in a couple of days. Hey, shut the pumps off before you go.”

“God, I hope so. I’ve already shut them off, an hour ago, then I turned them back on when that lowboy needed fuel.”

LeRoy had gotten up from the booth. Suddenly he was the only one left around to make a decision.

“LeRoy, I could just die,” the Rev said. “My church can’t pay me to preach, and I needed this job to support my family. I got to preach, LeRoy. It’s in my blood, you know.”

“Rev, Rev, Reverend Hoyt,” LeRoy stammered. “As soon as I can, I’m going to keep the Truck Stop open. I promise you that. I don’t care what my mother says. This is my life, too. And you’ll be my fuel man, ’cause I know Dude, Dude won’t come back when I tell him to stop carrying that pistol – and boozing.”

“God, I hope so,” he said. “Christmas will be here in little over a month. And, winter is already here. I need to work – and preach! I’d hate to have to go back to the mines.”
“Well, that makes two of us. I promise, Rev, I’ll do something.”

“I, I, I tried to talk to her,” he said, motioning to Ruthie. “But, Shirley will be missed by all of us. Right now, she needs to go home and get some comfort from the Lord. I told her that I would pray for her.”

“Thanks, thanks,” LeRoy said. “Turn off the pumps and the outside lights before you go. I’m not going to pump any fuel tonight.”

The last song that came on was Patti Page’s *Tennessee Waltz*. Ruthie held a plastic straw that she was constantly tying into knots, her hazel eyes now staring at LeRoy.

“Ruth, Ruth, Ruth-ie,” he said. “It’s okay if you stay all night, but I’m worried about you getting home. You might have to contend with them in the morning. You’ve got this drive over the mountain now, and it’s, it’s, it’s a long way to LaVale, Maryland. My God, it might take you a couple of hours. The slushy snow is turning to ice everywhere.”

His words trailing off, Ruthie stared at him. Her lips began blubering once more: “You know, LeRoy,” she began, “once I walk out that door, I’ll never be back. I’ll, I’ll, I’ll never be back to the Truck Stop.”

“Bab, Bab, Baby,” he tried to say, “once we all leave, I don’t know what is going to happen. Miss Clarissa and my mom might just burn the place down. They can’t stand anyone having any fun – especially me.” LeRoy looked into her eyes. “With a mom like mine, what are you going to do?”

The longer LeRoy talked the worse he seemed to make it. Finally, he gave up and stopped talking. Together, they listened to icy winds hitting the windows and the wooden
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clapboards on the outside of the Truck Stop. All this seemed like a bad dream. Everything was happening so fast, and there was nothing that he could do about it. He wanted Miss Ruthie to stay there tonight. But what would happen if his mother or Miss Clarissa came up there in the morning and found her asleep in the bunkhouse? Then his mother would really be thinking that Ruthie and him were sleeping together.

"LeRoy, walk me to my car," Ruthie said, her lips quivering. "I'm, I'm a lady, you know. I need to be walked to my car."

"I know, I know, baby doll," LeRoy stuttered. "I've always known that you were a lady – even when I gave you hell."

She twisted in the booth to put on her shoes, then got up slowly. LeRoy went for her coat in the little office, and wrapped the black fake fur around her shoulders, smelling the hint of perfume that she was wearing. Then, head held high, Ruthie took that first step for the door. LeRoy could feel her weight on his arm.

The cold air struck both of them in the face. As they walked the couple of steps down to the concrete, LeRoy started to cry, more like blubbing, boohoo. The big yellow Buick Special sat under a blanket of snow in the empty parking lot. Down by the Pure Oil sign, two rigs were warming up, getting ready to head out for night running. Opening the heavy door, Ruthie fumbled in her bag for the ignition keys. Once she had them, she slid into the brown leather seat behind the steering wheel, inserting the keys into the ignition. The engine roared to life blowing dried leaves and crusted snow from its underside. Ruthie pumped the accelerator to get the heater going. LeRoy cleaned the snow off the windshield with his hands so the wipers could start working. Then he went back and stood beside her open car door. When Ruthie turned around to say goodbye,
LeRoy was standing as close as he could to her, shaking. He could feel the cold on the back of his neck, blowing his hair around. 


LeRoy did not know what to say. He was crying like a little boy. "Ruthie, you’ve got enough money to take care of you for a week or two?"

In the near darkness, he could see her lips with a wry smile on them. "I guess so," she said. "For the past year, I could always count on Shirley. Now that he is gone, I don’t know what I’m going to do."

The engine groaned under the hood.

"I’ve got to get over the mountain before the road freezes," she said. She pushed him away from the door. "Bye, LeRoy," she said, rolling the window down. "Don’t worry, I, I, I will call you soon, soon."

Putting the car into reverse, she quickly backed up, and turned the steering wheel hard to the right. Going past, the car made a wide turn that took her around by the blue and white sign. Watching intently, LeRoy saw the taillights blink, as she stopped briefly at Little Orleans Road. Pulling out, the car turned, then turned left again onto Route 40, heading west up the side of the dark mountain.
Chapter XIV

Closed for Funeral

LeRoy spent the better part of an hour shutting the Truck Stop down. After he turned off the lights, he went back into the bunkhouse and searched for a small security box that Shirley kept hidden. LeRoy thought that Shirley might have hidden it behind a stack of new truck tires, but when he looked, there was nothing there save a fifty-pound box of dried beans. Frantically, LeRoy continued searching the five or six different hiding places where he thought that Shirley might have put it. Then he went to a freezer that Shirley kept meat in. Pushing boxes of chicken, pork and beef aside, he found the metal box at the very bottom, crusted over with ice. Shutting the lid, LeRoy took the frigid box into the shower room and turned on a small wall light. He beat the top against the tiled floor until the ice broke off, then he opened the lid.

"Great God Almighty." He started sweating. The box was stuffed with wads of ice-cold greenbacks – tens, twenties, and fifties. All he could think about was that someone was watching him and that he would be caught before he got it hidden again. Lord God! He never thought that Shirley had so much money, never thought it in a thousand years. How could Miss Ruthie or any woman say no to this?

Once his heart had stopped pounding, he made sure all the lights were off, except the Pure Oil sign out front. Then he went into the darkened garage, staring outside to see if anyone was watching the Truck Stop. Over in the corner, the two rigs that had been parked by the bank were now gone. LeRoy even made sure that no one had pulled over
by the side of the garage by his pickup or was parked out back by the junkyard, as some 
lovers did once in a while – friggin’, hot as hell.

LeRoy went around inside the Truck Stop, stopping at various windows and 
doors, listening. A car’s headlights flashed across the front of the Truck Stop, then slid 
past and headed south on Little Orleans Road. LeRoy went to the diner’s front door and 
slipped out into the windy dark. He walked as fast as he could around the end of the 
diner and the rest rooms, going back to the hole that led underneath the floor. Dropping 
down to his knees, he crawled into the space between the frozen earth and the floor joists. 
Under the floor, he could hear Duke whining and starting to bark.

“Shhhhh, boy. Sshhhhhhh, boy,” LeRoy whispered. “Be quiet now. It’s me, 
Lee, Lee, LeRoy.”

Duke must have thought that LeRoy was coming under there to sleep with him. 
LeRoy rubbed the dog’s head when he crawled over, then dragged himself to a brick 
pylon directly beneath the floor where the kitchen joined the diner. Grabbing one of 
Duke’s blankets, he put the metal strongbox behind the pylon, wrapping it up with the 
dusty wool cloth. Then, turning around in the tight space, he climbed out again, pushing 
Duke back under the floor. The dog seemed surprised that he wasn’t staying. Again, 
LeRoy went around the south end of the Truck Stop, past the diner and the garage, until 
he came to his pickup.

Right in front of the Ford truck, further along by the side of the bunkhouse, sat 
Shirley’s Chrysler Imperial with a couple inches of snow covering the top and windows. 
In all the confusion, LeRoy had forgotten that Shirley’s car was still where he had parked 
it. He couldn’t leave it out here. Someone might want to steal it. Rummaging through
his pockets, he finally found Shirley’s keys that he had picked up off the floor of the
Cracker Box when he had gotten back to the Firehouse. He went over and tried the
driver’s side door. It came open smoothly, inviting LeRoy to slip into its leather seats.
Pushing himself in behind the wheel, LeRoy took the keys and cranked the engine up.
He turned on the windshield wipers and, with a little help from his bare hands, let them
clear the snow. Without turning on the lights, he slowly pulled the Imperial around back,
then on through the open gate of the junkyard. He left the car in the yard, closed the gate
and returned to his truck. With the winds kicking up the light snow, he cranked up the
engine and eased down to the white road where the two lights beamed down onto the blue
letters P U R E. Turning right, he headed south and drove the mile down to his
mother’s house, glad that the lights were off and that she had not come home yet.

The next morning LeRoy was so tired that he did not wake up until well past nine
o’clock. Rolling back and forth in the small bed, he heard his mother leave the house and
pull out of the driveway. It took him half an hour to put on his jeans and walk through
the kitchen to the back porch for his cigarette. Outside, a cold wind blew what was left of
last night’s ice and snow around. A weak November sun was breaking the high clouds.

Looking out over the valley towards Fire Tower Mountain, LeRoy did not hear
his mother come home until she started talking in the kitchen behind him. Even though
there was a cold breeze blowing, she pushed the door open a foot to make sure he heard
every word that she said.
"...Son, I tried to tell you, Miss Clarissa may be a lot of things, but one thing that she is not is a fool," she said. "Boy, why didn't you wake up for me last night? Shoot, I know you were not asleep. You were just laying there laughing at me. I could hear it."

She walked around in the kitchen for a few moments pretending to be tidying up. LeRoy could hear every move that she made.

"Now, look what is going to happen. I tried to tell you not to take sides against my dear friend. But, you would not hear any of it. Would you?"

LeRoy knew that he would eventually have to say something. "I, I, I, I came in and went to bed," he stuttered. "Once in the middle of the night, I thought that I heard you and Miss Clarissa talking, but then I realized that I was dreaming. So I went back to sleep. I'm tired too, you know? I, I, I don't know what it was. Miss Clarissa was crying, almost moaning. I couldn't tell whether she was happy or, you know, all tore up."

"Oh, really," his mother said. "When was this supposed to have happened? Sometimes, son, I don't know about you and your mind."

LeRoy lit up another Marlboro. In the cold air, his feet started stinging.

"It must have been well after midnight, around one or two. I kept on hearing strange voices. It must have been a bad dream."

"Son," Cora Ann said, "you sure have an imagination. Where do you get such thoughts about my best friend?" She pushed the door open wider. "You know, LeRoy, Clarissa could become a big part of our lives now that that worthless husband is gone. She would be like another mother to you."

LeRoy couldn't figure that one out. How do you have two mothers, if you only came out of one of them? He started laughing hysterically.
From the tone of her voice, LeRoy knew that his mother was hurt by his insincerity. “Mind your manners, son,” she said. “She’s a good woman, you know. Besides, what has she ever done to you? What? Outside of the fact that she knows that you always sided with Shirley, Miss Clarissa has said a lot of good things about you. I know that the two of you will get a long just fine now, especially since the real problem is gone to hellfire and damnation.”

LeRoy hated her when she got like this.

“No tell me the truth, son,” she began, “did Shirley Yarrow say anything before he departed this life?” She waited. “Did he? Did he have any money hidden?”

LeRoy pulled on the Marlboro wishing she would go away. “No, no, he didn’t have time to say anything,” he told her. “He was in the back of the Cracker Box, and when we got near the hospital, he just stopped talking. And, that was it. You know, Mom, I wanted him to tell me something – anything! Money, Shirley was as poor as, as, as a church mouse.”

“Well, LeRoy, we all got to understand that the Lord put all of us here, and the Lord can take any of us away any time that he wants to. Shirley Yarrow was living on borrowed time, son.”

“Mom, did you make any gravy and biscuits this morning?” LeRoy asked, pitching the butt out into the frozen yard. “I guess there will be nothing to eat at the Route 40 Pure Oil today.”

“Hell fire and damnation – Route 40 Pure Oil,” she exclaimed. “Son, I told you that the Truck Stop is not going to be open today. In a few days, everything up on that corner is going to be gone. If I was a betting woman, I’d say that Miss Clarissa will have
a bulldozer raze the place and turn it into a cornfield.” She pointed at him. “Son, be smart for once. Forget the Truck Stop. It’s history.”

“How in the hell, do you think I am going to earn some money?” LeRoy shouted. “You don’t work. Did you fix any gravy and biscuits this morning?”

“Son, don’t raise your voice to me,” Cora Ann shouted back. “I won’t have it. And I mean it. No son of mine is going to walk all over me like Shirley did to Miss Clarissa. I’ll starve first!”

“Mom, all I want is something to eat,” LeRoy pleaded. “That’s all. I don’t need all this grief from you today.”

“Say you’re sorry, son,” she said. “Say it, or you will get nothing from me.”

LeRoy began going from bare foot to bare foot, his feet stinging. “My trucking boss dies, and I have to put up with this. Okay, if it will get me something to eat, I will say it: I’m sorry for talking to you so, so, so, so loud. I’m really sorry that it takes me screaming to get your attention. I’m not a ten-year-old kid anymore.”

“Say you’re sorry, son.”

“Okay, okay, I’m sorry. Now, you’ve heard it?”

She warmed up the brown gravy, biscuits and fried fatback on the electric stove. LeRoy ran for his room, took a quick shower in the little shower above the bathtub, and dressed warmly in clean blue jeans and a red plaid wool shirt. While he was sopping up the brown gravy, and eating two fried eggs, she started again. LeRoy covered his ears.

“You will not listen, but I tried to tell you, that Miss Clarissa was no fool,” she said. “And I know what I am talking about. You keep on being a fool mechanic, talking about cars like they are women. Just keep on and see where it gets you.”
A few minutes later, the telephone ran in the living room. Sipping coffee loudly, he could hear his mother speaking to Miss Clarissa. They were discussing what he perceived was a special rendezvous somewhere. LeRoy could not decipher what they were going to talk about. However, from the back and forth language, he figured it was important. In any event, this would be his opportunity to get out of there before she came back and started on him for the umpteenth time.

Picking his teeth, LeRoy heard the front door open and shut. His mother’s car drove on the frozen gravel down the driveway to Little Orleans Road. LeRoy got his work coat and headed out the door very nearly behind her. Waiting for a few second on the concrete steps, he could see her heading south towards the church. He wasted no time in pulling down to the road and turning right. Whatever had happened, the important thing for him was the money that he had found last night. The whole Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop might depend on the gift that Shirley had left him.

Over next to the Pure Oil sign, five tractors and trailers were parked, diesel engines running, their long rigs stacked long ways against the steep, leafless embankment of trees and vines. LeRoy walked around to the front door to the diner. Coming closer, he saw a white, cardboard sign that had been taped with brown glue-paper onto the wooden door. It read:

“Closed for Funeral.”

Frozen, LeRoy stood there on the concrete steps for a few seconds. God! Now, he knew for certain that Clarissa had no intentions of reopening the Truck Stop. That was the reason they were doing all this planning this morning.
Taking Shirley's key chain off his leather belt, LeRoy opened the front door. Behind him, Duke came running, barking wildly, obviously hungry from missing the breakfast that Frenchy always gave him. LeRoy looked back at the pumps and saw an International Cab over, pulling a lowboy with a bulldozer on it, stopping just beyond the little hut. He went on into the empty diner and Duke followed him, trying to get his attention. Upon the cleaned, greenish counter, a piece of paper lay beside the sugar canisters, the salt and pepper shakers, and the napkin dispensers, the only thing out of place. It was a discarded bill with the Route 40 Pure Oil business head, a tractor and trailer underneath the blue and white sign. A note was written in flowery ballpoint pen:

_LeRoy, Shirley's wife came by and told me she was closing_
_the Truck Stop up – for good. She said I had better leave._
_Sheriff Reimes is keeping an eye on the Truck Stop. I guess_
you had better watch out, too. Next week, I am heading out_
_for Detroit. Be careful...Frenchy._

“Jesus Christ! What's them women up to?” LeRoy yelled. “Don’t they know a money maker when they see one? They're both crazy. I'll bet my damned life on that. Stupid!”

LeRoy was ready to get to working. But, at the moment he did not know what to do or how he should do it. If he turned on the pumps and started filling up trucks with diesel fuel, he would have to crawl under the floor and get some cash to put into the register to transact business. Facing outward from behind the counter, he saw a trucker wearing worn-out brown, cowboy boots walk up to the front door, see the sign, and turn around for his idling rig. In a few moments, the big lowboy was pulling around the yard
until it made a wide berth back down to Little Orleans Road and Route 40, the sun
glinting off the top of its red cab. In the distance, Fire Tower Mountain stood brownish-
gray against the cold, blue horizon, and the lowboy, with its stacks burning black smoke,
headed down into the ravine for Sidling Creek. For the first time in a long time, he was
losing money by sending truckers to the next stop.

Opening the refrigerator back in the kitchen, LeRoy looked for some scraps the
dog could eat. Everything that Frenchy had put into the icebox was clean and tidy.
LeRoy took out some cold gravy, a pan of hard lard biscuits, and a dried-out piece of
fried ham and took them back around to the back of the Truck Stop to Duke’s pan, with a
bucket of water. It was the best that he could do.

Back inside the diner, he fixed a pot of coffee using the twenty-cup percolator that
he sat up on top of the counter across from the cash register. Worse case scenario, he
would sell hot coffee, the candy and fruit pies from the glass case under the cash register,
and soft drinks out of the big cooler. For the moment, the truckers would have to pay
cash.

About one o’clock in the afternoon, LeRoy saw Miss Clarissa and his mother
drive by in Clarissa’s yellow Plymouth convertible. A few minutes later, it came back by
the Truck Stop heading south. Cold and tired from having changed two tires in the
garage, LeRoy made himself a cup of strong coffee. A few minutes later, he watched
them go past the second time. This time he went outside on the steps and watched the
Plymouth until they were far down Little Orleans Road.

Back inside, LeRoy went for the telephone in the fuel office. Already, the party
line up and down Little Orleans Road was in full swing. The gossip-mongers were
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Talking about Shirley's death, then about Miss Ruthie. Obviously, they were all jealous of her. One couldn't understand how she owned the big yellow Buick. When LeRoy started laughing, the party line shut down, especially the old woman's voice who had been telling the story. LeRoy heard the familiar click-up as the party line cleared up.

With the line clear, LeRoy dialed 7511 on the rotary dial.

"Hello -"

"Major, Major, Major Hogans," LeRoy said. "This is Staff Sergeant Clough..."

"Who?"

"Lee, Lee, Lee, LeRoy, LeRoy at the Truck Stop."

"Oh," Major Hogans replied. "LeRoy, my boy. How are you holding up? I've been meaning to call you. You were next on my list."

"You were? Oh, oh, oh, Major Hogans, the Truck Stop is in a mess. My trucking boss is dead, dead..."

"Yes, yes," he cut in. "LeRoy, First Sergeant was a fine man and a great soldier. The Twenty-Ninth Division will miss him terribly. Plus, I don't know what the Guard in Cumberland or the Fire and Rescue Squad are going to do without him. He gave more than most folks would care to. He was that committed."

"Oh, God, I know, Major Hogans..."

"LeRoy, the man deserves the best send off that we can give him." Then the Major cleared his deep voice. "LeRoy, I've got a big problem."

"You, you, you do?"

"Yes, yes. I want to tell the Honor Guard from the Unit in Cumberland and the old Twenty-Niners when the funeral detail is going to be held. But so far Shirley's wife
has not made a decision on when or where he is going to be buried. And I would like for you to drive a truck or tractor, or something and follow the hearse and the Color Guard from the church to the graveyard."

"Me, me, me, me?"

"Yes, LeRoy. I know that you would probably like to ride in the hearse with your mother and the First Sergeant’s wife, but I need you to drive something that folks will remember him by from the Truck Stop. One of the wreckers is probably the best thing."

"Right, right," LeRoy answered. "Well, Major Hogans you can count on me. I, I, I wanted to ride with Mom, but I can see that I can now drive a wrecker. I’ll wear my uniform and be an extra member of the Color Guard. Major Hogans, Major Hogans, I’m going to drive Big Pecker. I’ll be right behind the family limousine."

"Big Pekkar," the Major said. "What’s a big pecker?"

"You know," LeRoy answered, "It’s one of Shirley’s favorite wreckers – the only one he really loved to drive and pull wrecks out of the creeks and bushes. Big Pecker is the one that did all the work on that wreck at the base of Fire Tower Mountain a year ago. Major, Mayor, Shirley loved Big Pecker. It could do some pretty work, now."

"LeRoy, when did Shirley get this piece of equipment?"

"Oh, oh, he’s had it for some time," LeRoy replied, getting excited, "Big Pecker was a little bulldog Mack tractor that I put an Autocar engine in it with a 250 horsepower, supercharged diesel. When the supercharger gets going, it’s balls to the wall. No stopping them pounding pistons."
“Well, LeRoy, I don’t want your nuts hanging on any wall,” Major Hogans said sternly. “I just want you to drive a truck from the Truck Stop. Do you understand me, Sergeant?”

“Ye, Ye, Ye, Yes, boss,” LeRoy stammered. “I’ll just drive, then nothing more, nothing less. You know me, I can drive anything.”

“All right then, I guess we got a deal,” the Major said. “The truck will make Shirley rest easier.”

“I know, boss, I know. Shirley is resting easier now that he is not screwing so much. A man can’t be fruckin’ so much. It will make him weak, weak to the bone.”

“Unfortunately, LeRoy, that’s never been my problem.”

“Boss, boss, boss, I’ll be there,” LeRoy said. “Things are kind of slack around here now. Miss Clarissa wants to close the place up. The crazy woman sent Frenchy home before I got here today. And, and, and, and she says that she is also going to close the Canal Hou....”

“What! She wants to close the Canal House down?” he asked. “Are you sure now, I mean, about the Canal House?”

“Boss, she wants to get rid of everything that was Shirley’s, and the Canal House was all Shirley’s – moonshine and all.”

“Hey, LeRoy, keep me abreast of any new developments,” Ben Hogans told him. “We can’t let our community get sold to outsiders, especially city folks from back east.”

“Boss, I’m with you all the way,” LeRoy chimed in. “We can’t let that happen. But, but, but Miss Clarissa and my mother have gone crazy. They don’t understand truckin’.”
"I know, LeRoy, they never do."

Putting the receiver down, Leroy walked back into the diner, mumbling to himself: "Just think of the noise I can make with Big Pecker. Hell, it might wake the dead up!"
Chapter XV

An Old Twenty-Niner Goes Home

About noon, a big black hearse pulled off the westbound side of Route 40 and wheeled onto Little Orleans Road heading towards the Potomac. LeRoy got knots in his stomach and the tears started flowing down his cheeks. For the next two hours, he stood at the picture window and watched folks from all over the county and state head down Little Orleans Road in their Sunday best. LeRoy could easily recognize many of the cars or their drivers; others were quite strange – he figured dignitaries from the Old Division in Baltimore. Still dreading seeing the First Sergeant in his flag-draped casket, LeRoy waited until ten minutes until two before he put on his dress green blouse, locked up the Truck Stop, and cranked up the Mack tractor, letting it warm up for ten minutes. When he arrived at the church, one of the squad leaders from the Engineer Company met him at the crowded parking lot.

Rolling down his window, LeRoy stuck his head out. “Julian,” he called out. “Where can I park Big Pecker? I’m one of the vehicles trailing the hearse to Hancock to the graveyard.”

“LeRoy,” the G.I. returned: “Major Hogans is inside with the Color Guard. He’s been expecting you – ”

LeRoy stomach started to tighten up. He did not want to carry the casket. God, he might fall, dropping the casket and having it break open!

“Go down the road and get behind the three military vehicles,” the GI directed.

“We are going to follow the hearse up into Pennsylvania for about ten miles. The First
Sergeant is going to be buried on the way to Blue Knob Mountain, east of Breezewood. That's where Major Hogans said he was raised.”

“Blue Knob Mountain?” LeRoy asked. “Are you sure?”

“That’s where his wife said he was from. She told Major Hogans she was sending him back to his roots. They were Welsh coal miners, you know.”

Miss Clarissa was wiping the slate clean. In five years, Shirley would be forgotten down here in Western Maryland.

“So, you want me to drive down and line up with the military vehicles?” LeRoy asked. “Boy, the church looks crowded. I've never seen this many folks before.”

“I guess you can go inside. Most of the Unit is waiting by their vehicles. Major Hogans said there was no place to sit down. But you knew him better than the rest of us.”

Hearing traffic, LeRoy looked down Little Orleans Road. First came four vehicles from the Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Squad. Then there were five trucks and cars from the military and the Maryland Army National Guard. They had driven down Little Orleans Road, turned around, and came back and got into line, heading north. Shirley was getting a grand send-off.

Pumping the fuel pedal, LeRoy put Big Pecker in low gear and headed down the line of vehicles. Going past the last one, he drove to an open lane in a field, turned around, and came back up to the red and white Cracker Box. Stopping directly behind the ambulance, he pulled on the parking brake, and let the Mack's Thermodyne engine idle, keeping the heater going.
Then he went up and down the roadway greeting all the GIs and the drivers from the Firehouse. Already, it was 14:50 hours, starting to turn gray and cold, spitting snow from time to time. Over beyond the parking lot full of cars, LeRoy could hear singing coming from the little white church, muffled by the wind.

While he was talking to Bobby and Drake from the rescue squad, Major Hogans came walking briskly from the front of the church. He continued on down the roadway to where LeRoy was standing. Behind the Major’s steps, Amazing Grace came drifting out of church. The front doors opened with a crashing thud. The honor guard from the Engineer Company came out and posted themselves on either side of the walkway. Beyond them the hearse started backing up.

“LeRoy,” Major Hogans called out. “They’re coming out now. You and the firing squad are going to follow the hearse all the way to the grave site near Bedford. At first, we were going to drive up to Breezewood and take the Turnpike down, but that would have taken too long. With this convoy, I finally convinced Miss Clarissa and your mother to drive up through the back country.”

From the southwest, a cold wind blew up. At the front of the church, the military pallbearers—with the Old Timers from the Twenty-Ninth Division standing in reserve, were carrying Shirley’s flag-draped casket. Hot tears rolled down LeRoy’s cheeks.

“Once we cross the State Line into Pennsylvania, there is a wide spot at State Road 484 where the Little Orleans Fire and Rescue vehicles and the trucks from the National Guard Armory will break off,” Major Hogans said. “At that point, it will be the hearse, the family car, your tractor, and the firing squad in a military van. Behind that
will be myself, Captain Cresap, and the Battalion Commander. We will form the final funeral procession up to the graveyard.”

Turning and looking back across Little Orleans Road, the Major saw the pallbearers start sliding the casket into the back of the hearse. Grabbing LeRoy’s right shoulder, he said: “We’ve got to be ready. Tell everyone to mount up.” Then he started shouting, “Mount up. Mount up.”

“Boss, boss, boss,” LeRoy called after him. “You know, I’ll be ready for Shirley.”

Once the hearse and the family car had cleared the parking lot and pulled onto Little Orleans Road, the Fire and Rescue Squad came next. After that, LeRoy watched the two and one half ton trucks, the Deuces from his National Guard Unit, pull in behind the procession. Soon, it was time for LeRoy to pull out. Dropping the clutch, he lunged in behind the last Guard vehicle.

As soon as they got to the Pure Oil sign, LeRoy started blowing the air horn. At the corner of Little Orleans Road and Route 40, the hearse waited until it was clear and crossed over Route 40 and continued north on State Road 26 until they crossed the state line and ran into Pennsylvania on State Route 484. At the junction of Routes 26 and 484, the vehicles from the rescue squad and the trucks from the National Guard Unit pulled off to the right at the Y in the roadway, as the hearse and the family car veered off to the left. Near the back of the procession, this was the point where LeRoy had to catch the other vehicles, as the funeral procession was considerably smaller now.

Heading through the low-lying mountains, light snow-flurries began falling from the high clouds, blustered by an unsteady wind. As the day grew colder and darker,
private cars and trucks began to break away from the procession and head back to Maryland. By the time that they had reached Chaneysville and State Route 326, the funeral procession was down to the hearse, the family car, Big Pecker, the National Guard van with the firing squad, Major Hogans and the Battalion Commander in a military staff car, and six Old Timers and the Sergeant-At-Arms in a government carryall van. Pennsylvania Route 326 took them through Rainsburg, Charlesville, and finally into South Bedford Springs where the graveyard sat behind a group of old houses upon the side of a steep hill. It was a cleared-off field that had once been a strip mine.

The November day was darkening. Against the drabness of the wintry countryside, the hearse pulled up a steep, grassy road, then turned left and drove to a waiting tent above a freshly dug grave. The family car drove up behind it, its bumper near one side of the funeral tent. The undertakers opened the back of the hearse exposing the Stars and Stripes, its brilliant colors blazing. Everyone parked down at the bottom of the hill, afraid to be stuck in the rocky soil. The old Twenty-Niners had to hurry up the snow-covered knoll. Then two lonely figures came out of the family car, bundled up in heavy coats and clinging to each other’s arms. Their faces covered with veils, they walked through the frozen grass and crunchy ground trying to cross the few feet to the gravesite without slipping or falling.

Down below, LeRoy parked Big Pecker on the street in front of the other cars. Putting his gloves and his round, saucer hat on, he left the Mack Thermodyne idling and stood by the truck’s front bumper at parade rest. He heard the volley of cracks from the first seven shots and snapped to attention. Then a sharp command and seven more shots. The final command was given, and the last seven shots were fired from the honor guard’s
1903 Rifles. The Old Timers began the folding of the Stars and Stripes, passing it from one pallbearer to another until only the blue was evident and it looked like a pistol. The Captain of the firing squad tucked the spent round into the folds of the flag. From the end of the cemetery, a bugler blew the sad notes of Taps, the notes wavering from the cold winds. The Sergeant-at-Arms waited for the last note to sound, then handed the flag to Miss Clarissa who was bent up from the cold, huddling in the arms of LeRoy's mother.

The pallbearers touched Shirley's coffin and said a parting prayer, then the two, black figures began making their way around the coffin to the family car. As another wind blew up the hillside bringing snow flurries with it, LeRoy watched the chilled bodies starting to move. The scene at the grave site started breaking up, as the young GIs and the Old Timers began filing down the slippery hillside. As they came down by him, LeRoy waved at them, tears in his eyes.

The family car backed up the lane, started spinning when it tried to back further up on the hillside, and turning hard to the left, the driver finally got it headed back down the side of the steep hill. It pulled over to where LeRoy was standing and Miss Clarissa stuck her veiled head out of the back window. "LeRoy, LeRoy," she said weakly. "Take this to the Unit and hang it up, or do something with it that makes sense. I'm at a loss to know what to do with it."

LeRoy took the blue, pistol-folded flag in his white-gloved hands, tucking it under his left sleeve.

"He meant more to them than he did to me," Miss Clarissa said.

"Don't worry yourself, Clarissa," Cora Ann said. "Tomorrow will be a new day, believe me!"
The window glided back up. The limousine glided off past Big Pecker and the throng of GIs standing next to a drab-green, military van. LeRoy stood there with the wind blowing the snow sideways. Out of the firing squad stepped Old Sarge Chambers, a cigarette dangling from his mouth.

“She gave you Shirley’s flag?” he asked, tears frozen to his face.

“She, she, she said that she didn’t want it. She didn’t know what to do with it.”

“Here, I will take it to the Engineer Company. We can put it in the Division Trophy Case. Shirley deserves that much.”

LeRoy handed Sarge the flag and started stuttering. “I, I, I, I…”

“LeRoy, I’ve told the story so many times, I don’t want to tell it anymore. So, don’t call me.” Sarge was shivering hard. “He was like a brother to me, too.”

Heh, heh…

A bitter blast of cold wind cut LeRoy short. Sarge turned and started walking towards the van making sure that the brass rounds did not fall out. LeRoy watched the door to the van close, then Sarge and the firing squad drove off dusting the snow flurries onto either side of the tar and chipped roadway.

When everyone had left, LeRoy stayed behind and watched the undertakers work the gravesite. It wasn’t long before the Grove Funeral Home tent came down and was dragged over to a long-bed pickup truck, wooden side-poles and all. Next, the two remaining undertakers started talking to three old man in overalls who were leaning on their long-handled shovels. As night fell, they hurriedly lowered the gray casket into the brownish, coal-mining earth. LeRoy watched the casket moving down, down, then it was level, and soon its silver color was gone. In a couple of minutes, the undertakers and the
gravediggers were gathering up the square metal bars that surrounded and supported the
casket upon the gravesite. Like figurines against a dark sky, the three men worked,
shoveling the brittle dirt into the open side of the hill.

Feeling like he was going to fall down right there in the snow-covered gravel,
LeRoy grabbed a hold of the cold steel bumper and guided himself around the idling
tractor and up into the cab. He revved up the engine, dropped the clutch, and lurched out
from the side of the roadway. In moments he was beyond the vine-covered fence where
the bugler had stood. He shifted the double gearshifts simultaneously, his left arm stuck
through the steering wheel to keep it from turning.

Once past the small town, LeRoy turned left onto U.S. Route 220, heading south
for Cumberland. Although it was a little out of the way west of the Truck Stop, it was,
safer, faster and had a truck stop down near the Maryland-Pennsylvania Stateline. LeRoy
was going to order the biggest and most expensive blue plate special they had on the
menu. Driving in the darkness of the Mack's cab, LeRoy began to formulate a prayer of
hope: Oh, God! Let there be a Miss Ruthie and a jukebox to liven my spirits up.
Tonight, I need to go to Cum, Cum, Cumberland!

Gosh, I wonder where Jazz is?
Chapter XVI

Sheriff Proctor Reimes Comes Calling

At seven-thirty in the morning, LeRoy placed a call to the Pure Oil storage tanks in Hagerstown, Maryland. Pretending to be Shirley, he told them that he needed diesel fuel real bad, that the Truck Stop could not continue business without some fuel oil. Yes, yes, he knew that it was the Friday before Thanksgiving. Finally, a secretary told him that a driver couldn’t get there until late that afternoon, and that was only because another customer had canceled their shipment of fuel oil until Monday.

Exhausted, LeRoy closed up the Truck Stop for a couple of hours. Out on Route 40, the trucks were making the most of a cold daylight. Feeding Duke, he walked back into the bunkhouse and laid back on the scratchy Army wool blankets exposing the crisp sheets that Miss Ruthie had left there. Still smelling her perfume everywhere, he lay down and instantly fell into a drugged sleep. He had started pumping fuel that morning at 4:15 a.m. To make things easier, he only took cash, sticking the money into his jeans.

LeRoy kept hearing barking and someone beating on the high, small windows to the bunkhouse. Around 12:30 p.m., he sat upright in bed and listened to the banging. Tap, tap, tap, tap. Then around front: bang, bang, bang. Too tired to walk at first, he sat up for a few minutes allowing the haze to clear. He threw his feet onto the linoleum floor pulling on his dirty jeans. Smelling the stink from his t-shirt and his cigarette breath, he wanted to go directly to the shower room and get cleaned up. But whoever it was kept beating on the bunkhouse windows, then they went back around to the front.
Walking barefooted to the front door of the diner, LeRoy opened the door still rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. It was a driver, dressed in wool pants, work boots, and a green plaid shirt. He looked like he had not slept in a week and needed a shave badly. He had pulled up to the opposite side of the island and was driving a White truck with a silver, box-style sleeper. Before LeRoy could speak he said, “I’m running low on fuel. I’ve got to get over the mountains to Ohio. I’m trying to get home to Leavenworth, Kansas, and spend some time with my family.”

LeRoy lit up a Marlboro. “Buddy boy,” he said, “we’re out of diesel. All I can give you is gasoline and oil. Hell, we’re about one step away from closing.” He blew smoke all over the front steps.

“I don’t want my injectors burnt up,” the driver said. “That White tractor out there is all I got. It keeps my family going. I don’t know whether you’ve ever been to Leavenworth, Kansas or not, but there isn’t much out there, oil, corn and cattle. And I’m not much of a farmer.”

“You take twenty gallons of gas and you add two quarts of oil to it,” LeRoy said. “It’s a better product than that rot-gut diesel fuel we sell, anyway. You don’t have to worry about your injectors because the oil will keep everything running. That’s right, the oil mixture lubes everything where it needs to be. The injectors will get plenty. Just don’t turn the engine off. Sometimes if the oil gets cold, it tends to settle in the tanks, and if the engine isn’t hot, then it is not going to crank. So keep that baby hot, hot!”

“Well, it’s Friday, and if I don’t do something, then I am going to be right here with you and that black dog right there until the weekend is over,” the driver said. “At this point, I guess I don’t have a choice.”
“How much do you want?”

“To get me home, I need a hundred gallons. That way, I can drive all night.”

“I’ll turn on the pumps, and I will get you ten quarts of ten-w- thirty oil,” LeRoy said. “Pour it in after you have pumped the gas into the saddle tanks. You don’t want the oil settling in the bottom of the tanks.”

LeRoy could tell that the driver wasn’t quite sure that the truck would run on gasoline and oil, but he also needed to head on down the road. LeRoy turned the pumps on and went back into Shirley’s supply room where he got the ten quarts of oil – one extra, just to be sure.

After the driver paid him, LeRoy went back into the bunkhouse. He quickly shaved, brushed his teeth, and showered. When he came back to the diner, he poured himself a hot, sweet cup of coffee. Duke was barking his head off. About an hour later, the Pure Oil truck pulled up, ready to deliver twenty thousand gallons of diesel fuel into new tanks that Shirley had put into the ground a year ago.

The Pure Oil driver parked his International truck and long refinery trailer on the lower side of the Truck Stop. Pulling out a long hose, he dragged it over to the refill point and hooked it up. Soon, he was leaning up against the back tandem wheels letting the pumps fill the underground tanks.

Watching, LeRoy thought of something. He hustled through the fuel shop, on through the garage, and came back into the diner with a big brown grocery bag, wadded in a knot at the top. He waved for the driver to come inside.

“Come in,” LeRoy said. “Come in and enjoy a hot cup of coffee. I got something I need to talk to you about.”
The driver was an older man in oil-soaked work shoes and an old blue work coat. His tan gloves had turned dirty brown from all the pumping he did. He came back from the silver percolator, cup and saucer in hand, sipping at the dark tan brew, shaking from the cold wind outside. LeRoy motioned for him to have a seat in Miss Ruthie’s big booth.

“Much obliged,” the driver returned. “I can’t stand the cold, anymore.” From all the shaking, the coffee was spilling over into the saucer. “I guess the First Sergeant left us,” he said, lighting up a roll-your-own cigarette. “What happened to him? Great God, you don’t figure a man that lived through D-Day would go that quickly.”

LeRoy was already in the booth, the brown grocery bag sat atop the counter. He managed a smile. “His heart gave out on him,” he said. The smell of diesel fuel was everywhere. “You know how that goes?”

The old man laughed. “Yeah, just when you think everything is all right, it kills you!” He slapped the top of the table. “I used to have a heart like that, but I gave it up. Too costly. Where’s that big blonde? Now, she could put a hurtin’ on you.”

“I, I, I haven’t seen her since Monday night,” LeRoy answered. “That’s the reason I need to talk to you.”

“She selling?”

“I, I, I, I guess she was selling, but Shirley was the only one that could afford to buy,” LeRoy answered. He waited for the driver to take it all in. “I need a favor. See that bag up there?”

The Pure Oil driver turned and looked in the direction of the brown bag, its top closed in a wad of wrinkles sitting up higher than them on the counter top.
“There’s a gallon of some of Shirley’s best West Virginia moonshine in there,” LeRoy informed him. LeRoy moved closer. “Shirley’s wife is trying to squeeze the life out of the Route 40 Pure Oil.”

“What?”

“Yeah. She wants to bulldoze the place down, make it a cornfield again. She, she thinks the place is a whorehouse. You know, the house of the, the, the devil.”

The unshaven driver took a big drink of coffee, then a drag on the homemade cigarette. “Too bad it wasn’t.”

LeRoy almost started laughing. But, he knew that he had to get this done. He needed the driver’s attention on something other than screwing. “Can you backdate the bill for today’s fuel until last Monday morning, put a time delivered on the bottom? I’ll get Miss Clarissa to pay it by next week before Thanksgiving. Nobody will ever know the difference.”

The driver looked at LeRoy sideways. “Now, if you get caught, you aren’t going to tell on me, are you? I don’t want Sheriff Reimes at my house, threatening me with the county jail.”

LeRoy hadn’t figured that he would object this much, so he didn’t have an answer for him.

“You say you want last Monday’s date on the bill?”

“Last Monday, Monday morning.”

“Do you have any of them beans floating around here that everyone is talking about? We always need food at home. I got the grandkids with me, you know?”
“What beans? No, they aren’t any beans around here. But if a driver comes through, I get you some. What do you like?”

“Great Northern and them red beans from Louisiana.”

“Okay, it’s a deal,” LeRoy said. “And don’t worry, no one will ever know the difference. One way or the other, the beans will be here when you come back next week.”

LeRoy would buy them from the grocery store if he had to, that was part of the deal.

“I hope we don’t have to worry about the difference,” the driver said. “Can I have another cup of coffee? Boy, it is cold enough out there. I wish Frenchy was here so I could eat.”

“Me, too. Sure, we got plenty of coffee,” LeRoy said smiling. “Take all you want. I can’t drink that whole pot. And take some candy as well. I need to get rid of it.”

The next morning, it warmed up and a rainy front moved in from East Tennessee and Southwestern Virginia. Around ten o’clock, the windy rain droplets started hitting the southern side of the diner and the kitchen. Because it was Saturday, the Truck Stop would not have been open, but LeRoy was trying to bring in all the cash that he could. After eating a couple of fried eggs, toast, and some hot sausage, he fixed two flat tires, welded a bar back onto a farm tractor that held a winch, changed a diesel fuel filter, and let three over-the-road rigs fill up their saddle tanks. Out on Route 40, now that the trees were barren and stark, it was easy to see that things were pretty quiet going east and west.
Around one in the afternoon, LeRoy caught sight of a big, black Ford sedan with two radio antennas on each side of the trunk pull off Route 40. Very slowly, the cruiser pulled past the Pure Oil sign and the fuel pumps, and eased to a stop at the front door to the diner. Opening the car door, a big, massive man got out wearing a black, police uniform and a tan cowboy hat. In his Sunday best, it was Sheriff Proctor Reimes.

With the warm rain lightly blowing, the glass door to the diner slowly opened and shut. The big man took off his cowboy hat and laid it on the counter by the cash register. Outside, Duke was sniffing around the Sheriff's car, especially the tires, until he recognized its scent. Then he ran.

Reimes came over and inserted his frame into a big middle booth. "I've been meaning to stop and talk to you since yesterday," he said. "There's a couple of things that we need to clear up – you know, your business here."

"We, we, we, we do," LeRoy stammered. "I don't know nothing about Shirley's business. You know me, I'm just a truck mechanic."

"Yeah," the big man said. "And I'm just a hillbilly Sheriff from Washington County."

"Let, let, let, let me get you some coffee," LeRoy said, repeating all his words. "You know, big man, LeRoy has got something for you – Boss man."

Plugged into the booth, Reimes sat there expressionless and lit up a fat El Producto cigar, the smell of sweet tobacco filling the empty diner. His eyes wandering, he stared over at the Wurlitzer jukebox. This was the first time he had ever been in the place that the damned thing was turned off.
LeRoy came back with the black coffee and sat the cup and the saucer down. Before Sheriff Reimes could say anything, he went running for the bunkhouse. In a couple of minutes he came back with a paper sack that surrounded what looked like a gallon jar. Opening the front door, he took the paper bag out to the Sheriff's car where he opened the back door and placed the sack down onto the floorboard. Then he came back, shutting the glass door. Seeing the Sheriff was becoming impatient, LeRoy sat on a bar stool next to him.

Rev. Reimes took the cigar out of his mouth. "LeRoy, by God, what did you put in my car?" he asked.

"Boss, Boss, I put what I always put in the back seat."

"What's that?"

"You know." LeRoy winked. "Shirley's finest."

"What am I supposed to do with that?"

"Boss man," LeRoy said, "what you did with it all the other times? I'll give you two gallons, if you want it."

"No, no," Sheriff Reimes replied. "LeRoy, you know them Groves are pretty important folks around here, especially in Western Maryland politics."

"I, I, know, Boss," LeRoy said, his voice cracking. "Sometimes, I think that they own pretty much everything that is worth anything in this county. Us common folks, well, we just get the lard bucket and what's left."

The Sheriff laughed. "Son, you can see the position I'm in. Them folks helped get me elected — well, Clarissa's brother James did. And he's now the Mayor of Hancock, and he's pretty much the one I have to keep happy, if I want to eat."
“Yeah, Boss man, I know James,” LeRoy said. “I tune up his car from time to time. I like that 55’ Thunderbird that he drives. Wish I had that kind of money. I’d have me a cherry for a girlfriend.”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

The Sheriff stared at LeRoy like he was crazy. “LeRoy, I hate to do this, but I’m going to have to close you up. Miss Clarissa wants to shut this place down. And there’s nothing that I or anyone else can do. To her, this place is a cat-house, and that’s it. See, son, the Truck Stop doesn’t go well with her image of a church-going, Christian lady. That’s the rub.”

“But, Boss man, this place could be a money maker,” LeRoy said. “You know that. I, I, I, I could slip you some money under the table from time to time?”

“Yeah, LeRoy, I know that. But she owns all the property for the next mile down this side of Route 40. Shirley was always slipping me money to keep her at bay. That’s one of the ways that he survived, plus he also found out about her peculiarities. But to rich folks that don’t count none. What Miss Clarissa wants around here, she normally gets, if money can buy it.”

LeRoy puffed on a butt, then crushed the Marlboro in the glass ashtray. So that would be it. Soon there would be bulldozers pushing everything down. In the spring, the tractors would be planting corn from Little Orleans Road to the base of the mountain.

“Boss man,” he cried. “Isn’t there nothing that I can do – nothing at all? Truckin’ is all I know now.”

The big man in the black uniform slid out of the booth and put on his tan cowboy hat, adjusting it. Getting ready to open the door, he straightened his wide leather gun belt.
with the walnut handles. "LeRoy, I know that you don't mean anyone around here any harm," he said. "In some ways you're just like me. But I can't help you or the Truck Stop this time." He put his massive hands on his hips. "For me, this is a good place to stop and have a blue plate special when I need one. Shirley was always informing me as to who was doing what, and what I should be looking out for. Nothing, I tell you, got by the man. But I'm kind of in a bad spot here. Boy, it's totally out of my hands. But, let me end with this --" Without notice, he started speaking in a whisper -- "Son, if I was you, I would get your mother to get Miss Clarissa to cut a deal with you. Miss Clarissa doesn't care about you, this place, or what you do. Now tell me: Haven't your mother and Miss Clarissa been real good friends lately? Well, haven't they? And they're even church folks as well."

"How does all this add up?"

The Sheriff headed for the door. "It means that one can't do without the other. And, I'd say that you are squarely in the way. When the sun goes down, that ought to be worth something -- a lot in my book."
Chapter XVII

Rissa and CC

"Well, son," LeRoy's mother said, "I'm glad that you came to your senses. I don't like my son having to be talked to by the Sheriff because my best friend wants him removed from her place of business. God, it was appalling. I tried to fight for you, you know?"

LeRoy blew smoke out through his hairy nostrils. The day was trying to get lighter, but the back porch was shrouded in dark, windy cold. Watching the dawn, LeRoy knew that the ditches were going to be full of wrecks before this Sunday was over. Behind him, his mother was still talking, but he was drifting in and out, not really listening. "All I was trying to do was make a living," he said. "That's all. Why does all this seem like something else is going on? You and Miss Clarissa want to take everything that a man has got and turn it to crap."

"Son, I told you," his mother said, "don't underestimate Rissa. Many times I have told you not to take her for granted. Your father did that to me all the time. The sonofabitch had whores all up and down the northern side of the Potomac River, waiting at the junction houses. Wherever a train from the Western Maryland went through, J.C. Clough was there with his pants unzipped. Now look what happened to him. He died at a cat-house just up from Harpers Ferry."

LeRoy had heard all this before. "Rissa? Who's Rissa?"

"Son, I've called Miss Clarissa Rissa for the past couple of years," his mother told him. "You haven't been listening. To a tee, just like your father. I guess you don't have to know everything that goes on around here to work up at that Truck Stop. But you're
going to find out soon that it would've helped. When that man died last Monday, it took a weight off both our shoulders, especially mine. Now we're both ready to start living again."

"What man are you talking about?"

"Shirley, of course," his mother cried out. "Who do you think I am talking about? Good God Almighty, son, don’t you ever listen to me? I've told you many times how much pain I've had in the past ten years. I sometimes felt like my body and my soul were completely adrift from each other. Can you imagine how that feels? Men never understand about their souls!"

"Mom, Mom," LeRoy cried out, "I'm not going back to the mines. I need a job - something to do, that's all. I can make the Truck Stop work for both of us, if she will let me. Your so-called friend has control of everything that goes on in this county." LeRoy finished the Marlboro and flipped it out into the graying day. The sleet had now turned to a fine drizzle. LeRoy realized that his mother had left the doorway for a couple of minutes, but she quickly returned. Smelling the grease, LeRoy figured that she was frying fatback for gravy and brewing up a pot of coffee. "Mom, I keep trying to explain to you. All your life you've been right here. You've never had to load up and move. I hear it at the Truck Stop all the time. When folks don’t make it one place, they go to another. And another, if they need to. You've never had to go get a job in Baltimore, or Kansas City, or even San Francisco. Around here, folks just read about places like that in the Geographic. We're Marylanders, stranded on this damned bluff above the Potomac River, living in these mountains trying to change hard luck into good luck. Look at me, I'm who I'm talking about - Little Orleans, Maryland, written all over me. I need a job
or I'll have to go to the mines again or start traveling. You've got to change this woman's mind about the Truck Stop. Mom, we're not like her. Look at us. We can't afford ten horses and a barn to go with it. Or, or, crab imperial and pink champagne. All I need is a Budweiser and a crab cake at an Orioles game.”

Cora Ann laughed. “Well, son, my bad luck has just changed,” she told him. “Now you're wasting my time. If you get yourself cleaned up, then we'll have a good breakfast, and I might even let you go to church and dinner with me. I don't think Rissa would mind it too much, especially since you are going to mind you manners, aren't you? And since we are going to Hancock, you'd better mind them good or I will nag you to hell freezes over.”

By the time they got to church, Rissa was already there dressed in an old black dress, with a black hat and a veil hanging down over her crying, still-swollen eyes. When morning service started, LeRoy went up into the choir and sang his loudest, particularly during *The Old Rugged Cross, Just as I Am, Send the Light,* and his favorite, *Amazing Grace.* When the elder deacon, Brother Bryant, got to his sermon on Salvation, LeRoy decided to go forward and be saved again. It was a lot of fun to have all the eyes on you. He even got to take a big drink of wine from the silver goblet that they had purchased from an antique store in Cumberland a few blocks down from Jazz’s.

When church was over, LeRoy waited while everyone left except Brother Bryant, his mother and Rissa. By then, he had noticed that when Rissa spoke to his mother, she was calling her CC.

“Who's CC?” he asked in the car, when Rissa was out talking to the church folk
“Why LeRoy, that’s me,” his mother explained. “Miss Clarissa has been calling me that for years. You know, Cora Clough.”

Dumbfounded, LeRoy said, “Well, I guess that makes me LRVC? Mom, do you think that Rissa will call me LRVC? I can’t see myself as a LRVC, but you got to admit, it does sound like a Hollywood, kool-kat name?”

“No, LeRoy, don’t act like you’ve got shit for brains today,” she said. “If you mess this up for me, I will hound you for the rest of your life. Count on it.”

LeRoy’s mother had him follow Rissa to her farm where they got into Shirley’s Chrysler Imperial. Like a good boy, LeRoy offered to drive, so Rissa made the mistake of allowing him to get behind the wheel, perhaps to please CC. Headed up Little Orleans Road to Route 40, out of the clear blue, LeRoy started calling himself LRVC. Laughing, he even asked Rissa what she thought. Turning right at the Truck Stop and heading east for Hancock, LeRoy began talking to Rissa about how his Hollywood name would sound: “Trent Clough. Rock Orleans. LeRoy King. Sherrill Favor.” Pulling up the steep incline up Fire Tower Mountain, he continued, “How about Fain Clough? What, you two don’t like Fain Clough? How about Rory DeFriend?”

“LeRoy,” his mother asked, “have you lost your mind?”

“No, I’m just lightening up from the Truck Stop,” he answered. “I figure that now that I am not a mechanic anymore, I’ve got to learn about business the way you two know it. I got to tag along and learn what you all know. That way I can make a living and won’t have to live at home anymore. Really, I don’t like bothering either one of you, specially about money. Right now, I don’t have anyone that I can live with. Now that
the Truck Stop might go under, I don’t know what I am going to do. Miss Clarissa, do you think that you could find me a job on one of your horse farms?”

Neither of them said anything, so LRVC continued to talk: “Don’t worry, don’t worry, Mom. I’m just trying to make conversation. I’m restless. I didn’t get on a tire today. Worse yet, I didn’t have an engine to get my hands on, either. What else am I going to do? Rissa, at this point, I’ve got to have something to do. Tell her, Mom – I can’t stand doing nothing. I need to keep my hands going all the time. It’s a crazy thing I have in my mind. That’s why Shirley called me Jitterbug.”

There was a silence from the back seat, then Clarissa said: “My God, CC, what are we going to do with this boy? What? He wants us to help him? I can see that he has a point. He’s not like Shirley at all.” She leaned forward in the back seat grabbing CC’s headrest. “Son, I told your late boss that I didn’t want any whore-hopping going on up at that Truck Stop. But he wouldn’t listen. It drove the deacons crazy. They were always coming to me, like it was my fault.”

“Yes, yes, ma’am,” LeRoy said, pretending to hear every word that she said. “I, I, I, I don’t want to hop on any whores either. You know when I worked in the carnival shows, I used to tell folks that my name was Buddy Loveless, and I sang rock and roll with a group called Buddy Loveless and the Sleepless Knights?”

Heh, heh, heh, heh, heh.

“Really, LeRoy,” CC said. “You’ve never had a sleepless night in your life.”

When they had finished eating at Grove’s Canal House of Fine Dining, LeRoy had politely talked both of them to death. Somewhere along the way, Rissa asked LeRoy if
he would stay at the Truck Stop tonight. She would give him ten dollars – that’s right, ten
dollars a day – if he would take care of her business on the corner parcel of land at Little
Orleans Road and US Route 40. Besides that, CC and Rissa had something awfully
important to do that night up in LaVale. Rissa was afraid that one of them awful truckers
would rob her blind, or worse yet, burn that farming shack with a tin roof down. It
wouldn’t look good in the newspaper.

"Son, there is no telling who would be up there at night, if you don’t do
something and watch the place for me," Rissa explained. "Drinking, carousing, and
worse yet, gambling. Listen, I will call you a couple of times tonight, just to make sure
that everything is okay. CC, you make sure that we stay in contact with LeRoy by
telephone. I don’t want anything happening at this stage that we can’t take care of,
especially if it involves anything that I own."

Just before Sidling Creek Bridge, LeRoy slammed on the brakes. Miss Clarissa
almost crashed into the back of the front seat. Up front, LeRoy’s mother lunged onto the
dash. Slowing down, LeRoy checked the mirror for safety. Fortunately, there was no
traffic behind them.

"God forbid, LeRoy," Rissa cried out. "Are we all right? CC, are you hurt, my
darling?"

"I, I, I, I just wanted to show you two where that truck wreck was."

"Heavens, son," LeRoy’s mother said straightening herself up. "You don’t have
to treat us girls so rough. We’re ladies, you know, not some old floozies from a beer
joint."
“Sorry, sorry, but I had to stop. See right there.” LeRoy pointed to the gash in the white beech tree that was starting to heal over. “That’s where the trucker came to rest. And over there is where all the beans spilled into the creek.” There had been very little rain for the past two months, and the creek was almost dry under the dull green leaves of the laurel bushes.

“And right here, on this bridge, is where Shirley had me put Big Pecker. See, we used Big Pecker to hold up this side of the wreck. That way it was easy to pull the tractor out ahead of the trailer. I had my head pointed straight in.”

“Son, what’s a big pecker?”

“You know, Mom,” LeRoy answered. “It’s the little wrecker up at the Truck Stop. The bulldog Mack with the rooster’s head painted on the door under the words Route 40 Pure Oil.”

“Sounds like some boyish symbol to me, CC,” Miss Clarissa said. “Really, all men think about is penetration.” Up the road, they could see a dark green car coming their way.

“Don’t worry, sweetheart,” CC told her, rubbing her hand that was placed gently on top of the front seat. “All this misery will be over soon. Beulah Land, the women around here are rising, rising like men used to, before they gave up on God and the holiness of their bodies.”

LeRoy let off the brakes and eased the Chrysler across the sleet-covered bridge. He heard Miss Clarissa manage a laugh of sorts. For a few moments, there was dead silence, as the rain started once more with an occasional spackle of hail. All any of them could hear was the glide of the windshield wipers, the rubber making squeaking noises.
"Son, son, what did you think of the Grove Canal House in Hancock," his mother asked him. "Wasn't the place just grand? Nothing like Shirley's pool hall."

LeRoy rolled his eyes. "I, I, I, I don't know about them prices. I'm not rich like you two. Why so many napkins, all pure and white? I guess they don't serve fat-back gravy, do they?"

"Of course they do," Rissa said. "But they use Virginia ham instead. It gives a better, more Southern taste – a taste from the plantations of the Shenandoah Valley. Yes, LeRoy, you are quite right, my brother, when he bought the Old Canal House, wanted it to have a more refined setting than what you normally find around here."

The silver car headed up out of the Sidling Creek ravine. The rain was coming down harder now, with a heavy fog, making the road hard to see. "The pork chops didn't have enough fat on them," LeRoy said. "You can't have a good blue plate special unless you fry some fat. Frenchy told me that one time. You know, Frenchy from Birmingham. It takes fat to make a truck driver's meal."

"Suet, my boy, suet," Rissa said.

"See, LeRoy, see how smart this girl is," his mother chimed in. "You should hear her at Bible study, talking about the ancient Jews, the Israelites."

LeRoy tried to speak some of Shirley's French, just to keep the conversation flowing. But it came out as if he was beating two lead pipes together.

"That man," Rissa broke in, "that man was nothing more than a bootlegger. And, like I've told your mother many times, he used women, used them all up. God, will I never be rid of him and his memory? The first thing that I am going to do is sell that place down on the canal. To think that he used my brother's restaurant's name. What a
con artist! The only thing that place was a cat house that sold liquor and canned goods.

Right, CC?"

"Oh, God, yes. LeRoy will see that in time, what the man was. Won't you, LeRoy?"

Slowing for a narrow curve in Route 40, where a small stream was cascading off the side of the opposite bank, LeRoy turned and looked into the back seat at Miss Clarissa. "I, I, I, I know it's probably early to ask this, but I will buy Big Pecker from you, if you will sell me the title."

"Sell you that truck! I wouldn't go to Cumberland to the Motor Vehicle Office to change the title. I don't want anything that reminds me of Shirley Yarrow or his lifestyle."

"You don't have to," LeRoy said.

"Why, what do you mean? I don't understand you, son."

"Because I put the truck together out of five or six other wrecked trucks," he explained. "Shirley took a tag off a wreck in the junkyard. I'm telling you the truck has never been registered. It belongs to whoever has the keys."

"See, CC, see what I mean," Rissa said. "The man could never live by the law. He was nothing more than a damned crook. Thank God, I'm glad that he didn't die doing something that would have gotten my name in all the newspapers."

"In a few days," CC said, "you will be away from all of this. I keep telling you we need to go to Florida this winter and get away from the snow and cold wind from blowing up our skirts. Just think of all the places we could visit: Shenandoah Valley
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down by Lexington, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and all the hot springs in Northern Florida.
All the time, we'd being going down and having fun!"

    Rissa put a handkerchief up to her mouth. After that, she dabbed her eyes. "If
you had the money, son, I would sell you the whole corner -- even up to the top of the
ridge where the Greenmont Inn is." She was moaning in the back seat. "Right now, it's
sell the place or tear it down. It has too many bad memories for me. As God is my
judge, the man treated me like a queen before we got married, then, little by little, I
would catch him sneaking out the door. That's what I should have called him, Sneak
Yarrow."

    "Now, now, Miss Clarissa," LeRoy began, "I don't have your or your family's
money. What is it worth to you to get rid of the place? I, I, I came..."

    LeRoy caught himself before he started to get himself into some real trouble. He
didn't want to give his hand away. It would mean that he would have to give up all the
money that he had hidden under the floor with Duke. His mother would have made him
do it. Rightfully, it was Rissa's money, but, it couldn't be hers if she didn't know she had
it.

    "Lord God Almighty, son," his mother objected loudly. "Don't get crazy on us.
I've had enough of you craziness for one day. LeRoy, don't start acting like your father.
He was always coming up with these grand schemes and nothing ever came of them.
Please don't put me through this today. I've got my own bad memories, too."

    "Oh, let me see. Without the bad memories, the place is worth a lot to me," Miss
Clarissa said. "The fifteen acres butts up against Route 40 on one side and Little Orleans
Road on the other. It also goes all the way up to the top of the ridge where that nice brick
house is built on the overlook. So it is a nice piece of property and a beautiful home. But, if I keep it, I'll have to tear down the Truck Stop and clear out the junkyard. Right now, son, I would take fifteen thousand dollars for it, just to get it out of my mind and my hands.” She leaned forward and grabbed the top of the seat. “Remind me tomorrow, CC, that we need to go to the attorney’s in Cumberland. I want to sell Ben Hogans the liquor joint down on the canal before we leave Wednesday morning. He says that he is ready to buy right now. Great God! Let’s get rid of it before the FBI raids the place! I don’t have any control over them outsiders coming in here.”

“Well, Rissa,” CC said, “that will take care of problem number one, moonshine and all. Now that leaves the Truck Stop. I know, that’s not so easy.” She was smiling now.

LeRoy let out a long breath of cigarettes and onions. He loved fried pork chops with raw onions, especially with black coffee. His mother covered her mouth and nose. “LeRoy, I told you not to stuff yourself with them onions. Sometimes you’re despicable. God, will I ever find you a woman? When, for God’s sake, when?”

LeRoy turned onto Little Orleans Road. Out front of the diner, Duke was barking at everything that came and went by the blue and white Pure oil sign. With the two coal haulers that had been there this morning, three other rigs sat parked against the bank, their engines idling. “Well,” LeRoy began, “if you want me to watch the Truck Stop, how about renting it to me until you decide what to do? I’ll give you two hundred and fifty dollars a month. I’ll take care of all the expenses. You won’t be obligated for anything, not even the electricity. I’ll take care of everything. I’ll even give you the money in the morning.”
“Great Jesus! Son, where did you get that kind of money?”

“I, I, I, I, I have it saved in a coffee can under the seat in my pickup,” LeRoy said stuttering. “I’ve, I’ve, I’ve been saving it for the past three years.” Slowing down, he turned around and stared directly at Rissa. “I can drop the money off to you in the morning, if you want me to.”

“Go ahead, Rissa,” CC said, as they passed the old high school, then the Little Orleans Fire and Rescue Squad. “Go ahead, give the boy a break. Please. Please for me. Then ours can be the palace of the Glory Land.”

For a few moments, no one spoke.

“Only if you will go with me to the Shenandoah Valley and the Natural Bridge down next to Lexington for Thanksgiving,” Rissa said to CC up front. “I mean it, only if...”

In the front seat of the Chrysler, CC started laughing. She punched LeRoy in the right side of his rib cage. “See, LeRoy,” she said. “Rissa is giving you a job. One that you already know how to do. Rissa, how can I thank you?”

“Girl, I guess, by you just being you.”

“LeRoy, you’ll have to have Thanksgiving up at the Greenmont this year all by yourself. Maybe you and Lizanne can get something going again. Son, don’t worry, they serve gravy and biscuits up at the Greenmont every morning. You’ll be all right. Besides, by the time we get back from Florida, you’ll appreciate your mother more. Hey, right here. Drop yourself off at my house. Here, LeRoy, here. We have to get ready for tonight, because Rissa and I have a deal to consummate.”
Pulling into the rocky driveway, LeRoy heard Rissa moan in the back seat: “Oh, dear!”
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Chapter XVII

Old Sarge, Miss Lulu and the Rev. Come on Board

The next morning, LeRoy was jolted out of his bed in the bunkhouse by someone beating on the windows in the garage. It sounded like ping, ping, ping, then thud, thud, thud. Wobbly, LeRoy went into the dark garage. Down at the pumps, he could see the lights of a tractor and a trailer parked, the engine running in the frosty November air. It was 5:30 am, and LeRoy didn’t feel like listening to any hard-luck stories. In his plaid slippers, skivvies and white T-shirt, he stumbled through the fuel shop and into the diner. The driver was standing on the steps. By now, Duke had woken up and was barking like crazy. The one light above the door was shining on the trucker’s face. He was trying to smoke a cigarette in the cold.

“We’re, we’re closed,” LeRoy called out. “We’ve been closed since Friday evening.”

“I got a load of chickens from Missouri going to Philadelphia,” the driver hollered. “I need some fuel to get them there before noon.”

“Well, that’s a pretty good trip for that four-banger you’re driving,” LeRoy told him. “How much do you need?”

“Probably a hundred gallons.”

Just about then Duke rounded the corner of the truck stop. LeRoy figured it was that two-week old chicken and dumplings that he fed him out of the refrigerator last night – all at once, he was snarling and barking like the man was a stranger from hell.
“Slide twenty-five dollars under the door,” LeRoy shouted. “I’ll pull the mat away.”

Trying to keep Duke from biting him in the buttocks, the man shouted back, “Isn’t that a bit high? Normally, I can get breakfast with a price like that. Where’s the older guy that runs this place?”

“He died last Monday,” LeRoy replied. “I got no change in the cash register, and we don’t have a cook. So you’ll have to take it or leave it.”

Cursing and grumbling, the trucker bent over, slid three folded bills under the door. From the way he acted, he must have been broke.

LeRoy took the twenty-five dollars, turned on the pumps, and waited in the darkness in the middle booth smelling the chicory in the brewing coffee. Once the driver was gone, LeRoy shaved and cleaned up. Worried, he knew that despite his optimism with Miss Clarissa yesterday, he could not run this place by himself. At a truck stop, whenever you turned your back, some of the hired help were going to rob you blind. After he had fed Duke last night, LeRoy slid under the floor. Huddled under an Army blanket with a flashlight, he counted out one thousand dollars. This time, he hid the metal strong box behind the middle pylon and piled hard, crusted snow on top of it. The first thing that he had to do was pay Miss Clarissa the rent money. That would keep her away from the Truck Stop. Next, he had to call some folks that he could count on. But, who would that be?

“Hello, hello,” the graveled voice said into the receiver. “Hellfire, is anybody there?”
“...Sarge, Sarge, Sarge Chambers,” LeRoy said, sitting down. They were on Shirley’s private telephone.

“Who in the hell is this?” Sarge asked. “Who’s calling?”

“Old Sarge, it’s me, LeRoy.”

“LeRoy, what the hell do you want?”

LeRoy couldn’t think of what to say. “Sarge, did you take the flag to the Armory?”

“Burrhead, do you know what time it is?” the raspy voice said, coughing. “I’m going to take it this week. What’s wrong, LeRoy? Where were you at the other day? Why didn’t you come into the church and help us out? I see you on that crazy tractor with the rooster painted on the side.” He laughed. “Knowing First Sergeant, he probably got a kick out of it. Don’t tell me something else has happened? Anybody died?”

“No, no, no one that I know,” LeRoy answered. “The rescue squad is fine. Don’t worry, Major Hogans hasn’t called. But I got problems.”

“What, with women?”

“No, no,” LeRoy stuttered. “Right now, I don’t have a woman, unless you can count my mother and Miss Clarissa.”

“Holy Hell. I wouldn’t wish that on the devil – no disrespect to your mother,” Sarge said. “Both of them wore Shirley’s ass out!”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.
"You know how women are? My wife told me yesterday that if I don't get something to do, she is going to burn the house down -- with me tied to our four posted bed."

"What, what happened?" LeRoy asked, still laughing.

"Three weeks ago, Number Twelve Mine south of Frostburg shut down," Sarge explained. "I don't know, LeRoy, when it's going to open back up again. You'd think that the Coal Miners Union would find us some work, but all they do is set back on their lard butts and collect our union dues."

Outside, LeRoy could hear Duke barking. No doubt another truck had pulled up to the fuel pumps.

"Let me guess," Sarge said. "The Truck Stop is closing, and you are looking for work yourself. Right? Boy, how long has it been since you been in a mine?"

"All, all, almost," LeRoy answered, "nine years. To be honest, Sarge. I got a problem. I don't know what to do. Most of my life, I've just been a truck mechanic, you know."

"So, what's wrong with being a mechanic?"

"Well, I got a diner, a kitchen, and I'm going to try and find a cook. But I need someone to help me get this place off the ground, again. Sarge, I'm not really very good at talking to folks, you know that. Shirley knew how to wheel and deal. I guess I've got a lot to learn."

"Where's everyone at?"

"Sarge, they're gone," LeRoy said, his voice creaking. "Miss Clarissa ran them off. Miss Ruthie left in her big Buick the night Shirley died. Buster French, I think
headed for Detroit, and I don’t know what’s happened to Dude Thompson. He’s probably drunk. Shirley’s wife wanted the Pure Oil to shut down, but I got her to rent it to me for the next four months. Right now, it’s just me and Duke. And if he wasn’t a good watchdog, then I’d get rid of him.”

“Huh, are you sure Shirley’s wife is going to let you rent the place through winter?”

“I’m going to pay her cash on the barrel head,” LeRoy answered. “Knowing her, she won’t turn the money down. I’ll at least have four months, maybe more.”

“LeRoy, you can’t mess with her, I told Shirley that. She hates to be put on the spot. She worries too much about what folks with good tastes think. Hell, they think it anyway.”

On the other end, LeRoy could hear Old Sarge, Donnie Lee Chambers, wheezing into the receiver. “All right, all right, burrhead, I will help you, if you can get us a cook.”

“Well, well, right now, I don’t know of one,” LeRoy replied, relieved. “This place is in the middle of nowhere. Who would come out here?”

“What are you doing today?” Sarge asked.

“Nothing, really.”

“I’ll be there by noon,” Sarge said. “We might as well start getting the stores together, so we can begin cooking by Wednesday – if we can find us a good cook. The supplies shouldn’t be too difficult, but, LeRoy, we need a cook that can cook country food. You know, them truck drivers are crazy about what they eat.”

When LeRoy had finished talking with Old Sarge, he hung up the receiver and quickly picked it up again and started dialing a number that Shirley had written in pencil
up on the blue, sheet-rocked wall. The telephone rang and rang. LeRoy hung up and called again. Finally, an old woman’s voice answered. “Hello.”

“Lulu? Lulu Creel? Is that you?”

“LeRoy, where have you been?” she asked. “I’ve been calling everybody I know. Miss Clarissa sold the Canal House.”

“I, I, I know. Out here, she, she ran everybody off except me.”

“What are we going to do? I need some money to pay rent and take care of my granddaughters. Right now, we hardly have anything to eat.”

“Lulu, Lulu darling,” LeRoy said to her. “I need a cook to fix them truck drivers their blue plate specials.”

“Whewee, that’s me, baby doll,” she answered. “Lulu Creel can slap some home cooking with the best of them. They isn’t no one that can make fat-back gravy and lard biscuits the way I can. Not even Frenchy, but don’t tell him I said that.” Both of them were laughing now. “Are you sure, LeRoy, that the Truck Stop is going to stay open? That woman has her ways, even with women, you know?”

“For six months at least,” he answered. “Miss Clarissa is going to let me rent it until summer. But, but, but Lulu, you got to keep an eye on her. Don’t say nothing to nobody, especially on the telephone. Besides, they always got Sheriff Reimes in their back pocket. I, I, I, I don’t know where she has my mother, either?”

On the other end, Lulu Creel broke out laughing. “Between her legs, where else?”

“Legs? What, what, what do women do between each other’s legs?”
“Nothing,” Lulu answered. “Nothing at all. Women can hug and kiss and keep each other warm at night, and no one will every say a word, LeRoy. Women are friendly like that. So, son, don’t pay me no mind.”

“God, that reminds me,” LeRoy told her, “if I don’t pay Miss Clarissa the rent, the Pure Oil will be closed down. Lulu can you be here by Wednesday – seven in the morning?”

“I know, I know, the day before Thanksgiving, and you are going to get this here Truck Stop going,” Lulu groaned. “How late are we going to stay?”

“I’m thinking, because it’s the day before the holiday, we’ll shut her down at three. Yeah, that will be good. Then on Friday we’ll shut down at three again. Then on Monday we’ll try to start the week with a full day.”

“LeRoy,” she said, “I can’t work two shifts now. God knows my knees can’t stand it.”

“Oh no,” LeRoy replied. “I’ve talked to Old Sarge Chambers – you know, the old Mess Sergeant at the Guards in Cumberland – and we’ve decided to just stay open from about seven in the morning until seven at night. For sure, we are going to shut the diner down at four. Lulu, if they want more than that, they’ll have to stop someplace else.”

Soon after LeRoy stopped talking to Lulu, he cranked up Big Pecker and drove it down Little Orleans Road. Stopping at his mother’s house, he was shocked to find that she was not at home. Slowly he backed out of the driveway, then he drove further down Little Orleans Road to Miss Clarissa big brick house. Pulling slowly up into the dark driveway, he saw Miss Clarissa’s yellow Plymouth convertible and his mother’s old
Dodge parked side by side in front of the two garage doors. Shirley's Chrysler Imperial must have been parked in the garage.

Inside a taped envelope, LeRoy had put one thousand dollars and placed it in the front seat of Miss Clarissa's car. On top, he had printed the words: "To: Miss Clarissa Grove; From: LeRoy Vann Clough; Rent Money." This initial payment would give him until the first of April to get the Truck Stop going and show Miss Clarissa that he could at least make a down payment on the business. Looking around at the shaded windows in the stately brick home, LeRoy knew that, when Big Pecker had pulled back out onto Little Orleans Road, his mother would come out and find the rent money on the front seat. Once Miss Clarissa had the rent money in her hand, there was no way that his mother would allow her to go back on her word retrospectively, not to any son of hers.

Two days later on Wednesday, LeRoy's mother and Miss Clarissa showed up at the Truck Stop livelier than bumble bees on a hot August day buzzing honeysuckle. The yellow Plymouth was packed full in the back seat, and they said they were heading for Sarasota, Florida, to see the winter quarters of Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus. Talking at everyone about everything, they were acting like two women who were about to enter the political arena and this was their way of getting votes. Uncharacteristically, LeRoy's mother had on makeup, a blue suit, and dark brown suede shoes. LeRoy was amazed at how nice she could look when she was all dressed up. She had even gone to the beauty parlor in Cumberland and had her hair done. Miss Clarissa, on the other hand, was totally refined wearing brown boots, brown riding pants and a beautiful white sweater. Heading south, they were going to see along the way the Natural
Bridge down near Lexington, Virginia, the Limestone Caverns in Bristol, Tennessee, the Smoky Mountains near Knoxville, and Ruby Falls from Lookout Mountain Tennessee.

CC told LeRoy that she wanted to view Chattanooga from above the clouds and ride the incline up the Y in the side of the mountain. From there, God only knew what they were going to see in Georgia and Northern Florida, as they traveled down US Route 11 all the way to Tampa Bay, Bradenton, and Sarasota, where the headquarters for the winter circus was housed.

LeRoy couldn’t have felt better if Shirley or his father had suddenly came back to life. He had never seen his mother any happier than she was at that moment. Confident, somehow LeRoy felt that his mother would see to it that Miss Rissa Grove would make good on her promise to give her son a chance at running the Route 40 Pure Oil. In the cold, sunny afternoon, LeRoy looked up from the Mack’s saddle tanks, where he could smell the oily acid of diesel fuel. From behind the picture window, he could see Lulu and Sarge standing and staring at Rissa and CC, as if both of them had just seen two rock and roll singers from a Hollywood girl group who were traveling to their next singing gig. To LeRoy, feeling the bite of the cold wind, it was somehow funny but all right.

When an Emeryville Tractor showed up pulling a ragtop with a flat tire smoking and stinking on the back tandem of the trailer, LeRoy become so busy that he did not see the Plymouth pull out of the Truck Stop and head east on Route 40 for Hancock and Hagerstown. Looking out the garage bay through the treeless landscape, LeRoy caught a fleeting glimpse of their back fins as the yellow convertible headed into the ravine for Sidling Creek Bridge. Far beyond them, casting a hard gray-blue color under a weak,
sunny sky, was the humped, razorback ridgeline of Fire Tower Mountain. By the time that LeRoy started revving up the impact wrench, their yellow bird had disappeared completely into the brown, frozen hues of winter.

By Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, the Truck Stop was running pretty much on an abbreviated schedule. The coffee urn was brewing at first light, and the pumps were shut off soon after darkness crept in. That way, LeRoy only needed one shift, and he didn’t have to worry about who was closing up at midnight. When Reverend Hoyt heard the Truck Stop was opening back up, he came back to work mid-morning and started pumping diesel fuel. He said that was the only way that his church could afford his preaching and his family could eat all at the same time. When asked about the whereabouts of Dude Thompson, Rev told them that Dude had gotten drunk this past weekend and cleaned out a ditch on Pennsylvania 484 above Hancock. The wreck tore up the whole right side of his car, and he ended up in the hospital with twenty-one stitches in his head and a broken right arm.

From the start, LeRoy had Old Sarge scouting the cash register in the diner and the fuel shop. Like any good Mess Sergeant, Sarge started selling anything that he could that would make the business fifty cents. A man of iron guts, the old Mess Sergeant started by splitting some clean boxes and laying them in the unused garage bay next to the lift that LeRoy used all the time. When he had a clean bed of boxes down on the concrete floor, he dragged out all of Shirley’s hidden stores of food, truck tires, six packs of Iron City Beer, twenty-one cases of Frank Fehr’s “burpless” beer from Louisville, Kentucky, and anything else that would make the truck stop an honest buck – even the
twenty-nine gallons of West Virginia Moonshine that Shirley had kept back in an abandoned trailer in the junkyard.

The only real problem at the Truck Stop was Duke. He barked his head off all the time. Every time a trucker would show up, Duke would come running around the south end of the Truck Stop, no matter how much Lulu fed him. All of them couldn’t figure out how to make that damned dog stop barking all the time. It was like the dog was possessed.

By the close of business on Friday night, everything was starting to smooth out, except for Duke’s barking. LeRoy was about ready to turn on the jukebox to have something else to listen to. Shutting down the pumps and the lights outside, LeRoy just didn’t feel like listening to any jukebox music – not yet, anyhow. It reminded him too much of Shirley and Miss Ruthie. Maybe that’s what’s I need: some rock and roll to chill my nuts off. The jukebox had not been on since Miss Ruthie had listened to Tennessee Waltz, just before she drove off in her yellow Buick.

Staring out at the dark fuel pumps, LeRoy remembered being in the garage working on a tire with the compressor pumping and revving up when Miss Ruthie was going to clean up the bunkhouse. Now there was a woman you could fall in love with. Besides Jazz, Miss Ruthie was his secret love.
Chapter XIX

Gypsy Bus Stop

On Saturday and Sunday, LeRoy stayed nights at his mother’s. During the day, he hung around the Truck Stop doing odd jobs, waiting for Monday morning to arrive. Before he went home each night, he drove up on top of the mountain and had a southern dinner at the Greenmont Inn. Both times, he saw Lizanne, and both times about all he said were “Hi” and “You all right today?” Even her nod didn’t mean anything.

A couple of times, he wondered if he should go up and see Jasmine at the Carney Town and get his boots shined. Where were folks when you needed them? Even the Guards and the Armory in Cumberland were all shut down for the Thanksgiving Holiday, which meant that there was not one place to go for cheap beer, or a good story or two. Even Shirley’s Canal House down on the Potomac was now closed. LeRoy was beginning to think that maybe the Route 40 Pure Oil should just close up too. He would find something else to do. Maybe, he would travel. God, he needed a woman!

On Sunday night, LeRoy was still grieving. He had gone to Sunday School and Church that day, and one of the deacons of the church officiated the services. Brother Bryant in his sermon spoke of John the Baptist, and the need for all of us to be baptized no matter how terrible our sins are. LeRoy couldn’t help but wonder if Shirley had ever been baptized. Certainly, he had gone ashore at Normandy. Now that was a baptism. But had he ever been dunked? There was this place just above the Canal House where the creek ran under the old Western Maryland Railroad and the C&O Aqueduct. Just beneath the aqueduct, where the waters pooled and formed a circular pond, was the
spiritual spot where every country church for ten miles around had baptismal services. LeRoy had been dunked twice, and he knew every rock that lined the steep bank that traversed down to the deep, dark waters. Deep waters, hell! I need something new – like the day he bought his boots from Jazz.

At 4:30 on Monday morning, LeRoy got tired of twisting and turning in his bed and threw his feet onto the small, square rug that lay beside his bed. Outside, he could hear the wind blowing frozen snow crystals around, causing his mother’s wood-framed house to creak. Taking a hot shower in the small bathtub, he quickly shaved and slicked his curly hair back with Wildroot hair tonic. He put on his blue jeans, insulated underwear, a heavy flannel shirt, and his black engineer boots. Then he turned off the lights and left the dark driveway, heading up Little Orleans Road wanting to get the big coffee pot going.

When LeRoy got to the Truck Stop, Duke didn’t want to hear anything at all about the big coffee pot. He wanted his scraps. After feeding Duke, LeRoy left the lights off in the diner and started making a huge pot of Army coffee, complete with chicory. About six, a pair of truck headlights swept across the dark fuel pumps. It was Old Sarge. Smoking and drinking black coffee, they spent the next hour taking about how they were going to sell Shirley’s supply room off to anyone that would buy it. Tired of waiting, at 7:30 Sarge went back in the kitchen and started frying up eggs, baloney, and white toast. LeRoy and Old Sarge were sitting there eating breakfast, staring out the picture window when Lulu showed up.

“My youngest granddaughter, LeRoy,” she said, hanging up her long coat in the little office. “I got to take care of her, you know.”
While she talked, neither of them said anything. They didn’t want to get up and cook every morning, so you took what Lulu could give. In the cold dawn, a couple of rigs were warming up over next to the bank. Looking out the picture window, LeRoy could see steam coming off their tractors. Right now, the Truck Stop had coffee, and that was about it. Truck drivers would have to wait.

Lulu stuck her big head around the corner of the door. “LeRoy, I’m going to make some pork chops and hot biscuits,” she said. “We’ll start with that. And, if them truckers don’t like that, then they can drive to Hagerstown.”

LeRoy lit up a Marlboro, continuing to sip his strong, black coffee.

"Holy hell," Sarge exclaimed. "There is Reverend Hoyt now."

In a couple of minutes, the door to the diner burst open and Reverend Hoyt came in all bundled up. “Where are the keys to the pumps?” he asked. “I’m sorry I’m late. I preached late last night, and I’m all strung out this morning. I had a family of West Virginia hillbillies there. They all wanted to be saved.”

LeRoy started stuttering, then he slowed down. “We’ll have biscuits and gravy in a little while, Rev,” he said. “Everything has been quiet this morning.”

Once the pumps were on, a cold sun slowly came up, Lulu started serving her blue plate specials, and everything settled down to a wintry day in Maryland. About mid-morning, warmer winds started blowing up out of the Tennessee River Valley, and by noon even the hard, packed patches of snow had pretty much melted. The sun felt so good that just after lunch started, LeRoy took a wooden chair and went out front of the garage and leaned it up against the white cinder-block garage. Warming himself up in a rare Maryland sun for late November, LeRoy began watching the traffic out on Route 40.
Already that morning, he had changed two truck tires, three fuel filters, and fixed a set of trailer lights.

Then out of nowhere Bobby Pyle showed up. He had two hundred pounds of dried beans. Bobby said that Shirley had told him three weeks ago to take the beans from the shed back of the Firehouse and drop them off at the Truck Stop.

"But when I forgot to stop here, I just put them in the corncrib at my father's dairy barn for safe keeping. So where do you want me to put them?"

Behind LeRoy, Old Sarge started laughing. "That man will never die," Sarge said. "He'll be here for years to come. Bobby, take them and stack them in the garage bay on the clean boxes next to all the other stuff. I'll give Rev some and sell the rest. What's left Lulu can cook."

After Bobby left, everything settled back down. Everyone was waiting for the next customer. Up on the corner, a big, silver Trailways Motor Coach pulled to a stop. For a few seconds, the blue and white Pure Oil sign was blocking the open doorway. At first, LeRoy couldn't tell who it was that had gotten off the bus. Normally, bus passengers got off in either Cumberland, Flintlock, or Hancock. On this part of Route 40, there was nothing out here except the Truck Stop. Little Orleans Road was what bus drivers called a gypsy bus stop. And you could never tell what the bus was going to drop off, including small freight and packages.

Laden with a suitcase and a white cloth bag, a tall slim figure came walking by the Pure Oil sign lugging two suitcases. The young woman looked like she wanted to drop the bags right then and there and forget them.
“Where would a woman be going, walking down Little Orleans Road this time of year?” LeRoy asked himself.

Once she was past the blue and white sign, LeRoy could see that she was a tall, willowy girl — no, young woman — in high heels. She had long, blondish hair, mixed with brown, a pointed face and fine, muscular legs.

Dropping the chair on the hard ground, LeRoy went walking fast for the Pure Oil sign. Going past the pumps, he could see that Reverend Hoyt had his mouth open. When LeRoy got to the young woman, she was flustered beyond belief, blowing her shoulder-length hair up off her sweaty forehead.

His engineer boots crunching, LeRoy stopped and looked at her. Seeing LeRoy, she stopped and stared at back at him, her green eyes flashing.

Heh, heh, heh. “Where you going, Kitty Kat? You look like you need some help.”

“You always laugh like that?” she asked. “Strange, I’ve never heard anyone laugh like that before. Who did you learn that from? Are you a kool kat?”

“I, I, I, I only laugh like that when I’m happy,” LeRoy said, smiling. “Here, let me help you with your bags. My God, you got everything in here but the kitchen sink.” Then he stopped for a second. “Girl, where you coming from? Come on, how did you know that I was a kool kat? Are you one of those for-see-ers?”

“Not exactly. I started out three months ago, back in September, in Kansas City,” she said. “This last month, I have been working at a shoe store in Cumberland.” She stopped and stared at him. “You ever heard of the Carney Town Shoe Store?”
LeRoy froze in his tracks. He turned around and looked at her. He wanted to laugh so hard his sides were hurting. But he didn’t dare. “Well, I go there once in a while to buy my work boots. See these boots here, my engineer boots. I bought them there, but I’m not a regular customer like, like, like I used to be.”

“Well, everything was going great,” she began. “Then last week the owner, this gypsy-lady named Jasmine, goes and runs off with the Sheriff.”

“What?”

“Yeah, she runs off to Missouri with some old guy named Sheriff Reimes, Proctor Reimes,” she said, pushing her brown hair up off her collar. “Now, to beat hell, I’m out of, not only a place to stay, but my job selling shoes. Who would have ever thought that this big, fat Sheriff would light out with an old gypsy who ran a shoe store?”

By now, they were walking past the fuel pumps. Reverend Hoyt was smiling his head off, as they went past.

“Who’s that man?” the girl asked.

“Ah, don’t worry about him. He’s just a horny preacher. He keeps his horns behind his salvation.”

“Oh!” Then: “A week ago, I show up for work, and the place is all boarded up. The sign on the door said: Going Out of Business Sale. Then Jasmine opens back up and sells everything. And I mean everything. She was selling twenty-dollar shoes for five dollars. In three days the store is practically empty. If it hadn’t been for the minister at the Methodist Church, I’d have been sleeping on the streets. Thank you, Miss Gypsy, for my month of hard work.”
Part Four: Novel

They got to the front door of the diner. Inside the diner Old Sarge and Lulu were looking at them with a puzzled look on their faces.

“So, Kitty Kat,” LeRoy asked? “Where are you heading now?”

“Well, when I left Kansas City, I was heading for Baltimore,” she said. “But now I don’t know if I will ever get to where I am going.”

LeRoy pushed his fingers back through his greasy hair. “Why did you get off at Little Orleans Road? Seems like an unusual place for a traveler heading east to Baltimore?” He groaned as he set the heavy suitcase down.

“To be honest,” she answered. “I didn’t have any money. The bus driver agreed to take me until I got to some Truck Stop that Jasmine had been telling me about. She talked about this place all the time. She said that I could find work here. But, when she left, I didn’t believe her. Not once, did she ever tell me who I should see.”

LeRoy could tell that this girl was a bone-breaking cherry. And, like them cherry cars that he worked on, innocent and needing some of his fine-tuning. Great God Almighty! Rubbing his lips, he could feel that they were burning hot. He opened the door to the diner and let the young woman walk through. He took her heavy bag and sat it in the first booth. In the middle booth, Old Sarge and Lulu were drinking coffee.

“This is Old Sarge,” LeRoy said. “Don’t ask: everyone just calls him that. And this is Miss Lulu. They kind of run this place when I’m not around.” He looked at the young woman who was trying to sit in the second booth, taking off her overcoat. “I didn’t catch your name?”
“My real name is Judy Katrina Sellers,” she said. For some reason, she started laughing: “But when I was in high school they used to tease me and call me Cat, Cat Sells!”

Heh, heh, heh, heh.

Lulu brought the young woman a cup of fresh coffee and set it down in the booth.

“See, see, see,” she moaned. “Folks are always laughing at me. Does that jukebox work?”

“Oh yeah,” LeRoy said. “What do you want to hear, Kitty Kat? We lost our trucking boss last week, and things have been kind of bleak around here. But a song won’t hurt. You know, I haven’t played it for over a week – since the Boss died. Now, sweetheart, what do you want to hear?”

Cat stirred in the cream and sugar. Standing up, she straightened her dress and smoothed out her blouse. She laid her coat on the back of the booth, and LeRoy watched as her breasts fell down, wiggling.

“I don’t know,” she said. “How about the Everly Brothers? Do you have something by them? I love the way they sing – you know, them love songs.”

LeRoy went over and punched in Crying in the Rain. Soon the mellow voices of Don and Phil Everly filled the inside of the diner.

Lulu came over to the booth. She motioned for LeRoy to move aside before he smothered her to death. “What do you want for lunch, Miss?” she asked. “We only serve blue plate special here. You got to remember, this is a place for old, rough-neck truck drivers. But I’ve got pork chops, apple sauce, potatoes, and hot biscuits. And they’re really good, if I say so myself.”
Cat looked away out the large picture window. “Well, since I only have $2.10, I guess I should eat a good meal before I get back on the road. Sounds good to me. Anything will be fine. I’ll take it.”

“Kitty Kat,” LeRoy said, “you ever think about doing trucking work – I, I, I, I mean truck stop work?”

She looked at him suspiciously. She had no idea what he was talking about.

“We sure need someone to be the Queen-Lady here. Last week, we lost Miss Ruthie when our trucking boss died. Don’t worry none, you’d be working under me. I would see to it that everything was kept proper. This ain’t any cathouse now. You’d be doing honest work, all the time.”

The young woman eyed him. LeRoy kept talking like a fool.

“I guess we are kind of needing one real bad – now, now, I’m talking about a lady, not a wh, whor – you know a set-up girl. We got no place for them kind here.”

LeRoy was glad that Sarge had gone into the back where Lulu was fixing the young woman her blue plate special. He was turning red, embarrassed by the way that the conversation was going. What was coming over him? It was like he was back in the carnival when Jazz was young. He didn’t feel quite right talking this way. All of a sudden, he started talking about Cum, Cum, Cumberland, when he was a boy.

The young woman lit a cigarette and pulled hard. “What does a truck stop queen do? I hope nothing too shady and illegal? That’s not me, you know. I like to be paid for what I do, no matter what it is.”

While LeRoy was talking, the Everly Brothers’ Cathy’s Clown started playing. He almost asked the young woman to dance – slow dance.
“Well, they kind of run the diner out front. Make it like home, you know? Every truck stop has to have a queen to make them horny truck drivers act right. Truck drivers don’t know how to act, they’re like GIs when they put that green uniform on. While they’re eating, you need someone to settle them down – no cursing allowed. That’s right – they got to feel like they are back home with their moms or their wives.”

She took a drag on her Marlboro and the smoke curled down out of her thin nostrils. LeRoy liked the way she looked, like she could wrap her legs around your back. She had fine skin, the kind that men like to rub their fingers over. Hell, Lizanne never had that look, and Jasmine had that look until she started getting older. LeRoy wanted to break out into a hideous laugh, start stuttering even.

When Miss Lulu slid the blue plate special onto the table, Elvis was rocking with Little Sister, Don’t You Cry. The young woman crushed her cigarette in the glass ashtray and smiled at LeRoy.

“Honey,” Miss Lulu said, “this is my best plate of pork chops – Maryland style. You aren’t going to get nothing like this in Kansas.”

Cat took up the fork and started eating, small bites at first, then larger ones.

“Back up, LeRoy,” Miss Lulu told him, “back up. Jesus, Lord, give the woman some breathing room.”

Heh, heh, heh.

“You’re as bad as Shirley,” Lulu told him. “Where’s your respect. The woman will do what’s best for her, right, honey?”

“I guess so. Seems like there is a lot to learn about this place.”
"Don't worry about it," Lulu told her. "You've just got to act well. If you do that, them truckers will love you – you'll be getting some big tips. And I'll be right back there with a big iron skillet to whip out if they get indignant. And, honey, I got a real big can of 'whop-ass', and I'm not afraid to use it."

Old Sarge, his face craggy and expressionless, pushed the door open from the fuel shop. "We've got to sell as much of this stuff as we can," he said. "And we need to round up all the stuff Shirley had stashed all over the countryside. It's the only way that we can clear the air around here before another batch of the Feds show up."

Lulu had backed up against the counter and was flipping a dishcloth from side to side. Her left elbow was resting like a latch upon the countertop. "Did I ever tell either one of you about the only time that Shirley got mad at me?" she asked. "In all the years that I have known him, I think that was the one time that he was ever really mad at me."

Sarge poured himself a cup of black coffee and settled upon a stool next to her. He lit a cigarette.

"It was about two years ago," she said. "Shirley had only known Miss Ruthie for about six months then. It was a Friday night at the Canal House, and there was a pretty good crowd, not too many drunks yet. Along about midnight, that crazy fool from Hagerstown, you know the one that comes up to Little Orleans and camps out near Green Ridge State Forest, well, he begins getting drunk out of his mind. At first, it was just good jokes, and I put up with it. But once that liquor took hold of him, he started getting stupid – real crazy acting. Then he wants to fight a couple of the customers, and that's when I had had enough. I slid my hand under the counter and pulled out Shirley's big forty-five revolver. But the fool still wouldn't stop his foolishness. So I pointed the
pistol at the ceiling where all the dollar bills were pasted and fired off two rounds. Blam! Blam! Boy, you should have seen that place clear out after the first shot. Everyone was ducking low, trying to find cover or get out the front door. Yes sir, all them fools were doing the duck walk to get out of there."

“When that little weasel came up for air, I told him to get his ass down them steps, and he had better not come back until he had sobered up and learned how to act.” Lulu laughed. “Well, about fifteen minutes passed, and out of the corner of my eye, I see Shirley come sliding over behind the bar. Behind him, I see Miss Ruthie over by the door that led up to the stairs. I didn’t know what was up with either one of them. Shirley began wiping his red face with a small towel, sweat dripping down the sides of his eyes. His silver hair was all mussed up. He lets out a big breath, and he says to me, ‘Did you have to do that?’ And, I said back to him, ‘If you were down here helping me, they wouldn’t get so rowdy. Besides there isn’t nobody up there except the birds and the squirrels.’ I could see that he was perturbed. ‘Now, Lulu,’ he said. ‘I don’t like my guns shot off like that. Besides, you never know where the bullet is going to land once it comes back down. So don’t be shooting my gun off unless someone is trying to rob you. Those angels up there will get mad as hell!’”

LeRoy and Old Sarge were laughing at her story.

“When Shirley started to walk off back down the bar towards Miss Ruthie, I said, ‘If I was you, I’d zip up my pants before the squirrels get in there.’ Boy, Shirley was mad at me – for a week. But he never went back up there on Friday nights.”

When Old Sarge told her that her biscuits were burning, she went running for the kitchen, yelping.
Still laughing, LeRoy looked away from the young woman's green eyes and fresh, open face. He was afraid that he was running out of things to say. She was enjoying the blue plate special.

"I don't know what to say," she said.

LeRoy looked at her again. She was staring around at the place, and LeRoy knew what she was thinking. At best, the Route 40 Pure Oil Truck Stop was just an old farmhouse turned into a wayside grill for truck drivers and derelicts out on the highway.

"I'm not really in a good way right now," she continued. "I only have two dollars and twenty-three cents on me, and where would I stay? I saw a place up on top of the mountain. Is that place a rest home for old people?"

That started LeRoy to thinking. He couldn't let her stay in the bunkhouse at night. Something would happen to her. Once the drunks around here found out, they'd be beating on the windows all night, barking at the moon.

"Hey, Kitty Kat," LeRoy said, squaring his shoulders in the booth, trying to be cool and nonchalant. "For a while, you can stay at my mother's house. It's not that much, but it will be your home away from home."

"Your mother's house," she gasped. "What would your mother say? She'd think I was a bad woman or something like that."

"Don't worry," LeRoy replied. "My mother went to see the circus in Florida with her girlfriend. Until you get on your feet, you can sleep there, and I'll sleep in the bunkhouse. I can assure you, it will be a business arrangement, purely on the level." She eyed him up and down. "Business, I promise to God."

Cat didn't answer.
"My mom's house is just down the road, about a mile towards the Potomac. It's not much, but it's clean, and no one will ever bother you."

LeRoy looked up. Old Sarge was listening to every word he said. But he knew the importance of having a truck stop queen to run things out front in the diner. It kept things nice and sweet, like a white tablecloth.

"Well, okay," Cat answered, sitting her fork down. "But just until I get on my feet. There's a lot of road out there. I guess I want to see it all. And I'll stay until I've get some money to travel on to Baltimore."

Hearing her say that, LeRoy was talking crazy. "I guarantee you, you won't regret staying with us — I mean the Truck Stop. You never know, you could be here for a long, long time."

A long-nosed Autocar, its bright green color gleaming in the winter sun, pulled alongside the pumps. LeRoy stood up and slid out of the booth. "Holy cow, look at that cherry," he shouted. The big rig had two chrome stacks, a twin screw with dual axles, and an oversized box sleeper. Even in the diner, LeRoy could hear its big diesel engine like a throbbing heartbeat.

Excited, LeRoy went running for the door, then down to the Autocar, his engineer boots crunching on the hard ground. Coming to the concrete island, he read the name on the driver's door: "Deneen Mica Mines, Micaville, North Carolina."

Up in the cab, a tall thin man put the two gearshifts into neutral and pulled down on the parking brake, the back airbrakes breaking wind. Then he stepped with his black Wellington boots down onto the running board. Already Reverend Hoyt was pulling the heavy hose to get to the far side of the saddle tanks.
“What’s your name, cowboy?” LeRoy asked. “Do you need your oil checked?”

The driver stood out on the ground before the huge engine, pushing the door closed. “Truck Purdy,” he answered. “From Roan Mountain, Tennessee. It’s up in the mountains.” His reddened eyes stared around. He had been in the cab so long, he didn’t even feel the cold. “If you’re wondering, I got a new four hundred horsepower caterpillar engine in there. I’ve been driving since midnight from up in Minnesota. Boy, there’s still a lot of snow up there. Check her, she probably needs a quart of heavy-duty detergent oil.”

“Wow, four hundred horsepower,” LeRoy sang out. “That’s a big kitty kat. I’ll take good care of this baby. You go on inside to the old home place. I’ve got Miss Judy taking care of coffee and the tables, and I got Miss Lulu working ’Grade-A’, blue-plate specials in the back. We got pork chops, applesauce and biscuits today. Go in and tell them that LeRoy sent you in to get his special, special.”

The driver laughed. Turning, he headed for the diner.

Up on the truck, LeRoy undid the latch and pushed the hood up, exposing the dipstick to the oil pan that sat at the bottom of the huge straight-eight Caterpillar engine. Jerking out the stick and rubbing it down with a cloth, he could hear it pushing the eight gigantic pistons up and down, up and down. Slowly and methodically, he pushed the metal stick back into the long, round chamber quickly pulling it out with a flourish. Yep, it needed a quart to keep this cherry moving right along.

Climbing back onto the ground, LeRoy went running for the garage. God forbid! For a second, he thought that he saw Shirley’s face looking out through one of the panes
in the garage door, puffing on an El Producto, a grin on his face, his silver hair drooping down onto his forehead.

Walking back outside to the idling, green Autocar, its twin chrome exhaust stacks quietly roaring in the cold afternoon sun, LeRoy wondered if his name would ever be up on the driver’s side door of a truck like this one. Coming alongside of the tractor, he stared intently at the door: Deneen Mica Mines, Micaville, North Carolina. Sliding the sharp, metal spout into the top of the oil can, LeRoy had an idea. He would put his name up on both doors of Big Pecker: LeRoy Vann Clough Trucking. That part was good.

Route 40 and Little Orleans Road, Pure Oil Station, Maryland. Now, that part was even better, because when LeRoy got through with them, everybody for fifty miles would know his name. LeRoy Vann Clough Trucking. How does that sound: LeRoy Vann Clough Trucking?

LeRoy climbed up onto the left fender of the Autocar, listening again to the throttling of the pistons. With its open hood, he could feel the heat coming off the engine. Watching the caramel-colored oil ooze out of the can, he pulled his head back staring at the picture window. Inside, he could see Miss Judy talking to Truck Purdy in the middle booth. He watched the oil drain, then he looked back again. What would he do? Take her to dinner first, then let her settle in at his mother’s, or take her to his mother’s, freshen up with a bath, and then pick her up for something to eat up at the Greenmont Inn? Better yet, why not take her to Cumberland for Christ’s sake? Jazz is gone, your mother is gone, and the coast is clear. No doubt the Carney Town Shoe Store is closed, and better yet, Sheriff Proctor Reimes left town for Missouri. Hot damn! It will be like new territory out there. Cumberland – how about Pittsburgh for a weekend,
maybe even Atlantic City. God! How many times have I wondered what the ends of Route 40 look like?

Into the sounds of the Caterpillar engine, LeRoy heard the jukebox stop. Instantly, Duke started barking like crazy under the floor. And when it didn’t start again, with a flurry of yelps, he came running around the corner of the diner, heading straight for the fuel pumps.

Just get her to the Greenmont Inn tonight for something to eat, and you’ll be rolling. Sooner or later, she’s got to eat. In a couple of days, maybe, you can put on your jitterbug outfit and go dancing at the beer garden in Berkeley Springs!