

To anyone who lived through it, there will never be anything remotely like the 1968 presidential campaign again: the murder of Robert F. Kennedy, the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Eugene McCarthy's "Children's Crusade," the spectacle of Lyndon Baines Johnson virtually a prisoner within the White House, and finally, climactically, the riots during the Democratic Convention in Chicago.

But what *really* happened at Chicago, beneath the smoke and tear gas? Pat Cadigan, Hugo- and Nebula-nominated author of *Mindplayers*, *Synners*, and a number of savagely brilliant short stories, offers one startling reconstruction.

Dispatches from the Revolution

by Pat Cadigan

Dylan was coming to Chicago.

The summer air, already electric with the violence of the war, the assassination attempts successful and unsuccessful, the anti-war riots, became super-charged with the rumor. Feeling was running high, any feeling about anything, real high, way up high, eight miles high and rising, brothers and sisters. And to top it all off, there was a madman in the White House.

Johnson, pull out like your father should have! The graffito of choice for anyone even semi-literate; spray paint sales must have been phenomenal that summer. The old bastard with a face like the dogs he lifted up by their ears would not give it up, step aside, and graciously bow to the inevitable. He wuz the Prezident, the gaw-damned Prezident, hear that, muh fellow Amurrieans? *Dump Johnson, my ass, don't even think about it, boys, the one we ought to dump is that candy-assed Humphrey. Gaw-damned embarrassment is what he is.*

And the President's crazy, that's what he is, went the whispers all

around Capitol Hill, radiating outward until they became shouts. *Madman in the White House—the crazy way with LBJ!* If you couldn't tell he was deranged by the way he was stepping up the bombing and the number of troops in Vietnam, his conviction that he could actually stand against Bobby Kennedy clinched it. Robert F. Kennedy, sainted brother to martyred Jack, canonized in his own lifetime by an assassination attempt. Made by the only man in America who was obviously crazier than LBJ, frothed-up Arab with a name like automatic-weapons-fire, Sirhan Sirhan, ka-boom, ka-boom. The Golden Kennedy had actually assisted in the crazed gunman's capture, shoulder to shoulder with security guards and the Secret Service as they all wrestled him to the floor. Pity about the busboy taking that bullet right in the eye, but the Kennedys had given him a positively lovely funeral with RFK himself doing the eulogy. And, needless to say, the family would never want for anything again in this life.

But Johnson the Madman was going to run! Without a doubt, he was a dangerous psychotic. Madman in the White House—damned straight you didn't need a Weatherman to know the way the wind blew.

Nonetheless, there *was* one—after all, hadn't Dylan said the answer was blowin' in the wind? And if he was coming to Chicago to support the brothers and sisters, that *proved* the wind was about to blow gale force. Storm coming, batten down the hatches, fasten your seatbelts, and grab yourself a helmet, or steal a hardhat from some redneck construction worker.

Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement already had their riot gear. Seven years after the first freedom ride stalled out in Birmingham, the feelings of humiliation and defeat at having to let the Justice Department scoop them up and spirit them away to New Orleans for their own protection had been renewed in the violent death of the man who had preached victory through nonviolence. He'd had a dream; the wake-up call had come as a gunshot. Dreaming was for when you were asleep. Now it was time to be wide-awake in America...

Annie Phillips:

"There were plenty of us already wide-awake in America by that late date. I'd been to Chicago back in '66, two years to the month in Marquette Park. If I was never awake any other day in my life before April '68, I was awake that day. Surrounded by a thousand of the meanest white people in

America waving those Confederate flags and those swastikas, screaming at us. And then they let fly with rocks and bricks and bottles, and I saw when Dr. King took one in the head. I'd thought he was gonna die that day and all the rest of us with him. Well, he didn't and we didn't, but it was a near thing. After, the buses were pulling away and they were chasing us and I looked back at those faces and I thought, 'There's no hope. There's really no hope.'

"When Daley got the court order against large groups marching in the city, I breathed a sigh of relief, I can tell you. I felt like that man had saved my life. And then Dr. King says okay, we'll march in Cicero, it's a suburb, the order doesn't cover Cicero. *Cicero*. I didn't want to do it, I knew they'd kill us, shoot us, burn us, tear us up with their bare hands and teeth. Some of us were ready to meet them head-on. I truly believe that Martin Luther King would have died that day if Daley hadn't wised up in a hurry and said he'd go for the meeting at the Palmer House.

"Summit Agreement, yeah. Sell-Out Agreement, we called it, a lot of us. I think even Dr. King knew it. And so a whole bunch of us marched in Cicero anyway. I wasn't there, but I know what happened, just like everybody else. Two hundred dead, most of them black, property damage in the millions though I can't say I could ever find it in me to grieve for property damage over people damage. Even though I wasn't there, something of me died that day in Cicero and was reborn in anger. By '68, I had a good-sized bone to pick with good old Chi-town, old Daley-ville. I don't regret what I did. All I regret is that the bomb didn't get Daley. It had his name on it, I put it on there myself, on the side of the pipe. 'Richard Daley's ticket to hell, coach class.'

"Looking back on it, I think I might have had better luck as a sniper."

Excerpt from an interview
conducted covertly at Sybil Brand,
published in
The Whole Samizdat Catalog, 1972
exact date unknown

Veterans of the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley also knew what they were up against. Reagan's tear-gas campaign against campus protestors drew praise from a surprising number of people who felt the Great Society was seriously threatened by the disorder promoted by campus dissidents.

The suggestion that the excessive force used by the police caused problems rather than solving any was rejected by the Reagan administration and by its growing blue-collar following as well.

By the time Reagan assumed the governorship, he had already made up his mind to challenge Nixon in '68. But what he needed for a serious bid was the Southern vote, which was divided between Kennedy and Wallace. Cleverly, the ex-movie actor managed to suggest strong parallels between campus unrest and racial unrest, implying that both groups were seeking the violent overthrow and destruction of the government of the United States. Some of the more radical rhetoric that came out of both the student left and the civil rights movement, and the fact that the student anti-war movement aligned itself with the civil rights movement only seemed to validate Reagan's position.

That the Southern vote would be divided between two individuals as disparate as Robert F. Kennedy and George C. Wallace seems bizarre to us in the present. But both men appealed to the working class, who felt left out of the American dream. Despite the inevitable trouble that Wallace's appearances resulted in, his message did reach the audience for which it was intended—the common man who had little to show for years, sometimes decades, of hard work beyond a small piece of property and a paycheck taxed to the breaking point, and, as far as the common man could tell, to someone else's benefit. Wallace understood that the common man felt pushed around by the government and exploited this feeling. In a quieter era, he would have come off as a bigoted buffoon; but in a time when blacks and students were demonstrating, rioting, and spouting unthinkable statements against the government, the war, and the system in general, Wallace seemed to be one of the few, if not the only political leader who had the energy to meet this new threat to the American way of life and wrestle it into submission.

Some people began to wonder if McCarthy hadn't been right about Communist infiltration and subversion after all... and that wasn't Eugene McCarthy they were wondering about. By the time of the Chicago Democratic Convention, Eugene McCarthy had all but disappeared, his student supporters a liability rather than an asset. They undermined his credibility; worse, they could not vote for him, since the voting age at that time was a flat twenty-one for everyone...

Carl Shipley:

"I hadn't been around Berkeley long when the Free Speech Movement started. Like, the university— Towle, Kerr, all of them were so out-to-lunch on what was happening with us. They thought they were dealing with Beaver Cleaver and his Little League team, I guess. And with us, it was, 'Guess what, Mr. Man, the neighborhood's changing, it ain't Beaver Cleaver anymore, it's Eldridge Cleaver and Wally just got a notice to report for his physical and maybe he doesn't want to go get his ass shot off in southeast Asia and maybe we've had enough of this middle-American conservative bullshit.' That's why they wanted to shut down Bancroft Strip. That was the first place I went to see when I got there and it was just like everybody said, all these different causes and stuff, the Young Republicans hanging in right along with the vegetarians and the feminists and people fund-raising for candidates and I don't know what-all.

"So we all said fuck this shit, you ain't closing us down, we're closing *you* down. And we did it, we closed the university down. We had the power and we kept it—and then in comes Ronald Reagan two years later in '66 and he says, Relax, Mr. and Mrs. America, the cavalry's here. I know you're worried about the Beave, but I've got the solution.

"He sure did. By spring 1968, a lot of campus radio stations all over California were off the air and the campus newspapers were a joke. No funding, see. And by then, everyone was too sick of the smell of tear gas to fight real hard. That was Reagan's whole thing—sit-ins and take-overs weren't covered by the right of free assembly, they were criminal acts. Unless you had to be in a building for a class, you were trespassing. I got about a mile of trespassing convictions on my rap sheet and so do a lot of other people. And Mr. and Mrs. America, they were real impressed the way Reagan came down on the troublemakers.

"Sure were a *lot* of troublemakers. Too many to keep track of. That's what happened to me, you know. Got lost in the court system. The next thing I knew, it was 1970, and nobody remembered my name, except the guards. And they could remember my number a lot easier. Still can.

"The thing is, I never burned my draft card. That was a frame-up. I wouldn't have burned it. I was ready to go to Canada, but I intended to keep my draft card. As a reminder, you know. And not even my parents believed me. By then, I'd been into so much radical shit, they figured everything the pigs said about me was true.

"But the fact is, everything I owned was in that building when it

burned. So of course my draft card burned up with it! But I never set that fire. My court-appointed lawyer—this is me laughing bitterly—said if I told my 'crazy story' about seeing off-duty cops with gasoline cans running from the scene just before the explosion, the judge would tack an extra five years on my sentence for perjury. I should have believed him, because it was the only time anyone told me the truth."

Interview conducted at Attica,
published in
Orphans of the Great Society,
Fuck The System Press, 197?
(circulated illegally in photocopy)

Some say, even today, that Reagan wouldn't have taken such an extremist path if Wallace hadn't been such a strong contender. Nixon's mistake was in dismissing Wallace's strong showing, choosing to narrow his focus to the competition within his own party for the nomination. This made him look dinky, as if he didn't care as much about being president as he did about being the Republican candidate for president. That would show those damned reporters that they couldn't kick around Dick Nixon, *uh-huh*. Even if he lost, they'd have to take him seriously; if he actually won, they'd have to take him even more seriously. Which made him look not only dinky, but like a whiner—the kind of weak sister who, for example, might stand up in front of a television camera and rant about cocker spaniel puppies and good Republican cloth coats, instead of telling the American people that rioting, looting, and draft-card burning would no longer be tolerated. Even Ike's coattails weren't enough to repair Nixon's image, and Ike himself was comatose or nearly so in Walter Reed after a series of heart attacks.

The Republican National Convention was notable for three things: Rockefeller's last-minute declaration of candidacy, which further diluted Nixon's support, the luxuriousness of the accommodations and facilities, and its complete removal from the rioting that had broken out in Miami proper, where an allegedly minor racial incident escalated into a full-scale battle. The convention center was in Miami Beach, far from the madding Miami crowd, a self-contained playground for the rich. You couldn't smell the tear gas from Miami Beach, and the wind direction was such that you couldn't hear the sirens that screamed all night long...

"Carole Feeney" [this subject is still a fugitive]:

"I told everybody it was the goddam fatcat Republicans that we ought to go after, not the Democrats. But Johnson the Madman was running and everyone really thought that he was going to get the nomination. I said they were crazy, Kennedy had it in the bag. But Johnson really had them all running scared. I tried talking to some of the people in the Mobe. Half of them didn't want to go to either convention and the other half were trying to buy guns to take to Chicago! Off the pigs, they kept saying. Off the pigs. Jesus, I thought, the only pig that was going to get offed was Pigasus—the real pig that the Yippies were going to announce as the candidate from the Youth International Party. That was cute. I mean, really, it was. I said, let's go ahead and do that somewhere in California, film it and send the film to a TV station and let them run it on the news. Uh-uh, nothing doing. Lincoln Park or bust. Yeah, right—Lincoln Park *and* bust. Busted heads, busted bodies, busted and thrown in jail.

"So I wasn't going to go. Then I found out what Davis was doing. I couldn't believe it—Davis Trainor had been in on everything practically from the beginning. He was real good-looking and real popular, he had this real goofy sense of humor and he always seemed to come up with good ideas for guerrilla action. He actually did all the set-up work on the pirate radio station we ran out of Oakland and he worked out our escape routes. Not one of us got caught in the KCUF caper. We called it our Fuck-You caper, of course.

"Then I'm doing the laundry and I find it—his COINTELPRO I.D.—stuffed into that little bitty pocket in his jeans. You know, it's like a little secret pocket right above the regular pocket on the right. The one thing I always hated about the movement was that it was as sexist as the Establishment. If you were a woman, you always got stuck doing all the cooking and the cleaning up and the laundry and stuff. Unless you were a movement queen like Dohrn. Then you didn't have to do anything except make speeches and get laid if you wanted. Oh, they threw us a sop by letting us set up our own feminist actions and stuff, but we all knew it was a sop. We kept telling each other that after we changed things, it would be different and for now, we'd watch and listen and learn. Besides, everyone knew that the Establishment wouldn't take women as seriously as they would men. I wonder now how much any of us believed that—that it would really be different, that we could change things at all.

"Anyway, I went straight to the Mobe with my discovery, but it was too late—Davis discovered his pants were missing and he'd already split. I *really* didn't want to go to Chicago after that, but the alternative seemed to be either stay home and wait to get busted, or go to Chicago and get busted in action. I was still enough of an idealist that they talked me into Chicago. If I was going to get busted, I might as well be accomplishing something, and anyway, after the revolution, I'd be a National Heroine, and not a political prisoner.

"So, the revolution's come and gone and here I am. Still working for the movement—the feminist movement, that is. What little I *can* do, referring women with unwanted pregnancies to safe abortionists. Yes, there are some. Not all of us were poli-sci majors—some of us were pre-med, some of us went to nursing school. It costs a goddam fortune, but *I'm* not getting rich on it. It's for the risk, you know. You get the death penalty in this state for performing an illegal abortion. I could get life as an accessory, and there was a woman in Missouri who *did* get death for doing what I'm doing.

"Nobody in my family knows, of course. Especially not my husband. If *he* knew, he'd probably kill me himself. Odd as it sounds, I don't hate him... not when I think what good cover he is, and what the alternative would be if I didn't have such good cover..."

Part of a transcript labeled "Carole Feeney"
obtained in a 1989 raid on a motel
said to be part of a network of underground "safe houses" for tax
protestors,
leftist terrorists,
and other subversives;
no other illegal literature recovered

The source of the DYLAN IS COMING! rumor never was pinpointed. Some say it sprang into being all on its own and stayed alive because so many people wanted it to be true. And for all anyone knows, perhaps it actually was true, for a little while anyway; perhaps Dylan simply changed his mind. The more cynical suggested that the rumor had been planted by infiltrators like the notorious Davis Trainor, whose face became so well known thanks to the Mobe's mock WANTED poster that he had to have extensive plastic surgery, a total of a dozen operations in all. The poster

was done well enough that it passed as legitimate and was often allowed to hang undisturbed in post offices, libraries, and other public places, side by side with the FBI's posters of dissidents and activists. One poster was found in a Minneapolis library as late as 1975; the head librarian was taken into custody, questioned, and released. But it is no coincidence that the library was audited for objectionable material soon after that and has been subject to surprise spot-checks for the last fifteen years, in spite of the fact that it has always showed 100 percent compliance with government standards for reading matter. The price of a tyrant's victory is eternal vigilance.

This was once considered to be the price of liberty. Nothing buys what it used to.

Steve *D'Alessandro*:

"By Sunday, when Dylan didn't show, people were starting to get angry. I kept saying, well, hey, Allen Ginsberg showed. Allen Ginsberg! Man, he was like... *God* to me. He was doing his best, going around rapping with people, trying to get everybody calmed down and focused, you know. A whole bunch of us got in a circle around him and we were chanting *Om, Om*. I was getting a really good vibe and then some asshole throws a bottle at him and yells, *Oh, shut up, you fag!*

"I went crazy. Sure, I was in the closet then because the movement wasn't as enlightened as some of us wished it were. The FBI was doing this thing where it was going around trying to discredit a lot of people by accusing them of being queer, and everybody caught homophobia like it was measles. I ain't no fairy, no, sir, not me, I fucked a hundred chicks this week and my dick's draggin' on the ground so don't you call me no fag! It still stings, even when I compare it to how things are now. But then, I don't expect any kind of enlightened feeling in a society where I have to take fucking hormone treatments so I won't get a hard-on when I see another guy.

"Anyway, I found the scumbag that did it and I punched him out. I gave *him* a limp wrist. I gave him *two of* them. And I know I had a lot of support— I mean, a lot of straights admired Ginsberg, too, even if he was gay, just on the basis of *Howl*, but later, a bunch of Abbie's friends blamed me for creating the disturbance that gave the police the excuse they needed to wade in and start busting heads.

"Sometimes I'm afraid maybe they were right. But Annie Phillips told me it was just a coincidence. About me, I mean. She said they came in because they saw a black guy kissing a white girl. I guess nobody'll ever really know for sure, because the black guy died of his injuries and the white girl never came forward.

"I prefer to think that's what made Annie and her crowd go ahead with the bomb at the convention center. I don't like to think that Annie really wanted to blow anybody up. It was kind of weird how I knew Annie. Well, not weird, really. I probably owed Annie my life, or damn near, and so did a certain man of African-American descent. We were lucky it was her that walked in on us that day. She was enlightened, or at least tolerant, and we could trust her not to say anything. I didn't think she liked white people too much, but I'd heard she'd been with Martin Luther King a couple of years before on those marches and I couldn't blame her. Anyway, she couldn't give me away without giving away the brother, but to this day, I believe it really didn't matter to her—homosexuality, that is. Maybe because the Establishment hated us worse than they hated blacks.

"Anyway, I wasn't intending to be in the crowd that crashed the gate at the convention center on Wednesday. Nomination day. We'd been fighting in the streets since Monday and Daley's stormtroopers were beating the shit out of us. Late Tuesday night, the National Guard arrived. That's when we knew it was war.

"On Wednesday, we got hemmed in in Grant Park. People were pouring in by then, and nobody had expected that. It was like everyone was standing up to be counted because Dylan hadn't, or something. Anyway, there were maybe ten-twelve thousand of us at the band shell in the park, singing, listening to speeches, and then two kids went up a flagpole and lowered the flag to half-mast. The cops went crazy—they came in swinging wild and they didn't care who they hit or where they hit them. I was scared out of my mind. I saw those cops close up and they looked as mad as Johnson was supposed to be. On the spot, I became a believer like I'd never been before—Madman in the White House and Madman Daley and his Madman cops. It was all true, I thought while I curled up on the ground with my hands over my head and prayed some kill-crazy pig wouldn't decide to pound my ass to jelly.

"Somebody pulled me up and yelled that we were supposed to all go to in front of the Hilton. I ran like hell all the way to the railroad tracks along

with everybody else and that was where the Guard caught us with the tear gas. Man, I thought I was going to die of tear-gas suffocation if I didn't get trampled by the people I was with. Everyone was running around like crazy. I don't know how we ever got out of there but somebody found a way onto Michigan Avenue and somehow we all followed. And the Guard followed after us. Somebody said later they weren't supposed to, but they did. And they weren't carrying popguns.

"Well, we ran smack into Ralph Abernathy and his Poor People's Campaign mule train and that was more confusion. Then the Guard waded in and a lot of Poor People went to the hospital that night (it was after seven by then). I'll never forget that, or the sight of all those TV cameras and the bright lights shining in our eyes. We were all staggering around when a fresh bus-load of riot cops arrived, and that's another sight I'll never forget—two dozen beefy bruisers in riot gear shooting out of that bus like they were being shot from cannons and landing on all of us with both feet and their billyclubs. I lost my front teeth and I was so freaked I didn't even feel it until the next day.

"I was freaked, but I was also furious. We were all furious. It was like, Johnson would send us to Vietnam to be killed or he'd let us be killed by Daley's madman cops on the Chicago streets, it didn't matter to him. I think a lot of us expected the convention to adjourn in protest at our treatment. At least that Bobby Kennedy would speak out in protest against the brutality. The name Kennedy *meant* human rights, after all. Nobody knew that Kennedy had been removed from the convention center under heavy guard because they were all convinced that someone would make another attempt on his life. I heard that later, before they clamped down on all the information. He was about to get the fucking *nomination* and he was on his way back to his hotel. They said Madman Johnson was more like Mad-Dog Johnson over that, but who the fuck knows?

"George McGovern was at the podium when we busted in. I hadn't really been intending to be in that group that busted in, but I got carried along and when I saw we were going to crash the amphitheater, I thought, what the fuck.

"I almost got crushed against the doors before they gave, and I barely missed falling on my face and getting run over by six thousand screaming demonstrators. And the first person I saw was Annie Phillips.

"I thought I was in a Fellini film. She was dressed in this godawful

maid's uniform with a handkerchief around her head mashing down her Afro, but I knew it was her. We looked right into each other's eyes as I went by, still more carried along with the crowd than running on my own and she put both hands over her mouth in horror. That was the last time I saw her until she was on TV.

"I managed to get out of the way and stay to the back of the amphitheater itself. I just wanted to catch my breath and try to think how I was going to get out from all this shit without getting my head split open by a crazy Guardsman or a cop. I was still there when the bomb went off down front.

"The sound was so loud I thought my ears were bleeding. Automatically, I dropped to the floor and covered my head. There was a little debris, not much, where I was. When I finally dared to look, what I saw didn't make any sense. I still can't tell you exactly what I saw. I blocked it out. But sometimes, I think I dream it. I dream that I saw Johnson's head sitting on a Texas flagpole. I'm pretty sure that's just my imagination, because in the dream, he's got this vaguely surprised-annoyed expression on his saggy old face, like he's saying, *Whut the fuck is goin' on here?*

"Anyway, the next thing I knew, I was out on the street again, and somebody was crying about they were bombing us now, along with the Vietnamese. Which was about the time the Guard opened fire, thinking we were bombing them, I guess.

"I was lucky. I took a bullet in my thigh and it put me out of the action. Just a flesh wound, really. It bled pretty impressively for a while and then quit. By then, I was so out of my head that I can't even tell you where I staggered off to. The people who found me in their front yard the next morning took care of me and got me to a hospital. It was a five-hour wait in the emergency room. That was where I was when I heard about Kennedy."

Part of the data recovered
from a disk
taken in a raid on an illegal
software laboratory,
March, 1981

Jack Kennedy had died in the middle of a Dallas street, his head blown off in front of thousands of spectators and his horrified wife. Bobby Kennedy had narrowly missed meeting his end during a moment of triumph in a Los Angeles hotel. Ultimately, that seemed to have been only a brief reprieve before fate caught up with him...

Jasmine Chang:

"Everyone heard the explosion but nobody knew whether it was something the demonstrators had done, or if the National Guard had rolled in a tank or if the world had come to an end. I ran down to the lobby with just about everyone else on the staff and a good many of the hotel guests, trying to see what was happening outside without having to go out in it. Nobody wanted to go outside. That night, the manager on duty had told us that anyone who wanted could stay over if we didn't mind roughing it in the meeting rooms. I made myself a sleeping bag out of spare linens under a heavy table in one of the smaller rooms. The night before, the cops had cracked one of the dining room windows with a demonstrator's head. I wasn't about to risk my neck going out in that frenzy.

"Well, after the explosion, we heard the rifle-fire. Then the street in front of the hotel, already crowded, was *packed* all of a sudden. Wall-to-wall cops and demonstrators, and the cops were swinging at anything they could reach. They were *scything* their way through the crowd, you see—they were mowing people down to make paths so they could walk. It was one of the worst things I've ever seen. For a while it was *the* worst. I wish it could have stayed that way.

"The lobby was filling up, too, but nobody really noticed because we were all watching that sickening scene outside. The whole world was watching, they said. I saw a camera crew and all I could think was their equipment was going to get smashed to bits.

"I don't know when Kennedy came down to the lobby. I don't know why the Secret Service didn't stop him, I don't know what he thought he could do. He must have been watching from his window. Maybe he thought he could actually address the crowd—as if anyone could have heard him. Anyway, he was there in the lobby and none of us really noticed him.

"The demonstrator who forced his way into the revolving door—he was just a kid, he looked about fifteen years old to me. Scared out of his mind. The revolving door was supposed to be locked, but when I saw that kid's face, I was glad it wasn't.

"Then the cops tried to force their way in after him but they got stuck, there was a billy club jammed in the door or something. And the kid was babbling about how they'd blown up Kennedy at the convention. They threw a bomb and killed Kennedy! They blew him up with Johnson and McGovern!' he was yelling over and over. And Bobby Kennedy himself rushed over to the kid. I'm pretty sure that was the first any of us really noticed him, when it registered. I remember, I felt shocked and surprised and numb all at once, seeing Kennedy right there, right in the middle of a lobby. Like he was anybody. And nobody else moved, we all just stood there and stared like dummies.

"And Kennedy was trying to tell the kid who he was, that he wasn't dead and what bomb and all that. The kid got even more hysterical, and Kennedy was shaking him, trying to get something coherent out of him, we're all standing there watching and finally the cops manage to get through the revolving door.

"They must have thought the kid was attacking Kennedy. That's all I can figure. Even if that's not how they looked. The cops. They looked... *weird*. Like they didn't know what they were doing, or they did know but they'd forgotten why they were supposed to do it. I don't know. I don't *know*. But it was so weird, because they all looked exactly alike to me right at that moment, even though when I looked at them again after, they weren't anything alike, even in their uniforms. But they looked like identical dolls then, or puppets, because they moved all at once together. Like a kick-line of chorus girls, you know? Except that it wasn't their legs that came up but their arms.

"I know that when they raised their guns, they were looking at the kid, and I thought, 'No, wait!' I tried to move toward them, I was reaching out and they fired.

"It was like another bomb had gone off. For a moment, I thought another bomb had gone off, just a split second before they were going to fire. Then John Kennedy—I mean, Bobby, *Bobby* Kennedy— that's a Freudian slip, isn't it?—he did this clumsy whirl around and it looked like he was turning around in anger, like people do sometimes, you know? like

he was going, 'Dammit, I'm leaving!' And then he went down, and it was so awful because— well, this is going to sound really strange, I guess, but... well... when you see people get shot on a TV show, it's like choreographed or something, they do these kind of graceful falls. Kennedy was... they'd robbed him of his dignity. That's the only way I can think to put it. They shot him and humiliated him all at once, he looked clumsy and awkward and helpless.

"And I was outraged at that: I know it must sound weird, a man got shot, killed, and I'm talking about how he looked undignified. But that's like what taking someone's life is—taking their humanity, making them a thing. And I was outraged. I wanted to grab one of those cops' guns and make *them* into things. Not just because it was Bobby Kennedy, it could have been anyone on that floor at that moment, the kid, the manager, my supervisor—and I hated my supervisor's guts.

"Right then, I understood what the demonstrations were about, and I was against the war. Up until then, I'd been kind of for it—not really *for* it, more like, 'I hate war, but you're supposed to serve your country.' But right then, I understood how horrifying it must be to be told to make somebody into a thing, or be told you have to go out and risk being made into a thing. To kill, to be killed.

"All that went through my mind in a split second and then I started screaming. Then I heard this *noise*... under my screams, I heard this weird groan. It was Kennedy. They say he was dead by then and it must have been the air going out of his lungs past his vocal cords that made the sound. Awful. Just awful. I ran and pulled the fire alarm. It was the only thing I could think to do. And this other chambermaid, Lucy Anderson, she started pounding on the front windows and screaming, 'Stop! Stop! They killed Kennedy! They killed Kennedy!' Probably nobody could hear her, but even if anyone had, it wouldn't have mattered, because most of the people out there thought Kennedy was already dead in the explosion.

"It wasn't the Fire Department that used the hoses on those people. The cops commandeered the fire trucks and did that. And we were stuck in that hotel for another whole day and night. Even after they cleared the streets, they wouldn't let any of us go anywhere. Like house arrest.

"The questioning was awful. Nobody mistreated me or hit me or anything like that, it was just that they kept *at* me. I had to tell what I saw over and over and over and over until I thought they were either trying to

drive me out of my mind so I wouldn't be able to testify against those cops, or trying to find some way to make it seem like I was really the one who'd done it.

"By the time they told me I could leave the hotel, I was mad at the world, I can tell you. Especially since that Secret Service agent or whoever he was told me I'd be a lot happier if I moved out of Chicago and started over somewhere else. He really screwed that one up, and it was lucky for me he did. I left, and I was far, far away when the shit really hit the fan. I started over, all right—I got a new name and a new identity. Everybody else who was in that lobby—Lucy Anderson, the manager, the other staff and guests—they all disappeared. The last anyone saw of them, the Secret Service was taking them away. The cops vanished, too, but I have a feeling they didn't vanish to quite the same thing as the others. And the kid killed himself. *They* said. Right, sure. I bet he couldn't survive the interrogation.

"Of course, all that was a long time ago. Hard to imagine now how things were then. I was only twenty, then. I was working days and taking college courses at night. I wanted to be a teacher. Now I'm in my early forties, and sometimes I think I dreamed it all. I dreamed that I lived in a country where people *voted* their leaders into office, where you just had to be old enough and not be a convicted felon and you could vote. Instead of having to take those psychological tests and wait for the investigators to give you a voting clearance. It is like a dream, isn't it? Imagining that there was a time in this country when you could be anything you wanted to be, a teacher, a doctor, a banker, a scientist. I was going to be a teacher. I was going to be a history teacher, but those are mostly white people. My family's been in this country forever, but because I'm Oriental, I've got conditional citizenship now... and I was *born* here! I suppose I shouldn't complain. If anyone found out I saw Kennedy get it, I'd probably be unconditionally dead. Because everyone *knows* that the rumor that Kennedy was shot by some cops with a bad aim in a hotel lobby is just another stupid rumor, like the second gunman in Dallas in 1963. Everyone knows Kennedy died in the explosion at the convention center. That's the official version of how he died and if it's the official version, government certified, that's the truth.

"Where I live, they have routine segregation, so I can't use any of the whites' facilities. I've thought about applying to move to one of the larger cities where there's elective segregation and nothing's officially 'white-only,' but I hear the waiting lists are years long. And somebody told

me that everything is really just as segregated as here, they're just not as open and honest about it. So maybe I'd really be no better off...

"But I wish that I could have become a teacher— any kind of teacher—instead of a cook. I can't even become a chef, because that's another men-only field. I don't want to be a chef necessarily, because I really don't like to cook and I'm not very good at it. But it was all I could get. The list of available careers for non-whites gets smaller all the time.

"Sometimes, I think it actually wasn't meant to be this bad. Sometimes I think that nobody really wanted the military to take over the government for real, I think it was just panic about so many of the Democratic candidates dying along with the President in that blast and the rioting that wouldn't stop and all that. It did seem as if the country was completely falling apart and somebody had to do something fast and decisive. Well, sure, somebody should have. Somebody should have figured out who was the President, with Madman Johnson and Humpty Humphrey and all those Senators dead—there had to be *somebody* left, right? All of Congress wasn't there. I mean, if I'd known, if a lot of us had known how things were going to come out, I think we'd have just let Ronald Reagan be President for four years, run him against Wallace or something and kept free elections, instead of postponing the elections and then having them abolished.

"People panicked. That's what it all came down to, I think. They were panicking in the streets, they were panicking in the government, and they were panicking in their homes. Our own panic brought us down."

Undated typescript found in
a locker in the downtown
San Diego bus terminal,
April 9, 1993

Our own panic brought us down. For many who were eyewitnesses to certain events of 1968, this would seem to be a fitting coda, if coda is the word, for the ensuing twenty-five years...

Oh, hell, I don't know why I'm bothering to try to sum this up. How do you sum up a piece of history gone wrong? How do you sum up the fall of a

country that believes it was saved from chaos and destruction? And who am I asking, anyway? I'm out of the country now, another wetback who finally made it across the border to freedom. There was a time when wetbacks went north to freedom, but I'm pretty sure nobody would remember that now. Mexico is sad and dusty and ancient, the people poor and suspicious of Anglos, though I'm so brown now that I can pass convincingly as long as I don't try to speak the language—my accent is still atrocious.

But the freedom here—nothing like what we used to have, but the constraints are far fewer. You don't need to apply for a travel permit in-country, you just go from place to place. Of course, it's not really that hard to get a travel permit in the U.S., they give them out routinely. But I'm of that generation that remembers when it was different, and it galls me that I would have to apply for one at all if I want to go from, say, Newark to, say, Cape May. I've deliberately chosen two cities I've never been to, just in case these papers fall into the wrong hands. God knows enough of my papers have been lost over the years. Sometimes I think it's a miracle I haven't been caught.

It's a hell of a life when you're risking prosecution and imprisonment just for trying to put together a true account of something that happened two and a half decades before.

Why I bothered—well, there are a lot of reasons. Because I've learned to love truth. And because I want to atone for what I did to "Carole Feeney" and the others. I'm still amazed that she didn't recognize me, but I guess twenty years is a long time after all.

I really thought I was doing the right thing at the time. I thought infiltrating the leftist groups was all right if it was just to make sure that nobody was stockpiling weapons or planning to blow up a building. Or assassinate another leader. I truly wish I could have arrested Annie Phillips and her group long before Chicago. Some of the people I talked to who were in the streets that night blame Annie for everything that's happened since, and I think that's why the authorities kept her alive instead of killing her—so the old radicals could hate her more than the government.

After I talked to Annie, I understood why she turned violent, even if I didn't condone it. If her voice could have been heard in 1964, maybe all these voices could be heard now, though they might not have so much to

say...

How melodramatic, "Davis." I can't help it. I was actually just like any of them in the year 1968— I thought my country was in trouble, and I was trying to do something about it. And—

And what the hell, we won the Vietnam war. Hooray for America. The Vietnamese are all but extinct, but we brought the boys back home. We sent them right back out to the Middle East, and then down to Nicaragua, and to the Phillipines, and to Europe, of course, where they don't protest our missile bases much anymore. That big old stick. We've gone one better than talking softly and carrying a big stick. Now we don't talk at all....

In the weeks since I finally got out of the country, I've been having this recurring dream. I keep dreaming that things turned out differently, that there was even just one thing that didn't happen, or something else that did happen, and the country just... went on. And so I keep thinking about it. If Johnson hadn't run... if Kennedy hadn't been killed... if that bomb hadn't gone off... if it had only been half the number of demonstrators... if Dylan had showed up.

If Dylan had showed up... I wonder sometimes if that's it. God, the world should be so simple. Instead of simple and brutal and crude.

Even after putting together this risky account, I'm not sure that I really know much more than I did in the beginning. I was hoping that I might figure it all out, how, instead of winning the battle and losing the war, we won the war and lost everything we had. But it could have been different. I don't know why it's so important to me to believe that. Maybe because I don't want to believe that this was the way we were going no matter what. I don't want to believe that everything that was of any value is stuck back there in the Sixties.

Papers found in a hastily vacated room
in an Ecuadorian flophouse
by occupying American forces
during the third South American War
October 13, 1998