



Don't Spyhole Me

David Reville

At the age of 23, David Reville was involuntarily committed to Kingston Psychiatric Hospital in Ontario, where he spent one-and-a-half years of his life, from 1965 to 1967—three months on the geriatric ward, and one year on the chronic ward.

Today, Reville is 46 and lives in Toronto with his wife and two children. From 1976 to 1984, he was a Toronto city alderman for Ward 7, and since 1985 he has served as a Member of the Ontario Provincial Parliament, representing Riverdale riding. Reville is a respected member of the Ontario New Democratic Party and is his party's health critic. He is also an outspoken advocate of radical reforms in the psychiatric system, including The Mental Health Act, is strongly opposed to electroshock, and is a member of On Our Own, a self-help group of psychiatric inmates and former inmates in Toronto.

This piece consists of excerpts from Reville's journal which he wrote while incarcerated in Kingston. Names have been changed to protect the identities of those mentioned.

In the beginning . . .

December 25, 1965: Christ the Saviour is born. Hallelujah. This is not your average mockery. The Kiwanis Club is here en masse dispensing cigarette lighters and hard

candies. Gordie has almost given up trying to eat his lighter. We even got a Santa. The guy is half-cut but I guess that helps with the ho-ho-ho. Isn't everybody being jolly! There's even something for me under the tree. A book from Robert. My parents have overlooked Christmas this year. Oh well, maybe they don't feel like celebrating. Neither do I.

January 1, 1966: 12:01—Playing gin rummy with two of the boys. Jack has a bottle. Nursie called John a queer when he wouldn't give her a New Year's kiss. Nursie didn't ask me. Just as well.

January 10, 1966: The medical heads have bobbed and nodded. The shrink has pursed his lips. The psychologist has drummed his fingers. The sociologist has clicked her tongue. The expert opinion drops out like a great fart. My marriage has something to do with my problems. Bravo, you silly bastards! For this you need 400 years of university? Carol has been asked to cool it for six months—no letters, no visits, no phone calls, no cigarettes, magazines, chewing gum, zip.

What am I supposed to think about that?

They're going to keep me for six months.

They better not count on it.

January 18, 1966: I've been transferred off the admitting ward. What's the strategy, fellas? How's a stay on the alcoholic ward supposed to work? "You've been too manipulative," said a usually informed source. Can I help it if I'm so charming?

There are no nurses on this ward. And I'm already weary of the bottle-by-bottle histories. It's time to light out for the territory.

January 22, 1966: What kind of a crummy joint is this? Can't anybody do anything right? There I was, an obviously dangerous lunatic, fixing to escape, and no one does anything. I didn't have to gnaw my way through three

feet of concrete, fight off seven burly guards with staves, crawl through a fetid sewer. I just walked out the door when we went down to the cafeteria for supper . . .

I turned myself in. They acted nonchalant about it, of course, like it was no big thing, and one cop tried to pretend he'd never heard of me. It's hard to get credit. But I did get a ride back with the provincial bailiff under the heavy guard of a matron. They left the manacles off because I was playing it smart and going quietly.

So here I sit, outside the doctor's office, waiting. I was told to be here at 9:00 and it's now 11:45. This must be a lesson of some kind. I guess I shouldn't have fouled up the bookkeeping.

And if they think that I'm wondering what's going to happen to me, hah!—they're right.

January 23, 1966: I sat until 4:00 when Dr Powell came out, said goodnight and kept on going. Shit, I wish I hadn't looked so surprised. I'll have to get used to the games they play around here.

Later . . . oh, yeah, here it comes. My clothes just left the ward. I'll probably find out where they went because it seems reasonable to think that I'll be joining them. Or does it? Maybe Mrs Powell is head of the Rum-mage Committee.

Punishment isn't called punishment, of course, but it operates just like you'd expect, the restriction of liberty in some kind of relation to the severity of the offence. It almost always starts with a demotion in Grouping. Now, Grouping is the status structure of the patients. Group 1 means you remain on the ward, probably in pyjamas. Group 2 entitles you to get dressed (yippee) and move around the hospital accompanied by an attendant. You might even get to work on a work gang or go to the OT (Occupational Therapy) workshop. On Group 3 you can walk around the building unaccompanied, and Group 4 opens the grounds to you. At opposite ends of the scale are "Special Observation"—you are watched more or less carefully after a suicide attempt—and "Town Parole," an

instructive term meaning that you may go into the city. Anyway, for inappropriate behaviour you lose a group or two, returning to pyjamas for particularly heinous crimes. If you are really beyond the pale, you are put beyond the pale into the Old Hospital, Rockwood, Home of the Chronic and Defective. And if, somehow, there are no rummage sales tomorrow, that must be where I'm going.

I have made a decision to be Quiet and Co-operative. Not that I'm looking forward to Rockwood. Actually, I'm scared to death. It's just that I've seen the early results of non-co-operation and I don't think that my case history would be greatly improved by the inclusion of a brief medical report reciting the contusions, abrasions, fractures and concussions sustained resisting transfer.

So I think I'll just plaster a smile on my face and sit here clutching my exercise book and wait.

Sid approaches me; half-apologetic, he says that we're taking a walk. I receive a faint message that Sid isn't happy either, probably because I'm bigger than he is. Then I realize that it's not very flattering—where are the heavies? But I get off that track quickly because I know the heavies will appear magically at the slightest possibility that they're needed. So Sid and I walk to the elevator, ride down one floor and walk out the way I came in, out the door, down the road about a quarter of a mile to Rockwood, the charming grey limestone edifice. We climb the four flights of stairs to Ward Eight. A face appears at the little window in the door.

I walk past a long row of beds and into a large square room. The place smells strongly of urine. Sid and my file, considerably fatter now, go into a little office and I wait indecisively at the door. I look around.

In the room are about 50 men, most of whom are busy with various occupations—dozing, mumbling, sucking their toothless mouths in and out, and staring in a variety of attitudes: wistfully, stoically, blankly, demonically. I see a vacant chair and sit in it gingerly and try to see parallels between Ward Eight and the old folks' home Grandpa spent his last years in. This place is an example

of the newness of psychiatry. Or maybe it's a tasteless joke from some arrogant Olympian or other.

A wheelchair hurtles by, a Downs syndrome patient at the helm, chanting "curtee piss, curtee bitch" as his contribution to the noise level. He rolls huge, liquid eyes and looks over at me, smiling long strings of saliva. I smile back tentatively and he lolls a huge, shiny, bulbous head with its fantastic railway map of scars. Over there, an ancient relic, dapper in collar and tie, rubs his bald dome, meticulously accounting for each rub—"five, six, seven, ai-um."

Hunching along in a corner, a silent white-haired simian. Feet bruised from constant stomping, an elderly humanoid grrrs, apparently exhausting his vocabulary in the process. And the most spectacularly wizened remnant I've ever seen avidly strips the paper off cigarette butts and devours the tobacco.

It's a gruesome, pathetic catalogue. Mind-boggling. It's a macabre parade, the ravages of syphilis, of time, of inhumanity, of plain stupidity. There is a neat little man in another corner, praying. To what God? Lights begin to flash behind my eyes. Too much input: overload, overload, I'm shorting out.

A wall-eyed man beckons to me. "C'mere," he rasps, and I realize with one of those terrible jolts of comprehension that this is the ward supervisor. I wonder briefly if he's been given the job after 40 years' faithful service as a patient. That's the last wondering I do that day. I turn off completely, unable to absorb further jolts. It's some time before I return to conjecture—it's not happening, this is an hallucination (maybe I am crazy), I'm tripping out on something, it's a Rod Serling/ Vincent Price low budget 3-D reject. But now there is a heavy steel bolt through my temple expanding and contracting, driving sharp spikes deep into my head and I'm grateful that I can get lost in the pain until I eventually lose consciousness.

When I peer out through trembling eyelids I can make out three figures around the end of my bed. A deep but female voice says, "You'd better watch this one—

suicidal." Then they move away and I hear a raucous laugh and a sharp slapping sound. I fall asleep again.

Rockwood geriatrics

January 24, 1966: I wake up early. I'm at the end of a long row of beds and as I look down the row I see only one other inmate awake. He's going through some kind of elaborate dressing ritual, folding and refolding his shirt, putting a sock on one foot, taking it off and putting it on the other foot. Left and right socks? He sees me watching and picks up an ashtray and wings it at me, frisbee-style. It hits the wall just to the left of my head and ricochets to the floor where it spins noisily. I leap out of bed and assume what must be my version of a fighting pose. But my assailant seems to have forgotten me already and is busy putting his left boot on his right foot. He still has no pants on. What the fuck is Powell trying to do to me?

January 26, 1966: It is incredible how adaptable humans are. In two days I have managed somehow to accommodate myself to this bizarre situation. I've slept, eaten, breathed, shat, and, amazingly, found myself a private enough place to masturbate. What more could I ask for?

Most of my fellow lodgers seem harmless enough once that leap into the beyond has been made and a place has been found for them. Henry, the Wheelchair Driver, is erratic but you can plot his trajectory fairly well. And Austin, the Ritual Dresser, reacts only to stares, so I shall note where he is peripherally in the future. And I think I've survived the only physical encounter I'm likely to have. Yesterday I was approached by a hulking man of about 30-odd, no neck, beady eyes, who told me I looked pretty sure of myself—he must be nuts—and that I should know that he was in charge of things around here. I replied that I thought it was reassuring that someone was in charge and the big man must have thought me sarcastic because he lunged at me like a bear. I was startled and ducked down, my shoulders caught him where he was

hinged, and he sailed over my head and landed with a terrible thud on his back. I stepped back, prepared to be murdered, but the big man slowly got to his feet, dusted himself off and stuck out a big paw, saying, "My name's Doug. Pleaseta meetcha." Very curious.

This place is heavily weighted to geriatrics. I don't suppose Henry is very old, being a Downs syndrome sufferer, and Bill, the other Downs patient—he travels on foot, however—and another Billy are maybe 35, Andre couldn't be more than 18, Doug the Bear, and I are the only ones under what? 70? 80? 115?

What have they got me here for? Am I being deliberately disassociated? Why not the violent ward if they are punishing me? True, I've got to stay put here, the doors are locked, I'm four stories up (and afraid of heights anyway), but how is this sort of place supposed to "cure" me? Is it possible that this is a joke? I don't get it, if it is. Or am I to carefully cultivate a virulent case of the paranoids?

January 28, 1966: I plucked up the courage to ask the ward supervisor—his name is Peck (no, not Gregory, Bill)—when I could see the doctor.

"What do you want to see him for? He's very busy, you know. Can't be everywhere at once, you know."

I said that I knew.

"Well, then," he said, "don't be botherin' me about it. I've got enough to do myself."

"But . . .," I said.

He turned to me, belligerently. "Listen. I've been readin' your file. Can't keep your fingers off 'em, eh?"

I looked puzzled.

"Aw, don't go playin' the little innocent. Stealin'. That's what you're here for. Well, we'll soon learn you that don't pay. Nossir. No stealin' around here. Or you'll be off to Penetang sure as God made them green apples."

I could see that Mr Bill Peck and I were going to have a really therapeutic relationship.

Ten minutes later he was back.

"Dr Powell comes on the ward at 10:00. I've put you down to see him."

It looks more like a plot every minute.

Dr Powell was brilliantly unreachable. I asked to be transferred to another ward, any other ward. "Why?" he asked innocently. I explained patiently that I didn't think I could be helped here. "If you want help, you'll get it." And with that reassurance he picked up his telephone and swiveled around in the chair so that his back was to me. And to underscore the absurdity of everything he made a date for a game of golf with Dr Thingamajig.

When I recovered from my surprise, I became very, very depressed at my lot. And Petula Clark filtering out of the box over the door with "my love is deeper than the deep blue ocean" didn't help much either.

January 30, 1966: The doctor comes on the ward once a week for an hour. That works out to 1.2 minutes apiece. I wonder where the Department of Health enshrines that statistic.

February 2, 1966: "You've heard of the Duchess of Sotheby, of course. A most attractive woman, immensely rich. One night—I think it was the tenth of November, no, it was the eleventh—I saw her rise from the sink, yes, she rose right out of the sink in Pavilion 3 of the Mowat (some frame buildings to the north of the hospital housing old and docile patients). She sat gracefully on the floor and waved her hand. Immediately fourteen lords appeared one by one and sat down on the floor in a circle around the Duchess. Her Ladyship took off her ruby and emerald necklace and laid it carefully in a velvet-lined box. Then she leaned over and—I couldn't believe my eyes—she began to suck off the first lord. She looked up at me and smiled a charming smile as the jism ran down her chin. She wiped her chin with a lace handkerchief and proceeded to the next lord and the next until all fourteen had been sucked off. It couldn't have taken more than fifteen minutes. The lords rose and disappeared out the window. The Duchess paused on the windowsill and beckoned to me. I jumped out after her. Broke both my legs."

When the old fellow with the sunken red-rimmed eyes

told the story, he was looking straight ahead, back to the tenth or eleventh of November, I guess. He certainly didn't expect me to disbelieve the story. I hoped he might have another one, but he had fallen asleep.

February 5, 1966: I have never felt so isolated in my life.

February 7, 1966:

Some fifty men

Of mixed origin

Require no abacus to record IQ

Read not nor think

Only sit

With misted eye.

I need something to help me handle this place. Powell is turning a deaf ear to my requests for a transfer. He's got some schedule for me that I can't figure out. Peck is hopeless, he's just waiting out his time now and I doubt if he ever knew anything about the human mind. There's no one to talk to—I can't count the absurd dialogues I have with the old boys—nothing to read, we don't even get the customary (and ridiculous) little wallets to knit. So . . . I am going to write. I don't care what I write about, I don't care whether it's any good or not, I'm just going to let it come out. I'm going to schedule it, provide my own structure. Fuck them. They're trying to break me. I'm going to do what I can to keep together.

February 10, 1966: It's going well. I hunch over a table in the corner and scribble away furiously. I've got a huge callus on my middle finger and I'm building a conviction in Peck's mind that I really am nuts. The poor bastard can barely read, let alone write.

February 13, 1966: I am mad and need accept no responsibility for the acts the world does in the name of insanity. (Pompous epigrams have a certain charm, though probably mostly for the epigrammist.)

Reluctant to hide my light under a bushel, I tried the

above out on Peck. He just stared at me and, for once, both his eyes looked in the same direction.

I have to run the risk of being thought mad in order to keep from going mad. This place is intolerable. Dominic sits in his chair and goes "five, six, seven, ai-um!" for hours and the Sultan stomps and stomps and stomps and glares and Henry drives that fucking wheelchair all over the place and Billy can be found eating turds in the shithouse almost anytime. Chippie sits and stares and blinks regularly at eight-minute intervals, I swear. The noise level is so high you can believe bedlam with your guts. So I grit my teeth and hunch hunchier over the table and the pencil races along almost as fast as my stomach contracts and my eyes buzz.

February 14, 1966: Joe had a visitor today—good for Joe, he didn't notice—and the visitor left . . . a *Globe & Mail* magazine. And in the *Globe & Mail* magazine was an article about the New Left. And instantly I am inspired to . . . wait, I'm getting excited. The article said that the New Left was a "revolt without dogma." Well, obviously, who is in a better position to write the dogma?

February 18, 1966: I know what I'm doing. I'm redirecting. I'm venting all this spleen harmlessly. Why can't I just kick Powell in the balls? Oh no, I'm railing against poverty and hunger and privilege. I am making my isolation tragic and noble. I shout about social injustice (on the pages), and I scream against war and hypocrisy, hunger and poverty as though I discovered them.

It's very tempting, the whole situation is very tempting. Here I am, on Ward Eight, surrounded by unfortunate souls, developing the most important political philosophy since Hegel and Marx sat at their little tables. Imagine *Das Kapital* squared being ground out on the geriatric wards of an insane asylum. How can I resist?

In a way, it's legitimate enough. We are political prisoners, all of us. We have dared to challenge mythology. Foolish of us, I guess, especially those of us who had a choice. Most of us didn't know we were challenging,

most of us couldn't help it. Old Zack over here, he certainly didn't intend to outlive all of his people and he doesn't shit himself on purpose. But there he is: alone, old, vague, incontinent. You can't have embarrassing people like him around. Lock them up, get them out of the way, there is room only for some kinds of social failure. And Billy, shortchanged on the marbles, well, better get him out of the way too, our society is too efficient to allow for this kind of incompetence. My case, admittedly, is different. I'm actively insulting. I've shortchanged you.

Hurt your feelings, did I? I'm learning to be sorry. But I'm not learning fast enough. I've not yet been forgiven.

February 19, 1966: It works. But it works sporadically. The writing. Sometimes it gets me so high all the horror of this sitting room fades out completely. I feel competent, creative, energetic, invincible. But when it leaves me, oh, when it leaves me, I am at the bottom of the pit.

I'm scared.

And I can't even scream.

Communications

February 20, 1966: Feeling the need to try and make contact, I wrote to my parents. I hadn't heard from them since the suicide attempt. "Keep it light," I told myself and chatted away inconsequentially until the very last line when the bitterness grabbed me. I wrote, "I am grateful that you provided me with such a false education. It has helped immensely in my present position. I pull the dung balls off the asses of aging syphilitics."

The letter came back stamped "RETURN TO PATIENT FOR CORRECTION." I snorted and wrote across the stamp, "How to correct the Truth?" Back it came again, a second "RETURN TO PATIENT FOR CORRECTION" stamp on it. But I was tired of the dialogue.

February 21, 1966: Shower Day here in Happy Acres is the result of a collaboration between Goebbel, H and Marx, G.

It goes like this: We are all stripped and lined up and marched by twos into the showers. The block capos—Doug and, lately, me—shove the old boys into a stall, pour water all over them and pick off the eazist dung balls. Then the line goes out again and hospital gowns are dropped over most heads and clothes shoved at others. It's instructive if you're interested in the similarities of tragedy and comedy. Albert shuffles and chirps and walks carefully into the wall. Chippie stands unblinking in the shower like a stuffed praying mantis, the Sultan continues to stomp, Dominic just adds a little water to his five-six-seven litany, and Bernie, bobbing and weaving, shouts defiance despite his damp impotence. A number of the old boys forget why they're in line and wander off to take up their hobbies of eating cigarette butts and praying, looking even a little more pathetic in their pale white skins. But then Albert can't make the turn into the shower so the young attendant gives him a short arm in the ribs and I say what do you want to do that for it's not his fault he's got no motor control and the young attendant tells me to fuck off and mind my own business. I briefly weigh the consequences of returning the short arm and decide against it and instead walk down to Peck's office and tell him about it and he reminds me that I'm crazy and anyway he's busy.

After I'm dressed, I sit in my corner, brooding and cursing and feeling guilty about my impotence. I wonder about the effects of living in a place where human warmth is so absent that you can feel it like a draft. And I realize again how isolated I am and become involved in my own pain. It's easier than being involved with Albert's. And just then Albert bumps into my chair. I look up but already he's skittering off, chirping, same as ever.

What a dehumanizing process. Do the Boys in the Office appreciate what they're doing? They must know that it is too dangerous for me to identify with the poor old buggers on the ward. I've got to protect myself from thinking—even for a moment—that Albert and I are alike. It's not a subtle trick. Power-people have always used depersonalization to get the powerless to do what they

want; kill the Commies or stomp the niggers. So it's not surprising to find myself thinking of Albert as a GPI, pulling the shade down over Albert's humanity, blacking out the fact that Albert and I are being oppressed together. These crummy little insights are painful. I know that it's going to be my survival that I fight for, not Albert's. And, right now, I think I'm losing.

February 23, 1966: On five successive Mondays I asked the doctor to transfer me to another ward. "I can't take it any longer," I told him. He looked at me with the smallest of smiles on his face. "You're breaking my heart." I felt it so quickly that I couldn't suppress it—a huge tearing sob. "You're breaking mine!" I shrieked, and ran out of the office and threw myself at a steel-meshed window.

Now Peck has come to me. "I guess I learned ya," he says. "You're being transferred."

It's over.

Transfer to the Violent Ward

February 24, 1966: No, it's not over. Just the first part of some plan is over. I didn't take that quarter-mile walk back to the new hospital; I just came downstairs to Ward Six. Ward Six is the new violent ward. Oh yeah.

February 25, 1966: I'm still alive. Nobody has got to me yet. Lucky. Journals are harder to write posthumously.

It might have been just a trick of lighting, but when I came down here yesterday afternoon everything was too, too . . . what? . . . bright? The ward was quiet; almost everybody was out to work on the grounds. I sat gingerly in a chair and immediately a stocky gnome approached me, thrust his jowly face into mine and demanded a cigarette. I rolled him one very quickly.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Dave." Again, very quickly.

He held the cigarette in front of his face and recited, "My fren Dave gave me a cigarette and it's all checked."

Then he waddled off, puffing happily, the cigarette unlit.

Where are the little men with their orientation course?

The mythical heroes began to arrive: the Black Prince, Cy, Buddy, all swaggering and har-haring as is their right as the acknowledged bad men of the hospital. Fortunately, my natural reserve didn't desert me.

Immediately, the Black Prince (BP) kindly filled me in on the ways things were.

"Listen, there's gonna be no fuckin' around. First thing in the morning, yer gonna be swampin' with the rest of 'em."

At nine o'clock I received a second deputation, this time three attendants.

"We're gonna put you in a room."

The statement was not open to interpretation.

"Three guys to put me in a room? You must think I'm nuts!"

Stony silence. No points for style at all. I was ushered into a room 8 x 6 x 12. There was no furniture. One attendant closed the steel-mesh screen over the window and locked it. Then he went out the door and locked that.

I sat down on the terrazzo floor and tried to figure out just what they (read "They") had in mind this time. Maybe this is just standard procedure, a way of saying "we mean business here." Or some kind of initiation into the Violent Fraternity. Then I thought how ironic it was for me to be locked in a room on the violent ward, violence being hardly my forte. After a while I gave up, there being no way to confirm or deny any of my conjectures. The next few hours I alternately invited and chased away various kinds of paranoia. Eventually I feel asleep. No tension headache this time; I must be adapting.

When they let me out in the morning, I asked for and got no explanation of why I had been locked up.

I think this ward is going to be a little better, though. We seem to be both more and less with it. Although, on the average, we're crazier, we still are more in touch with all that 1966 going on Out There. Could be a mixed blessing.

February 26, 1966: Looks like I've just exchanged prisons. They're still not letting me off the ward. Not a breath of fresh air for over a month now. Very therapeutic, I'm sure.

So I have to continue to be my own program director. Why am I so ungrateful? Any number of writers would give their rejection slips to be allowed a couple of weeks here. Just look at the material!

Take Chippie, for example:

Character File—Entry #1—Chippie. Age: between 60 and 100. Wizened face, more than old, almost primeval. Could be Early Man. His white hair is shaggy and his walk is stooped and hurried as though he were just learning and not quite comfortable with walking yet. I have never heard him speak. In fact, the only sound he makes is a kind of squeak and he reserves that for special occasions as when an attendant bends back his thumb—"Hey, wanna hear Chippie talk?" Apparently he's been here as long as anyone can remember and that's a long time because one of the supervisors goes back 37 years. What was he like in 1929? Does anyone know anything about him? He sits in a corner all day long, his hands clasped together in his lap. They are strange hands. They look like they've been washed too often. (Was he a surgeon?) During the afternoon he takes a nap. He curls up on the bed that happens to be closest and assumes a perfect fetal position. One day I sat across from him and looked into his eyes for a long time to see if I could reach him. Chippie just looked back without changing his expression. The things those pale blue eyes must have seen. But does anything register?

Character File—Entry #2—The Sultan. Age: 60 to 80. The Sultan is old but from the much more recent past. I call him the Sultan because he wears a hospital robe and white cotton hospital slippers that turn up at the toes. But he could as easily be a Senator, plucked off the steps of the Forum, a silent patrician, silent but still fiery. His eyes blaze and his head does too—it's completely bald and shiny. He strides around the sitting room and up and

down the halls, his arms behind his back, his robe flapping. He's composing an oration but he never delivers it. A perfectionist.

Character File—Entry #3—Albert. Age: 60 to 75. Albert isn't so enigmatic. He's just awkward. He slobbers and shuffles and chirps. He does an excited, clumsy dance and never seems to know where he's going. (He shouldn't be blamed for that; there's no place for him to go.) His shoe laces are never tied—for some reason, he's been given a pair of business Oxfords to wear—so, of course, he trips over his shoe laces and lays back his scalp for a few more stitches. An attendant said that Albert has tertiary syphilis.

Poor Albert spills his food and dribbles on the floor and shits in the corner. Shower Day is his downfall because he can't make it into the shower on his own and, when he finally gets punched in there, he can't stand still. But he's not going to complain, mostly because he speaks a language all his own.

Character File—Entry #4—Dominic. Age: 75 to 85. Dominic is a man of means. He's always well turned out in a collar and tie, somewhat dated and frayed but obviously of a good cut. He'd been a storekeeper. In fact, he'd been something of a tycoon with three stores and, although he could have easily afforded to hire staff for all three and sit in the sun, he liked to work in them himself. As he tells it, one day Mrs Whoosiz waddled in and asked for a bottle of that good old herbal tonic. Dominic hurried up the ladder to get it down off the top shelf. "This is the one," he said, falling off the ladder and landing on his head. "I lost one of my head nerves. That's why I rub my head, to bring back the seventh nerve." Well, that's clear enough. So Dominic is meticulous about rubbing his head. He keeps track as he rubs—"five, six, seven, aim!"—maybe it just marks the end of each series of rubs. I found his determination and conviction somehow reassuring.

Dominic looks a little like Boris Karloff. Sounds like him too with a kindly but sepulchral voice. Extremely polite.

He has money coming in from somewhere because he always has Tailor-Mades (that old-fashioned expression is still very current around here), but the staff won't allow him matches. So he stops rubbing his head for a minute and says, "Would you please give me a match?" and, after you do, "Oh, thank you so much."

They've worked up a little routine for Dominic too.

"Hey Dominic, where did you keep the cock safes in your store?"

"Cock safes? Cock safes? I didn't sell such things!" And he gets so outraged at the slander that he leaps out of his chair and chases his tormentor away.

(What routine will they think up for me?)

I stop to reflect about the morality of my turning people into vignettes. Eventually I decide that it is, at the very least, more honest for me to do it than for some shrink. I share their lives, after all. And if I can divert myself a little while . . . well, I can hold out that much longer.

March 3, 1966:

I inhabit an asylum
Night falling
Sees me pacing
And wondering why.
No knowledge comes
In these bare halls
To us madmen—or to
You.

In the strongroom with friends

March 5, 1966: Well, well, am I in luck. Bill just came over. I won't be seeing him today though, unless I look through the little square window in the door. I guess he caused some trouble on Sixteen in the new hospital because it looks like they've put a good beating on him.

There's plaster on his head, one eye is shut and one hand swollen up. But Bill was grinning and I'm going to

get a soulmate.

I met Bill briefly at the General when I was coming round after my OD. He showed up on Sixteen about a week later and we got talking. He's sort of a Jack Kerouac/Johnny Cash figure. He's got a cloth cap—"My turn-on hat"—and a great long overcoat. Naturally, he writes songs and poetry. He used to come over to visit me when I was on Eight and he always seemed to arrive just when things had built up so much that I was ready to go berserk. But they put a stop to his visits—got to keep the isolation complete.

I rolled a couple of cigarettes and slid them under the door. Bad move. Now I'm locked in the strongroom.

March 6, 1966: First thing this morning I went down to Bill's strongroom to see how he was. He was already awake—and he was certainly a sight. He was decked out in a jockstrap and a short pink hospital nightgown. He was trying to do the nightgown up with one hand; the other hand was broken. I helped him out and was just finishing off a nice bow when the night supervisor looked in.

"What's going on here?"

Bill looked up and smiled in his most charming way. "We're just getting up," he remarked casually.

The eyebrows shot up, the lips were swallowed and the red face disappeared. The night supervisor makes a funny report this morning.

Bill has been saving his pills up for an OD. Yesterday was the day so he went to dig out his stock but someone had been there first and they were gone.

"I was some pissed off so I fired a few chairs around and the next thing I knew screws are popping out of the walls at me. The first one gets my guitar over the head—one of your better chords—and then five or six of them pile on."

"What happened to your hand?"

"I dunno. Maybe I hit the wall."

So Bill has added a few more scars and I'm going to have someone to talk to for a few days. They'll get wise to

that before long, I imagine, and away he'll go again.

March 8, 1966: Bill got sent back this morning. I go into the washroom and say "I told you so" into the mirror.

March 9, 1966: It shouldn't be possible to be an oddball here but I am. This hospital is filled with poor people. The middle-class contingent could meet comfortably in a phone booth. So I must be here accidentally. (Hey fellas, this is all a big misunderstanding. If you'll just unlock the door . . .) All my power systems are temporarily out of order or I'd never be here. I'm getting a rare opportunity; I'm seeing how my people deal with slow learners. If you fail to learn how to behave in the correct unobtrusive way and you have already committed the horrible crime of being poor, you will surely be thrown in jail—this one or the one next door (Kingston Penitentiary). If you are given the choice—you won't be—take the one next door. You might learn something useful, welding or safecracking, and you'll have a better idea of when you're getting out. And people will hold their mouths a little differently when you tell them your previous address. After all, you will have been considered worthy of some kind of legal process, unlike us who do our indefinite time without having had our day in court.

So, a word of warning (you can trust me). Take care about the family you get born into. Then, if you safely make it into the middle class, don't piss all your relatives off. Best of all, get yourself a private psychiatrist and pay him all your money. When the white coats come to get you, he'll intercede on your behalf. Because he'll suspect that you held some of that loot back.

March 15, 1966: I have always been able to adapt well. Maybe too well. I've gotten used to the numerous small deprivations of this place. I've gotten used to having no money and no place to spend any. I wear joint clothes; mine have worn out, fallen apart after a visit to the hospital laundry, or have disappeared. And I don't mind. I

smuggle out my mail to avoid a censor. There's no point giving them more ammunition. But I can't get used to the lack of love and warmth and tenderness. That's the big turn-off and that must be the biggest single obstacle to recovery for everybody here. Nobody gives a fuck.

I read Camus and understand his isolation. No one can share my feelings. I can't share theirs. But if only I had someone to talk to, someone to hold, someone to hold me! Bill's gone and the rest aren't much help. Some don't talk at all, some shouldn't, some won't. Some have forgotten to be sad. The common ground is the environment. We share the same space, eat the same dull food, breathe the same stale air. That's it. I say to Big Bob, "Hey, man, why do you put up with this shit?" He looks puzzled and then mumbles, "Ain't nothing I kin do about it, is there?", and the horrible part is, maybe he's right. I say to Chuck, "You got town parole, why don't you split?", and he says, "Sure, sure, what do I do when I run out of pills?", and I see how cleverly they've got it worked out; if the system doesn't keep you, then the dope will. And the hell of it is I don't think there's anything very much wrong with Chuck. They just never let him try to handle his problems. Keep him so stoned out he never can learn to cope. Twentieth century technology. Yeah.

I wasn't ready for this. Nobody should be. How do you fit this into any notion of the world? How do I match up these pictures? My son lying cooing in his crib with a Downs patient blowing someone in a cupboard? My wife whispering "I love you" with the BP shouting, "You little cocksuckers, I'll kick your fuckin' asses for you!"? Am I so naive? Or is this the outrage that I think it is? If a man becomes an animal, what does that say for his keeper?

March 20, 1966: "There we were, flogging ourselves silly up by the dam."

That's Bucky. He's off again. A man of about 40, average build, generally nondescript—the joint clothes helping that out a lot. Usually he's quiet and harmless, padding about in a pair of slippers, collecting butts from ashtrays. But now there are shreds of tobacco hanging

from the stubble on his chin and his pale blue eyes flash and dart. His voice is husky and insistent. And he's after me.

"We were flogging ourselves silly."

"That's nice, Bucky. Now take off."

"Are you going to burn him up?"

"No, I'm not going to burn him up. See ya."

"I burned him up."

"Great. Got to go now, bye."

"Were you drunk?"

"Jesus Christ, Bucky. I'll pound you in a minute."

"I was drunk. They got me in eternal purgatory."

"Click, click, you're out."

Bucky shoves his face into mine. "I'm going to burn in hell."

I've had it. I put my hand flat against Bucky's chest; with all my strength I try to push him away. I can't even budge him. So I punch him hard in the sternum. Bucky doesn't even blink. He plucks at my sleeve and peers into my face again. I nip into my room and slam the door.

"Will you burn him up?"

I put the chair against the door and sit in the chair. Bucky's nose flattens against the little window and he pushes the door open a crack.

"I'm burning. Let me out."

"Fred, will you lock up this lunatic for fuck's sake?"

I felt guilty later. Poor Bucky. But when he comes after you like that . . .

March 23, 1966: So time's up. After only 60 days of being locked up, I'm going outside. Outside. Imagine that.

I am going to work in the Greenhouse.

But they can't bear to go all the way. I'm not going to be allowed to go to any of the "recreational activities" but, heh, heh, I don't care. (You slipped up on this one, doctor.)

March 24, 1966: The Greenhouse is an oasis. It's Paradise. The fragrance of the flowers, the colours, almost intoxicating. If I could only take some of this life back onto the ward.

Marking time

March 29, 1966: I begin to realize how important schedules are. If the world did not stir to the sound of alarm clocks, pack its lunch and go off to work, the street would soon be clogged with idle, demented people. We're not too good at occupying time when left to ourselves. Doomsday is coming—the twenty-hour work week. Unless inroads can be made into the work ethic, there's going to be lotsa buboobuba here. The most structured place in the world. When the structure falls down, when the social workers go home to their barbeques, when the bits of wool for the little knitted wallets stop getting handed out, we are still here. What to do? What to do during the long day? What to do during the interminable evenings? What to do on god-damn civic holidays?

During the week, however, you can work if you're considered fit and there are all sorts of reasons why you might not be, mysterious reasons. You can shovel snow, collect garbage, rake leaves, trim around the walks with sheep shears, stuff like that. Minor satisfactions limited to the amount of joy found in bodily movement and completion of tasks and, thankfully, a bit of comradeship (the work gang is unique in that respect). But it doesn't keep the mind alive. The material rewards aren't excessive either. Your room and board—which is a long way from luxurious, which you didn't ask for and which is the very least they could do. Plus two packages of the poorest grade of fine-cut tobacco they could possibly find. I have been unable to organize even one trade union (shoulder to shoulder with the Sultan for instance, is hard to imagine, even for me). Knock off six hours per day, weekdays.

I can fill up six, seven hours with sleep. The staff are most particular that we get up at six, why I don't know except it must be convenient for them. On most wards, you don't sleep during the day. Most of the men go to bed right after supper but I try to stay up until eleven and try to remain awake and unnoticed after that, not always successfully. One night man lets me watch the late movie but we've got to watch for the supervisor. Total so

far—thirteen hours.

An hour and a half to eat. Fourteen and a half hours. No complaints about the food. Who expects much in that department? Although sometimes it's a little annoying to see the staff taking it home in their briefcases, shopping bags and trucks.

An hour for ablutions. Fifteen and a half hours. You must fight for more than one bath a week and on some wards, a daily shave. But long hair is verboten. A maniacal barber tours regularly.

Eight and a half hours left. I could watch TV for eight and a half hours, Chinese water torture not being available. A hand or nineteen of cards? The rules are interesting. Don't forget the parties. I'll be seeing one for myself, no doubt. Movies? Oh yes, Friday night—*Flipper Goes Hawaiian*, don't miss it. Biweekly singsong; eat your heart out, Ted Mack. Ah, fuck it. Anyway, Powell told me, "You've got all sorts of opportunity for inappropriate activity right here on the ward." Whatever that means. So I write and write and write. Harry calls me the Professor. There are consolations everywhere.

March 31, 1966: John has a theory. If he can subdue the largest man in any given group and if, having subdued him, he can blow him, then he can take over the group.

There have been theories more bizarre.

Trouble is, John isn't content with mere theory.

Trouble for the largest man in any given group; trouble for John.

Most of the time John is undemonstrative. Quiet. Polite. Well-behaved. In short, co-operative.

At intervals, however, he is moved to test his theory. At intervals John pounces on the largest man in the group he has selected. At intervals, he is clubbed to the floor and experimenter becomes experimentee.

I've never been chosen. I'm not hurt, John, honest I'm not. I was standing beside MacNamara when John chose him one day. MacNamara showed more sense than usual and ran yelling down the hall to the office.

Today the ward staff are playing gin rummy. Not un-

usual. Ward supervisor is Big Jack. He doesn't find his work very challenging. He's waiting until the shift is over. An ex-cop. Still big and tough. Reputed to be very fast.

Here comes John down the hall very slowly, close to the wall. His arms are hanging straight down and on the end of each arm is a giant fist.

John sidles up to Big Jack and pow pow, two tremendous shots to Big Jack's big head. Big Jack goes down—the chair clatters—Big Jack is up on his feet, and John is on his back out cold.

By the time I get my mouth shut again John's feet are disappearing into his strongroom. I barely saw Big Jack's arm move. And, I swear, it was an open-hander. Hmmm.

April 1, 1966: I sit in my sideroom, my future cluttered with the wreckage of a marriage, a career and several bundles of aspirations, some of them mine. But I feel—amazingly—that I have some control. I will get out. (Say it again.) I will get out and build some kind of life. But what of the others? What's the point of no return: two years, five years, or is it temporal at all? What about those who have no clear idea of why they're here? And no reason to think they'll ever leave? What about old Zack up on Eight? Found wandering in the bush several miles from his farm. Out after a deer, he said, I always take a deer when I need one. How is a man like that to live locked up in a room after a lifetime of roaming wherever he wanted? What does he make of that locked door at the end of the hall and the poor old rustling hulks around him? Does he think about what has happened to him? Or has he got that patience that we attribute to the very old? You see, Zack I can relate to. Zack makes me sad. He could be my grandfather.

The Women's Auxiliary

April 2, 1966: The ladies of the Women's Auxiliary came on the ward today. Apparently, it's a monthly number and I've got to admit it's a more dangerous sort of do-

gooderism than usual. Mind you, the heavies get an extra shot of be-a-nice-quiet-boy dope but, after all, I'm not on any dope and who knows what I might dream up? The ladies. They bring cakes and cookies and cigars and cigarettes and they organize bingo and card games and they even have a little record player with real records so that they can dance with us boys. All these young suburban wives. And their doctor-engineer-professor husbands are very tolerant and all my cynicism disappeared when a woman with the most disarming brown eyes came over and said, very quietly, that she was sorry to see me here. She didn't even force me to dance and I appreciated that much. But then a tall cool blonde woman joined us and said she understood that I wrote and would I let her read something and I fell over my feet scuttling off to my room to find something and I've hated myself for at least three hours now about that one. Patronizing. What does she know about it?

Ah, but the woman with the brown eyes touched me. For a moment. And I'm not even going to wonder how long it will have to last me.

Big Jack is wearing two brand-new shiners, courtesy of John.

John is wearing lots of brand-new hypo marks, courtesy of Big Jack's friends.

Big Jack is laughing. "He sure suckered me."

John is barely moving. He doesn't say anything.

(Overheard) "We got him on double maximum."

Character File—Entry #5—Joe. Age: 55 to 65. Joe has an interesting hobby. He's a public diddler. Not that his devotion has any noticeable effect. His continual stroking and stretching produces nothing except perhaps more limpness and he is already on the Ten Most Limp List. What he lacks in potency he makes up in chatter. An artist.

"Going to fuck mommy. Going to fuck mommy." Give that three to five minutes.

"Going to fuck Mary. Going to fuck Mary." Give Mary—his daughter—another three to five minutes.

"Going to fuck John. Going to fuck John." Another

three to five for John, his son.

"Going to fuck Rover. Going to fuck Rover." But here the SPCA must have stepped in because that was all. He was probably set up anyway; the attendants haven't much else to do. But I did appreciate the act one day when the puffed-up Head Nurse appeared at the door with a flock of student nurse affiliates. Joe got as far as John before Head Nurse could bear it no longer and puffed out. Good old Joe.

April 3, 1966: I creep towards the house. It's a fine big house in the best part of town. It's Dr Powell's house. There's no moon. I hide in the bushes near the back door. I see the bedroom light go out. I slip into the house and crouch beside the refrigerator. The kitchen clock has a luminous dial. The minute hand jumps 30 times. I climb the stairs, keeping close to the wall. A board squeaks. I freeze. Nothing. I steal down the hall and pause outside the first door. I listen to the gentle breathing. I turn the knob and ease the door open. A child is asleep in a bed by the wall. I take out my knife and *stab stab stab* screaming *Powell Powell Powell, bastard bastard bastard*. Question: should I tell Dr Powell about my dream?

April 4, 1966: No change in John. He looks like aging celery.

April 5, 1966: It's almost three months since the six-month-no-contact-with-your-wife plan began. I'm not doing very well. I couldn't stand the lack of attention and ran away. I couldn't follow through on that so I came back and got sent to Eight. They drove me buggy and I said so and ended up on the violent ward. And now they've cut me off the Greenhouse because the Greenhouse boys say they haven't enough staff to keep an eye on me all the time. Every time I think about the baby I cry and every time I think about Carol I start feeling guilty. I wonder if it's over. What do I have to go back to? Will this leave me too scarred, too scared?

Character File—Entry #6—Grenville. Age: 60. Grenville

is simple. Grand Mal seizures have dropped him on his head so often he should rattle. But he has a knack for learning routines, too, and he does several side-splitters.

Q: What's that you got on your head, that white spot?

A: That's eagle shit.

Q: How did it get there, Grenville?

A: The eagle put it there, stupid.

or

Q: What have you got on your head, Grenville?

A: Nuffin.

or

Q: What have you got in your belly, Grenville?

A: A baby?

Q: What's your baby's name?

A: Judy. My baby's name is Judy.

Q: How old is she?

A: Sixteen.

Q: How old are you, Grenville?

A: Fifteen.

Q: How did you get that baby in your belly?

A: Bill Osborne fucked me up the bum.

And don't forget that "check it out" bit with the cigarette. When the routines pall, you can really upset Grenville by making your fingers into circles, thumb and forefinger, and holding them up to your eyes. He tries to hit you and shouts, "Don't spyhole me, you old spyhole!"

It makes me sick. Maybe Grenville is happy with his role as jester. But I doubt it.

April 9, 1966: Being in this place is keeping me in this place. How can I get out of that cycle?

April 10, 1966: I've been let out again, this time on a little longer string. Despite my lack of face-to-face contact with the staff, the therapeutic staff, that is, there is some fairly astute appreciation of where I'm at. Some eyeball or other is trained on me, some ear is listening and just as I start coiling up or in, the screws are loosened a turn. So now I can work on a work crew and attend the recreations if I suck ass appropriately. I suck ass. I'm tired of the ward.

No more bars

April 12, 1966: There are no bars on my window. The sun is coming up and sunlight glinting off bars would be nice but there are no bars. "See," says the Minister of Health, "no bars."

I do have a heavy mesh screen, though.

It's a beautiful sight. The lake's frozen, the sky is clear, the shore is covered with snow, Kingston Penitentiary doesn't look like it will fall down, and there is an enormous cone of coal on our dock below me.

But no fucking bars!

There is one of those redundant signs on the coal dock. "Coal dock," it says.

Couldn't I get just one god-damn bar?

The sign goes on to say that trespassers will be prosecuted. One of these days I'm going down there and I'm going to change that sign to: TRESPASSERS WILL BE SUBJECTED TO ELECTRO-CONVULSIVE THERAPY.

Hah! That'll get 'em.

Six o'clock. Here comes Bernie.

"Awright, drop your cocks, les roll 'em out, ya gonna sleep all day or what. C'mon, c'mon, feet onna floor, outa them fart sacks."

All this punctuated by metallic crashes as his boot hits the footboard of each bed.

"Bernie, how come you're so subtle?"

"What the fuck you think you're doin', Reville?"

"Just writing up your case history, Bernie."

Waking up on Ward Six. The last of the violent wards. Makes you feel kinda proud. Mothers probably scare their kids with it: "Drink your milk or you'll end up on Six." It's an important weapon in the attendant arsenal. "Wanna go to Six?" "No, no, not that. I'll stop breaking this chair over your head right now, honest, sir."

Psstt! Ward Six isn't so bad. Sure, windows and chairs disappear, but if you keep your back to the wall you'll be all right.

There are a couple of things to watch for: Big John walking quietly down the hall, very close to the wall, watch

that. Bucky creeping up with bits of tobacco on his chin, watch that. Whitey tearing towards the back hall, watch that. Once you learn each guy's trick and once you learn how to avoid it, well, then you're practically home free.

There's no relaxing on admission wards. No one lets you relax, not the patients, not the staff, not yourself. The patients are nuts, they have to be, hoping as they are for important-sounding diagnoses. They dance and scream and tear off their clothes and slit their throats and break their guitars over your head. You can't tell what's going to happen next.

The staff are always pestering you, why did you do this, why did you say that, how long have you hated your third cousin, knit this little wallet, look at this weird inkblot. It's a madhouse.

This place has got some stability. It should have—we've been here fifteen years on the average.

And here comes the BP with his mop tank, rounding up his minions with a cheery "Get out here, you fuckers." And now he's cornered poor, miserable Harry.

"Harry, you wormy bastard, you been pissin' in this fuckin' corner."

"Ohnosir," swears Harry.

"You lyin' sonuvabitch. You wanna cut that out or you'll git my boot up yer fuckin' ass."

"Please don't hit me, sir. I'm just a little mouse."

"Yer fuckin' right yer a mouse. Now get the fuck outa the way."

"You got to hate me," pleads Harry.

"Yer fuckin' right I hate you, you black-eyed cocksucker," says the BP agreeably, "and here's a fuckin' kick up the fuckin' ass to prove it."

Looks like it's going to be an ordinary nasty sort of day. The sadists and masochists are up stomping and cringing, old Greenback will be in the kitchen freezing the toast and, oh sigh, it's bath day today.

It's different here than on Eight. We pull off our own dung balls. The rest is about the same, sheets down in the hall from the clothes room to the showers, a line going in and a line coming out. I do squeeze my cheeks together a

little tighter, though, and I try to get through early on to avoid itchy underwear.

I'm wearing joint clothes now. Look a bit like a storm trooper; khaki workpants, black T-shirt, work socks, work boots.

At my desk. (It's really a metal night table but I call it my desk. I must be entitled to some delusions.) You know, sometimes I almost forget where I am. Sometimes, hunched over, scribbling, I could be anywhere. I wonder what that means. Did they forget in Dachau? Does my neighbour in the Hole forget?

April 15, 1966: I was summoned today to my doctor's office for an interview with my lawyer. They didn't want him on the ward, obviously. I shaved and dressed in my lawyer's suit out of mothballs from my law school days. I'm going on trial Monday. Powell rocked back in his chair, smiling his maddening smile, exuding superiority. I asked the lawyer about his getting me out of here. Powell's chair came down with a thump and he refused to allow any discussion of that useless topic. The lawyer wouldn't take any initiative; he's being responsive to the man with the chequebook—my father.

April 18, 1966: The crown has dropped the charges. My lawyer gratefully closed the file. I guess he figures he's done his job; he's saved me from jail. At what price?

Powell comes around to tell me how ludicrous he thought my performance with the lawyer was. "You sounded like you were talking about somebody else." Brilliant. I was talking about somebody else. I was talking about the guy who got fucked up and stole some cars. He and I barely know each other. What did he expect me to do? Wear a black shirt and white tie and walk in carrying a violin case? Sit in the chair with my head hanging down and a tear trickling down my cheek? I probably know as much criminal law as the lawyer. Should I pretend I don't? Shit, that little prick grinds me. But he can afford to be supercilious. He goes home at 3:30; I'm not going anywhere.

April 19, 1966:

Happy birthday to me
Happy birthday to me
Happy birthday, happy birthday
Happy birthday to me

A parcel arrived this morning from Mom and Dad. Socks, cigarettes, cookies. They think I'm at camp.

April 20, 1966: Good for John—a change. He's turned red. Chameleon? Naw, just side-effects from the dope.

April 23, 1966: John got tired of red and thought he'd try blue. Rod cut him down, though.

So, c'mon, let's hear it for chemotherapy. Give us a C. Give us an H. Give us an E . . .

If I thought I could stand seeing the food twice, I'd puke.

April 25, 1966: I struggle to be an individual, to exercise some degree of self-determination. I am doomed.

They say, "Pick up the garbage."

I say, "Give me a job that has some meaning."

They say, "Pick up the garbage."

We are at an impasse.

The impasse is resolved. They lock me up again. Clang.

April 26, 1966: I don't seem to have much bargaining power. How would Ahab have handled this?

Making it

April 27, 1966: I hate this place. I hate Powell. I hate myself. Yet I look around and see people who are making it here. For them it is a haven safe from the horrid shocks of the world. If your IQ is low or if you barely survived your birth or if you have scrambled your brains in a 100 grand mal dives, you probably will like the undemands of the OHK (Ontario Hospital, Kingston). You can walk in a

line around the carefully landscaped grounds, you can see a movie and knit the now-famous little wallets and nice ladies bring cookies once a month, bingo too. You can shit your pants and wet the bed and anyway you've been here fourteen years and couldn't leave if you wanted to.

I look at the BP and wonder why he's got town parole and why I'm locked up. He's supposed to have killed two people. He's supposed to have tertiary syphilis. I know he beats the shit out of the weaker and slower patients. I know because I've managed to stop him a couple of times. (He has some kind of respect for me, the source of which I don't understand.) The staff give him a lot of leeway. It's easier to accommodate him than to call in six men to put him in a strongroom. Anyway, he keeps order, kicking people into line when they interrupt the attendants' card games. Me, they don't need to accommodate. I'm not anxious to be beaten up, I can't see the point. (I've also got too much imagination to be that brave.) And—if I make it—I get out. The BP is a lifer.

Later. There've been times when I thought this place was hell. But I've grown used to the various deprivations and no longer cringe at the more horrible happenings. So it can't be hell. Is it limbo then? A prison of oblivion?

Later. You are not hungry? You must eat. It is easier for us to make you eat than to allow you to interrupt the mechanics of hospital routine. This above all, my boy: the smooth function of the machine. We have schedules for bathing, shaving, sleeping, eating, changing beds, singing, dancing, talking, resting, working, and you shall do nothing except at the appointed time. Do not be so foolish as to talk at 11:15, to sleep at 6:01, to bathe on Wednesday. You will be punished. The whole order of this universe depends on your timing, on your adhering to the schedule. There is, however, no schedule for screwing; you are to forget about that.

Obviously, I resist structuring. In my little way. I am clever, I am manipulative, I am able to get little favours. I both applaud and hiss myself for each little favour. I begin to realize that I'm prolonging my imprisonment. I grow cunning. I behave expediently and I suppress the rage I

feel when I see Powell's sarcastic face. I do everything when, where, and how I am supposed to and, lo, I "progress." I move to an "active" ward. I am, however, a little suspicious. It has worked too well. Something must be wrong.

Active

May 4, 1966: "Active" is about as euphemistic as you can get. One—count 'em—patient goes out to work each morning and returns each night. The door is, however, open. Just try to go through it without being asked the password. The doctor lavishes one entire hour on this ward each and every week.

May 8, 1966: The ward supervisor caught me crying this morning and got very upset. "What do you have to cry about?" I didn't know where to start, so I didn't.

Night on the ward—a refuge
the drone of many sleepers.
In repose, their faces lack
the wildness of the day.
Yet reminder of where we are
now a hideous shriek, a pacer in the hall.
Mutterings and hammerings
and gaunt sockets staring.

I'm an elevator. A hundred technologists designed and assembled me. My program was faultless. A million fingers pressed my UP button. But I didn't work. Turn off the MUZAK, press ALARM, call the mechanic. But everything checks out. The two built-in responses—Door Open, Door Close—fail. The light at the top of the shaft is on but the elevator isn't seeking it. The DOWN button was programmed out at the start. What could be wrong? The elevator had been going UP as directed, the door opened and closed at the appropriate time, the maintenance was on schedule. Why is this program being reject-

ed? Confusing. There is only one thing to do. Get rid of it. I am taken out of the shaft and junked. I lie in a heap, wires trailing. I hum softly, despite my lack of power source.

May 13, 1966: SCANDAL ROCKS THE HOSPITAL—SOMEBODY BETTER INVESTIGATE SOON SAYS SOMEBODY

Well, well, well. Such buzzing and tittering and heh-hehing has seldom been heard. Seems that last night a furtive foursome was discovered in the basement of the new hospital. Down by the morgue, they are saying, but that smacks of cheap journalism to me. The line-up: two attendants, one of them married, and two teen-aged girls, both patients and both . . . significant pause . . . under sixteen. What ever could they have been up to? (let no wag utter "to the child".) Lurid myths spring up like weeds. I'll probably never know what really happened.

What interests me most is the sort of response one should have. We will carefully ignore (for the sake of argument) that it doesn't matter whether a girl of that age is willing or not. Waive the whole Criminal Code if you like. We are still left with a problem. What if they get pregnant? (This looks to me like sour grapes, said the dog in the manger to the cat who just fiddled.) There's rape all around us anyway. It will have blown over in a week and you can be sure there will be no charges laid. Nossir, the administration takes care of its own, and if some back ward gets two very young patients, all the better—the grants will be bigger. I was tired of the whole story before I started writing it. Wonder why I did?

May 14, 1966: I walk into the washrooms this morning and there is Allan washing the mirror. Allan is about twenty and has spiky hair sticking out of his head at about 49 different angles.

"Washing the mirrors, eh?" I say, brilliantly.

Allan doesn't answer. Rightly. The staff are always saying things like that—"Walking up and down the hall, are you?"—and wondering why they get no response. They hurry off to write in the book "out of touch with reality" or

some such. But then something makes me think that Allan hasn't heard me come in because he leans closer to one mirror and whispers "mars." He moves to the next mirror, peers into it and whispers "mars" again. And so on, down one row and up the other. (I look in the mirror closest to me—just to make sure—all I see is myself looking into a mirror.)

Allan confronts me.

"You know, I used to jerk off all the time."

"Never mind. Everybody does."

"My mother told me it'd make me crazy."

"Lots of mothers say that."

"She was wrong."

"Oh?"

"Yeah, jerking off didn't make me crazy. My trouble started after I tried to fuck that chicken."

Then he walks past me out the door, leaving me somewhat confused: who to curse—his mother or that reluctant chicken?

Re-read the above. It's disturbing. I don't know anything about Allan and yet I have made the assumption that he's crazy; racing around playing baseball and beating the drum in the hospital "Orchestra" and zipping in and out of the art room and chopping out stumps on the grounds. What do I think this is—Bigwig Inn? And this, this Pretentious Journal of mine! What an elaborate trick I'm playing on myself. I am teetering on the edge. What if I drop on the Lifer side? Will this journal comfort me forever? Another disturbing thing is that I've fallen into the same error that the staff have; they don't look at a person, they look at the person's tag. If it reads "patient" then that person is nuts and is treated as such. And there's no more effective way to keep a hospital full than by treating everybody there as though they were wingy.

I've encountered a lot of puzzled looks since I've been here; staff I don't know ask me when I started and what ward I'm working on or what medical school I went to. I suppose it could be a put-on but I expect that I look too "normal" to be a patient. (Maybe I could grow an antler.)

What is a madman? I'm functioning. I might even be

considered succeeding in this frame of reference. I mean, who hit a home run today? Who filled out three attendants' income tax forms in March? Who has been on *five* wards? Who? Who? Yes, but who has been unable to grasp the hard facts of his situation? Who has been unable to move toward that door in any real sense? I haven't been able to run away and yet I know with my gut that this place is poisoning me. I haven't been able to come up with an alternative life for myself. I'm still hanging on to some stylized vision of Carol and the baby out there somewhere, all clean and comforting and warm. But what if? And there I stop because it's too dangerous for me to go on. Oh, have you got me in a box! Do I really have to be frightened to death? You, Powell, what are you doing? I say to you, "I'm sad" and you say smugly, "This isn't supposed to be a picnic." That's such a help.

I have realized that I have a lot of things to work out. Things were going up, up, up at such a rate, I was too busy to think about what I was doing. Then everything went down, down, down even faster. Is this where I stop? How long? Or am I sliding into a deeper pit? I'm running, running, that's what the baseball, the orchestra, the art room are all about, keep running, don't get off the merry-go-round, spin, spin, blur all the ugly realities, in this, some minor league version of what I was doing before, if I can't be Joe College, never mind, I'll make do with Joe Funnyhouse. If ooooooh, fuck. Enough.

There is nothing wrong with Doug. I have lived with him for ten days and I have reached the conclusion that there is nothing wrong with him. So I'm letting him out. Trouble is, he won't go. He's got nowhere to go and nothing to do when he doesn't get there. But he even gets a bad shake in here. Not being crazy he doesn't get messed around with daily overdoses of drugs; however, being diabetic, he still gives them a chance to screw up his insulin two or three times a week and you shouldn't do that, Doug, you're asking for trouble. The other thing you shouldn't do is respond truthfully to the inane questions. Such as . . .

Nurse: Where are you going, Mr MacDougall?

Mr MacDougall: To take a shit.

Oh no, that's unwise. Very unwise. Sociopathic, probably. Pretend you don't mind the constant invasions of privacy, the attendants under your chair peeking up your bum, pay them no mind. Who cares if there are no doors on the shithouses, all that delicacy about bodily functions isn't good for you anyway, invite all the staff into the tub with you, empty out your night-table drawer so a couple can crawl in there too.

Old Grenville is right. "Don't spyhole me." But for Grenville and Doug and me, it's pointless to protest. They all got first-class honours in spyholing. They aren't about to let their spyholes rust.

May 20, 1966: There are consolations to be found almost everywhere, I hope, and one of mine in this has been Chummie. He just left today and that's good for him and not so good for me, but I'm glad he's gone. I first saw him just before I got transferred over here and I was sure that the Prophet had come among us. He was wearing a hospital gown of dazzling white and his black hair touched his shoulders. Above the beard were very startling blue eyes. He told me he'd done the turn-off scene. I heard later, from Bill, that he'd tried again on the ward. Drank a bottle of wintergreen. Caused a bit of scurrying around, I imagine.

I'd never have seen Chummie again if he hadn't been so handsome. Not that I refuse to see anyone who isn't handsome. That is not the reason. No, the reason is that a certain nameless nursie found Chummie so handsome that she couldn't bear to see him so few hours a week but needed to lure him to her home—first luring her husband out of his and her home—so that she could see Chummie some more. That, of course, bugged up the accounting at the hospital—hmmm, only 39 nuts here, 40 on the list. Chummie arrived on Ward Six.

Chummie would never have been on Ward Six so long if the same certain nameless nursie had not been so unprofessional as to practically plant herself outside Chummie's window and make all manner of suggestive

suggestions up at it.

To get back to my memoriam. Chummie was eighteen. Still is. He thought journals were a good idea, kept one himself and encouraged me to write in mine. His entries were coded, however. He wrote some little poems and kept track of the days . . . day no. 57, day no. 58 . . . or DNM-7, DNM-8, which signified the seventh and eighth consecutive days in which he did not masturbate (ah, lentes deprivation).

Chummie and I were put on Group 2½ at the same time. This was a special grouping that allowed activity at the ward supervisor's discretion. A ratio established itself. Two hours of sucking ass—polishing brass switch plates, cleaning windows, scrubbing walls—to one hour out. We bought it. We were glad to. Outside the sun was shining, waves were crashing on the rocks.

Chummie and I were the key men on the Rockwood ball team, at least until Chummie decided he wanted to spend the ball game cuddling with Nursie up the hill. I was pissed off—we needed a long ball hitter—but couldn't really blame him.

Some over-extended staff person decided to go modern and try a little group therapy and Chummie and I were invited because we were "active." We were supposed to get up the loafers. We didn't play. We admitted we played baseball, we worked on the outside gang, we went to the art room. Why did we do it? You had to do something to keep from going crazy. The psychologist's face falling rapidly makes up for two or three pounds of horseshit. But we continued with it anyway. It got us off the ward for the morning.

Open House: come and see the musical rides. Chummie entered into the spirit. He had me sit in a chair with one leg folded up under me and a boot strapped onto my knee. Then, just as a string of eager sightseers trumps through, he lets out a bloodcurdling laugh and kicks me right in the congenital deformity. Good stuff. The string of eager sightseers unravels. Chummie and I are "spoken to" later.

So now I'm on my own again. I couldn't in any good

conscience wish that he had stayed longer. This is no place for a man of eighteen. No place for anyone of any age, for that matter. Good luck, Chummie, wherever you get to.

June 15, 1966: I've got a handful of saved-up nickels and dimes in my pocket and I'm on my way to the new hospital to make a phone call. There's a reasonably private phone there. I want this call to be reasonably private.

I don't need to look up the number.

I have rehearsed my speech. I wish I had the other half of the script.

There is, I've heard, a tide in the affairs of men.

The six-month exile is over. The silence is going to end today. In about ten minutes. I'm going to call her and say that I want to begin again.

Oh.

July 10, 1966: "I don't want to try again," she said.

"I don't want to try again," she said again, perhaps because I didn't respond. That is, I don't know what I responded or if I did. I don't remember anything of our conversation after that calm "I don't want to try again." I do remember a feeling, a feeling like falling out of an airplane; cold, cold and bottomless.

The clock said 7:03.

I walked back to the point and stood there, looking across the lake. There was a strong wind blowing. I tried to grin in the wind.

Inside my head—nothing, nothing at all.

The emptiness is still with me but it's got a lot of second-guessing for company.

How could she have been so calm? I was almost falling down. I might have been asking her if she wanted to take another shot at throwing the ball into the milk can at the Ex. Funny, I'm supposed to be the cool customer.

I've been upside-down and inside-out and backwards. I've accused her: "Carol, you are a cowardly, cop-out bitch." Again. "Carol, you are a cowardly, cop-out bitch." More conviction. I've accused Them, oh yes, They were

the ones, They confused her with their double-think, of course, They promoted the six-month separation. They intercepted and destroyed all her letters, her dutiful, loving, daily letters. They smoked up all her gift cigarettes; it's a plot, They're trying to break me, well, by God, I'll show you who you're messing with, I'll smash clean through the wall and go to her and straighten this out. Mostly, I've accused myself.

The shock is wearing off. I must have known. I must have but somehow I didn't. I couldn't. I had to have something to hang onto during the winter, that black winter, something clean and shining and warm. Crossing the days off must have seemed like progress.

The light at the end of the tunnel is out.

Hey, Carol, do you have any idea what it's like in here? Do you know how much I've been counting on you to rescue me from this? You've let hope out of the box. I've nothing left, do you hear me, *nothing left!*

One more thing. As long as I could dream of going home, I didn't have to get out of here. Why else would I have come back after I ran away? Now that I have nowhere to go, I can leave. *But I'm already nowhere.* Hell of a place to build a new life. It's going to be a good trick.

I don't feel tricky.

The staff is embarrassed. I wonder why?

Shit, if I stay here long enough, maybe I'll see some humanity yet.

Don't Spyhole Me

David Reville

At the age of 23, David Reville was involuntarily committed to Kingston Psychiatric Hospital in Ontario, where he spent one-and-a-half years of his life – from 1965 to 1967 – three months on the geriatric ward, and one year on the chronic ward.

Today, Reville is 46 and lives in Toronto with his wife and two children. From 1976 to 1984, he was a Toronto alderman for Ward 7, and since 1985 he has served as a Member of the Ontario Provincial Parliament, representing Riverdale riding. Reville is a respected member of the Ontario New Democratic Party and is his party's health critic. He is also an outspoken advocate of radical reforms in the psychiatric system, including The Mental Health Act, is strongly opposed to electroshock, and is a member of On Our Own, a self-help group of psychiatric inmates and former inmates in Toronto.

This piece consists of excerpts from Reville's journal which he wrote while incarcerated in Kingston. Names have been changed to protect the identities of those mentioned.

In the beginning...

December 25, 1965: Christ the Saviour is born. Hallelujah. This is not your average mockery. The Kiwanis Club is here en masse dispensing cigarette lighters and hard candies. Gordie has almost given up trying to eat his lighter. We even got a Santa. The guy is half-cut but I guess that helps with the ho-ho-ho. Isn't everyone being jolly! There's even something for me under the tree. A book from Robert. My parents have overlooked Christmas this year. Oh well, maybe they don't feel like celebrating. Neither do I.

January 1, 1966: 12:01- Playing gin rummy with tow of the boys. Jack has a bottle. Nursie called John a queer when he wouldn't give her a New Year's kiss. Nursie didn't ask me. Just as well.

January 10, 1966: The medical heads have bobbed and nodded. The shrink has pursed his lips. The psychologist has drummed his fingers. The sociologist has clicked her tongue. The expert opinion drops out like a great fort. My marriage has something to do with my problems. Bravo, you silly bastards! For this you need 400 years of university? Carol has been asked to cool it for six months — no letters, no visits, no phone calls, no cigarettes, magazines, chewing gum, zip.

What am I supposed to think about that?

They're going to keep me for six months.

They better not count on it.

January 18, 1966: I've been transferred off the admitting ward. What's the strategy, fellas? How's a stay on the alcoholic ward supposed to work? There are no nurses on this ward. And I'm already weary of the bottle-by-bottle histories. It's time to light out for the territory.

January 22, 1966: What kind of a crummy joint is this? Can't anybody do anything right? There I was, an obviously dangerous lunatic, fixing to escape, and no one does anything. I didn't have to gnaw my way through three feet of concrete, fight off seven burly guards with staves, crawl through a fetid sewer. I just walked out the door when we went down to the cafeteria for supper....

I turned myself in. They acted nonchalant about it, of course, like it was no big thing, and one cop tried to pretend he'd never heard of me. It's hard to get credit. But I did get a ride back with the provincial bailiff under the heavy guard of a matron. They left the manacles off because I was playing it smart and going quietly.

So here I sit, outside the doctor's office, waiting. I was told to be here at 9.00 and it's now 11:45. This must be a lesson of some kind.

January 23, 1966: I sat until 4:00 when Dr. Powell came out, said good-night and kept on going. Shit, I wish I hadn't looked so surprised. I'll have to get used to the games they play around here.

Later... oh yeah, here it comes. My clothes just left the ward. I'll probably find out where they went because it seems reasonable to think that I'll be joining them. Or does it? Maybe Powell's wife is head of the Rummage Committee.

Punishment isn't called punishment, of course, but it operates just like you'd expect, the restriction of liberty in some kind of relation to the severity of the offence. It almost always starts with a demotion in Grouping. Now, Grouping is the status structure of the patients. Group 1 means you remain on the ward, probably in pyjamas. Group 2 entitles you to get dressed (yip- pee) and move around the hospital accompanied by an attendant. You might even get to work on a work gang or go to the occupational therapy workshop. On Group 3 you can walk around the building unaccompanied, and Group 4 opens the grounds to you. At opposite ends of the scale are "Special Observation" — you are watched more or less carefully after a suicide attempt — and "Town Parole," an instructive term meaning that you may go into the city. Anyway, for inappropriate behaviour you lose a group or two, returning to pyjamas for particularly heinous crimes. If you are really beyond the pale, you are put beyond the pale into the Old Hospital, Rockwood, Home of the Chronic and Defective. And if, somehow, there are no rummage sales tomorrow, that must be where I'm going.

I have made a decision to be Quiet and Cooperative. Not that I'm looking forward to Rockwood. Actually, I'm scared to death. It's just that I've seen the early results of non-cooperation and I don't think that my case history would be greatly improved by the inclusion of a brief medical report reciting the contusions, abrasions, fractures and concussions sustained resisting transfer.

So I think I'll just plaster a smile on my face and sit here clutching my exercise book and wait.

Sid approaches me; half-apologetic, he says that we're taking a walk. I receive a faint message that Sid isn't happy either, probably because I'm bigger than he is. Then I realize that it's not very flattering — where are the heavies? But I get off that track quickly because I know the heavies will appear magically at the slightest possibility that they're needed. So Sid and I walk to the elevator, ride down one floor and walk out the way I came in, out the door, down the road about a quarter of a

mile to Rockwood, the charming grey limestone edifice. We climb the four flights of stairs to Ward Eight. A face appears at the little window in the door.

I walk past a long row of beds and into a large square room. The place smells strongly of urine. Sid and my file, considerably fatter now, go into a little office and I wait indecisively at the door. I look around.

In the room are about 50 men, most of whom are busy with various occupations — dozing, mumbling, sucking their toothless mouths in and out, and staring in a variety of attitudes: wistfully, stoically, blankly, demonically. I see a vacant chair and sit in it gingerly and try to see parallels between Ward Eight and the old folks' home Grandpa spent his last years in. This place is an example of the; newness of psychiatry. Or maybe it's a tasteless joke from some arrogant Olympian or other.

A wheelchair hurtles by, a Down's syndrome patient at the helm, chanting, "dirty piss, dirty bitch" as his contribution to the noise level. He rolls huge, liquid eyes and looks over at me, smiling long strings of saliva. I smile back tentatively and he lolls a huge, shiny, bulbous head with its fantastic railway map of scars. Over there, an ancient relic, dapper in collar and tie. rubs his bald dome, meticulously accounting for each rub — "five, six. seven, ai-um."

It's a gruesome, pathetic catalogue. Mind-boggling. It's a macabre parade, the ravages of syphilis, of time, of inhumanity, of plain stupidity. There is a neat little man in another corner, praying. To what God? Lights begin to flash behind my eyes. Too much input: over- load, overload. I'm shorting out.

A wall-eyed man beckons to me. "C'mere." he rasps, and I realize with one of those terrible jolts of comprehension that this is the ward supervisor. I wonder briefly if he's been given the job after 40 years' faithful service as a patient. That's the last wondering I do that day. I turn off completely, unable to absorb further jolts. It's some time before I return to conjecture — it's not happening, this is a hallucination (maybe I am crazy). I'm tripping out on something; it's a Rod Serling/Vincent Price low-budget 3-D reject. But now there is a heavy steel bolt through my temple expanding and contracting, driving sharp spikes deep into my head and I'm grateful that I can get lost in the pain until I eventually lose consciousness.

When I peer out through trembling eyelids I can make out three figures around the end of my bed. A deep but female voice says, "You'd better watch this one — suicidal." Then they move away and I hear a raucous laugh and a sharp slapping sound. I foil asleep again. Jan. 26: It is incredible how adaptable humans are. In two days I have managed somehow to accommodate myself to this bizarre situation. I've slept, eaten, breathed, shat, and, amazingly, found myself a private enough place to masturbate. What more could I ask for?

Most of my fellow lodgers seem harmless enough, once that leap into the beyond has been made and a place has been found for them.

Rockwood geriatrics

January 24, 1966: I wake up early. I'm at the end of a long row of beds and as I look down the row I see only one other inmate awake. He's going through some kind of elaborate dressing ritual, folding and refolding his shirt, putting a sock on one foot,

taking it off and putting it on the other foot. Left and right socks? He sees me watching and picks up an ashtray and wings it at me, Frisbee-style. It hits the wall just to the left of my head and ricochets to the floor where it spins noisily. I leap out of bed and assume what must be my version of a fighting pose, But my assailant seems to have forgotten me already and is busy putting his left book on his right foot. He still has no pants on. What the fuck is Powell trying to do to me?

January 26, 1966: It is incredible how adaptable human are. In two days I have managed somehow to accommodate myself to this bizarre situation. I've slept, eaten, breathed, shat, and, amazingly, found myself a private enough place to masturbate. What more could I ask for?

Most of my fellow lodgers seem harmless enough once that leap into the beyond has been made and a place has been found for them. Henry, the Wheelchair Driver, is erratic but you can plot his trajectory fairly well. And Austin, the Ritual Dresser, reacts violently only to stares, so I shall note where he is peripherally in the future. And I think I've survived the only physical encounter I'm likely to have. Yesterday I was approached by a hulking man of 30-odd, no neck, beady eyes, who told me I looked pretty sure of myself—he must be nuts—and that I should know that he was in charge of things around here. I replied that I thought it was reassuring that someone was in charge and the big man must have through me sarcastic because he lunged at me liked a bear. I was startled and ducked down, my shoulders caught him where he hinged, and he sailed over my head and landed with a terrible thud on his back. I stepped back, prepared to be murdered, but the big man slowly got to his feet, dusted himself off and stuck out a big paw, saying, "My name's Doug. Pleasedtameetcha." Very curious.

This place is heavily weighted to geriatrics. I don't suppose Henry is very old, being a Down's syndrome sufferer, and Bill, the other Dawn's patient — he travels on foot, how- ever — and another Billy are may- be 35 and Andre couldn't be more than 18. These ones. Doug the Bear and I are the only ones under what? 70? 80? 115?

What have they got me here for? Am I being deliberately disassociated? Why not the violent ward if they are punishing me? True. I've got to stay put here, the doors are locked. I'm four stories up (and afraid of heights anyway), but how is this sort of place supposed to "cure" me? Is it possible that this is a joke? I don't get it, if it is. Or am I to carefully cultivate a virulent case of the paranoids?

January 28, 1966: I plucked up the courage to ask the ward supervisor — his name is Peck — when I could see the doctor.

"What do you want to see him for? He's very busy, you know. Can't be everywhere at once, you know."

I said that I knew.

"Well, then." he said, "don't be botherin' me about it. I've got enough to do myself."

"But.. ." I said.

He turned to me, belligerently. "Listen. I've been readin' your file. Can't keep your fingers off 'em, eh?"

I looked puzzled.

"Aw, don't go playin' the little in-nocent. Stealin'. That's what you're here for. Well, we'll soon learn you that don't pay. Nossir. No stealin' around here. Or you'll be off to Penetang sure as God made them green apples."

I could see that Mr. Bill Peck and I were going to have a really therapeutic relationship.

Ten minutes later he was back. "Dr. Powell comes on the ward at 10:00. I've put you down to see him."

It looks more like a plot every minute.

Dr. Powell was brilliantly un-reachable. I asked to be transferred to another ward, any other ward. "Why?" he asked innocently. I explained patiently that I didn't think I could be helped here. "If you want help, you'll get it." And with that reassurance he picked up his telephone and swivelled around in the chair so that his back was to me. And to underscore the absurdity of everything he made a date for a game of golf with Dr. Thingamajig.

When I recovered from my surprise, I became very, very depressed at my lot. And Petula Clark filtering out of the box over the door with "my love is deeper than the deep blue ocean" didn't help much either.

January 30, 1966: The doctor comes on the ward once a week for an hour. That works out to 1.2 minutes apiece. I wonder where the Department of Health enshrines that statistic.

February 2, 1966: "You've heard of the Duchess of Sotheby of course, A most attractive woman, immensely rich. One night—I think it was the tenth of November, no, it was the eleventh—I saw her rise from the sink, yes, she rose right out of the sink in Pavilion 3 of the Mowat (some frame buildings to the north of the hospital housing old and docile patients). She sat gracefully on the floor and waved her hand. Immediately fourteen lords appeared one by one and sat down on the floor in a circle around the Duchess. Her Ladyship took off her ruby and emerald necklace and laid it carefully in a velvet-lined box. Then she leaned over and—I couldn't believe my eyes—she began to suck off the first lord, She looked up at me and smiled a charming smile as the jism ran down her chin. She wiped her chin with a lack handkerchief and proceeded to the next lord and the next until all fourteen had been sucked off. It couldn't have taken more than fifteen minutes. The lords rose and disappeared out the window. The Duchess paused on the windowsill and beckoned to me. I jumped out after her. Broke both my legs."

When the old fellow with the sunken red-rimmed eyes told the story, he was looking straight ahead, back to the tenth or eleventh of November, I guess. He certainly didn't expect me to disbelieve the story. I hoped he might have another one, but he had fallen asleep.

February 5, 1966: I have never felt so isolated in my life.

February 7, 1966: I need something to help me handle this place. Powell is turning a deaf ear to my requests for a transfer. He's got some schedule for me that I can't figure out. Peck is hopeless, he's just waiting out his time now and I doubt if he ever knew anything about the human mind. There's no one to talk to — I can't count

the absurd dialogues I have with the old boys — nothing to read, we don't even get the customary (and ridiculous) little wallets to knit. So... I am going to write. I don't care what I write about. I don't care whether it's any good or not. I'm just going to let it come out. I'm going to schedule it, provide my own structure. Fuck them. They're trying to break me. I'm going to do what I can to keep together.

February 10, 1966: It's going well. I hunch over a table in the corner and scribble away furiously. I've got a huge callus on my middle finger and I'm building a conviction in Peck's mind that I really am nuts. The poor bastard can barely read, let alone write.

February 13, 1966: I am mad and need accept no responsibility for the acts the world does in the name of insanity. (Pompous epigrams have a certain charm, though probably mostly for the epigrammist.)

Reluctant to hide my light under a bushel, I tried the above out on Peck. He just stared at me and, for once, both his eyes looked in the same direction.

I have to run the risk of being thought mad in order to keep from going mad. This place is intolerable. Dominic sits in his chair and goes "five, six, seven, ai-um!" for hours and the Sultan stomps and stomps and stomps and glares and Henry drives that fucking wheel- chair all over the place and Billy can be found eating turds in the shithouse almost anytime. Chippie sits and stares and blinks regularly at eight-minute intervals, I swear. The noise level is so high you can believe bedlam with your guts. So I grit my teeth and hunch hunchier over the table and the pencil races along almost as fast as my stomach contracts and my eyes buzz.

February 14, 1966: Joe had a visitor today — good for Joe, and he didn't notice — and the visitor left... a Globe and Mail magazine. And in the Globe and Mail magazine was an article about the New Left. And instantly I am inspired to... wait. I'm getting excited. The article said that the New Left was a "revolt without dogma." Well, obviously, who is in a better position to write the dogma?

February 18, 1966: I know what I'm doing. I'm redirecting. I'm venting all this spleen harmlessly. Why can't I just kick Powell in the balls? Oh no, I'm railing against poverty and hunger and privilege. I am making my isolation tragic and noble. I shout about social injustice (on the pages), and I scream against war and hypocrisy, hunger and poverty as though I discovered them.

It's very tempting, the whole situation is very tempting. Here I am, on Ward Eight, surrounded by un-fortunate souls, developing the most important political philosophy since Hegel and Marx sat at their little tables. Imagine Das Kapital squared being ground out on the geriatric wards of an insane asylum. How can I resist?

In a way, it's legitimate enough. We are political prisoners, all of us. We have dared to challenge mythology. Foolish of us, I guess, especially those of us who had a choice. Most of us didn't know we were challenging, most of us couldn't help it. Old Zack over here, he certainly didn't intend to outlive all of his people and he doesn't shit himself on purpose. But there he is: alone, old, vague, and incontinent. You can't have embarrassing people like him around. Lock them up, get them out of the way,

there is room only for some kinds of social failure. And Billy, short-changed on the on marbles, well, better get him out of the way too, our society is too efficient to allow for this kind of incompetence.

February 19, 1966: It works. But it works sporadically. The writing. Sometimes it gets me so high all the horror of this sitting room fades out completely. I feel competent, creative, energetic, invincible. But when it leaves me, oh, when it leaves me, I am at the bottom of the pit.

I'm scared.

And I can't even scream.

February. 20, 1966: Feeling the need to try and make contact. I wrote to my parents. I hadn't heard from them since the suicide attempt. "Keep it light." I told myself and chatted away inconsequentially until the very last line, when the bitterness grabbed me. I wrote. "I am grateful that you provided me with such a fine education. It has helped immensely in my present position. I pull the dung balls off the asses of aging syphilitics. The letter came back stamped "RETURN TO PATIENT FOR CORRECTION." I snorted and wrote across the stamp, "How to correct the Truth?" Back it came again, a second "RETURN TO PATIENT FOR CORRECTION" stamp on it. But I was tired of the dialogue.

February 21, 1966: Shower day here in Happy Acres is the result of a collaboration between Goebbels, J. and Marx. G. It goes like this: We are all stripped and lined up and marched by twos into the showers. The block capos — Doug and, lately, me — shove the old boys into a stall, pour water all over them and pick off the easiest dung balls. Then the line goes out again and hospital gowns arc dropped over most heads and clothes shoved at others. It's instructive if you're interested in the similarities of tragedy and comedy. Albert shuffles and chirps and walks carefully into the wall. Chippie stands unblinking in the shower like a stuffed praying mantis, the Sultan continues to stomp, Dominic just adds a little water to his five-six-seven litany, and Bernie, bobbing and weaving, shouts defiance despite his damp impotence. A number of the old boys forget why they're in line and wander off to take up their hobbies of eating cigarette butts and praying, looking even a little more pathetic in their pale white skins. But then Albert can't make the turn into the shower so the young attendant gives him a short-arm in the ribs and I say what do you want to do that for it's not his fault he's got no motor control and the young attendant tells me to fuck off and mind my own business. I briefly weigh the consequences of returning the short-arm and decide against it and instead walk down to Peck's office and tell him about it and he reminds me that I'm crazy and anyway he's busy.

After I'm dressed, I sit in my corner, brooding and cursing and feeling guilty about my impotence. I wonder about the effects of living in a place where human warmth is so absent that you can feel it like a draft. And I realize how isolated I am and become involved in my own pain. It's easier than being involved with Albert's.

What a dehumanizing process. Do the Boys in the Office appreciate what they're doing? They must know that it is too dangerous for me to identify with the

poor old buggers on the ward. I've got to protect myself from thinking—even for a moment—that Albert and I are alike. It's not a subtle trick. Power-people have always used depersonalization to get the powerless to do what they want; kill the Commies or stomp the niggers. So it's not surprising to find myself thinking of Albert as a GPI (general paresis of the insane), pulling the shade down over Albert's humanity, blacking out the fact that Albert and I are being oppressed together. These crummy little insights are painful. I know that it's going to be my survival that I fight for, not Albert's. And, right now, I think I'm losing.

February 23, 1966: On five successive Mondays I asked the doctor to transfer me to another ward. "I can't take it any longer," I told him. He looked at me with the smallest of smiles on his face. "You're breaking my heart." "I felt it so quickly that I couldn't suppress it — a huge tearing sob. "You're breaking mine!" I shrieked, and ran out of the office and threw myself at a steel-meshed window.

Now Peck has come to me. "I guess I learned ya," he says, "You're being transferred."

It's over.

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March 9, 1966: It shouldn't be possible to be an oddball here but I am. This hospital is filled with poor people. The middle-class contingent could meet comfortably in a phone booth. So I must be here accidentally. (Hey fellas this is all a big misunderstanding. If you'll just unlock the door...) All my power systems are temporarily out of order or I'd never be here. I'm getting a rare opportunity; I'm seeing how my people deal with slow learners. If you fail to learn how to behave in the correct unobtrusive way and you have already committed the horrible crime of being poor, you will surely be thrown in jail — this one or the one next door (Kingston Penitentiary). If you are given the choice — you won't be — take the one next door. You might learn something useful, welding or safe-cracking, and you'll have a better idea of when you're getting out. And people will hold their mouths a little differently when you tell them your previous address. After all, you will have been considered worthy of some kind of legal process, unlike us who do our indefinite time without having had our day in court.

So, a word of warning (you can trust me). Take care about the family you get born into. Then, if you safely make it into the middle class, don't piss all your relatives off. Best of all, get yourself a private psychiatrist and pay him all your money. When the white coats come to get you, he'll intercede on your behalf. Because he'll suspect that you held some of that loot back.

March 15, 1966: I have always been able to adapt well. Maybe too well. I've gotten used to the numerous small deprivations of this place. I've gotten used to having no money and no place to spend any. I wear joint clothes; mine have worn out, fallen apart after a visit to the hospital laundry, or have disappeared. But I can't get used to the lack of love and warmth and tenderness. That's the big turn-off and

that must be the biggest single obstacle to recovery for everybody here. Nobody gives a fuck.

I read Camus and understand his isolation. No one can share my feelings. I can't share theirs. But if only I had someone to talk to, someone to hold, someone to hold me! The others here aren't much help. Some don't talk at all, some shouldn't, some won't. Some have forgotten to be sad. The common ground is the environment. We share the same space, eat the same dull food, breathe the same stale air. That's it. I say to Big Bob, "Hey, man, why do you put up with this shit?" He looks puzzled and then mumbles, "Ain't nothing I kin do about it, is there?", and the horrible part is, maybe he's right. I say to Chuck, "You got town parole, why don't you split?", and he says, "Sure, sure, what do I do when I run out of pills?", and I see how cleverly they've got it worked out; if the system doesn't keep you, then the dope will. And the hell of it is, I don't think there's anything very much wrong with Chuck. They just never let him try to handle his problems.

I wasn't ready for this. Nobody should be. How do you fit this into any notion of the world? How do I match up these pictures? My son lying cooing in his crib with a Down's patient blowing someone in a cupboard? My wife whispering "I love you" with the Black Prince shouting, "You little cocksuckers, I'll kick your fuckin' asses for you!"? Am I so naive? Or is this the outrage that I think it is? If a man becomes an animal, what does that say for his keeper?