

Kendalhang

by H. W. Moss

Dennis found the innards in the Panhandle near Masonic and immediately named it a Seedasoom. Most likely dropped off from a car heading in on Fell or out on Oak by someone who did not want to pay dump fees. Dennis got James to help lift and carry, not drag it, through the eastern tip of the park, across Lincoln and up Sixth Avenue. At the base of their building they paused on the sidewalk in front of the steps to recoup their energy, took a few deep breaths and ascended to the landing. The front door opened wide, they hefted the thing up the stairs bumping into the frangible embossed wall covering in several places puncturing it. The wainscoting in the hallway fared no better.

At last they trundled it into the living room and there, amid the piles of pillows, in front of the shallow coal fireplace with its high mirrored mantle, they set it down and fell back on the shabby sofa Michelle had found in the Panhandle two weeks prior.

Harold heard the bumping noises and came to investigate. He and James watched as Dennis bent and plucked one of the strings just as Sean entered the room.

“What the hell is that doing here?” Sean asked indignantly. He preferred items with which he was familiar. He was not acquainted with a naked upright piano harp lying on his living room floor.

“Heavy,” was all Jimmy said.

“What’d ya expect? Probably cast iron under that yellowgold paint.” Dennis had a working man’s knowledge of metal.

Michelle entered from the room she shared with Sean. The original Victorian family who inhabited the property at the end of the Nineteenth Century used Sean and

Michelle's room for dining. Now it was just one of five bedrooms in a large flat that had been turned into a hippie commune.

"You can't leave that lying there," she stated with an assertiveness that derived from her being the only female in the bunch. "How do you expect anyone to move it when we have to straighten up in here?"

Dennis knelt beside the thing and stroked it and hugged it and snapped its strings and sang to it and hammered it and hummed to its incongruous noises as if it were a finely tuned instrument. Even James found the result hard to sit through. Sean grabbed Michelle and pulled her back into their room; the arabesque design on the white pocket panels met in the middle as the sliding doors were shut tightly together.

In a few moments, despite Dennis' continued strumming on the Seedasoom, the sounds of Michelle in a passionate state of ecstasy floated into the living room.

Steve entered from the hallway and apprised the situation in silence. When Dennis took a break and Michelle gave a final gasp of delight, Steve observed: "Kind of makes you want to eat a taco, doesn't it?"

Kendalhang came into existence through a ruse. The property was owned by an Old Russian Lady, Mrs. Panayatov, who occupied the other flat in the building. She was wary of unemployed young people and refused to rent to Dennis when he knocked on her door one afternoon, newspaper in hand, classified ad circled. He told her he was looking for work to satisfy his draft board classification as a conscientious objector. She shooed him away in pidgin English.

Michelle and Sean were up next. They wore their best set of clothes in order to interview as prospective tenants for the woman whom Dennis described as looking "like

a peasant potato farmer in a babushka.” She remained suspicious, but was willing to let them the flat when Sean held out four one hundred dollar bills as the first two month’s rent. He was extremely personable, his curly blond hair lending his cherubic face an innocence that was too much for the old woman to deny.

Of course, the money swayed her. It confirmed Sean’s claim to be a recent arrival from Southern California who had a job in the banking industry. Plus, she was only asking \$160 a month.

What she did not know was six people had chipped in to fund the proposal and it took almost everything they had in ready money.

When they learned Mrs. Panayatov took the cash, everyone breathed a tremendous sigh of relief. They had been crashing on the floor, on the couch, in makeshift beds at Laurie’s house on Ninth Avenue for a week. Sean and Michelle had a room of their own because Laurie moved into her son’s for the time being.

One night during this hiatus between permanent shelters, Harold lay in his bedroll uncomfortable on the uncarpeted dining room floor as James, who had couch privileges that night, let a roaring thunder of a snore fly. The sound was a deeply, deeply disturbing rumble so loud and rough it shook the windows in their frames. This is what must have awakened Harold although he had no dream memory for the why of it, only that he was suddenly torn from Morpheus’ arms and thrust into the real world. It took a few seconds to learn the source. Apparently, he had come to in between.

And then the explosive roar renewed in exhale. There was a pause, thundering inhale. Pause. And so it went, this double dynamic with varying degrees of light and soft expelled on the exhale and noisily sucked back in past flapping tonsils on the inhale. The

sound of honking geese, screeching automobile tires and crashing surf were woven into the fabric of it. Harold lay with hands behind his head, pillow bent and pressed into each ear which did absolutely no good. He could not get back to sleep and tried to dream that he was actually dreaming, yet he was completely awake.

How in the world can the other guys in the room sleep through that, he wondered. What were they wearing, earplugs?

The snores were unpleasantly sonorous. They were resoundingly loud and then, between gasps, in the silence between Harold's thoughts and the inevitability of the next roar, Steve said in the darkness, "When that train comes by here again, I'm jumping on the caboose." This caused Dennis, who had obviously been lying awake along with Harold and Steve, to laugh in fortissimo which made Harold crack up laughing as loudly and Steve could not help but join in with his own guffaws. The cacophony had the surprise result that James was startled awake saying, "What's happening? What? Hunh? What's so funny?"

Harold was able to get to sleep before James' foghorn began operating again. Now, with the renting of the flat, everyone had his own room in the commune they called Kendalhang. Later on, none could recall who named it that, but James was given credit for dubbing them all members in the Tribe of Ragnar.

Rooms were divvied up by Sean who became *de facto* group leader. Harold and Steve got the front pair, side by side overlooking the street below with Steve in what had once been the parlor. Dennis and James each got what were the original actual bedrooms from the time the building was constructed eighty years prior. And Sean and Michelle took the dining room with its pocket doors opening onto the living room because it was

considerably larger than any of the other rooms and had wonderful light from a set of double hung windows along the south wall. Sean explained the size discrepancy by pointing out there were two of them.

“So how come you only pay one fifth of the rent?” Dennis asked at the first group meeting. Sean gave no reply, merely glared at Dennis. Kendalhang gradually became home even as war flared in Southeast Asia.

As for their draft stats: Dennis was a CO, Harold and Jimmy were students with deferrals, Sean was a drug dealer who had never registered and Steve was 4-F. He received disability from Social Security due to a childhood bout with polio. He was also the only one with any steady income. Michelle planned to waitress when she went back to work.

Harold decided he would also work restaurants, specifically Mexican food. Before his first semester at City College, he got a job the previous summer as a dish washer under the tutelage of Louie Avery, owner of Seal Beach Spanish Food. Louie gave Harold a job only if he promised to go to college, which was his plan anyway. But Louie made him promise. On the wall above the dish cleaning area was a sign: “There are fast cooks, there are slow cooks. And there are half fast cooks.” Harold did not get the pun and Louie had to explain it to him. Harold worked there all summer and learned how to make *mole* sauce for a hundred people, but he did not really have the skills required to serve a plate of enchiladas with a side of *refritos*.

His lack of training did not discourage him. As soon as the new phone was hooked up, he began his search for employment in the Yellow Pages. He called local

establishments, nothing outside the San Francisco area code, and by mid-afternoon had two offers: one as prep cook, the other for dishwasher. He could start next week.

“Two? You got two jobs in one day?” James was astounded. “How the hell’d you do that?”

Harold related his technique. James asked how he might apply the same search to his own field of expertise.

“Why? What are you trained in?”

“Oriental Philosophy.”

They all smoked dope, but Dennis was paranoid. He was certain Mrs. Panayatov could smell the smoke and would call the police. Possession of marijuana was a federal offense. Therefore, whenever they wanted to get high, Dennis led them to the attic, up the thin stairs with tiny treads nailed to the inside of the back porch. A single light bulb dangled from a lamp cord wire extension that was plugged into a baseboard socket in their flat below.

Several old mattresses lay across the joists, but everyone had to be careful not to stand up and punch a hole through the ceiling.

Smoking dope made Harold giddy, goofy, silly. He said things that made no sense to anyone but him and he laughed a lot. He saw things that were funny to none but he alone. He took a hit and “The king of fishes and the Prince of Whales” popped into his head. He was an English lit major and, just as the Eskimo had hundreds of words for “snow,” when Harold smoked dope he found hundreds of ways to interpret the word “whoa.” Whoa’s declension related directly to the subject tangled up with it. Was it a tale of “whoa” or a “whoabegon tale” he asked himself. He found as many ways to say and

meanings for “wow.” On the odd moment of high, he would break into a recitation of Coleridge’s opening lines from “Kubla Khan” and asked himself if “boviate” was a real word. He imagined and then convinced himself that Mrs. Panayatov’s father was named Alexander Warren Peace.

Climbing back down the ladder after having smoked a doobie with the others required Harold employ every ounce of brain power in order to focus foot and hand holds in co-ordination. The previous semester he took a swimming class for his PE requirement. It was fun to smoke a joint at Jim’s garage then cross the street and jump in the pool on a hot afternoon. Trouble was, he could not make his breathing and stroke coincide with his kick and when his head was underwater the bubbles sounded like rainbows in his head. A practiced swimmer, he nearly flunked the course.

Above the kitchen sink in their new apartment, James tacked a hand written notice: Washe Thine Owne Dyshe.

“Why does every word end in e?” Michelle asked innocently, but with a certain amount of perspicacity.

Dennis said cynically, “Because if they didn’t, your name would be Michael.”

James never formally studied calligraphy, but made a pretty good stab at shaping the letters out of Elven Runes. He was an avid reader of Tolkien as were Dennis and Steve. Jim always used a felt tip and his penmanship was defined by the fact he was left handed. He held the pen in the crevice between index and middle finger with thumb pressed firmly against the base. No elementary school teacher had any idea how to train his young brain other than to try and get him to shift right. This was probably the origin of his rebellious nature. It carried over well into adulthood.

“How come the letters are so square-ish?” Michelle had a good heart, Harold thought, but not a lot of gray matter assigned to regular hours. “And the ends are curly.”

“Poor thing,” Steve muttered, turned on his crutch and walked away.

James and Harold had known each other for roughly a year. Absolute opposites in many ways, their shared love of literature created a common bond. Harold and James were simpatico when it came to Science Fiction, although James was a much more voracious and omnivorous reader. He was also a fantasy fan, where Harold was doggedly speculative with an emphasis on the future. Independently, they both picked up Nadsat from Burgess.

They met at City College three months after Harold moved to Long Beach, just after his summer stint as dish washer in Seal Beach ended. James lived directly across the street from the campus. They were standing in line to register for a literature course taught by Doc Booth when James read the title of the book Harold held and said, “Goolie chits. Movie’s supposed to be pretty good too. Stars Jimmy Stewart. Came out this year.”

They ran into one another a second time a few weeks later at Welcome’s party. Harold was pledging a fraternity and somehow both the frats and the Garage People had been invited to the same place at the same time. This was an almost cosmic event, Harold thought, since never the twain should meet.

He entered a darkened bedroom where James entertained an audience of beer and wine consuming college students passing a bong. Harold walked in just as James concluded his version of a bawdy 15th Century English drinking song. With a full open throat, James sang, “All I want’s a lusty wench to lie across a wooden bench and sing a-way a-way-o.” James liked to sing. His was a barrel bass with operatic overtones.

Welcome's mother was away for the weekend and it was a pleasant social gathering that threatened to become a drunken brawl, primarily because the mix was ice and fire with alcohol. In the living room, Welcome was in the midst of an altercation with Radus, a self-styled frat rat. Radus was plastered, but would not leave when asked. Welcome tried reasoning with him, then said, "You're drunk. Get out."

Invoking intoxicated logic, Radus enunciated with precision, "Yes, I have been drinking. I know: I am drunk. I have had too much to drink. But I also know I am quite sober."

"So who are you anyway? How'd you get invited?" Welcome was genuinely interested. He had no idea how this person found his way to the party and if he could locate the source perhaps he could cut it off.

"I'm Richard's cousin."

That was probably true: Richard and his sister had been invited although Kay had not shown up. At least now Welcome had someone to pin the responsibility for Radus on. "Yah? And where's Richard?"

Radus said with a hiccough, "He went huh. Hick. He went huh. Hick. Huh. Home."

At that instant Radus projectile vomited a red spew of beer and wine onto the living room carpet. Welcome felt he had no choice, so he picked up the phone and called the police on his own party.

Harold looked out the front window down the street where he noticed a squad car pulling up. "Viddy the millicents," he shouted in warning.

James was the only one who understood what Harold meant. He took a final hit on the bong, said through pinched breath, “Hide the vellocets,” and fled. They found each other in the back yard racing toward an alley.

“Hey, droog,” Harold shouted. “That was real horrorshow. We got away.”

They had been buddies ever since. James invited Harold over to his house. The Southern California faux Spanish building sat on a corner lot exactly opposite the community college. Jim’s bedroom was once a two car garage. Now it was outfitted with a king sized bed, bookshelves, a portable clothes closet and a black and white television. When he went to bed at night, Jim drew down the double wide door. In the morning as part of his ablutions, he raised it up and open again. There was an entry to the home from a side door that went directly into the kitchen. Jim did not miss many meals and had easy access for midnight munchies.

During the course of the school year, Harold spent a lot of time at The Garage as did Kromitus, Dennis, Welcome, Steve and a host of others. All but Harold had grown up together, gone through elementary and high schools and were now college age. Students who did not know them soon gave them the moniker the “Garage People.”

Harold came from 90 miles inland, had his transcripts sent to San Francisco State, but landed in Long Beach. He could breathe and had a high school diploma, thus he was accepted at City College. Since he knew no one, he decided to join a fraternity. He dropped out of the pledge process shortly after Welcome’s party.

The spring semester was fast coming to an end and summer was just weeks away when Dennis said he wanted to move to San Francisco where he had a better chance of getting a job in a hospital or convalescent home. James said he’d like to join the trek

north. Steve was game. Kromitus was a penniless poet tied to his mother; he wasn't going anywhere. So Harold, who had a car, was asked if he wanted to drive. It was three hundred sixty-five miles from Long Beach to San Francisco, which should have taken at least six hours at 60 mph. The four of them stuffed the trunk full of bedrolls, duffle bags and back packs and made it in five. Sean and Michelle left early and were already staying with Laurie.

There were two entrances to the room Sean and Michelle shared. When the pocket doors were closed, the meaning was clear. However, the other entrance was off the hallway of the railroad flat. The term derived from the floor plan, a design common in many Victorian buildings. There was a long hallway that ran from the front to the rear with rooms branching off like whistle stops. In the middle of the hallway on the other side, a separate room the size of a closet held a toilet and next to that, a room with a white porcelain claw-foot tub and a pedestal sink.

The stacking of plumbing fixtures in one section of the building was not an accident and did not stop there. The next room over, separated from the bath by a pantry, was the kitchen. None of the building's fixtures including its electrical grid had been updated since the late 1920's when indoor plumbing was connected to the city sewer system and electricity superseded gas lights. The white porcelain sink was shallow and thin. It sat at the end of a two foot wide drain board which ran nearly the length of the kitchen below a double hung window that rattled when two people walked in or someone shut the refrigerator. The fridge itself was only six feet tall, had a round top with a chrome handle. Inside was a tiny ice box with no door that was completely frozen over and filled with food no one could identify.

Now that the ceiling fixtures were wired and electrified, only the range, wall and water heater still used gas. The Wedgewood double oven porcelain stove was mint green with white doors. Across from it, a ten gallon water heater, far too small for the number of people inhabiting the apartment, was installed between the pantry and hallway doors. It was an eyesore and a disaster waiting to happen. Should a piece of paper or cloth get lodged up under the burner and catch fire during the night, the entire building would likely be engulfed in flames in minutes.

Nor could the wall heater adequately fend off winter. It was inset in the hall halfway down between two rooms which meant it did keep the area within a ten foot radius moderately warm while the rest of the flat was stone cold. Fortunately, winter was months away.

Sean placed a brown paper bag in front of the hallway door to his bedroom. On the bag in big black magic marker letters was the admonition: Do Not Enter. Balling Inside.

Harold stood pondering these words when Dennis paused in his peripatetic wanderings between bedroom, bathroom and kitchen, back to bedroom: his own triangle of trade. Harold became aware Dennis read the same words.

“What’s ‘balling’ mean,” Harold asked as Dennis sipped from a cup of black coffee that was the primary cause of Dennis’ peripatetic traipsing up and down the hallway.

“Fucking. It means fucking going on inside.”

“Inside the paper bag they’re fucking?”

Steve limped down the hall with his cane thumping on the thinly carpeted floor. He stopped and read the paper bag. “Something to do with the size of Sean’s dick, I would imagine.” Steve eventually graduated with an emphasis in semiotics.

Dennis harrumphed and returned to his room.

Sean was careful not to deal from the house primarily because Dennis was so paranoid. However, he did bring people over to discuss business and try out new products. One day shortly after they rented the flat, Sean brought a friend over. They entered the living room: “Hey, everybody. Want you to meet Super Spade.”

Sean handed two large brown pills to the new girl staying with Harold. Monica sat on the couch next to Harold who shook his head no when she offered one of the pills to him.

Sean said, “Aw c’mon. Here. A gift. From me to you. Go on. Just a couple Asmador. Great high. You’ll love ’em.”

Harold more strongly shook his head no. He admonished Monica out loud. “You don’t know what that stuff is, do you? Whatever he called it, I never heard of it.”

Monica went into the kitchen and drew a glass of water. She popped both pills in her mouth and swallowed.

Harold went to work. This first job was night shift prep cook two days a week at Tia Marguerita in the Richmond out in the Avenues. He spent the first four hours of his shift slicing onions and chili peppers. His hands were stung by the chilies and his eyes watered from the onion fumes. At one point he made the mistake of going to the bathroom without taking any precautions and his dick was on fire for an hour afterwards.

He was assistant to the chef and was called upon to help make up plates when there was a large party. Typically, the rush was from seven to nine, then things slowed. Sometimes he watched as the head cook prepared an unusual dish.

“This is the tenderloin or rib eye,” Pablo, who was from El Salvador, said holding up a foot long roll of red meat that was tapered at one end. “And this is the filet mignon,” he sliced off the slender tip. From this he cut three silver dollar size pieces each an inch thick. “We are making Mexican steak.” Pablo lay the circles of meat on a wood chopping block and proceeded to beat them with a mallet until the medallions were flattened to pancake thickness. At the same time he threw a skillet on the stove over high heat and ladled at least four ounces of liquid lard from the never empty metal canister he kept warm on the upper corner of his griddle. He heavily salted and twisted a considerable amount of ground black pepper onto each side of the meat and, when the grease was just beginning to smoke, flopped the flat seasoned pieces into the fry pan. He grabbed half a lemon and half a lime and squeezed them both at once, one in each hand, drizzling their juices into the pan which caused green tinged yellow flames to shoot up as the gas fire roared and the liquid sizzled. He grabbed the long fry pan handle and shuffled the meat two or three times before he gave a quick flick of the wrist and the contents flew into the air, flipped over once and landed other side up in the pan. After another few seconds, he slid the meat onto a plate, added a scoop of beans, a scoop of rice and a handful of chopped lettuce, wiped the rim of the plate with a dishcloth hung from his belt and hit the bell as he placed the order on the waiter’s shelf beneath two heat lamps.

What a waste of good steak, Harold thought as he watched the process work its way toward a conclusion. His shift was up at ten and he would not be home until some time after eleven.

He got off the bus at Lincoln and Seventh, walked up the block, climbed the short set of cement steps and inserted his key. The tall Victorian door swung open and there

cowered Monica at the foot of the stairs just inside the entry. Her hands were up around her head, knees bent into a half stance leaning against the wall for support. As he shut the door, Harold said, “Monica. What are you doing down here?” He reached out to touch her shoulder and she leaped away. She shuddered and wobbled against the wall as if the touch of his fingers hurt her and his question frightened. She could not make intelligible words come out of her mouth although she did grunt like an animal.

Harold knew she was on something, but had no idea what. He was unfamiliar with the horse sized pills Sean called Asmador. Could the two brown capsules she swallowed ten hours earlier still be in affect? Or had she taken something else on top of them?

Whatever Monica was on, it produced the worst reaction, the most miserable trip imaginable. Looking into her eyes, Harold saw pain and fear. This was not the sort of drug induced state he wanted and was pretty sure Monica did not either. He tried to get her to walk up the stairs, touched her shoulder as a guide, but she rebelled and slid to the floor. Her butt landed solidly on the first step. She gave out a whining cry of anguish that was other than human, quite cat-like.

Harold gave up trying to get her upstairs. Instead, he went alone into his room, grabbed a blanket and pillow, returned to where she cowered and wrapped her as he said soothing words he hoped would lessen the mental -- and for all he knew, physical -- torture she endured. She stayed downstairs the rest of the night and never slept. At some point she opened the front door and stumbled into the early morning. Harold never saw her again.

Once the dining room was parceled out to Sean and Michelle by closing its pocket doors, everyone had a room of their own. Each was furnished in dumpster chic with remarkably different results.

First, the sleeping facilities: Dennis had a futon on the floor. James piled two old mattresses one upon the other then layered the surface with blankets and giant pillows.

Steve went out and bought a new box spring and mattress, but no bed frame, and Harold managed to scrounge an entire metal bed frame, box spring and an old mattress which he covered with a pad to act as a barrier between him and the fitted bottom sheet. He did not mind sleeping on a used but functional box spring and mattress, however he did insist on a new pad and new sheets. Sean and Michelle slept on a water bed.

The rooms were soon decorated according to each roommate's individual taste and style. Steve's father was a WW II veteran. Fred was commander of C Company, 1st Battalion, 502nd Regiment, 101st Airborne, a paratrooper who jumped into Normandy six hours prior to the beach invasion. Later, he jumped into Holland. Steve was particularly proud of his father's having been with the 101st and had a Zippo lighter with the winged bomb insignia on it as a souvenir. In keeping with this pride, Steve located a beige parachute at the flag store on 10th and Mission, had James stand on a ladder and thumb-tack it to the ceiling surrounding his bed. The effect was somewhere between the silk imagery of Scheherazade's apparel in "Arabian Nights" and a mosquito net.

Harold located a single picture frame and fitted it with a cardboard back. On a piece of white paper in green crayon he convinced James to print in Runes: "I begin with the principle that all men are bores. Surely no one will prove himself so great a bore as to

Soren Kierkegaard.” This was the only piece of wall covering or furniture besides a bed that he installed.

James bought a used record player with a set of tall speakers and filled his room with a form of tie-dyed-batik sheets he dipped himself. He went to the corner grocery, bought food coloring, bees wax and a box of rubber bands. Used white bed sheets were cheap at the Salvation Army store on Haight Street. Then he took over the kitchen for an afternoon with the result a whole array of beautiful drapes which he hung from the plate rail as wall coverings and as curtains in front of his bedroom windows.

In addition to the futon on the floor, Dennis filled his room with giant pillows. He found discarded boxes of carpet samples in a dumpster behind a store on Haight and stapled them to the walls. There were no chairs in the room and orange crates served as knee high tables. The only option if you were going to stay instead of flee was to flop down onto a pillow with the effect that you were inside a giant play pen.

Michelle turned the bedroom she shared with Sean into her own boudoir. She was constantly on the lookout for furnishings at garage sales or left out on the street. She acquired or created lacy bedding including a dust ruffle that hung down to the floor. Sean went along with her choice of colors and in one weekend repainted the room.

Philosophically, Dennis knew everything. “Turn on, tune in, drop out,” was his motto and he was fond of saying it. James was still thinking. Steve knew better than to say one way or the other and Harold was just unsure. Maybe life was a Möbius strip, he thought. No one ever asked Sean his ideas on existence and it was doubtful Michelle knew there were differing thoughts on the subject.

Dennis had a savant's insight into things hip. He introduced everyone to Cost Plus on Fisherman's Wharf. The store was a treasure trove for the stylish hippie. The dark interior was made humid because it shared a complete gardening and house plant section, a greenhouse within a warehouse filled with cane chairs, tables and lounges, binges full of silverware and cutlery, shelves packed with colorful Indonesian hand painted batik fabrics and crate loads of carved wood statues and tiki lamps. Madras bedspreads could be turned into curtains, dresses, shirts, hats. Hookahs, cheap jewelry, woven belts studded with small bells and incense, dishes, cooking pots and pans and rattan furniture filled the building.

James found kitchen spices next to imported coffee. He picked three half pound packages of different curry powders off the shelf and sampled a chocolate covered coffee bean which was not made more palatable by the sweet exterior.

Harold wandered into the gardening section where he recognized dieffenbachia, philodendron and mother-in-laws-tongue. He surreptitiously pinched a piece of greenery from a jade plant and shoved it in his pocket. He didn't consider it stealing to take a cutting which he intended to place in water until it grew roots and then plant in a pot.

Michelle took over the thinking for Sean who dutifully purchased whatever she wanted. They wandered the store, him pushing a shopping cart, and she threw items in which Sean could only wonder at. "We need oven mitts," she said as he rolled his eyes when a pair was deposited in the cart. "How else am I going to bake?"

Steve examined many different woven cane place mats and bamboo serving trays before he selected a set. No one asked why he needed these. It was assumed he wished to eat in his room.

Dennis bought incense and enough Madras material to tack in billowing flow along the plate rail up onto the ceiling. This covered the cracks and gave the impression of being inside a huge pair of culotte pants.

“Super Spade only deals in smoking dope,” Sean told the group one evening. They were meeting because Dennis insisted that communes have meetings where everyone had a voice and everyone’s voice could be heard. This meeting was to discuss rent and the phone bill. Somehow the subject moved to Sean’s favorite topic: drugs. “No powder, pills, speed or smack. And he only deals in cash.”

The subject had come up when Dennis complained his stash was running low, where could he score? A lid, one ounce of pot, cost ten dollars. He said everyone had smoked his, it was time to contribute to a communal score.

A gallon of Red Mountain wine was being circulated. It came with a screw on cap and cost \$1.98. A six pack of Regal beer cost ninety-nine cents, but the preference was for Red Mountain. More kick at about half the price. Green Death was popular, too.

“Beer nuts?” Dennis sounded incredulous. “Why’d you buy beer nuts? We’re drinking wine. Didn’t they have any wine nuts?”

Steve held the bottle in front of him with both hands, his half crutch dangling from his right forearm, and took a long pull. He set the jug on the floor, belched and said lasciviously, “Slits. The beer that made Milwaukee famous.” A sappy happy smile shined through his beard as he repeated the word heavy with unspirated sibilants, “Slits.”

A banana split in Woolworth’s cost thirty-nine cents. There was an all you can eat buffet for a dollar on 19th and Irving. Triple feature theatres on Market Street cost fifty cents and a two bedroom flat in Pacific Heights rented for \$135 a month. But the monthly

phone bill was cause for acrimonious communal discussion. Sean held a sheaf of papers in the air and waved them like a fluttering flag.

“Two hundred twenty-dollars. The phone bill is two hundred twenty-dollars. Can you believe that? Our phone bill is more than the rent. And almost all the calls are to Long Beach, probably to parents.”

Harold said, “I marked my calls and they come to nineteen ninety-five. Here’s twenty.”

“You didn’t add taxes,” Sean responded. “That’s another five dollars.”

Harold passed two tens over, reached in his wallet and dug out a five.

Steve took another gulping swallow, smacked his lips and belched. “Ahhhh. Puts lead in yer pencil.”

The utility bills were equally daunting. Everyone blamed each other for leaving lights on or taking extremely long showers and using up the hot water. They did not receive the water bill or a garbage bill which Mrs. Panayatov paid. But other than that, everyone was supposed to chip in to buy toilet paper and milk.

Michelle said, “We need a household fund. Everyone should kick in five dollars a week for general food and stuff like that. We used up the entire three pound peanut butter jar, big peanut butter jar, and two pounds of sugar making peanut butter cookies last night.”

Actually, Michelle volunteered to bake cookies after Sean broke out a half ounce of Moroccan black hash and everyone got so high the munchies hit around midnight. Harold got home from work just as the pipe was being passed. And, yes, they used up all the peanut butter and sugar.

On Saturday night, the guys went as a group to North Beach where the go-go fad was in full swing and Broadway from Columbus to Pacific was lined with clubs offering live jazz, scantily clad girls in cages, a new type of comedy called “standup” and barkers who offered passers by a free drink if they would come inside and watch a nude review.

“Naked, naked, naked. Nice young girls your age, my man. Come inside, two drink minimum, here’s the first one free.” A pitchman placed a business card in Dennis’ hand as he passed in front of an open door. “See the girls topless and bottomless.”

Steve was tempted and said as much. But the others were in some casual relationship, so none felt compelled to oogle a female body, especially for a two drink minimum. Drinks in the clubs were expensive. Steve turned toward a fez wearing pitchman as they walked by and said with his characteristic face splitting grin, “Nekkid, nekkid, nekkid.”

A few paces later Steve nudged Harold in the ribs, indicated he should look at something across the street, but Harold had no idea what until Steve said, “Know what kind of show they have at Finocchio’s?” Harold had no clue and said so. “Transvestites,” Steve said into his sleeve to cover up the word and coughed to throw listeners off track.

“Hunh? Whatidyou say?”

“I said,” Steve made a throat clearing sound that led into the word, “Trans,” harrumphed as if coughing up a loogie and rapidly finished with, “vestites.”

They passed a man who stood holding the door open to another night club. “Hey, you boys. Come in and see the girls. Hey, why don’tcha come in, boys? You walk by, how about why you don’t come inside?”

Steve turned and said, “I’d turn to salt!”

Columbus from Pacific to Green was alive with Italian restaurants. Gold Cane served family style meals from big bowls brought to the tables; their ceiling was covered with thumb-tacked business cards and dollar bills. The US Cafe on the same side of the street two blocks toward downtown was working man's Italian at reasonable prices. Fior D'Italia across from Washington Square was unapproachably expensive and had a dress code which automatically barred them from entry. Bars were interspersed between eateries. Tosca's claimed to have invented the White Russian and there was only opera on their jukebox. It was also a little pricey, but next door was the Adler Museum with a full bar of 90 cent well drinks, cheap wine and a huge wheel of Fontina cheese you could get a slice of and a basket of crackers for half a dollar.

City Lights book store was directly across the street from the Adler. Dennis steered everyone there where he stopped at the top of the stairs leading to the basement and read the ads on the bulletin board. "This is how the underground gets messages out," he whispered to Harold who was impatient to descend to the Science Fiction section. "See? 'Meet me at Vesuvio's' Means a gathering of revolutionaries."

With its history of longshoreman versus Capitalism, San Francisco at the time was a stronghold for labor. You could not buy fresh meat on Sunday because the butcher's union was so powerful they only allowed supermarkets to sell frozen cuts on their day off. There was not a single McDonald's although they were popping up everywhere else in the country. The chain was prevented from setting up shop in the City because they paid minimum wage, not union scale. At Tia Marguerita, Harold was pleasantly surprised to discover he earned the union rate when he opened his first pay check.

James became de-facto cook in the household. He had a pot of brown rice ready for every meal and put large doses of curry in whatever the main course was. Fog horns tolled on the Bay as he dolled out red or yellow chicken curry, curried ground beef or curry pork. Harold grew quite tired of curry anything and made a point of getting to work early so he could eat there.

John Patrick O'Rios and Jo-Jo, however, loved curry. They lived across the street. They bought kilos, broke them up and sold lids for a living. It took them a month of surveillance before they came over and offered to sell a bag of sensimilla to Dennis.

"Fifteen dollars!?" Dennis sounded outraged. "Are you kidding? That's ridiculous. Way too much for a lid."

Jo-Jo was proud of his product and said so. "This is good shit, man. It's good boo, bro. Worth every dime. Tell you what, you take this for ten now, pay us five more after you had a chance to test it. How's that sound?"

Dennis retired to his room and rolled a joint. A few minutes later, James arrived and they started smoking together. The odor wafted down the hall and Steve thumped in to join them. By then James was scrunched up against the wall in the corner of Dennis' futon amid a pile of pillows and unable to move. Steve asked why James wasn't sitting on the floor with Dennis and him as he took a hit. Five minutes later, Steve, too, was on the futon scrunched up against the wall amid the pile of pillows. Only Dennis remained cross legged on the floor, but he paid the additional five dollars without comment.

John Patrick O'Rios and Jo-Jo wore tie-dye tee-shirts and army fatigues with bulging thigh pockets. The pockets were filled with tightly wrapped baggies bound with their trademark silver tape. They began to make a habit of coming over to eat Jim's

cooking. In return, they got everyone high before they retreated into one of the commune's bedrooms with the door closed behind them. One day they picked Harold's bedroom. He wandered down the hall only to find it was off limits. He tried to open the door, but someone seemed to be leaning up against it on the other side. He knocked several times, waited, knocked again. Sean eventually stuck his head out, looked devilishly angelic, batted his eyes and said they'd only be a minute, then shut Harold out. He was unable to retake the space for nearly an hour.

Steve's door was next to Harold's. He thought, why not wait for them in there where he can hear them leave? Harold turned the crystal knob, but the door would not open. The bolt was thrown. Why didn't I think of that, Harold asked himself. After all, they might be seventy years old, but the door sets worked perfectly. All they took was a skeleton key which Steve purchased a set of for a dollar at Woolworth's on Market Street and he had a secure room.

One day before dinner Jo-Jo drank an entire six ounce bottle of Robitussen CF cough medicine in one gulp. He sat on the living room couch slowed to a crawl, the casual rising smoke from his cigarette racing faster than he could move his arm. And when he did wave his hand in front of his face, his eyes recorded the movement in a series of stills as if a set of cameras lined up in a row caught the movement in clicking succession. He slowly rose and went into the bathroom where he rummaged through the medicine cabinet. Then he stood over the sink and began shaving his goatee. He came out twenty minutes later and resumed his seat on the couch. No one noticed his clean shaven face.

Everyone wore a costume. Dennis wore black: black jeans, black shoes, black tee shirt, dark sun glasses with black rims inside and outside the house, day and night, and sometimes a black beret. He favored wood bead necklaces painted black and had a black goatee and moustache he kept meticulously trimmed. He never chewed his facial hair because he never allowed it to get long enough. Dennis was an inveterate cigarette and pot smoker. In the dope smoking attic, he often lit a cigarette before the joint or bong was passed to him and exhaled one to inhale the other.

Dennis was an instigator. He called himself a *provocateur*. He often spoke in the third person: “Dennis gets up in the morning. Dennis gets dressed. Dennis is going to the bathroom. Dennis is taking a shit.” He had an alias. “My name is Forrest Dvorak. I start wars,” he said with a hissing sibilant lisp in parody of a Nazi war criminal. He practiced saying “Forrest Dvorak” until it rolled off his tongue fluently. When someone in authority asked, he could give his name without hesitation, with perfect candor and equanimity. Dennis kept a three piece suit, dress shirt and a tie on a coat hanger in his closet. This was his getaway costume. There was a scissors and razor in the breast pocket of the jacket and a one hundred dollar bill in the pants. If They came knocking, as he was certain They would, Dennis was prepared to cut his hair, shave his face, change clothes and disappear out the back before anyone knew he was gone.

Some time in July Dennis gave up trying to lead everyone up to the attic to smoke. He became more comfortable and allowed dope smoking in his room. Michelle poked her head in from the hallway. She asked what everyone was doing in there. Between hits, Dennis yelled, “We’re just sitting around picking our noses.” He took another hit and said, “We’re just sitting here passing gas.”

James wore billowing shirts he cut from cotton weave fabrics he sewed himself. They had no collar or tapering darts and were meant to hide his bulk as well as be cheap. Originally designed by his mother from what was called a Greek Fisherman's shirt, he didn't like buttons or anything fancy. No sleeve cuffs. He wanted his shirts simple and comfortable and one solid color. His pants were baggy jeans. He would buy those used from Goodwill, but they had to fit over his boots. He also favored leather sandals like Mexican huaraches with an open toe and heel. He wore a brown Buddhist wooden bead necklace with white ceramic separators.

Michelle tuned her femininity by wearing skirts and dresses although the female form on the street was most often attired in tee-shirt and faded, ripped at the knee blue jeans. She bleached her hair, but not often enough: The roots were black. When she put her hair in pigtails, Michelle bore a more than slight resemblance to Li'l Abner's girl friend, Daisy Mae Yokum, only a little plumper. She was cute like a Rubens rather than a Barbie Doll.

Steve nudged Harold and asked, "Think her hair color matches her snatch?"

James added, "She's a dishwater blonde, my mother used to say."

Harold: "What's dishes have to do with hair?"

Harold favored long sleeve white business shirts that buttoned in the middle and had a collar. The businessman look was betrayed by a khaki Army fatigue jacket he always wore. He let his hair grow long and stopped shaving his upper lip. Unfortunately, his facial hair was not particularly thick or dark and several times at work he was ridiculed for having a caterpillar on his lip.

Six months earlier on a Long Beach street, Harold found a leather working man's right hand glove which tightened below the wrist with a strap that had a red bead on the end. Harold took to wearing the glove every day, every where, for no reason. He removed it at work and before falling into bed. He often affected a mock Blue Meany voice and said as he wriggled his hand in front of his face, "Glove. My glove. Hello, glove, my glove." He especially did this when stoned.

Steve dressed as if he was a cowboy about to go out on the range. He wore Wrangler boots, a Pendleton shirt, wire rim glasses and a leather hat with a twist band in the Australian style. He would swallow or smoke any kind of drug but never touched cigarettes probably because he had done six months in an iron lung when he was a child and valued his pulmonary system too much to put it at risk.

Sean had a drawer full of white tee-shirts which he wore tight to show off his physique. He also had a collection of bell bottom jeans in various colors including yellow, orange, blue and green which he was not ashamed to wear. On anyone else they would have looked ridiculous; on Sean they looked sartorially splendid.

The real draw for Dennis was San Francisco's proximity to Berkeley, specifically the University where the Free Speech Movement was four years old and Mario Savio raised to godhead status in Dennis' SDS eyes. Dennis was not a student, had dropped out of high school and eventually received his equivalent, but he was a fervent follower of the Students for a Democratic Society. He was also an avowed Communist.

Dennis led choruses in, "Ho, ho, Ho Chi Minh. NLF is gonna win," as they walked Telegraph Avenue, a four block long shopping district aimed at the campus. Buy a pair of

Levis, eat a greasy hamburger, pick up your text books or choose a record from Licorice Pizza on the corner, then cross the street onto the sacred school's grounds.

Telegraph was a Mecca for young people who lined the sidewalks and frequented the shops or hung out in front of Moe's smoking. The smell of tobacco was not all that wafted on the air. A whiff of smoking dope was frequent, but so was a persistent eye irritant.

"Tear gas," Dennis said jovially. "Left over from the march on People's Park last Sunday."

"There's a band s'posed to play in a few minutes," Harold overheard someone say as he walked past a group gathered under a billboard advertising Coke. He asked where and one of the girls pointed roughly toward the park. "At about one," she said with a smile that Harold wanted to follow home.

He was several paces behind the gang who were moving at a leisurely stride toward the campus when he realized the pile of boxes stacked out front of the pharmacy just ahead were full. Not only that, they were not being watched. In fact, one of the boxes on top was so small he scooped it up almost without thinking and continued walking. Harold placed the box on his chest so that anyone watching from behind would not be able to pick him out of the crowd, pulled the sides of his jacket tightly around to hide his newly budding breast. Though relatively small, the box was too large to allow him to zip the jacket.

Harold scurried to catch James and Dennis and Steve who managed to keep up the pace despite the limitations of his leg.

Without saying a word, Harold jumped in front, turned to face his marching friends and flashed the prize by quickly whipping his coat open and closed again. James reacted with a double take, Dennis turned a frown on Harold while Steve said, “Yes, indeed. Jujubes. Yummy. Stick to your teeth, pull out all your fillings. Why would anyone buy a whole case of them?”

“I didn’t buy it,” Harold said defensively in a taut whisper. “I crasted it.”

This turned out to be a disaster in disguise. There were 24 boxes of the colored candies, each filled with several ounces of a hard, chewy sugar confection that might have been a treat in small doses, but fast lost their charm after the first few sat inside your mouth melting at glacial speed.

A phalanx of baton waving police stopped their progress toward the campus. Harold kept his hands inside his pockets where he surreptitiously held his stolen goods close to his body. He wondered how the cops had got wind of his theft so fast. It took a moment to realize they were not after him, but were crowd control.

“Here come the pigs,” Dennis said and held a hand up to halt his little band. “They don’t like freaks.” He stood on the sidewalk, glanced around, picked a side street, struck off at a fast walk with the others following. There was no argument, merely a change in direction. Harold was not happy to see they were headed away from where he parked the car on Ward Street.

The girl Harold had spoken with about the music was at the next block on the corner. She smiled and he smiled and held his jacket open and she laughed slightly and Harold knew he was going to do everything in his power to stay in Berkeley over night.

Harold opened the cardboard box and began divvying out packets of jujubes. He handed a box to the girl, said, "Have you read Terry Southern's 'Candy'?" She shook her head no and he made small talk, asked if this was where the band was supposed to play. She said yes and popped a jujube in her mouth, then handed the box back to Harold. Magnanimously, he said, "No, you may keep it."

Dennis, Steve and James quietly observed this exchange. When they realized they could safely follow Harold in, they moved as a group toward the girl. Maybe she had female friends, a sister or two.

She looked down at Steve whom she towered over. "And who are you, exactly?"

"I'm the dwarf."

Although Harold was indifferent, the crowd was becoming more agitated and displeased with the music delay. Several trash cans were set on fire and there was the general sentiment that something better happen soon or the cops would arrive and begin busting things up.

Several more minutes elapsed before a stake bed truck pulled up at the opposite end of the street and rolled onto the greensward. It parked on the lawn with its back to the mass of young people, some of whom were chanting, "We want rock. We want rock." Harold could not decide if that was a plea to begin playing or to throw stones.

Harold watched as several people pulled the stakes on the truck and set up a drum kit at the tail end of the flat bed. Somewhere toward the front of the vehicle a generator was fired up and three guys with guitars, a keyboardist and a drummer who hit an opening crash on his cymbals as he strode toward his trap set before he even sat down, began playing.

The street went wild with joy and what might have become a riot was calmed by the shock of electric sound.

“Who are they?” Harold asked the girl.

“They’re called The Warlocks. From the City,” she replied.

“Oh. Yah. I think I’ve heard of them,” which, of course, Harold had not.

“That’s Pigpen on keyboards and Phil Lesh on bass and I forget the names of the other guys.”

Harold thought this a great time to ask for her name and phone number. She said it was Crystal and that she had a boyfriend. But it really didn’t matter because Harold had to drive the guys back home and just then her boyfriend showed up and the set ended.

Michael and Susan appeared next morning in the living room bedded down beside the Seedasoom with their son, Jefferson, and baby Stephanie. Harold found the Seedasoom moved to a corner propped upright against the wall. The smallest child was curled up beside her mother, eyes wide staring up at Harold who sipped from his first cup of coffee.

Harold met Michael in an English 1-A class he took his first semester. Both wrote essays during week one to demonstrate they should be in that class instead of bonehead English. Harold’s essay, “Soup Run,” was chosen by the professor to read aloud in class. Harold re-told his boss’s story about how as a young man Louis met Ernest Hemingway at a party and Hemingway was interested in Louis’ job in the oilfields driving a nitroglycerin truck, a soup run, and the punch line, “You only get one mistake.”

Harold was allowed to remain in the class even though he misspelled both Ernest and Hemingway.

Harold and Michael did not hit it off as friends right away, but over the course of a couple months they became chummy. Turned out Michael had grown up with James and many of the Garage People. He was also married and had two children.

Michael worked in a camera store during regular business hours. One day Harold visited Susan while Stephanie was still in a crib. They were living on Linden Street in one of those shabby single bedroom Spanish style bungalows that are common in Long Beach: five hundred square foot, detached, six units to a parcel with a walkway between. They were really hot in summer, really cold in winter. Harold knocked on the screen door which was the only source of ventilation. The front door was open and Susan looked up from breast feeding the baby. She said, “Harold. Nice to see you. Come on in. All I have is a dog, a baby and a two-year-old and none of them talk adult.”

He looked around. “Where’s Jefferson?”

“At Grandma and Grampa’s.”

Turned out Grandpa was the reason the family was crashing on the living room floor at Kendalhang.

“Look what I got for my birthday,” Jefferson said proudly. He was kneeling in front of the short round living room table which was nothing more than an empty telephone cable spool covered with a colorful paisley table cloth. He held up a feather attached to a knotted strip of leather with a bright blue ceramic bead tied in the middle. It was a handicraft item that served no purpose other than to look pretty.

Although it had been a number of years since Harold was in pre-school, he knew to ask, “Are you going to take it to show and tell?”

Jefferson said with a complete lack of irony, “Yes. I got it for my second birthday when I turned four.”

His fifth birthday was celebrated at Kendalhang. They played musical chairs and Jefferson lost to Rain. They started a game of slap jack, but Jefferson was slower than River and Jade when it came to claiming the pile of discards. Dawnell even beat him at pin-the-tail on the donkey. But where Jefferson excelled, beating out China, Rainbow, Skye and Sunshine who were unable to swing a plastic bat and hit the Piñata, a blindfolded Jefferson swung and connected like Joe DiMaggio.

The dangling paper mache burro blew apart in a display of explosive energy. Candy flew like confetti surrounding everyone in a haze of mints, lifesavers, suckers, wax paper wrapped taffy, candy cigarettes, BB bats, jujyfruits and jujubes. Harold had contributed the latter from his stash.

The children screamed delightedly; the adults closed their eyes to avoid corneal damage. Jefferson pulled the cloth blindfold from his eyes and his face radiated surprise and pleasure as he surveyed the marvel of so many sweets scattered around him. He tried to claim all the prizes and started swinging his bat to keep the other children at bay. He yelled at them not to pick up the candy, but his mother intervened. In the time honored tradition of mothers everywhere, you knew she was really, really angry when she used the child’s entire name. Susan shouted, “Jefferson Airplane Jones, you get over here right this instant!”

She gave him a lecture on sharing which ended when James entered with a carrot cake and five candles for the boy to blow out.

Jim Cordero was someone Harold referred to as “friend of others.” Since he did not know him, Harold felt no obligation to defer to him. They were introduced, sat in the living room and shared a joint while the cake was divided. Cordero was entranced with something called The Book of Urantia: “There are seven super universes and inside each there are other inhabited planets,” Jim patiently explained. The joint apparently caused him to wax prolix. “And just like on any road map, you have to name places where you can stop overnight. Well, Urantia is the name the intergalactic map makers gave our planet. We’re under that name in the Local Universe registry of inhabited worlds. The book explains how our world and all the worlds in all the universes must become settled and stabilized, which means calmed down before we can achieve perfection. We strive for perfection, you see. The spiritual father is the supreme being which I liken to an invincible superman who can set us all free, once we have become stabilized and settled of course.”

Harold took a hit on the joint, exhaled and said, “Does he wear a blue cape and tights and leap from building to building in a single bound?”

Jim was not amused, but he put on a good face. “We are talking spirituality here, not comic books.”

“Just asking.”

“There is a universal headquarters where the father and other deities reside,” Cordero continued seemingly unfazed.

“Like Snow White and the Seven Dwarves lived in a house in the forest?” Long exhale from lungs full of blue smoke before breaking out in a laugh and slapping his thigh with delight.

“That’s not funny,” Cordero said defensively.

“No, it’s hilarious!”

Until he was 22 and as long as he stayed in school, Harold was supposed to receive social security benefits of \$90 a month through his deceased mother. However, he shared the same name with his father and since he failed to put in a forwarding address to Kendalhang, the checks went to his father’s new address on Ximeno Street in Long Beach. The end of the month was approaching and Harold had received only two paychecks. He called his father, asked that the most recent government check be forwarded, asked if any others had arrived and learned more checks had, indeed, come in, but they had been cashed and the money spent.

Harold was stunned. “You’re kidding, aren’t you Dad?”

There was resignation in his father’s voice that did not mitigate the situation for Harold. “I needed the money,” he said.

“Why? What for? I thought you had cases.” His father was an attorney who practiced civil law and fought for the underdog. He took clients who were accused of petty criminal activities and worked hard for them. Unfortunately, they often did not have money to pay him.

“I got married.”

His father’s first wife, Harold’s mother, died of nephritis, an inflammation of the kidneys. The second wife had come and gone with two children, one natural, one adopted, in the space of four years. Since then, the Old Man dated quite a few women, his own secretaries or those of colleagues, but there had not been a suggestion of permanence, at least not that Harold had heard or observed.

“You got married? To who?” Harold was too excited to note this was grammatically incorrect.

The Old Man explained that shortly after Harold left for San Francisco, his father moved Harold’s younger brothers into the house on Ximeno. There, Dad met the daughter of the property manager next door. She was 20 years his junior, a mere ten years older than Harold. The Old Man promptly moved out and into her apartment. He still paid rent on the house for the boys, one of whom was in high school, the other had graduated. Harold started telling people his father was the only parent he knew who moved out on his own kids instead of the other way around.

Although he gained a mother, Harold lost several months of government payments.

The living room became the dope smoking den when Dennis set his gohunza up in one corner of his room and kicked everyone out. An incense burner was constantly lit and fragrant smoke filtered out into the common areas of the house. Dennis called it his inner sanctum and forbade further group gatherings. “Nam myoho renge kyo, nam myoho renge kyo,” he chanted repeatedly ad nauseum. Harold called the religion nothing more than wish fulfillment.

Dennis heard this remark and decided to vent. They were passing the bong in the living room when he turned to Harold and said, “You walk too hard.”

Harold had no idea what this meant and said as much.

Dennis explained. “I can hear you outside stomping past my room at four in the morning when you get up to pee. You walk too loud.”

Harold did not know what to say. It never occurred to him his footsteps were offensive. He chalked the remark up to Dennis being Dennis.

However, Dennis was not done. He told Harold not to walk past his room at all because, “I feel your skepticism seeping towards me from under the door!”

Dennis was originally named Dennis Carlson, but dropped the suffix to spite his father and had his name legally changed to Dennis Carl. With James at the wheel of his family’s station wagon, they would drive by the Boeing factory where Dennis, Sr., worked in engineering and yell, “Fire Dennis Carlson!”

James’ father worked the same factory, but in a totally different area. He was in fabrication, on the line actually bolting planes together. Every night he would come home, sit in front of the television and drink a quart of scotch.

Michelle’s father was dead. She favored her mother which was a cautionary tale. If there was a glimpse of the future, it was in the form of a short, round body woman shaped not unlike the Michelin Man.

It was generally believed Sean had no parents. He seemed to have sprung whole from the head of Jove with the features of an angel and the heart of a devil.

The radio played, “Working in a coal mine, going on down, down. Working in a coal mine, going on down.”

Michael was five feet eight. Susan was six foot one. They stood beside one another and admired their progeny as Jefferson blew out the candles. But the incongruity between heights made the relationship that much more opaque to Harold who could only wonder how they ever got together.

Well, it was the same old story, Steve explained. They had known each other since junior high and lived in the same housing tract outside Long Beach State. They were married in a hippie ceremony performed by Calvin, a minister in the Universal Life

Church who got ordained for ten dollars as a draft dodge, and Michael moved with his new bride to the bungalow on Linden.

Before the children were born which would have given him an automatic exemption, an impending induction notice from his draft board prompted Michael to join the Navy. However, he did not show up at the appointed time and place, so he was considered Absent Without Leave. Weeks went by and he learned the shore patrol had come looking for him. He decided it best to turn himself in, but not in Long Beach. Michael wanted to get as far away from Moose as possible, which was why he settled his family into Kendalhang. Moose made no bones about the fact he thought his daughter married far beneath herself and Michael had no intention of having home port anywhere near the man. Michael called the naval recruiting office in downtown San Francisco and told them who he was and the reason he was calling was to voluntarily turn himself in.

Next morning there was a knock at the door. Four sailors in spotless white uniforms greeted Harold. They asked for Michael Jones. Harold rubbed the back of his head and yawned and told them he thought Michael was asleep on the living room floor. Without asking permission, the four barged up stairs with Harold in bleary eyed pursuit.

They found Michael and unceremoniously roused him, stood him in his skivies and pulled his hands behind his back. They placed him in handcuffs and thus trussed began marching him out of the house. Susan sat holding both her babies close and Harold heard one of the sailors say, "Have you jumped out of thirteen government airplanes? Well, you'll get a chance to now."

Word reached Harold through Steve who said he was told by Michelle that Susan confided in her that Michael was in the brig on bread and water rations, but after 30 days

he would be free to fulfill his military obligation. In the mean time, she said she had full privileges, let's go shopping.

The PX was on Treasure Island in the middle of the Bay. Harold took the Yerba Buena exit half way across the Bay Bridge. He followed the curving road around until they came to the flat part of the island that was man made for the 1939 World's Fair. At a check point, Susan showed her I. D. and the young sailor on duty bent down and counted the four hippies in the car with her as well as Stephanie and Jefferson.

"They have military I. D. cards?" He nodded toward the heavily populated interior.

"Nope," Susan said with her high pitched infectious laugh. "They're here to carry my groceries." They were waved through.

Haight Street was exciting any time of day or night. In the middle of the 1500 block on the south side was the Psychedelic Shop. Harold was inside perusing the eclectic selection of glass pipes, rolling papers, dazzling hand crafted roach clips and a rack of publications that included "The Oracle" when he overheard a salesman behind the counter argue with a tall man in a floppy hat and droopy moustache.

"C'mon, George, you can carry this. It's exactly what hippies want. I called it 'Please Plant this Book' for a reason and I guarantee they'll eat it up."

George was firm. "No, Richard, we don't want to sell seeds. I don't care if your poetry rots on the shelf, I'll buy that and try and sell it, but we're not going to carry a book full of seed packets."

After he left, Harold asked who that was. "Writer name of Brautigan thinks we'll sell anything here."

Across the street was The Straight Haight Theatre on the corner of Cole and Haight. Harold and Dennis and Steve and James all went together to see Blue Cheer belt out Eddy Cochran's "Summertime Blues." Harold was on acid and no lyrics ever rang so true. "I called my Congressman and he said quote: I'd like to help you son, but you're too young to vote," remained in Harold's head long after the show was over and the colors faded from his brain.

The second restaurant hired Harold for another two days' work a week. He located the address on Powell half a block from Broadway. Sinaloa billed itself as a Mexican cantina and in many respects it was exactly that except it adhered to the city's Health Code. During World War II the Navy patronized the restaurant to such an extent Mrs. Mendoza, the owner, developed a reputation for fashionable dining. Harold was hired as a preparation cook instead of dishwasher which meant his shift started at one in the afternoon. He was supposed to be off at ten, but quickly learned the waitresses had other ideas.

"You want to pick up some extra cash?" Mildred asked the first night Harold's shift ended and he pulled his dirty white apron off. He wore baggy black and white checkered pants and a too large white starched shirt with long sleeves.

"I guess so. Why? What I gotta do?"

"Waitresses are supposed to clean the candle glass on the tables, but the prep cook usually takes over for me for five bucks. I pay you out of tips." She spilled an apron pocket of coins on the red checker table cloth and began counting. "Ten, twenty, forty, here's one dollar. Twenty, forty, sixty. Two." Harold watched the coins mound into little piles until there were five. He was torn between wanting the money and not wanting a

pocket full of nickels and dimes. When she finished and scooped the overage back into her apron, she pushed a serving tray he had not paid much attention to toward him and said, "Here." The tray was mounded with half-dome glass bowls that were open on both ends, flat on the table side, bulged in the middle and tapered toward the top.

He picked one up and examined it. It was spattered with dry white wax. He scraped and wax chattered off gathered under his fingernail.

If it was not disgust or anger he heard in Mildred's voice, it was certainly impatience. "Here," she said hitting the hot water handle with a quick swing of her arm. She held one of the glass jars by its wide end under the flowing faucet. A painted wood bracelet wriggled on her wrist. Eventually the water wore the wax away in a stream that went down the drain. Giving the glass a quick couple of tight turns with a dry dish towel, she held the pristine candle cover up for him to examine. "See? Hot water and rub with a terrycloth towel. Can I count on you? Can I go now if I pay you in advance?"

Harold said, "Sure thing. I can handle it. Thanks for the dough."

Mildred doffed her colorful Mexican apron, rolled it into a wad and threw it in the laundry bin by the kitchen door. Before she left, Harold asked, "By the way, what does Sinaloa mean?"

Mildred looked at him with squinty eyes. "You a college kid?"

Although true, Harold thought it wise not to nod his head or answer either way.

Mildred started toward the door. "I worked here four years before I asked that question. It's a state in Mexico. Like California is a state, Sinaloa is a state in their south." She waved her red tipped fingers at him and said, "Toodles." The kitchen door swung twice behind her.

Harold worked when the regular prep cook was off. His first paycheck was three times what he thought it should be because he was, again, working at union scale. One lunch hour he wandered down Columbus Avenue toward the Cannery and found himself at the waterfront which bustled with stevedores.

The Chinese dishwasher spoke no English except cuss words, near as Harold could tell. He kept up a steady stream of rhetoric talking to himself and was equally fluent in Spanish, English and Chinese. It was a perpetual excoriation of everyone and everything as he rinsed dirty tableware, glasses and flatware with a strong spray of water from a black nozzle that dangled in the center of a deep metal sink. He stacked plates vertically in green plastic dishwasher racks which, when full, he rolled into the metal box to his right, drew a long stick handle down to close and punched a red button which started the wash cycle. All the while he muttered, "*Chinga tu madre*, asshole. Eat shit and go fuck yourself. *Chupame huevos*," in a heavy accent, sometimes repeating the word, "*chinga, chinga, chinga*," in apparent enjoyment of how it rolled off the tongue. During the heaviest dining hours which lasted from six to nine-thirty he kept a steady pace rinsing dishes, filling trays, rolling them into in the dishwasher, pulling down the silver door and locking it, slapping the button and cussing creatively.

The head chef was Mexican with a corrugated pockmarked face and quick hands. He could slice an onion into fine granules in seconds. He was also gay. The first day he made a remark which hinted at his interest in Harold who did not appreciate the advance. The second day, the chef appeared on the back steps where Harold was in the middle of a smoke. The cook lit his own cigarette and pointed at two roosters in cages.

"Fighting cocks," he informed Harold.

His third week on the job, Harold was chopping tomatoes when the lights went out on Broadway. The entire block along Powell was affected, but not the other side of the street which was the demarcation point where Chinatown began. Nor was this the first time the electricity died and almost immediately the entire kitchen was lighted with candles. However, all work came to a halt because the lighting really was bad and the patrons could not be served.

The patrons, however, did not notice anything amiss for several minutes since their tables were already lit with candles. Clean candle glass threw an eerie light from the dining room through the windows of the swinging doors to the kitchen. Mrs. Mendoza stormed through these and began shouting orders in broken English and fluent Spanish.

All the burners on the gas stove were turned up full to illuminate the room. She ordered them off.

The chef gestured toward Harold to follow him into the walk in. "Want some tequila? I keep a cold bottle in here," he whispered confidentially. There was nothing else to do and a drink of hard liquor sounded like just the thing at that time of night. He no longer worried the man might put the make on him because Harold had made it clear he was straight.

When the lights came back 30 minutes later, the chef was in no condition to cook. Mrs. Mendoza stood over him as he tried to flip a skillet full of *al pastor* pork. When he missed and pieces fell at his feet, he began scooping them up with his fingers and tossing them back in the pan.

Mrs. Mendoza was outraged. “Get away from that. You’re drunk, *muy borracho*.” She turned toward Harold and said, “I need a *plato* of *fajitas al pastor*. You cook? You make?”

Harold stepped up to the stove thinking he was ready to prove himself. He felt confident he could produce the main course with ease and agility. He began by scooping lard onto the fry pan which had been sitting on the stove where the chef left it and the grease flashed, burst into a torrent of flame.

Mrs. Mendoza shouted, “You too? *Borracho*? You drunk too, boy? Get out of here. *Ahora!* Now!”

Harold made a hasty retreat. He was scared. For all he knew the woman was going to come at him with the knife lying on the cutting board next to her. Harold removed his apron and split the doors with the palms of his hands.

Apprehensively, he phoned the next day and was told he still had a job. Sometimes I wonder what I’m going to do, Harold hummed to himself.

Early one evening the phone rang once, twice, and in the middle of the third Harold picked it up. “Hello?”

“How ya doing?”

There was considerable background noise, like a crowd murmuring, but Harold recognized the caller’s voice. “Hey! Vince! How are you? Where you calling from? You in town?”

“Nah, nah. I’m in a bar in Cleveland. I asked the bartender if I could borrow the phone. I didn’t tell him I was going to call you guys in San Francisco. Told him it was a local call.” After a minute of idle conversation, Vince said, “Y’know, they sell beef jerky

and pickled hard boiled eggs for a dime here. Uh, oh. The guy wants his phone back.” Harold heard, “Hey, hey, you got way too much ’tude, dude.” Then a hurried, “Gotta go. Goodbye.” Click.

The phone rang an hour later and Harold picked up the receiver. This time the voice said, “Dennis. I want to talk to Dennis.”

Harold recognized Gino’s voice, said hello, Gino.

“Fuck you. I want to talk to Dennis.”

Harold held the phone away from his head, faced the mouthpiece, considered slamming it down in the cradle, but decided against that and went down the hall to Dennis’ closed bedroom door. He knocked. There was no reply. He knocked again. This time from deep within he heard Dennis shout, “I’m just sitting around massaging my prostate.”

Harold returned to the phone, picked it up and without preamble said, “He’s jacking off. I’ll tell him you called.” Then he hung up.

One Sunday afternoon, James asked if Harold wanted to meet Richard. “He’s from Long Beach but lives in the Sunset. I have his address. Near the beach, near State College. He’s in a creative writing program there.”

James suggested to Harold how convenient it would be if they drove rather than took the bus. They hunted for twenty minutes on 40th Avenue but could not find the exact address.

James at last said, “This has gotta be it, but I don’t see where. I mean, it’s between the numbers. Let’s knock on the front door and ask.”

A woman wearing an apron, matronly and pleasant, told them the college student lived on the other side of the garage. They knocked loudly, for there was no doorbell. A conservative looking young man with short hair in almost preppy clothes appeared. He smiled and said hello to Jim, shook hands when introduced to Harold, invited them inside. He led them past two parked cars, around a deep freeze and through a door that would not meet construction codes. A scabbard in apartment, Harold thought as he maneuvered the slender passage and found himself in a single room apartment that had a low ceiling and one small window.

The walls were lined with books and Richard appeared to be a serious student.

“Summer school,” he said indicating a half dozen books on the bed that spilled over onto the floor. “Victorian literature course. Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope. Reading a book a day. It’s crazy.”

On the way back to Kendalhang, Harold asked who Richard was.

“My girlfriend’s brother. Just wanted to touch bases. Thanks for driving.”

This was the first news Harold heard that James had a girlfriend. Dennis was dating Morticia. Her real name was Carolyn but she dressed like the television character in the Addams Family: long flowing black dresses with puffy shoulders, black pumps and black fingernail polish. Harold was seeing a girl he met at the Psychedelic Shop, Steve was sleeping with a girl named Jenny and Sean had Michelle. But James was not dating anyone, appeared content to read philosophy or fiction and be the household’s chef.

The living room was filled with smoke. Steve held a shiny roach clip to his lips and inhaled.

“Do the rectum,” Dennis pleaded.

Steve's eyes widened in response to this request, which signaled his willingness to perform. He pursed his mouth into a round pucker. The red interior of his lips surrounded by beard hair lent credence to the image of an asshole.

James had a goatee and a moustache. He trimmed the upper lip, but the hairs of his moustache grew straight out like a wire brush. He shaved his cheeks an inch from his ears and had longish slender side burns. He never trimmed the goatee. The overall effect looked like a rabbit fucking his head, especially when he talked fast.

"Yep," Steve said with the air of one delivering a revelation, "Your beard is pubic hair."

Dennis kept his hair and sideburns short, cut his own hair. To do this, he stood in front of the bathroom mirror and clipped and snipped and did not clean the basin afterwards, to everyone's chagrin. He shaved all but the dimple under his lower lip, a style named for the French word "mouche" or fly, which he kept trimmed triangular in shape. This was a nod toward D'Artagnan whom he greatly admired.

Sean had no facial hair to speak of. He did not need to shave but once a week when thin blond strands became obvious along his upper lip.

Michelle told Dennis he ought to learn how to clean the basin when he finished.

He shouted in response, "Leave me alone! Can't you see I'm an aesthetic man?"

Susan entered the living room from the hall searching for her son. She spotted him standing next to Sean who held a hookah mouthpiece. Sean was sucking on the pipe. Smoke trailed from his lips as he passed the mouthpiece to the next person in a circle gathered around the cable table.

Susan realized Sean was blowing smoke from his lungs into Jefferson's open mouth and the child was inhaling it. She crossed the room in three long sudden strides, pulled Jeff away, stood for a second with him behind her. She made eye contact with Sean who wore his imp smile.

Susan stood over Sean for a second. He remained seated and when she said nothing, he shrugged and reached for the mouthpiece and made a motion as if to put it back in his mouth. Susan formed a proper fist with thumb outside and fingers curled tightly around the palm, swung in an arc like she knew how to keep a punching bag rattling and hit Sean solidly in the jaw.

The blow did not draw blood. Nonetheless, Sean recoiled and dropped the mouthpiece. He came straight to his feet in a boxing position, both fists raised, legs in a steady stance, feet planted, his right foot toward the rear in favor of him being right handed.

"Ouch. Bet that smarts," Steve winced in sympathy with Sean's sore jaw as he grabbed the pipe stem before Dennis could and took a hit.

"Where'd she learn to hit like that?" Harold asked with admiration.

"Moose was the 1948 Olympic gold medalist in the shot put," Steve said as he exhaled a thick cloud of blue smoke. "His oldest child learned to throw a punch before she learned to ride a bicycle."

Sean realized the fight was over the minute it began. He knew why she punched him and was truly sorry, but he could not bring himself to admit this out loud in front of everyone. Instead, he loosened up a bit, shuffled his stance and lowered his fists, but he did so with an attitude that said, Okay, you got one. Try another and I'll rip you apart.

Instead, Susan put a hand in back of her son's head, turned him around and marched him out of the living room.

"Can you believe the difference in height between Mike and Sue?" Harold observed. "She's gotta be at least a foot taller. Can you imagine them making love?"

Steve gave a short lascivious snort. "Imagine? Heck, I've watched."

Harold referenced "Jurgen" by James Branch Cabell, saying they "Discussed philosophy and mathematics," rather than they had sex. He added, "That was close."

Steve grinned, held the roach clip to his lips and sucked until a seed burst. He said, "Closer than two naked high school kids in bed on prom night. Nekkid."

"Birthday's tomorrow," Harold added casually, he hoped in an off-handed enough manner that would not raise the specter of him seeking a cake, presents and accolades even if he was.

"Yah? How old you going to be?"

"Nineteen."

"What do you know, me too," James said equably. "I'm a Leo. August sixth," This had a surprisingly leveling effect. Harold realized they shared not only a love of reading and Nadsat, they had the same birth sign.

"Me too," Steve chimed in. "August 8."

Michelle appeared bemused. "You're all Leos and the exact same age? Except for Dennis?"

"Harrumph," Dennis cleared his throat. All eyes turned toward him. "August ninth."

Harold felt mild triumph. "So I'm the oldest. My birthday's the fourth."

Dennis, Jim and Steve were glued to the black and white television that only got one channel. They passed a bottle of Red Mountain, but this time they poured into and drank from stemware, one of Michelle's homey touches, and ate from a can of snack food.

"Beer nuts? Why'd you get beer nuts? We're drinking wine."

"Arh, arh, Jim 'Arkins," Steve talked like a pirate. "Oi don't drinks water, I only drinks wine."

Harold fell for it. "Yah? Why is that?"

"Arh, arh. Because fish fuck in it."

The television had been found in a dumpster like much of their furniture. The national news was on. It showed a gurney and a body covered by a sheet being shoved into an ambulance.

"I can't believe it. Lenny died," Dennis said slack jawed. Steve looked properly serious.

James threw his hands in the air in a classic gesture of futility. He said, "Lenny's dead."

Harold said, "Lennie? Steinbeck's Lennie? Of course he's dead. George killed him."

Dennis snorted his disgust but said nothing more.

James said, "Michael T. Tree Sloth was killed before he could visit Kendalhang. Now Lenny Bruce is dead. What a shame."

The pocket doors were open and everyone could see Sean working on something in his room. He was fiddling with the side of the water bed and every once in a while he would lie on it in such a way as to make a sloshing around sound.

“I got my jobs by saying I worked restaurants,” Harold explained before he passed the pipe. “Which is sort of true. I used to work A & W’s. The one in Long Beach right there on PCH. And dishwasher in Seal Beach.”

Steve exhaled and said in his best buccaneer accent, “Arh, arh, Jim ’Arkins. I worked Pirate’s Cove on Atlantic Boulevard. Know what’s in Black Beard’s Secret Sauce? Me. I used to piss in the pickle jar every night. Arrrrggghhh! Arh, arh, Jim ’Arkins.”

Dennis stoned was a source of absurd wisdom often confused with Marxist thought. “Grease on top of glass. Slippery.” He sat in a lotus position, his bare feet poking out from inside bent knees. “Wrapped around it is the failure to do that. And that’s wrapped inside an enigma which has no opening or end,” he said enigmatically. “The petty bourgeois salutes and rises up from its knees.”

“Kneasles. I had kneasles when I was a kid.” Harold laughed at his own joke and blew smoke.

Dennis bristled at the remark. “You’re not committed to the struggle,” he accused Harold.

“What struggle?”

“Come the revolution.” Dennis raised a fist. “Yea Che!”

Harold said, “I resemble that remark,” and doubled over in mirth. He sat up, caught his breath and asked, “What if Steinbeck tried different titles like ‘Tortilla Square’ or

‘Round Tortilla.’ How about ‘Flat Tortilla’ as a title for the book even though it’s redundant?”

Dave was seated at the end of the couch. He asked, “What the hell’s he talking about?”

James easily followed the absurd stream of consciousness, unlike Dave who had never heard of “The Grapes of Wrath” let alone “Of Mice and Men.” Dave and C A were visiting and were crashing in Jim’s room.

“Ah, I see you like our new babbling book.”

Dave was noncommittal. “Where’d you get it?”

“I don’t know for sure. They don’t come from around here, but they can be entertaining.”

“Yah, where’d this one come from?”

“Imported from Riverside.”

“I want a couple for my living room.”

Dennis waved a hand in the air and hissed. There was silence as he wriggled his nose and sniffed. He sniffed again as if signaling the others with some arcane secret code. He perked up as if awakening from a stupor.

A rotten egg sulfur odor combined with dirty socks and food gone bad stench drifted in the air. No one noticed until made aware. Dennis said, “What the hell stinks so bad?” He rose and followed the olfactory trail down the hall, decided it emanated from Steve’s room. Dennis tried it, but the door was locked. He returned to the living room, organized an expedition, lead everyone including an apprehensive Steve who took part in the retinue that marched down the hall directly to his door.

Sean turned to Steve and said, "The key."

Steve wore this on a chain around his neck. He did not want to give it up, but relented when Sean leaned over him with his fists balled. Steve removed the chain, handed it to James who put the key into the keyhole and turned. The hundred year old tension spring inside the lock set worked perfectly and the bolt slid back.

The windows were shut tight and, without circulation, a built up flatulence exploded on them as the hinges swung and the door fell back. They followed their noses into the room until someone parted the parachute curtains. The bed was a mass of dirty plates and empty Chinese food containers surrounded by open sardine cans with curled metal lids. Plastic cups were common, the interior of each discolored the flavor of the soda or wine they once held, and the many empty soup cans with ragged lids still attached by a thread of metal would have been sufficient to produce the reeking stench, although that honorific probably went to the chicken bones that spilled off the other side of the bedspread and onto the uncarpeted floor where they made a morbid pile. A thick trail of ants hauled away tiny bits and pieces of the detritus infested room.

Harold realized he was late for work and beat a hasty retreat from what could well turn into an embarrassing confrontation for Steve. He opened the front door and stepped out at the exact moment Mrs. Panayatov opened hers. She stood beside him for a second or two paying absolutely no attention as he turned and locked the front door. He noticed she held a hand held out flat in the dry afternoon air.

"Did rain?"

"Hello, Mrs. P. Did rain what?" he asked

"Did rain last night?"

“No, it did not rain. Dry as a bone. I have to get to work.”

His shift over, Harold went upstairs to find Sean had connected a garden hose to the kitchen faucet which was dragged across the hall into the bedroom he shared with Michelle. The other end was connected to the water bed with Michelle in the kitchen at the faucet handle.

“Okay, turn it on now,” Sean shouted and the hose grew taut with the tension between a nearly full bed and city water pressure.

But the water would not hold and the bed required regular filling. Only days later, when the bed was once again shrunk to half its normal size and they were busy refilling it, did it occur to Harold to wonder where the water was going. The bed had probably been leaking for weeks directly onto the landlady’s head. He wondered what was in the apartment directly below their room that could soak up so much.

“There’s a Free Speech rally in Berkeley,” Dennis said conspiratorially. “You want to go?”

Harold was not working that night and said sure. Dennis mentioned how convenient it would be if Harold drove his car rather than take the bus. Taxis were not an option: too costly.

When they returned they found Jack who had just arrived. He was picking clothes up off the living room floor.

“Headed to the Galapagos where my father runs a hotel,” Jack explained. Harold thought this sounded exotic and adventurous. Then he learned why the sudden interest in the islands. “I got drafted. Figure if Sterling Hayden can take his sons on a voyage around

the world in part to keep them out of the military, I ought to be able to wait out the war there,” he said as he continued to pack his duffle bag.

The summer was coming to an end and Harold had to make a decision. At the end of August, he returned to Long Beach to complete his two year degree at City College. It was easy to find another roommate to take his place: Richard took his room and moved from his garage apartment.

James went south with Harold and finished another semester at the community college. He transferred his credits and moved north again and graduated from San Francisco State in Comparative Religion. Of the other founding members, Steve completed a degree but never used it. He continued to make salacious comments about the world around him. Dennis completed his two year obligation cleaning bedpans, then got a job with a moving company. Sean and Michelle broke up two years later. Sean never got busted and eventually obtained a contractor’s license, but he never prospered. No one knows where Michelle went although someone told someone she was married with children living somewhere in Southern California.

Kendalhang continued as a commune for ten years until Mrs. Panayatov died and the probate court sold the building. The out of tune Seedasoom remained in the apartment until probate closed and the new owner, a speculator taking advantage of the real estate boom of the late 70’s, tossed it in a dumpster. The property sold again and once more in quick succession until, in the mid-80’s, it was acquired by a yuppie couple with two teenage children who bought it almost for nostalgic reasons: Michael and Susan Jones.

The Tribe of Ragnar was briefly condensed inside Kendalhang, but it grew until there were many members. There are perhaps today a hundred people scattered around

the globe, from Seattle to Taiwan, Australia to England, Northern and Southern California, to whom you can say the word “Kendalhang” and there will come a knowing smile. They may read this story and complain saying, “That’s not what happened,” and they will be correct, for time has added and subtracted from the telling. However, there were only six who first moved into the flat that summer, and I’m the one who wrote about it so I get to put many things into the story and I say, “This is what happened during those first three months, the summer of ’66.”

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