

DD'S DREAMLIFE

Walk through park uprooting shrubs, small trees—yank them out. Someone watching.

In foreign land, locals heading into forest for celebration. Enter museum, mingle with crowd, head for bar. German spoken. A sad young man sits smoking, drinking, staring off into space. You find living quarters on a country estate. Holiday revelers file by. You ask two men clipping hedges if they are the owners. One doesn't acknowledge you. The other laughs.

You try to catch Ross' interest. He becomes confused, furious. You ask why he's upset. "I'm scared!" he shouts. "I'm scared," he repeats, his back rounded as he arches forward, weeping.

Women at a pottery workshop. You never get up the courage to introduce yourself to 'Mr. Vitale' re-roofing the Cliffport house where the workshop takes place. First, he is stern, bearded, Amish, then he is friendly, clean-shaven. You have to sleep apart from the women, bedding down in a makeshift lean-to. You climb a ladder to bid Mr. Vitale farewell. Mom is there, helping him cover the roof. She looks younger. She doesn't care that you're leaving.

Wake relieved to find police haven't stopped me for speeding through a red light and my bicycle has not been stolen.

Making loud music on Santa Cruz Mall. Cops demands our ID's, find a joint in your guitar case, bust you. The penalty: one-year in jail.

Scrambling to hide with refugees on ocean-going passenger ship. We jam into a lounge trying to figure out if anyone in our group has fallen overboard. Dousing lights, waiting. Inspectors from the English-speaking land of destination board ship. Our location has been disclosed. Guided by ship officials, a German commandant and entourage enter lounge and switch on the lights. I sit up. The commandant reminds his henchmen that one refugee must be selected. "But who can be trusted among them?" "Why not him?" the commandant replies, pointing at me. "He caught on first." I receive a description of what would be expected. "You mean I'd be helping you lead us through processing to detention?" "That's correct," the commandant replies, pleased with his choice. "And helping you," I continue, "to negotiate the transfer of human beings from ship to land?" "That's it," he snaps, growing impatient. If I perform my duties well, I will benefit from many advantages. I remain unconvinced, wake up.

A dozen young men link arms, marching into the mansion on a grand estate. The hall's walls are lined with framed art. The front door is locked behind us. We knock to get out. Nelson Rockefeller comes downstairs and cannot believe terrorists have entered his residence. A vicious German Shepherd charges down the stairwell. The front door opens. Lights and cameras blind us on the porch. We gather our camping gear. Rockefeller makes small talk about our Mexican blankets. We understand he is stalling for time while waiting for police to arrive. They do and we're arrested. Supporters rally when we are on trial. The lawyers and judge know one another. I face forty years of imprisonment.

The end of a working day. Growing dark. A van full of seniors arrives at the nursery. I leave them waiting for Mom. I carry a flashlight while watering in the greenhouse. Steve arrives and reminds me I owe him two dollars.

Hot summer Saturday night. Out-of-towners washing an RV in yard of a rental house outside Fern. Pickup trucks park on the lawn. A crowd gathers to watch three black gladiators sparring with one another then striking out at the white onlookers. The blacks are far outnumbered. Someone suggests a lynching party. You consider calling the cops. A guy with a satchel marked NO ON A is distributing literature. The election has already taken place but he persists, kissing Mom on the forehead, calling her the Queen of the Left. You glance at his material but tell him you're more concerned about what's happening right before your eyes—wake up.

Sunday afternoon. Ross and Mom embracing in the kitchen. Tears well in your eyes as you recognize you are excluded. The faucet is running, the kitchen sink about to spill over. Ross criticizes my date, Linda, and her hair's steely permanent. She tries to make conversation, wanting to be included if she can be but he keeps putting her down.

You show up early for work at the garden supplies section of Ebert's Department Store. Before you open the gates, you say goodbye to Tom who is on the run from people trying to punish him for telling the truth. He sits there making jokes about how he plans to buy a knife that knows how to fight. The store manager approaches him—he flees. Some female employees tell you to stay out of it. "Make me a deal!" you respond. "You're a deal, DD," they shout. "You're a deal!"

Mom returns home. I'm sleeping on sofa in darkness lit by the bulb inside an aquarium. I ask for more light. "Why?" "Cuz I want to see if the bears are still there." She laughs and shakes her key chain. You look around, still afraid of bears in the corners of the room. "You mean you're nervous too?" she inquires. "Coming and going, I carry these," she adds, jiggling the keys, "to keep away the bears."

In late afternoon shadows, walking among rocks on Cliffport Beach, steering clear of high surf, you see kids playing where the sandy stream exits the culvert. A mother bear and two cubs emerge from the edge of the willow thicket. Growing dark. You hear the sound of other animals out of sight. In dark you feel your way toward the far end of beach using your bare feet on sand.

Ross, driving a new jeep, drops off a third party. You're supposed to get out too but you don't. You spy a coastal house and say you want to live there. It's so cold the bay is frozen over. He says a tsunami is on the way that will crash over that house. Naked, gliding on my front, I break through the ice, falling in, waking up.

Finishing West Coast bicycle tour in San Francisco, I walk through the Ferry Building then peek into a movie house before checking into a fleabag hotel with down-and-out characters hanging around in lobby. In the morning, the front doors lock me in. Giant body-builders in wetsuits and flattop haircuts arrive: I am to be punished. I try to reason with one skinhead. A priest passes through the lobby and I plead for his intervention. The priest bargains with the goons. An exit door opens. The priest reminds me: "Stop singing and you get hurt."

Returning home from road trip. Running around after dark, playing pranks around main house, hearing voices from bathroom. I'm taking a bath with Ross. I go down on his hard-on. Ross gets violent, disgusted, smacks my head—I wake.

Biking through wide-open country. No pants on. You ask somebody where you can buy a wetsuit. He keeps chatting with his surfer buddies. You recognize you know none of them. They ignore you.

Watching logs being transported down the San Lorenzo River. A man jumps in to free up a logjam, slips, hurts his hand. I rush to help. "Stand back," he tells me. "I'll want to use this

again.” He uses his good hand to straighten the crooked fingers of the hurt one. I stand by, recognizing him, muttering, “Dad ... Dad....”

Riding a stallion bareback on Cliffport Beach, charging in and out of waves higher than bluffs.

Joining others at the bar where a half-dozen people are vowing to stay together. One by one, arms linked, they drink from a goblet without spillage. Behind the bar there’s a billboard with the movie image of a criminal being lassoed in the middle of the meadow above the old Monteflores Lodge. Everyone cheers. “I’d like to have your mind in a room for thirty days,” you tell a flirtatious waitress. “I’d fuck it up! Your asshole too!” “Don’t you downtown-bachelor- talk me!” she retorts, walking off.

Playing guitar on a bench on the mall. You call out to a bikini-clad girl in a second-story window: “Here’s wacko, right here!” Upon her arrival on the sidewalk, you lift her from the ground and wrap her bare legs around your waist. Half her butt cheeks are popping out of her panties. You both laugh and smile as you work her underpants deeper into her crotch. Wake.

Live rock show. Drummer and guitarist slow tempo as girl singer spills hundreds of crayons onto stage. People leave. The house empties. The party relocates to a houseboat. People ask you what you know. “It depends what you’re talking about.” “You have any stuff?” they ask. You tell them you can’t carry when you’re on the road even though I’m stashing some mushrooms in my bag. You reach a room with a fireplace. The furniture cradles naked babies. “Look at all the kiddies!” you remark. “Oh, yes,” the nurse replies, “the place is loaded with them.”

Potting plants into nursery cans on dirt pile. “You’re stupid, you’re stupid!” Mom says. “Don’t you remember how cool you once were?” She suddenly smothers me with kisses, pinning me on the ground. “I’ve got to have you back!” she cries. “I’ve got to have you back!” Wake up struggling.

You ride a motorcycle up into the Sierra Foothills to visit a tree house where you receive a warm welcome from Steve and some musicians he has met. We sit around listening to Grateful Dead. A tree limb grows into the tree house. A monkey slides off a branch and clings to you. “Oh yeah,” somebody says, “that’s Jimi Hendrix.” Its teeth clasp onto the flesh of your forearm. You try to shake it off but no one seems to notice. The monkey sits on your head. “I just like to dominate!”

it whispers into your ear then leaps free. Steve laughs, adjusting the sound system. "Sorry I haven't got a Christmas present for you," he says. "I'm not looking for any Christmas stuff," you reply.

Alone at nursery. A crew of female construction workers arrives and disrupts the quiet. Mom shows up, wearing feminine bedroom apparel. She struts about the glasshouse with a staff, knocking seed flats over, berating my lousy work.

In common sleeping quarters with other men. Everyone quiets down except one big guy who taunts me. Ross picks me up and shakes me like a storm shaking a tree then prepares to strike me. "I hate you, I hate you...." I cry out, waking up.

Being transported through well-lit underground water canals. The water is translucent. Exiting one tunnel, surfacing in a plaza with a crowd, you settle into a deluxe hotel from which you can see the boulevards below but not be touched by events there. You tour the halls: open doors to every room reveal naked couples copulating, naked women beckoning passers-by. Back in your suite, a woman resembling Debbie has been assigned as your assistant. She requests a sample of your handwriting and, licking the eraser of her pencil, expresses her admiration. You unzip your pants, positioning yourself so she can lick you instead of the eraser. She proceeds to pleasure you before you are interrupted by someone knocking on the doorjamb. Wake with erection.

Chased by an idiot tramp, you escape detection by passing for a horse in an open field. Hitchhiking, you are picked up by Japanese tourists who speak English and German among themselves. They ask how to get to Hollywood. I get out of their car and step into a Disneyland landscape of bonsai plantings and shallow bodies of water. I spot a seven-footlong snake and cry out warning, but a young girl continues to walk into the water. Toward the middle, her head goes under. Entering a building, a nurse assures you she will be okay. Out of nowhere, she reappears in good health, more mature, her hair trimmed.

Late at night, band packing up after a performance in roadside bar. One of the local groupies has had too much to drink and smoke. You lay her down in the front seat of somebody's car. You turn on the dim interior light and see she has done a sloppy job applying her lipstick. Everyone else stays in the bar for fun. You need to decide what to do with her. How about a nude swim in the sea? No, she won't go. She is jealous over your attention toward another girl in the doorway.

Inside the bar, she takes over the upright piano, shoving someone off the bench and banging on the keyboard while singing bawdy lyrics.

Father and son debate. Father sits guru-style, brooding aloud about DDT in the food chain. He grows impatient, requests one last favor, takes a pistol, loads it, and shoots son right in the heart. Awake.

In a vacation cottage with Mom, Mike Crogan, and someone else (Suzanne?). On a solitary outing, I kneel on eroded bluff high above sea—like Cliffport but not Cliffport. Dangerously close to edge, I move backward. In the shower back in the cottage, I sing in accompaniment to a sound system playing my favorites. In the bedroom, I find Mom and Uncle Mike interlocked. They are still both dressed but she is on her back with her legs raised and he lies between her legs. She croons a lullaby while he rocks their hips. I explode, grabbing both by their hair, declaring, “I will not be fucked with.” Neither notices me. I say goodbye and leave to the sound of their laughter.

Cliffport. Pipes below the house need repair. Ross and I crawl underneath while Mom talks on the phone in the room right above us. As we grope our way in the dark, I ask Ross to let me know when we reach the section that needs work. He says nothing but both his hands reach out and gently touch either side of my face. Wake up.

In a glass-encased directory in the lobby of a “Trust Building” in San Francisco, you discover that a wing has been dedicated to your father. You cry. Behind you, slow to recognize you, Gran’ma waits. She has just gotten off a commercial airline flight and thrown away the novelties presented to business class passengers.

Parading the streets of Havana with a sumptuous blonde on my arm, I see Mom—with the baron who keeps her—seated in the rear seat of chauffeured antique convertible. The baron decides to pick up my blonde, but two men prevent him from descending from his automobile. He drives off to the sound of my derisive laughter.

Dr. Healy emerges from the house. He says, “So it was you who caused your grandmother’s back to go out.” He listens to nothing you have to say. I throw up my hands in frustration and declare, “Is that all a zillion years of being our family doctor has taught you?”

I have been initiated into a “High-Country Commune.” Hiking down the mountainous terrain, I break into free song after hearing an alarm clock ring in the ditch below the road where a hobo has spent the night. The morning air is clear; the road is open. I reach a lakeside dock where a train has arrived, carrying Mom and her male friend. You protest that her friend can’t come; no arrangements can be made for him on the mountaintop. I call it a broken treaty since my birthday celebrations cannot include her being with anyone else. Wine is poured to exchange best wishes. It becomes an occasion for Mom to pronounce a curse upon me: she empties her glass of wine on my head while disowning me: “You are just like your father was.” “This is the last time you’ll ever curse me,” I declare and realize I am free to leave.

You and Ross are cleaning a basement rental where tenants have left empty liquor bottles, smoking paraphernalia, needles. His friend enters. We end up in a physical fight. His friend spits in my face. Ross holds my torso down and uses a pair of manicure scissors to snip at hairs in my bellybutton. The other guy holds down my legs and snips at my toenails. Released, I rise to my feet and spit in Ross’ face. Ross is smothering me under sofa pillows. “I hate you! I hate you!” I scream when released and, turning to leave, become aware of his fist raised over my head, about to strike—I wake up first.

A party is going on in a mansion where community activists are strategizing. In rooms off the upstairs’ halls, various scenes are being played out. You enter a room where someone is on the couch and the Regional High School principal is in the chair. The principal wears deep blue matching pants and an aspirin dot-white shirt revealed through the open collar of the blue jacket. “I try to keep it a little jazzy,” he explains.

A contest. First Ross fails to drive an ATV up over a ledge protruding from a brick wall. I take over and lunge forward, managing to get over the ledge and squeeze through some pane glass louvers, but when my face scrapes the brick wall I bring the vehicle to a halt. “I’m going to file a suit of anger,” I bemoan as I lie in his arms. We wait for an ambulance. When it arrives, Ross protests that the attendant is a black man. The attendant stands back and begins cataloguing his accomplishments: “But I once saved the life of a little white girl, and I once saved, etc.”

You enter a carpeted, heated room in a stuffy interior and stand in stocking feet at a picture window through which you view a golf tournament in the clear, crisp, sunlit outdoors. The

announcer's voice is broadcast over loudspeakers. You tell the announcer your father is hospitalized. This fails to disrupt his narration.

Returning home after living outside the USA. In the nursery, you are potting up cans while Mom shows off before customers, impressing them with photos of flower arrangements she made for her latest party. She looks at you and shakes her head. "Get off that dirt pile." "Why?" I ask. "You've been around," she replies. "It's clean, you're not."

Wearing a black turtleneck, a stocking cap, wraparound sunglasses, Mom slips out pantry door and scampers across deck and down stairs to greet a woman she wants to introduce to me. You urge her to stop pretending to look like a beatnik. She does not respond. "DD, this is" I wake up.

Sitting across the aisle from a table occupied by two young Germans in the train's dining car. A third diner asks them, "Any wetbacks on the train tonight?" "No," one answers, "but I'm eating one right now." You rise up and slap the speaker across the face. Out the window, you see armed guards striding alongside the train looking for you. Waking.

Smashing locked doors, exiting a hotel restaurant, I reject a taxi driver's homosexual proposition, declaring "Es loco!" I ride a bus to a college where an exam is in progress. Ross takes me for a ride in a car that drives itself automatically. In wake of a family funeral, Ross plans to attend my father's remarriage. I watch him ride off on a motorcycle then decide to hitchhike after him but cannot remember which road leads home. A warm, friendly, innocent young woman offers helpful information, but even with her maps, you cannot figure out where to go next.

Instead of entering the two-story house to lead his class, a professor sits on a rock at the base of a mountain. As daylight turns to night, he lights a pipe. At the thought that he should go inside, a few stones tumble down the mountainside. He pays no attention. An avalanche follows. The upper story is converted into an infirmary where the professor and other victims are being treated. Although unscathed, a nurse lies beside him with a bandage around her wrist, playing the sympathetic fellow victim.

You are in bed in a house occupied by a pair of thugs who refuse to leave. Outside the window, a boy whistles, begging you to let him blow you and you refuse. You go to the police station and find Ross there. He's informing against you. Back in bed, you lie still while a macho man enters the room and takes his position at the foot of the bed. You manage to eke out a few words: "Who... are... you?" before screaming "WHO? WHO? WHO?" — waking up.

Gran'ma is selling her ceramics to the highest bidders at a retirement supper in the Community Hall. Detained in jail with the band, you are ridiculed by police functionaries when you beg to be released. Meanwhile, a motorcycle gang is released although they were the ones to tear up the town square. One cop torments you as "one of those musicians with nothing but potential." "Is that wrong?" I cry out. The band members pat me on the back in consolation. Upon release, I retreat to a rundown residential hotel instead of going home.

Riding motorcycle into a courtyard where a frightened spinster sickens her German Shepherd on you. Your bike falls over as you fight off the dog and finally kick it hard enough to smash its head. You enter the garage in order to escape in a VW bus but you have no keys. You surrender to some neighbors cornering you. During the formal investigation, you explain what happened and admit to disliking dogs. The main investigator claims that there are very few people who actually dislike dogs.

Still far from the airline terminal and luggage check-in, I become agitated. Departure time approaches but my fellow passengers take time out for naps. I abandon the vehicle and don overalls for a cross-country effort on foot. The police and white skinheads in the backs of pickup trucks yield ax handles as they run black youth out of the neighborhood into which I am entering. I have missed the flight and return to the house where a table is set for a large family meal. Ross tells me, "The next time we are alone I'm going to beat the shit out of you."

Motorcycling on Skyline Boulevard, you join a group of bikers driving to join in trench warfare. "Can you handle it?" an older biker asks. "I don't think so, not right here at the front." "Look at you!" he replies. "Riding with us and not even ready to fight back!"

I see a man I know must be my father taking care of a window box left by an apartment dweller who suicided. He also tends to a balcony garden, plants in hotel lobby, other gardening jobs. I

encounter numerous obstacles when trying to re-find him in the building but finally meet up with him when he steps out of an elevator. He looks like Henry Fonda. “How are you, Dad?” I ask and he mumbles a response. “Don’t you care how I am?” you continue. “Don’t you even care...?” “I never cared,” he says and rolls a wheelbarrow down the hallway until turning the corner, out of sight.

Visiting Mom who shows off a fine crop of her potted, budded dahlias—boasting that they’re already sold! You tell her that these are the plants that matured after you began them as slips in perlite. She gives you no credit. One of Gran’ma’s friends drives up the lane and shouts out “Good morning!”

Gran’ma’s decapitated corpse is being carried in a tub of water and deposited on the living room floor where visitors from the Fern Church are assembled for the vigil. The body goes into convulsions. I go closer to hold it but Mom’s head pops out between the shoulders—I wake up.

You can’t find your way out of an ill-lit geriatric center. You wonder if Gran’ma is there. Wandering from the stroke ward to the psycho ward, you notice only old women, strangers who don’t know you and don’t move out of your way.

In the house where Uncle Mike is being treated after a car accident in the snow. “Your uncle’s probably dead,” the nurse whispers. I begin to weep. The lower half of his body has been torn off. I fall to my knees. His torso sits upright. He is awake, crying, indignant about the futility of fighting for his life. “I am fearful,” he says.

Strolling around inside a Chicano cultural center. Exhibits. Performances. You overhear an exchange between an organizer and a suited man who says he is going to get more traditional instruments from his car. A singer sits on the floor and sings ‘Mal hombre.’ “But how Chicano is it?” someone challenges her. “When are you going to sing a Chicano song?” The singer pauses: “Can’t you just listen once with your heart?”

The band runs out of the barn in alarm. In distance, we see a man wrestling with a pregnant woman, hitting her belly to abort her baby. We run toward them, cursing him aloud—wake up.

Rushing back and forth between Volkswagen buses to gather the underweight kittens of an abandoned litter whose mother has been run over.

Walking alongside a house situated on a steep hillside. Observing your descent, one stranger on the street remarks to another, “He’ll find out it’s all tangles down there after that last step.” You reach the last step and immediately fall feet-first straight downward, clutching at tendrils of ivy breaking off in hands. A freefall, black space—screaming—waking.

A half-frozen orphaned fawn thaws out in the meadow. You try to give it away so as not to have to kill it yourself.

You and members of the band are listening closely to the message on a radio switchboard. The messenger reports having visited the Cliffport barn and heard the band and sings some lyrics over piano. “I’m going to put in a good word for them, put some wind in their sails that’ll stay there long after I’m gone.” You jump up, certain that this is a big break. But the rest of the band is still having trouble with the speaker’s rendition of our song.

On tour with the band. Attempts to rendezvous with others are stymied by a girl singer who looks like Linda and keeps showing up for my performance in Point Arena. You rub her close-cropped hair but another woman named Cheryl comes on to you. You leave both and catch up with the tour in Arcata after having missed the Fort Bragg stop on the itinerary.

You are being born, lifted from between Mom’s legs, held closely, gently, then turned upside down. Your eyes open wide and the man holding you smiles.

In the cab of an old ranch truck with Ross. You’re at the steering wheel, headed straight down Grade Road with eucalyptus trees bordering both sides. The arms of a railroad crossing we never saw before lower across the road. Red signal lights are flashing. The brake pedal softens to mush, the truck speeds up, there are no turnoffs. Getting closer and closer, we steel ourselves for the collision, the truck going faster and faster downhill. A flash of white light—wake up.

On phone, Mom is telling you her mother is in bad shape. You ask her, “Is gran’ma dying?” We are both crying.

You pass through a security checkpoint. Your baggage is confiscated. You wonder where your smaller satchel has gone, the bag containing your wallet, a bowie knife, an aluminum foil-wrapped poke of grass. Leaving behind you the last newspaper racks, phone booths, and food concession stands, you enter a vast dark empty field—no man’s land.

Gran'ma is dying. Propped up on bed pillows, her head appears oversized due to the emaciation of her body. The Bible lies open in her lap. Mom kneels to one side of the bed. Gran'ma's eyes droop and her chin drops to her chest as if she has no neck. You bend closer. She raises her face and smiles at you. "I was an American pilot." You know she's saying farewell and informing you that she is brave enough for the trip ahead. I tell her, "I'll take care of Mom, and she'll take care of me." She fades away before our eyes. Waking.

Knocking on a closed bathroom door. No answer. Turning the doorknob. In the tub, arms clutching either side of her head, faced toward the wall, Mom lies in six inches of water. You go down on your knees and reach into the tub to loosen her hands and lift her skinny legs, to hug her boney torso. You squeeze her, trying to pump her lungs into breathing. Her body is stiff as wood. She's been dead a long time.

The band stops painting the barn, but I continue to blacken a large surface area and, when I turn around, I am surprised to see a larger-than-life depiction of the crucifixion with Jesus Christ portrayed in full agony. Tourists come by in a bus and admire the mural. Stripped naked to the waist, strapped face up on a long toboggan outfitted with hinged, flexible segments, the bandmembers begin navigating deeper into the forest until they get stuck in mud. On closer inspection, you see someone suffering on the sled, his body contorted like Christ on the Cross.

Some down-and-out jazz musicians are hanging out around a swimming pool. Linda and the girl named Cheryl and other girls show up. The guys are checking out their bikinis. The kegger is casual, friendly, with surfers milling about and people sorting themselves into small groups. Mom is sunbathing and you lie down beside her. "What do you think? Pretty good party, huh? The way we got everybody dancing." "I don't know." "You don't know what?" I ask her. "These people ... I mean ... if you really want to know what the general feeling is around here...." "What about?" "About your surfing and your music. I mean, everybody pretty much agrees there's a reason you never made it as a surfer or a musician." "Oh, yeah, that. I know there are better surfers than I am." "Thousands of them. Rumors are there are one hundred thousand better musicians with more talent and better licks than you too."

You are leading the pack in a cross-country motorcycle race. During a routine rest, you survey the terrain ahead and decide it's not worth competing, leave the track, and take off across the hillside.

Touring a desert terrain in the front passenger seat of van driven by Bill Graham. He broods. In rear seat, his aide-de-camp and several lawyers are talking contracts. We arrive at a retreat center in the mountains between Napa and Sonoma. Someone resembling Graham sits with us. "Are you his brother?" I ask. They both smile. "Just look-alikes." Then we are in a room where other members of his legal entourage continue to discuss matters related to his recent divorce.

On quiet side street in Live Oak, Mom accompanies me looking for Dad. En route, I thank her for the company and embrace her, immediately aware of how light she becomes in my arms. She leans back slightly, enough for her feet to lift off the ground. She is dying in my arms. I hold her closer, draping her arms over my shoulders. I can see the smile weakening on her face. "I love you," I tell her. "Finally," she sighs. "That's the first time you ever told me." We are clasping one another as her body deflates and her insides evaporate, losing all mass and weight until she is no more than a bag of skin melded against the contours of my body. Even her skin dissolves as she melts into me. No one notices as I walk through Capitola Mall, her boneless, fleshless essence indistinguishable from my own.

Crowded campground. A newcomer is searching for a place to pitch a tent. A debate about whether he can set up outside the official boundary. We are concerned about wild animals. We hear growling in the dark. "Shine the light," I say. "What is that?" It turns out to be a pet dog. The fence is getting closer and closer while we watch the boundary of the campground shrinking. There is no space available for the newcomer.

I lose my backpack while being driven from Cliffport to San Jose. I leave the car and travel by foot. For a while, I keep the "woody" station wagon in sight through the trees as it follows a route clinging to canyon walls. I proceed, thinking I can always intercept it and get back on board for the last leg of the trip. But I am left behind. I camp here and there. I am a guest in a hippie household and given permission to use phone for long-distance. Wondering if I should call Greyhound to see if my backpack is already there or go back home. I go into the room with the

phone: Gran'ma is there, sitting still. I can't make the call with her there. I go from room to room, looking for another phone but never make the call before waking up.

Driving a logging rig with a big load. En route to mill, the truck needs repairs. We stop in a tough industrial shipyard with a dry dock and heavy equipment, sunken pits, ramps, hangars, working bays. German Shepherds and Malamute Huskies guard the empty yard. Walking back to cab of truck, I discover it has been robbed. I can't remember if I locked the doors. The doors are closed but the burglar has taken my backpack and wallet. Through an open door I see a squalid dirt floor room with filthy sheets. Nearby the thief sits in an old car; the rear seat has my backpack and other stolen stuff. The driver of another car, the thief's companion, is trawling the empty shipyard for other opportunities. "Get out of here!" I shout. They don't flinch and even take Polaroid cameras out to record their future targets. The pack has been ransacked and I can't stop them as they depart.

Stranded with an old man in the mountains. "Let's see what the parking lot looks like," he says and goes to the picture window. "Nope, looks empty to me." I look through the phone book for a taxi. "Do you know what the best taxi company's number is?" I ask. "We don't know that," he replies and sis back down.

Dozens of women are celebrating political victories on election night. They hug and laugh. I sit, welcomed as a fellow traveler. Next to me is a woman who insists that she see copies of the test results regarding the death of her child. After ignoring her, a clerk finally responds and brings a packet of documents to her. She rises to her feet and in a loud, angry voice silences the crowd: "If your baby died after drinking your milk, you'd want to see your test results too!" She stomps out of the building, leaving the women with their jaws dropped. The celebration is over.

I get a lift in an old car driven by a bald, toothless acidhead who thanks me for going to Baja with him. "My pleasure," I reply, with no intention of joining him on that trip. But he delivers me into the hands of a big, burly guy who shoves me down into a canyon. In slow motion, I am sliding down on my back and looking up at him. My backpack separates from me. "If you hurt me...." I yell, attempting to threaten him, but he throws rocks and spears to kill me, barely missing. I scramble to my feet and run for my life, passing through community food gardens and

backyards, afraid I might be ambushed, afraid to stop, knowing I have a long way to go before I get back home.

Coasting on a bike on an incline down a road that dips and intersects with another road. A station wagon with headlights on pursues me up the opposite slope. I veer onto an unmarked dirt lane, drop my bike, and proceed on a footpath into a treed lot. Dogs and men hunt me. Hiding in darkness. The dogs sniff me out, bark at the bushes and rear up on their hind legs, straining at choke collars. I break away as sharpened poles are thrown at me. I plunge headlong back toward the paved road—come awake.

A Mexican tienda isolated in a treeless landscape. Low-lifers hang out there, stranded. Well-equipped gringo adventurers are stopping before traveling into uncharted desert territory. They have modern equipment in big pickups. You can't eat the food in the tienda. You appeal to the woman who works there, explaining that you are vulnerable to attack by desperadoes. You have no wallet or extra clothes. She can't help you. Outside behind the building the dirt is covered with vomit from those who have eaten the food. You wake up.