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CHANCE

WHEN OUR SYNAGOGUE was at last selected to become the new home of a Torah from Czechoslovakia—a Torah whose old village had been obliterated—the Committee of the Scroll issued an announcement, green letters on ivory, very dignified. Our presence was requested, the card said, at a Ceremony of Acceptance at two in the afternoon on Sunday the sixteenth of November, nineteen hundred and seventy-five.

Nothing in the invitation suggested that the Committee of the Scroll had chafed under the dictatorship of its chairwoman, the cantor's wife. But my parents and I heard all about it from our neighbor Sam, a committee member. Sam said that the cantor's wife wanted the Ceremony of Acceptance to take place on a Friday night or a Saturday morning—not on the pale Sabbath of the gentiles. The group united against her. Here in America's heartland Sunday was the proper day for special ceremonies, they said. Also we'd get better attendance—faculty from the university, interested non-Jews, maybe even the mayor. Then the sexton expressed dismay that the Torah would enter the premises three weeks before the date of the ceremony.

It would lie in the basement—a corpse! he cried—because the Leibovich-Sutton nuptials were scheduled for the first Sunday after its arrival and the Lehrman-Grossman ones for the second.

But what could anyone do?—weddings must never be postponed. Sam and the sexton cleared out a little room off the social hall directly under the sanctuary, and the rabbi blessed the room;

and they fitted its door with a lock. The congregation continued its busy life.

Lots of activities went on weekly in our synagogue. The Talmud class met on Monday nights. Hebrew for Adults was taught on Tuesdays. Wednesdays belonged to committees. On Thursdays from six to eight a university professor conducted a seminar on Chasidic thought. Friday nights and Saturday mornings were devoted to worship, and on Sundays children straggled into the hateful old school building next to the new sanctuary. Parents had to pay for Sunday school (some also paid their kids); the other courses were free and open to anyone.

On a Monday morning the Czech Torah arrived by plane. The cantor, the rabbi, the sexton, and Sam laid it reverently in the little cleared-out room. They locked the room, and there it remained, its presence unsuspected by the Talmud class, the Hebrew students, the scholars of Chasidism, and the committees. Perhaps the sexton visited it sometimes. The Torah study group left it entirely alone.

THE TORAH STUDY GROUP was *not* open to anyone. It met on Sunday nights, in private homes, usually at our house but sometimes at the cantor's apartment. His flat had a formal dining room, my father told me: panels and dark wallpaper and a weak chandelier. When the Torah study group assembled at the cantor's long mahogany table, no one sat at the head or the foot. The men huddled near the center, three to a side. The cantor's wife insisted on protecting the table with a lace cloth. The complicated geometry of the cloth was distracting, even more distracting than my mother's habit of dealing in a singsong voice when the Torah study group met at our house.

"Why is the cantor's wife so stern?" I asked my parents.

"She's from Brussels," was my father's reply.

"They have no children," my mother explained.

"Or maybe Antwerp," said my father, sighing. "The chips snag on that goddamn lace."

The round Formica table in the breakfast area of our kitchen didn't require a cloth. It seated eight easily. At my fourteenth birthday party, in September, some dozen girls had squeezed around it to eat pizza and make voodoo gourds under the supervision of Azinta, a sophomore at the university, our then live-in.

For the Torah study group, our table was usually adorned with a single bowl of pretzels. But on the Sunday evening after the Lehrman-Grossman wedding it wore a centerpiece of Persian lilies and freesia. My parents had attended the wedding and its luncheon, where my mother found a paper daisy under her plate, signifying that she had won the flowers.

I was fiddling with the blossoms. "Dede o savalou!" I sang. I was still partial to voodoo despite Azinta's having left us.

"Oh, shut up," my mother said, though agreeably. "Help me with this food."

I joined her at the counter that separated the kitchen from the breakfast area. Halloween had passed. Outside the window our backyard was covered with leaves. A pumpkin was softly decaying on the windowsill.

My mother sliced the beef to be served later to the group. She sliced the cheese and the tomatoes and the rye. I arranged the food in horizontal rows on a long platter. I laid pickles here and there, vertically, like notes. She slid the platter into the refrigerator.

I turned on the hanging lamp over the table. Its brilliant cone would soon illuminate not only the Lehrman-Grossman flowers but seven glasses of beer or cider. (The cantor's wife provided only ginger ale.) Later in the evening the light would fall upon the sandwich materials. (The cantor's wife left a plate of hard pastries on the sideboard.) In the hours of play the lamp would light up the faces of the six learned men and the one woman.

It was seven thirty. My father emerged from his study, and stretched. The doorbell rang.

The cantor and the rabbi came in, one immediately after the other. These two spent a lot of time as a pair. They got together not only to conduct services and prepare bat mitzvahs and report to the officers; they also went skating in winter and took bicycle rides out to the farm area in spring. I had seen them on their bikes. The cantor's buttocks lapped over his seat like mail pouches. The rabbi's curls stuck up on either side of his cap like the horns of a ram. Sometimes the cantor's wife went biking, too. She maintained her strict posture even on a ten-speed.

"Hello, hello," the cantor said to us all, remembering not to pinch my cheek.

"Hi," the rabbi said to my father and me.

My friend Margie's father arrived next, along with her grandfather. Margie's father was treasurer of the synagogue. Also he ran a successful finance business. Margie referred to him as "the usurer." After his wife's death he had invited his own father to live with him and Margie. Margie called him "the patriarch." The patriarch's moist mouth protruded from a ruche of a beard. His son kept him supplied with white silk shirts embossed with further white, and shawl-collared sweaters.

The usurer's walk had a dancer's grace. He greeted my mother with a friendly hug and me with an imperfect kiss, lips not quite touching my skin. The patriarch raised his hand in a general blessing.

Sam, who had to trot over only from next door, came last. I let him in. The others were already seated at the round table in the kitchen. My mother had transferred the Lehrman-Grossman flowers to the counter.

Sam barely reached my shoulder. He was in his fifties, and worn out. "Hello, darling," he said glumly.

I followed him into the kitchen and he took the empty seat next to my mother. I placed my own chair at a little remove, behind my mother's right shoulder. But I didn't plan to remain seated. I would soon stand and begin to move around the group, pausing above one person and then another, looking at the fan of cards each held. I was allowed this freedom on the promise of silence and impassivity. The tiniest flare of a nostril, my father warned, might reveal to some other player the nature of the hand I was peeking at. So I kept my face wooden. Eventually I'd settle on a high stool next to the counter, and hook my heels on the stool's upper rungs, and let my clasped hands slide between my denimed thighs. Hunched like that, I'd watch the rest of the game.

Now, though, I sat behind my mother's silk shoulder. She was wearing the same ruby-colored dress she'd worn to the wedding. I could see just the tip of her impudent nose. My mother was a devoted convert, but she could not convert her transcendental profile. Even in the harsh glow of the lamp, she was, in the words of my nasty great-aunt Hannah, a thing of beauty and a goy forever.

Two of the men—the slate-haired cantor and the young rabbi—were also handsome enough to withstand the spotlight. The patriarch was elderly enough to be ennobled by it.

The usurer had a reputation for handsomeness. Margie told me he was pursued by women, not all of them single. At the table he warmly accepted the cards dealt him as if his love for each was infinite. When he folded—turned cards down, withdrawing from a game—he did it with an air of fatherly regret. The overhead lamp greased his hair and darkened his lips.

Our neighbor Sam was less than handsome. His small curved nose was embellished with a few hideous hairs. His upper lip often rose above his yellow teeth, and sometimes stayed there, on the ledge of his gum, twitching. His upper body twitched a lot, too. "Maybe he a duppy," Azinta had suggested one September day, looking through our broad kitchen window at Sam raking leaves in the next backyard. "Cannot lie properly in he grave. Tormented by need to venge self."

Azinta—christened Ann—was the daughter of two Detroit dentists who were extremely irritated by her adoption of island speech. They became even more irritated when she left us in October to share quarters with Ives Nielson, the owner of a natural food shop called, more or less eponymously, the Red Beard. My mother spent a long evening on the telephone with Azinta's mother, trying to reassure her. I eavesdropped on the extension in my bedroom.

"A phase, I'm certain," my mother said. "Azinta—Ann, I mean—wasn't happy with the philosophy department."

"She could have switched to premed instead of to that Swede."

"A short-lived rebellion," my mother predicted.

"Like yours?" the dentist said.

Duppy or not, Sam was suffering from all his tics tonight. His shoulders moved up and down in defeated shrugs.

My father was not handsome, either. I had recently and suddenly become aware of his lack of looks, as if a snake had hissed the secret in my ear. I was ashamed of my awareness. His bald head shone grossly back at the lamp. His big pocky nose gleamed, too. His cigar glowed. Only his voice revealed his soul—the velvet voice of a scholar. He was a professor of political theory. His smile was broad, and there was a space between his two front teeth. He used that space to good effect at the lake in the summer. Lying on his back in the water, he could spout like a whale.

WHATEVER I KNOW ABOUT POKER I learned from watching the Torah study group. I learned that a royal straight flush was the best possible hand. This made sense—what could be grander than king, queen, and offspring, with a ten as steward, all under the tepee of an ace? Four cards of the same denomination were next best, and extremely likely to win the pot; then three of one value and two of another—that was called a full house; then five of the same suit, a flush; and so on down to a pair. Sometimes nobody had a pair, and the highest card won all the money.

I learned that whoever was dealing chose the form of the game. The deal passed from player to player in a clockwise direction. Betting within each round followed the same clockwise rule. Some games were called Draw; in those each player held his cards in his hand, not revealing them to anyone. He had to guess other players' holdings from their behavior and their betting and how many cards they drew. Other games were Stud; each player's cards lay overlapping on the table, forming a wiggly spoke toward the center, some cards faceup and some facedown. The down cards were called "the hole." A player could look in his own hole but not in anybody else's.

During my twenties I kept brief company with a fellow who played in a big-money weekly, and I discovered from him that my parents' pastime had been poker in name only. "Two winners?" he said, laughing. (In my parents' Stud games the best hand usually divided the money with the worst.) "What's Chicago?" he wondered. The lowest spade in the hole split the pot with the high hand, I diffidently told him. "Racist nomenclature, wouldn't you say?" he remarked.

"Oh dear."

"I'm sure the gatherings were pleasant," he quickly added.

White chips stood for nickels, red for dimes, blue for quarters. My mother was forbidden to deal her frivolous inventions like *Mittelschmerz*, where the most middling hand won, and *Servitude*, where you had to match the pot if you wanted to fold. The ante was a dime in Draw and a nickel in Stud. You couldn't bet a dime in Stud until a pair was showing, and the amount of the raise could be no greater than the initial bet, and there were only three raises each round. In short: very small sums were redistributed among

these friends. Even between them my parents rarely recovered the price of the sandwiches.

And yet everybody—or at least every man—played with ardor, as if something of great value were at stake: a fortune, a reputation, a king's daughter.

THE PATRIARCH DEALT FIRST that evening. "Five-card Draw," he announced. "Ante a dime."

He dealt five cards to everybody. From my chair I could see only Sam's cards and my mother's. Sam had a jack/ten and I knew he'd draw to it. My mother had a low pair and I knew she, too, would draw.

The patriarch turned to his left. "If you please."

"Ten cents," the cantor responded, and tossed in a red chip.

"Raise," the rabbi said. Two red chips. He was sitting to the left of the cantor and to the right of Sam. I couldn't see Sam's face, only his crummy cards. Of the rabbi I could see only a portion of his curls.

"Call," Sam said, matching the rabbi's bet. He put in two red chips.

"Raise," my mother said, on her silly pair of fives.

The usurer smiled and called. Dad passed a hand over his brow and called. The patriarch folded. Everybody else called.

The draw began. The cantor drew one card, the rabbi two, Sam three. My mother drew two. She picked up the five of clubs and a queen. The usurer drew one, and seemed to welcome the newcomer. My father drew one, and frowned, but that message, too, could have been false.

The next round of betting began with my mother. She bet ten cents. The usurer folded. Dad folded. The cantor folded. The rabbi tossed in a red chip. Sam folded, his shoulder shuddering.

The rabbi and my mother laid their cards on the table. He had three nines to her three fives.

Did it happen exactly that way? A deck of cards has fifty-two factorial permutations—fifty-three factorial times two if you use jokers. (The Torah study group didn't play with jokers, though my mother had made a plea for their inclusion.) Fifty-two factorial is an enormous number. Roughly that many angels dance on any pin. Furthermore, two decades have passed since the night the rabbi's

three nines (missing the spade) beat my mother's three fives (missing the diamond) in the first game of the weekly group. I would be wise to distrust my memory.

Yet I can see the moment as if it were happening now. The two of them inspect each other's cards. My mother then smiles at the rabbi, looking up at his eyes. The rabbi smiles at my mother, looking down at the pile of chips.

"I was dealt two pairs," says my father's thrilling voice. "But I didn't improve.

"I was dealt one pair," my mother says.

"You raised on a pair?" my father says. "God help me."

"I improved!"

"Insufficiently," the usurer says, and smiles.

The rabbi leans forward and sweeps the pile of chips toward him. A white one rolls onto the floor. I pick it up, and idly stow it in the front pocket of my jeans.

At the Torah study group I learned the politesse of dealing, at least as it was practiced there. In Stud games, though everyone could see all the up cards, it was the custom for the dealer to name them as they appeared. Also he commented on the developing hands. "Another heart, flushing," the cantor might have said in the second game, dealing to the rabbi. "Possible straight," he said, as a nine followed an eight in front of Sam. "Good low," as a four followed a six in my mother's display. "No visible help," he sympathized when the usurer's jack of diamonds took on an eight of spades like a bad debt. "Who knows?" he would shrug sooner or later; and then, reverting to the Yiddish of his ancestors, "*Vehr vaist?*" *Vehr vaist?* was the standard interpretation of some unpaired, unstraightening, unflushing medium-value hodgepodge. If the player behind this mess didn't fold when he received yet another unworthy card, the dealer's "*Vehr vaist?*" became ominous, reminding us that there were cards we couldn't see, things we couldn't know.

On Sunday nights it was my job to refill the drinks, and to tell people on the telephone that my parents were out. This work kept me pretty busy. One of the calls was always from Margie.

"What's he wearing?" she inquired by way of hello.

"A cassock."

"Stop that! Torturer . . ."

"Gray pants, gray striped shirt, tan sweater."

"Thanks. I'm absolutely devouring Rebecca at the Well, next week's portion. Are you going to the ceremony for the Czech scroll?" And without waiting for an answer, "What are you wearing?" And without waiting for that answer, either, "I'm wearing an exceedingly biblical outfit. How old do you guess Rebecca was when she watered the stranger's camel?"

"Thirty."

"Thirteen!"

I went back to the game. The deal had gone around to the cantor again, or so I think I remember. Seven-card Stud. Now I stood behind the patriarch. My mother was wiping her glasses with a handkerchief. She wore glasses over her Wedgwood eyes to deflect admiration, my father had told me. His great-grandmother had achieved the same thing with a matron's wig.

"The pair of queens bets," the cantor said, nodding to the patriarch.

"Ten cents," the patriarch said.

"I call," the cantor said, making the cadence sound like the beginning of a declaration of love. Some thirty years earlier, just out of high school, he had fought on the beaches of Anzio. I figured he had picked up his rich tenor on the march north. He had met his wife in Paris, after the liberation.

Sam did not conceal his disappointment in the cards he was being dealt. But disappointment was different from misery. He became noticeably miserable when the game ended and he had to go home. Sam had two sons, but both had escaped from his gloomy house. One was a physiotherapist in New York and the other was something unspeakable on the West Coast—at any rate, Sam wouldn't speak of him.

As far as I was concerned, Sam's wife was as dead as Margie's poor mother. She was just a pale face seen briefly at the kitchen window or an arm pulling down a second-floor shade. One rainy morning, when I was home from school with a cold, she ran down her front path after the mailman in order to give him a letter—perhaps one she'd forgotten to post, perhaps one that had been wrongly delivered. The mailman took the letter. Mrs. Sam turned and walked slowly back up the path. The wind further unsettled her scant red hair and her pink wrapper was coming undone and the rain lashed her squirrel face.

"Why is Mrs. Sam so strange?" I'd asked my mother.

"She drinks." My mother knew about drinking. She worked in a family-service agency.

At ten thirty, right after the patriarch had taken an entire pot by winning both high and low, Mother pushed back her chair. "Count me out."

"Already?" Sam moaned.

The men continued to play. My mother took the platter from the refrigerator and plugged in the coffee while I removed the empty beer glasses from the table and cut a defrosted carrot cake into eight slices. My mother loaded the glasses into the dishwasher, and I resumed my perch on the high stool and at last allowed myself to observe the rabbi. I did this at Margie's behest. I myself was in love with our chemistry teacher.

The rabbi was about thirty. He had a doctorate in sociology as well as a certificate of ordination, and he knew how to play the guitar. He was haltingly eloquent. Since his arrival two years earlier, attendance at Saturday-morning services had swollen. Every Friday night, Margie washed her hair with shampoo and then with flea soap, which added body. On Saturday mornings she put on a velvet skirt and a blouse with romantic sleeves. She walked to the synagogue. After services she descended to the social hall and drank the sweet wine and the seed cookies the Sisterhood provided. Sooner or later she edged toward the rabbi. The women behind the refreshments stiffened. Poor motherless vamp! Margie said something about the Torah portion. The interpretation was always borrowed from the Hertz commentaries but the vivacity was all her own. The rabbi gave her a kindly reply. She moved away.

The game now being dealt was seven-card Stud. The rabbi unabashedly peeked twice at his hole cards. His eyes were as black as calligrapher's ink. There were faint smudges under them. His hair made my fingers tingle. All at once I became unable to reconstruct the chemistry teacher's face in my mind. The white chip I had picked up earlier scorched my groin. I was no longer peeking at the rabbi for Margie's sake; now I was feasting my eyes on him for myself. I noticed that he had stopped checking on his pair. Through the medium of the darkened kitchen window, he was feasting his eyes on my mother.

That chilly replica of our kitchen in the window was like a

photograph that a son of mine might one day look at; he'd cautiously name me and my parents and wonder about the identity of the other five figures—the theatrical man with the gray hair, the bearded old fellow, the Latin lover, the shrimp, the young man burning up inside. I thought of my inquisitive descendant, not yet born, and then I thought of the Czech Torah, alone in its locked room, waiting to be born again. I shivered and shook myself—not like a dog, I hoped, again eyeing the rabbi. Maybe like a water nymph?

The rabbi lost to the patriarch, as I recall. It was now the last game. Dad announced pot limit, an unbuckled end to the evening. Pot limit was five-card Draw: any number of raises allowed, and you could bet the amount that was already on the table.

My father dealt. Chips hit the table immediately. Dad's was the only hand I could see. He wisely folded a jack/ten when it was his turn, but everybody else stayed in for three raises. At the draw everybody took two cards except for the rabbi, who took none.

There was a hoarse murmuring at this display of strength or nerve.

"Check," the patriarch said.

"Check," the cantor echoed.

The rabbi bet the pot. It amounted by then to five dollars or so.

"Too rich for me," Sam said, and folded.

But the usurer, smiling his tolerant smile, raised back. The patriarch and the cantor folded.

And then the rabbi raised again. I stepped down from my stool and slid behind the patriarch. I heard a squish: the pumpkin on the windowsill had imploded. I passed the cantor and stopped behind the rabbi. He held four spades to the king, and the nine of clubs.

Shocked by this four-flush that our man of God was so recklessly promoting, I nonetheless managed to obey my father's directions. I did not snicker, did not gasp, did not smile, did not frown, did not incline my head farther or change the angle of my shoulders or grip the back of the rabbi's chair any tighter than I was already gripping it. But my forehead felt as if a flame had been brought very near, and I wouldn't have been surprised to learn that my hair was on fire.

The usurer glanced up in order to evaluate the rabbi's face. He could not have avoided seeing mine, too. Who could fault him for

misinterpreting my close-wrapped excitement?—I must be looking down on a royal straight flush, he'd have thought; or at least four of a kind.

"The pot's yours," the usurer said graciously to the rabbi. He showed his straight, which he was not obliged to do. The rabbi collapsed his own fan of cards with one hand and collected the discards with the other and merged his nothing with the other nothings. He was under no obligation to show what he'd held. I knew that good poker strategy recommended allowing yourself sometimes to be caught in a failed bluff. But a successful bluff is best not proclaimed, particularly one that you guess has been aided by the kibitzer behind your back. My father told me later that my face resembled a tomato.

THOUGH THE CEREMONY to receive the Czech Torah was scheduled to begin at two o'clock, the entire congregation and a host of other people had assembled by a quarter before the hour.

We crowded into the pews of the sanctuary—an octagonal room paneled in light oak, its broad windows unmediated by stained glass. The room glowed in the radiant afternoon.

My parents and I had arrived at half past one. I entered between them as if they were marrying me, but they let me take the seat on the aisle. I watched people come in. Mrs. Sam leaned noticeably against her husband. His body adopted a matching slant, and he seemed to be doing the walking for them both. Margie swished down the aisle on her grandfather's arm. She was wearing an outfit that Azinta must have helped her assemble—an orange caftan, an orange turban, and silver earrings the size of kiddush cups. The mayor nodded to several acquaintances. The university provost nodded to no one. Other Christians looked stiffly appreciative, as if they were at a concert. Azinta held hands with her Viking lover. She wore a pioneer's high-necked dress in a brown shade that just matched her skin. I wondered if she was now speaking with a Scandinavian accent.

At exactly two o'clock Mrs. Cantor marched across the bimah to the lectern. In a manly voice she welcomed us. "This is a momentous occasion," she boomed. "It is the culmination of the efforts of many people." Her speech was brief. Perhaps it was not meant to be

brief, but by the time she had reached the fifth or sixth sentence, our attention was diverted to the rear of the sanctuary.

The cantor stood in the open double portal. He was wearing the white robe of the Days of Awe. His arms were wrapped around the Czech Torah, not confidently, as when he carried our Law on Shabbat, but awkwardly, as if he held something fragile. The scroll, swaddled in yellowing silk, might have been an ailing child.

The cantor moved forward. His footfalls were silent on the thick carpet of the aisle. There was no organ, no choir. There was no sound at all. Behind the cantor walked the rabbi, also enrobed. His eyes were fixed on the spindles of the Torah that poked above the cantor's white shoulder. Behind the rabbi marched the officers of the temple, talliths over their business suits. The usurer's tango glide was restrained.

The little crowd of talliths followed the two white robes down the middle aisle and across the front aisle and up the three stairs to the bimah and across the bimah toward the lectern. The cantor stopped short of the lectern, though, and turned to face the members of the congregation. The rabbi turned, too. The elders, unrehearsed, bumped into their priests, and there was some shuffling on the platform, and one old man almost fell. Soon everyone was still. The cantor's wife had disappeared. But I saw her green shoulder bulking in the front row. Then I lost sight of it as the congregation, without any signal, rose.

"Oh God of our fathers," the cantor began. His plummy voice broke. "God," he began again, and this time he kept talking, though his face glistened like glass. "We of Congregation Beth Shalom accept this sacred scroll, the only remnant of Your worshippers of the village of Slavkov, whose every inhabitant perished in Majdanek. Whenever we read from this Torah we will think of our vanished brothers and sisters and their dear children. God, may we be worthy of this inheritance."

He began a Hebrew prayer, which I might have followed, but I was thinking of what I'd learned in confirmation class about the village of Slavkov. Its Jews were artisans and peddlers and money lenders. Some of them read the Holy Books all day long in the House of Study. Then I thought about things I only guessed: some of them drank too much and others coveted their neighbor's silver

and one or two of them lay with peasant women. A few little boys plotted to set their cheder on fire. On Sunday nights a group of men gathered in a storefront, putting troubles aside for a few hours, consulting the wise numeracy of a pack of cards.

The cantor ended his prayer. He handed the scroll to the rabbi. The rabbi held it vertically in his arms. He turned toward the ark. The president of the congregation opened the ark. The rabbi placed the Czech Torah beside our everyday one.

The congregation sobbed. I sobbed, too, weeping over a confusion of disconnected things, *vehr vaist*: Margie who missed her mother and the rabbi who lived alone; childless Mrs. Cantor and forsaken Mrs. Sam; the sons and daughters of the Jews of Slavkov, who had dreamed of love and were ashes now. My cheeks flamed. I gripped the pew in front of me, looked at my knuckles, looked up, and met the usurer's rueful gaze.

TOYFOLK

IN THE TOWN SQUARE Fergus saw a young man in a military Czech. "Stores are on the ground above."

"I speak only English," snapped the man. His left hand rested on the awning of his shop. His middle fingers were missing—their ghostly tips were visible.

"The cobblestones were light gray," the man persisted.

"I have other magazines in the bin," the vendor said, in French.

Fergus shook his head, though the clock stood aslant in the middle of the square. The clock twitched every sixty seconds. Would you come to the bakery? Customers stuttered into the bakery. Sideways and sideways, sprinkling the October sun the whole little entrance. The facades—glistened as if shellacked.

"Good-bye," Fergus said to the man.

"Au revoir, Toyman."

Fergus walked away, smiling.

He was a division head of Toyman. After a site had been selected, and he