

The Babe and the Wolves

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We are sold books the same way we are sold cell phones, as if the latest models deserve the most attention. Each year, publishing houses churn out hundreds of thousands of new titles, including 35,000 works of fiction. The publicity machine goes to work, eager to fashion the rare success. Magazines and newspapers — the ones that still have book sections — chime in with opinions on which new books are worthwhile and why. Newspapers print their "summer reading" lists. The big-box bookstores pile their display tables with glossy stacks of fresh arrivals — for a fee, naturally. A relentless progression of the latest, freshest, greatest. Read this book! But all the middlemen along the way — the publishers, publicists, critics and book sellers — know the truth: The book they are hyping probably is not the book you ought to read, not even the book you would most enjoy reading. That book lies hidden in the back of the bookstore, or perhaps not even there. It is 10-, 20-, 35-years-old. However good it is, no one talks about it anymore. You might not have heard its title or its author's name.

Nathan Ihara - Jun 17, 2010

Intro

Of the people who could claim to be betrayed by Mitch Taylor, I do not know one who would hold it against him. Perhaps this speaks just as much for those he betrayed as for the man himself, because as long as I knew him, he was in no way endearing, and in no way in my mind was he kind. The streets are full of the kind and the endearing, though many hide it as they walk by, creating a mask for the unnamed crowds they encounter. These people applaud their children at school performances, call their family on special occasions, take friends to dinner and support names they read in the papers. Their attention is filled by those who call out for their attention, it is what we are used to, and so Taylor's uniform determination to simply exist justly, at least in his eyes, if not admirable, has made him at least forgivable.

I know nothing of his family or where he came from, only that by the time he was in New York, both his parents had passed away and he did not have any close family to speak of. He came from outside of the city, like most, but he never referred specifically to where he was from. Most people will. They compare their new home to their old. They tell stories to demonstrate some quality or other of the city. Taylor did not. He had no attachments any more to anywhere else. He felt that the city was his home, even more so than those who were born and raised there because he did not take it for granted. He saw it for what it was, not just as something that fades into the background because it has always been there.

He was a zealous student, unsparing of himself, and was respected for it, but no one loved him. He was poor and somehow proud and unsociable, as though he were keeping something to himself.¹ He fit the city, like those you see on the morning train commuting their way to work. Whether he was that way before he came, or whether the city molded him, I do not know. But talking to him was like going up to any stranger on the morning train to ask a question. After a general look of indignation that you would disturb him in his thoughts you would get a brusque answer, but that answer would be to the point, with no decorations of any kind. He would tell you what he thought without any concern with whether it was what you wanted to hear. And for this, despite his lack of more endearing qualities, in the world he lived in, people respected him and in general wanted to know what he thought of things. Given that most people like to hear themselves talk, they were generally willing to overlook his lack of returning the ball in conversation in return for his listening with an often intense thoughtfulness. Perhaps this stance allowed others to inflate their perceptions of his intellect, for his seriousness and generally silent demeanor conveyed there was a great deal more happening in his mind than what he let slip through his lips. And having come into possession of his journal by way of our mutual acquaintance, merely for safe keeping, I can confirm that this was without a doubt true. But again, I suppose it is human nature that everyone thinks a great deal more than they let on.

The journal which is the basis for large portions of this story came into my possession through my friend Jamie Cochran, with whom I spent a good deal of time over the course of a few months in Boston. She received the journal from Taylor who wrote it as a way to understand and analyze his own thoughts as he lived through these events. I met Taylor on several occasions, so I feel I can give a just description of him, but I would hardly say that we were friends, or even acquaintances. The only time I ever spoke with him alone, as far as I can remember, was as a favor to Jamie.

¹ Crime and Punishment, p 51.

1.1.1

If you followed the news during the Mortgage and Credit Crisis, during the outcry over the Too Big To Fail institutions, you will remember the uproar over the killing of Mortimer Goldfellow which, for a brief time, flashed across the media landscape as a violent example of the nation's rage towards the financiers and heads of industry who they saw to blame for the hole the economy and the nation had plummeted into. The headlines of the papers followed the temperature of the shooting. At first they called it an action of the people, the shots fired being what many had said they would love to do. Then, as the legions of bankers began to make fearful calls while huddled up in their mansions, the city government, and even the president, condemned the action as a terrorist act. Not for the act itself. Not for what the news reported as three gun shots fired at a distance from a revolver in the lobby of a Wall Street office building. The police were quoted that the spread of the bullets was great, indicating an unsure or inexperienced killer. It was noted that the killing happened early in the morning, before day break, at a time when there were no witnesses and no panic created. The body itself lay undiscovered for several minutes until a security guard happened upon it. For a short time it was floated that the shooting might have been an accident, or perhaps a botched burglary, or even a lovers' spat. But this was before someone realized it could be an example, a suggestion, a bellwether. For soon the reports came, without any claim of responsibility, telling what the act obviously attempted, to further weaken the financial backbone of the country, to show how a few shots could strike terror into the free market, scare it to death, or at least into submission. And so some were able to rally praise for the multimillionaires who risked life and limb to return to their gilded offices and ensure the yacht size bonuses guaranteed them for steering their country into the afore mentioned hole.

It is remarkable how fast news can spread, and yet with the constant commotion of the city, a plane could crash ten blocks away and you wouldn't know it, less if you happened to be wearing earphones. Knowing Taylor, it is no surprise the events of southern Manhattan did not reach him that morning until he was leaving class and he heard the rumors circulating that an activist had shot a banker that morning. There were no details but because it was local, because it was a banker, and because it was an activist and they were students, the campus talked about nothing else.

Taylor had his own thoughts on which to focus. His advisor had suggested revising a recent essay of his on the historical impact of Sacco and Vanzetti. With a little luck, it could be accepted for publication in an academic journal, Taylor's third publication. He was determined to do what it took to get the article tightened up for publication, but the deadline for submission was near. Taylor went directly home.

There was another rider in the elevator up to his apartment, an old woman Taylor had seen many times but whose name he had never learned. It was a large building, a hotel built in the 1920s, converted later to single room apartments. Fifteen floors with over thirty rooms per floor. The occupants were either just starting out in life without the means for a larger place, or retired and unable to take care of a larger place. During the real estate boom, the owners had attempted to change the building's code to combine apartments and sell them as luxury condos. A tenant committee was formed by the retired citizens of the building who had plenty of time on their hands to organize and managed to thwart the owners. Taylor had been one of the few younger tenants in the committee, attending meetings as much to support the committee as to hear stories from the older residents of how the neighborhood had been. He in particular enjoyed listening to one older tenant, George, a retired police chief with a round cherub face. George would go on about the old gambling dens in the neighborhood, or the Chinese ballroom that used to be in the first floor of the building with a host who wore a tuxedo. The refugees from World War II Europe who found shelter in the building. The man who committed suicide by leaping from his window into the light shaft. The jazz musician who named an album after the address of the building. All the oddities and old charms that Taylor felt had slowly eroded away. Through the committee, he had learned

many of the older faces in the building and the mannerly respect each tended to show in a smile or a nod, and perhaps most importantly, a grace in their ability to end a conversation without needing much prompting from him. In the elevator that day, he was able to give a quick nod of recognition to the old woman who returned a smile before he returned to the swirling thoughts of the revisions he was to begin as soon as he sat down.

The apartment, like all in the building, was a single furnished room. There was a bed in the corner to the right and a small couch along the wall next to it closer to the door. A stove and sink had been crammed into the corner to the left of the door with a small chest of drawers, made of plain wood, standing next to it. In the middle of the room, as if lost in the emptiness, was a wooden table covered with a dark blue cloth, and, at the table, a chair. Everything was littered with books and papers. That was all there was in the room. The yellowish, frayed, and shabby wallpaper was blackened in all the corners. There were not even curtains over the windows.²

Taylor sat down on the couch, adjusted a few books to make room for his legs, and retrieved the draft from his satchel to review. There were few remarks from his advisor, but Taylor had a hard time reading them, his mind consistently migrating to another student he had seen in the department a few days before.

The student had been on the phone with his parents, telling them between sighs that he was to have an essay published for the first time. Taylor had been annoyed by the public outburst of emotion, which he decided was unwarranted. After all, he had already been published twice. But now, having received similar news, he was aware that it was not the exhilaration that annoyed him. It was his lack of someone with whom to share the news. Rejecting these sentimental thoughts, he tried to channel them, focus them in his determination to get his essay published, which would be one more rung on the ladder to becoming a celebrated thinker, one whose thoughts could sway and shape the cultural consciousness. He, with no help, no support net, would form his life into one of influence.

It was then that he heard the knock on his door.

1.1.2

The knock startled Taylor, not only because it was unexpected, but because it may have been the first knock he had ever heard on his door. The sound was so new to him it took a second knock for him to comprehend it was actually a knock at his door and not some one hammering near by. As he got up, Taylor wondered who even knew where he lived. A handful of his neighbors, but there was no one else. It was not an apartment for entertaining and he was not an entertainer. His gaze through the peephole itself was distracted by his never having gazed through one before and it seeming unreal, as it was something he had only read about in novels. All of this occupied his thought to such an extent that when he looked through the peephole at first he did not recognize who it was. A young girl, his age. She was familiar, obviously from the university. She had long black hair half tucked under a baseball cap which looked down the hall towards the elevator. And then, it was obvious. It was Jordan, from his department. Why, he could not imagine.

He opened the door.

"Mitch..." she began and failed to proceed.

"Jordan? What are you doing here?"

She looked anxious, more than anxious, and so he let her in without any further explanation. She shuffled past him weakly, her head down. He had never seen her like this. Usually she was full of energy, not in a bubbly vapid way, but passionate, restless. She had a reputation for arguing, but backing arguments more with her emotions than anything else. She put herself down on the couch and removed her hat, releasing her hair into her face which she tucked behind her ears.

"I followed you home, I hope you don't mind..." Her voice was weak, but she was

² Crime and Punishment, p 315.

regaining her nerves. Taylor did not know what to say. "I know that we have never been close, but I need help and I didn't know where to turn." Taylor had not even known she even knew his name. And now that she obviously did, he wished she would go away, he had things which he needed to do. "I needed to go someplace they wouldn't expect."

"Well, I think you succeeded."

She looked at him. "I know we haven't been close, but I also know that you're a good person, that people think ... that you're fair. That's why I came to you. I'm in trouble and I can't go to my friends. I would be putting them in danger and I cannot ask that of them. I need to be some place where they cannot find me and I need some one I can rely on. Can I rely on you?"

Taylor was a little flattered, but remained cynical. "Who are 'they'? What has happened?"

It didn't matter that he had not answered her. She kept going, the words started to empty out of her. "Have you heard of the shooting on Wall Street? The banker that was shot this morning? It was me. It was an accident, but it was me. Only they will never believe it was an accident. The spin has already started. But it was an accident, no one was supposed to get hurt." She went on about some group of activists, friends of hers, who were planning a demonstration at the offices of an investment banking firm and how she had gone to perform reconnaissance, being non-intimidating in appearance. She was to go when no one would be there, investigating blind spots in the building's security. Before dawn that morning, she had left the apartment of one of her fellow activists she was living with, and it was he who gave her the gun. Just in case, he had said, off handedly. She had hesitated in taking it. It was heavy and awkward and made her feel like she was doing something wrong, when before it had been placed in her hands she had felt she was doing something right and just. But she had taken it, not because he had insisted on it, but because he had not insisted, because he had treated it so flippantly, as if to say "of course this is a good idea," and who was she to say it wasn't. She had never done anything like this before. He had given it to her and thought nothing more of it. Why should she? So she had stuck it into her shoulder bag, along with her camera and her notepad and her lip gloss.

And as Taylor leaned against the sink of his kitchenette and listened to this, he kept thinking, "I'm not going to even get to my revision today." He knew that thinking this was not what he should be thinking. Jordan sat there on the couch and explained how she had used a gun to end a man's life. This thought kept following the first, along with the thought that the police could arrive at any moment. This particular thought progressively built its presence in his head as he realized what Jordan described was not the same as a domestic dispute, but was being called murder on the news, which had preempted programming on local stations so that armies of on-the-spot reporters could stand around lower Manhattan in swarms, periodically corresponding with anchors behind news desks about evolving theories based on newly released details. The cable networks were focusing their lenses on it, which meant the nation and the city was watching, looking for what was here in his apartment, and waiting for a response. And with that media pressure, the police and who knew who else were surely scrambling as fast as they could to get ahead of the news, to capture all those involved so that no loose end could be held up under the media's eye. They would be coming for him now too.

"He just surprised me. He was yelling at me, asking what was I doing there. I was scared, I didn't even realize I had it in my hand, I guess I just wanted to scare him. And then he kept yelling at me to put it down and I just had this thought that I would show him I was in charge. He took a step, and a shot rang out. My hand jerked back and all of a sudden I wasn't aiming at him and he ran at me, and I just remember firing it again and again. Then he wasn't coming at me any more. I remember lowering the revolver and looking at him, not really in fear but in some wild perplexity. I didn't understand, I didn't understand what I had done or what was happening."³

³ Crime and Punishment, p 496.

Taylor tried to pay attention to the words that were coming out of her mouth, he knew they were important, but his thoughts were swirling in his head, round and round, that he would not do his revisions, that his paper would not be published, that they would be taken by the police and he would never teach, that his work was now done, that he would never go on. And she continued to talk, her words would not stop coming.

“I ran, there was no one on the streets. Almost no one. Then I saw one or two business men walking and decided I should walk to. I stayed off the subway, there was less of a chance of being trapped if I stayed on the streets, more ways I could go. I just kept walking. It felt like a dream. I know it’s cliché, but that’s what it really felt like, it still does, I simply can’t believe what has happened.”

Taylor muttered “I know,” but Jordan continued without hearing.

“I walked over to the west side, to blend in with the joggers and the others who were out walking around. At one point I walked out onto a pier and dropped the gun in the Hudson when no one was looking, just like they do in the movies. Then I got nervous, being passed by so many joggers and walkers, and I headed away into the city, trying to stay on quiet streets.

“I wanted to get to Lazlo, he’s one of us. He’ll know what to do. I went to the café he works out of. He doesn’t work for the cafe, that’s just where he can normally be found. I was afraid to call anyone in case the police already figured out it was me. Lazlo could get me a ride out of town, he would know of some place I could stay for a while, until things were figured out. I walked by the café and I didn’t see him, so I walked around the block and came back. He wasn’t there. I went in and bought a coffee and sat for a while, but he never came. I didn’t want anyone to get the idea I was waiting for him so I left.”

She has thought of everyone’s safety except mine, Taylor thought.

“I didn’t know what to do, I couldn’t go someplace where the police might expect me to go and I needed someone reliable, someone who would be fair to me without being trapped by the roles the media paints for us. Someone who would listen to me and who I could depend on not to tell everyone. I thought of school and who I could trust and I thought of you. I waited for you after lecture and followed you home so no one from the university would see us together.”

Finally she seemed to run out of steam. Taylor held up his hand for her not to speak for a moment. He needed a pause. There was too much jumping around in his head to try and get a grip on what was happening. What was he even trying to concentrate on? What needed to be decided? What needed to happen next?

“What is it you want from me?” That was it he decided. Yes, that was the next step.

“That is why I came to you!” Jordan exclaimed, her eyes were now directly upon him. “Straight to what needs to happen, straight to the heart of it! You’re a man of action, a man of few words, and with that comes confidence! I know we haven’t been close, but you and I, our perspectives aren’t that far from one another. You look to see what has to be done, what should be done. This is what we’re doing, determining what should be done and taking action!” She paused, Taylor looking at her, waiting, tensely, for an answer. “Lazlo. I need to find Lazlo. And I’m afraid to continue to wonder the streets, and especially to stay in one place waiting for him. He should certainly be at the café by now. He’s there without fail. All I want from you is to help me to vanish. Let me stay here and you go talk to Lazlo, that’s all I ask. Just ask him where I should go and then tell me and I’m gone. He will know what to do. He has been in similar circumstances before. He’s connected.”

Taylor began to wonder why not just tell her no, to get out and leave him out of this. And why had it taken him this long to think of saying it? She could just say leave and then he could get to work. He could still not shake the vision of him in prison, the entire trajectory of his life turned to nothing because of this conversation happening right now. And he could perhaps still salvage it by telling her no right now. Looking at her though, sitting on his couch amongst his papers and books, where no one else but him had sat, looking up at him, he knew he should tell her no, but he could not.

“Just give me the directions. Tell me where to go. I will go, ask him, and come

back.”

“God bless you! You’re saving my life! And not just mine, but that of my mother and my sister, saving them from worrying about this. I’ll get away and lay low and we’ll have nothing to worry about, I promise you. Oh, God bless you!”

“If you believe in God, I would start praying.”

“Well, not God in any sort of organized religious way. More like a higher power, guiding us, connecting us all as one. See? I don’t know how I could’ve gotten this far otherwise.”

Taylor shrugged. “Okay, just write down the directions for me so I have them straight.” She did. He looked around the room wondering if it was okay to leave her there alone, but at this point her taking or destroying anything was nothing compared to what she has already brought to his door. He took the directions and with nothing else to exchange, put them in his pocket, checked to make sure he had his wallet, and with one last look at Jordan sitting on his couch, opened the door and left, making sure to take the key, and making sure that the door locked behind him, locking her inside the apartment.

1.2.1

Why had she come to him? The question repeated itself in his head, not because he could not imagine reasons but as a plea wishing she had not. She had said their perspectives were not that far off. Why would she have said that? He would never allow himself to be placed in such a situation. Taylor did not know much about Jordan, but much of what he did know came from her efforts with a group of activists who would demonstrate in the city frequently. They called themselves activists, sometimes they described themselves as anarchists, who tried to live outside of the economic system as much as they could. Some were squatters, or simply lived on the couches of their friends. They wore shirts with the word “freegan” printed on it, living off of what was free, including the excess detritus of society. They looked for food and their other needs in what others had thrown away in dumpsters, not out of necessity, but as a political choice, to reduce the excess of society and to avoid supporting what they felt was its spiraling decadence. Their demonstrations were successful enough to cause all the students to talk about them, so they had become a periodical topic of conversation on campus, however many saw them as just the latest iteration of youth rebellion. Taylor could understand their desire not to contribute to what they saw as the degeneration of the culture around them. He tried to live modestly himself. Was that what Jordan had meant? But he could never see himself getting wrapped up in a group of activists staging elaborate demonstrations, especially some of the tactics they were rumored to use.

And yet here he was going to do Jordan's bidding, harboring one of the activists. No, he told himself, it is only the easiest way of getting her out of my apartment. He did not want to be a part of them, he simply wanted to be done with them as quickly as Jordan had involved him. He could not support their methodology, which would not contribute to any progress other than to polarize. Their demonstrations were about creating opposition, creating one side to berate the other. They were generating conflict, when sometimes collaboration, even if it required compromise, was necessary. Taylor understood the pitfalls of compromise, but their brute force tactics did not allow for the subtleties that issues like the economic crisis, or the even larger issue they found with a culture of consumption demanded. He could not support such an un-nuanced stance.

But he was aiding in Jordan's escape. That is how the police would law it. He was harboring a fugitive, by definition. She had killed someone. She had admitted it. Once that heart had stopped beating, there is other way about it. Murder is murder. She had been carrying a gun. She was responsible for her own actions. Just as he was now responsible for the decision to help her. He did not have the luxury of a family to worry about him, no support network in case he ran into trouble. He had to look out for himself, which at that

moment meant preventing the police from finding Jordan at his apartment.

It was this fear of being caught that kept Taylor on the hunt for this man Lazlo. He stalked through the streets letting his thoughts feed his annoyance and fear of to the situation. It was at this point getting dark, which felt much more suitable to Taylor's mood. He knew the block of the address Jordan had given him, but did not know the cafe. It was easy enough to find, off of Seventh Avenue in the West Village, exactly where Jordan indicated. It was a small, unobtrusive café on a side street in the middle of the block, long and thin, extending all the way through the building with a homey, broken in feel. Mismatching wooden tables, along with mismatched wooden chairs, an old couch in front of each window, and untreated brick walls with a bar against one side. There was no one there matching Lazlo's description, a tall thin man with black hair and a thick black beard. It was mostly filled with fresh faced students playing at reading or posing in some other intellectual way. Taylor saw that there was not a diligent look among them. He went and stood in the short line at the counter and continued to absorb the atmosphere of the café, which did little to improve its impression on him. It was a nice, comfortable place, one where he could sit down and do some writing, if it were not for the small quips of dull chatter.

Taylor finally moved up the three places in line to the front where a large surly woman took orders. He ordered his coffee and watched her pour it, waiting, fiddling with the dollar bills in his hands. As he handed her his money, he informed her he was looking for a man called Lazlo. Without looking at him, she pointed with her thumb in the direction of the back of the café. He took his change and navigated the tables to the back where a spindly young woman looked up and then back down to her magazine in the light of the large windows. There was a glass door, through which Taylor could see an overgrown garden with a few painted iron tables. He opened the door and walked down the handful of steps. Up against the building, curled up on an iron bench, a man with black hair and a black beard lay seemingly asleep. Taylor watched him for a moment before addressing him. He smelled.

"Are you Lazlo?"

The man stirred groggily. He wavered like he had been drinking. He sat upright on the bench and opened his eyes after a moment of concerted blinking.

"Are you Lazlo?" Taylor repeated.

The man regarded him with a roll of the eyes before his voice bubbled up.

"Who are you?"

"I am a friend of Jordan Cochran. She sent me to you."

"Never heard of her."

It sounded so cliché macho. Taylor looked at him trying to determine how to proceed.

"You are Lazlo?"

With slow unsteady effort. "What of it?"

"Jordan sent me here to you, to find you. She needs your help."

"Don't know her."

"Is that what you want me to tell her?" He paused, exasperated, his nerves already worn from his walk. "I do not know her, I do not know you, but she told me to find you, that she had been staying with you, that you had helped her and that you would know what to do."

His eyes were slightly more awake now. "I don't know you, and I don't know her, and I don't know what you are talking about. Now leave me alone." He straightened his jacket around him.

Taylor wondered why he was pushing, and how far he should push. He had done what he had come to do.

"Alright. I am leaving. And I will tell Jordan you have never heard of her. That is what you want me to say, isn't it? That is the message I am going to deliver?"

The man's eyes kept trying to meet Taylor's and stare, but they kept looking away.

Taylor shrugged. "Alright." He mounted the stairs back inside and navigated his way through the tables, tossing the coffee he had not taken a sip of into the garbage, and walked

out the front door back onto the street.

Unsure what to do, he just began to walk and to think. The man was drunk, that was clear and understandable. Everyone needs some vice to get through points in life, that is living. In a way, he appreciated Lazlo's response, it was what he had wanted to do, it was what he should have done, and now he was stuck. Lazlo was who he was to hand Jordan off to. She was a baton. Or better, a game of hot potato, but now he was the only one playing. He was the accomplice. He began to feel the eyes of those he passed upon him as he walked quickly in no particular direction. He realized this must have been how Jordan felt that morning: alone, overwhelmed, unsure what to do, quickly walking through the most unpopulated street he could find. Like his life was in a vice, his options being squeezed, his time being squeezed, his future already squeezed out of existence. His life was now tethered to hers.

The city was dark above him but the street was well light. He wished the streetlights would go out so he could hide in the dark. But the night was early, even on the little side streets there were strollers, couples, people going about their lives and making Taylor feel more isolated. He understood the activists' disenfranchisement. How could our country all be in this together, as the president kept saying, when someone can feel so isolated while surrounded by people? The more he looked around at the city, the windows lit up and behind each one of them a body, he felt more and more isolated from them. This was his home, his city, as much his as anyone's, and it was slipping from him.

1.2.2

As Taylor walked, he became angrier. He had not asked to be pulled into this. Why had Jordan come to him? Certainly, he understood her frustration with the state of the country. He understood the feeling of helplessness towards the government, the feeling it answered not to the public, but to lobbyists and corporations. When the Supreme Court had recently ruled that the first amendment protects corporations' payouts to campaign funds, he could not believe it, nor could he believe when he heard that a corporation was running for public office based on the decision. But he understood the decision simply followed the interpretation of the law. It was the law that needed to be changed. It did not call for bands of self-righteous students to exorcise their outrage with mayhem. That was the visceral response, and no matter how tempting it was to the individual feeling disempowered, the issue had to be engaged by all the stakeholders logically. Outrageous media grabbing tactics only inflamed the issues, and separated those who should come to the table and negotiate, and that was difficult enough already. Despite the structural flaws in the system from the power of corruption that kept good, honest ideas from making traction, he thought, it is the best system we have, and these fanatics only installed further obstacles in it. And they had no right to ruin his life by making him an accessory to it.

Taylor continued to debate with himself in the disappearing light, beginning to hate Jordan for making him an accomplice. "And where did she get this idea," he was thinking, as he went down the sidewalk, "where did she get the idea that she is so sure to get away right now? Why, why, why is she so certain of it?" He was crushed by her ability to control him, even somehow humiliated. He wanted to laugh at himself in his anger. He did not want his life wasted for the sake of their ill begotten agenda. He had worked hard by himself to build his life towards something meaningful. Studying the past may not feed the hungry, but writing history influenced and shaped the future. To help them was to betray what Taylor had worked for. After all, had Jordan not been cognoscente of everyone's safety except his own? Wasn't it she who had betrayed him by making him a part of this. Dull, brutal rage was seething in him.⁴

He knew the direction his mind was taking. He was building an argument to convince himself what he should do. He should turn her in. Why should he risk his life for a

⁴ Crime and Punishment, p 72.

cause he did not believe in, for a person who did not give a thought to throwing his life away? He could either betray her or betray himself.

Walking around the streets of the Village, he became consumed with contempt. To go on, to walk around the streets for the sake of appearances was revolting to him. To return home was even more revolting. "To lose such an opportunity forever!" he muttered. His eyes flitted across the windows around him. The apartments filled with people who had resources he did not, the smug students wondering the streets while their families paid for their adventures in higher learning. He had only himself to depend on. He had to look out for himself. And he had done well so far, his scholarships and awards. He was dedicated to developing his mind, something the jovial couples he passed clearly could not understand. He just wanted to be able to think. To think clearly and to be clearly understood. To write and to teach. To spread ideas so that others understood them and so that everyone could move forward. And he could feel his mind becoming more muddled as his world tightened in around him. He had one choice, to turn Jordan in. She was locked in his apartment, he had made sure the door was locked and he had the key. Unless she could get out some way. No, she could not. He could tell them he had her trapped. They must have security footage of her, someone must have seen her, he had no doubt he could convince the police that she was the killer. He simply had to bring the police to his apartment. But that would be admitting his collaboration. Would they believe him? With the light of the media on them, they would not take a chance. If there was a possibility that he was involved, the news would catch it and they would look like fools for not holding him to. Everyone that Jordan came into contact with was in danger, and now everyone that he came into contact with was in danger. Again he pictured himself in prison. His body trembling as if he was going to cry. It felt like his body was physically breaking down. He felt the eyes of those he passed glance quickly across him, like they would that of a panhandler they wished would not sully their streets. He needed support, moral support, someone who was beyond reproach, who would not be pulled into danger by talking to him.

Suddenly Taylor stopped. Someone who the police would not cast accusations on just because Taylor talked to him. Someone the police would trust and someone he could talk to.

Why did he not think of it earlier?

George. A man he could trust and who could tell him how to handle the police. His entire outlook changed, he was hit with a burst of energy. It could be alright. There was no time to waste. He started walking hurriedly back to his building. He ran.

Taylor took the elevator straight to George's floor, thinking of Jordan sitting alone in his apartment just a few floors above. The hall was empty. He knocked on George's door and waited, sure that he would be home. The older tenants always seemed to be home. A minute later the door opened slowly and there stood George, his pink round face, calm and smiling.

"Mitch. How are you?"

"Hi George. Can I bother you for a few minutes? I have a little problem that I would like you opinion on."

"Sure, sure, come on in, come on in." And with that the two walked into the small apartment. Taylor had been in it before, it was three rooms the size of his studio linked together with adjoining doors left from the days of the old hotel. The two walked into the living room where the New York sports channel was blaring on the television. The room was meticulously ordered, including bookshelves that had clear plastic coating on them to ward off dust. George offered him something to drink, pretzels, but he refused. Taylor restrained himself long enough to exchange some more pleasantries about the building and some gossip about a few of the older tenants in the building who had not been taking their medication.

Finally he could not hold back any longer. He told George the whole story, in as detached a way as he could. He began with arriving home from his lecture and described everything until leaving Jordan behind in the room, retelling her story as well. He left out his trip to the cafe to see Lazlo, only saying he walked around outside wondering what to

do. Going to see Lazlo seemed an extra detail that could only do him disservice and confuse things.

George sat quietly absorbing the story, nodding every so often and urging Taylor to continue. Then the story had ended and there was silence.

For a moment, Taylor began to question the wisdom of coming to George, who just sat there thinking and nodding to himself. He stood up, walked over to the television, and changed its channel to the local news station, where a reporter was standing on Wall Street updating the anchor in the studio on the latest details released. George and Taylor listened, words like "terrorist" and "plot" and "full alert" pushing through the rest, echoing in Taylor's head.

After a minute, George turned off the sound of the television. His face had also changed, the look of a cheerfulness was gone, replaced by the look of experience in the things that people were capable of doing to each other. It was a look that conveyed equally an understanding of the obvious difficulties of such a situation and in the ability of Taylor to retell it in a clear and concise way.

"I appreciate your thinking in coming here." George's tone had changed. "You are right to be cautious. The fact that the media's eye is on the situation makes everything more complex. This is no longer a matter for the police, there are other forces who are going to be looking into this. Washington is going to have a say in what happens and how things look... Don't worry, we'll make sure you get through this. You've done alright so far and we'll make sure you get the rest of the way." With this he offered a reassuring smile, and then he was standing up again.

Within ten minutes there was a flurry of phone calls made. George then disappeared to dress in a suit and tie, and they were out of the building again and getting in a cab. It was in the cab headed downtown when Taylor remembered to thank George for his help. The other nodded and smiled, appearing to enjoy being back on the job for a night. Then they rode in silence. Taylor looked out the window to try and relax. The parked cars and pedestrians streamed past. The cab swayed out into the avenue, surrounded in its little pocket of traffic following the green lights south through neighborhoods he did not know, filled with the gray textures of corporate structures. He let his body be rocked by the motions of the cabin. Riding in a cab was a luxury he rarely splurged on himself.

The cab came to a stop outside a large open air plaza with long green benches winding throughout it. Getting out of the car, George put a hand on Taylor's shoulder as he took the lead and murmured "Federal Plaza." The phrase meant nothing to Taylor, but the building conveyed enough through its steel and glass austerity to assume that it was a government building. The lobby was empty except for gray marble, a few security guards in unwashed navy jackets, and a tall bald man in a suit. George walked right up to the man in the suit, who immediately escorted the two through security turnstiles and into an elevator. When the elevator doors opened, the muffled sound of papers and keyboards clacking could be heard emanating from the floor to which they were escorted. Despite the fact it was dark outside, there was still a good amount of activity amongst the rows of grey and green cubicles they were led through. After several twists through the cubicles, the man in the suit brought them to an office with a frosted glass wall and opened the door for them to go inside. The office was empty, except for a heavy looking wood desk with two large chairs in front of it, and a wall lined with books and binders. Taylor looked at the scores of books with a mix of admiration and jealousy, unsure of how to act. The two stood silent, watched by their escort.

After a few minutes, the door opened once again as a well appointed large man, large in every sense of the word, walked in and closed the door behind him. The man greeted George with a smile and a handshake, then introduced himself to Taylor as Agent Gandolini with the same rehearsed smile handshake. His handshake was heavy and overpowering.

"We've got the shooter." George smiled. The large man smiled back.

1.2.3

The man behind the desk said nothing as George had Taylor recount the story to him. With a smug smile on his face, he looked back and forth between the two, encouraging them to continue until they were done. He sat there smiling away, letting them talk. Taylor could tell the man was doubtful of the story. .

"And how do you know she has not run away?"

Taylor was immediately put off by his tone. "I have locked the door from the outside. The apartment is on the eleventh floor, there is no other way to leave the apartment."

"And what was she wearing when she came to your apartment? What does she look like?"

Taylor, sighing, described again what she was wearing, the tight blue jeans, her sweater, her petite, elf like frame, her long dark hair pulled up under her hat.

"We do have security footage from the lobby and outside the building. We also found a man who saw the young woman. We will be able to tell if it is this Jordan."

Each sentence Gandolfini spoke made Taylor fidget a little. It was clear the man didn't understand what he had been through that day, sitting calmly behind that desk, his eyes occasionally wondering off, as if he was not listening. Perhaps he did not care. Taylor wanted to shout at him, to tell him he was doing Gandolfini a favor. He was doing the agents job finding the girl and handing her over to him.

"We will of course want to question her. Is she armed? Does she still have the gun?"

"She threw the gun in the Hudson off a pier. I don't think she is armed anymore."

"Yes, you said that," Gandolfini's large face retaining its smile. "And your apartment, are there any weapons in it that she could use?"

"I have a couple of kitchen knives."

"Yes, I suppose that is normal."

To Taylor's relief, George interrupted him. "Tom, this young man has shown a lot of trust coming to me with this, especially with the media circus in full effect. Now I am retired, and I do not have any need to have my name dragged into this, and I do not see any reason why Mitch's name has to be mentioned either. I want your assurance that you'll keep us out of this."

Gandolfini looked directly at Taylor, who was doing his best to match his gaze. "You don't want any credit for this?"

Taylor continued to look him in the eyes. "No."

"Alright, I guess I can understand that. I suppose the spotlight is not made for everyone."

They sat in silence for a minute. Taylor could feel himself crumbling under Gandolfini's unaltered grin. He had to maintain his position somehow. "You know that she will never speak to you."

"You think so?"

"She is committed. She is scared, but she has dedicated herself."

"She is scared? How do you know this?"

"She is, she told me."

"You seem to remember all kinds of details."

"That's true," Taylor replied, carefully, "I remember everything, down to the smallest detail, but try asking me why I am here, why I did this, or said that, and I would have a hard time explaining."⁵

Gandolfini smiled. "I bet you would."

George interrupted again. "Mitch came to me of his own will. He did not have to, he could have just told the woman to go away, but he has captured her and is handing her over. He is beyond reproach. I want every step taken that he will be treated as such."

Gandolfini shifted himself in his chair and shifted his smile to George. "Of course. You both have done very well. You understood the importance of the situation and you have

⁵ Crime and Punishment, p 226.

done everything that could be expected of you." Taylor felt a patronizing tone in his words. "And you, young man, inspire a great deal of confidence. You have conducted yourself admirably without loosing your head. It is difficult in a situation like this." He paused. "Yes, you inspire a great deal of confidence. I will personally make sure you do not suffer for it." His unaltered grin had returned to Taylor, who continued to feel his strength erode. "You are clearly a very impressive man."

Mitch interrupted him this time. "I just do what I think is the right thing to do." He hated having to explain himself to this man, who clearly did not understand, did not care to understand, the ordeal he had been through.

"But that is so much more than most people. It is so much more. Let me ask you, how long have you been away from your apartment?"

"I am not sure when I left. It was still light outside." He had still not mentioned his visit to the cafe to see Lazlo. "I walked around a good bit before I figured coming to George was the best thing to do."

George chimed in. "You did right."

Gandolfini echoed him thoughtfully. "Yes, you did well. And you have no idea why Jordan came to you?"

Taylor became testy. "No, but you seem to have a theory."

"No, no, how would I know? I just wonder, it is a lot of trust to place in someone you don't know."

"Perhaps part of it was panic."

"Perhaps..."

Taylor felt more and more fatigued, more and more helpless. He did not know how to explain why she had come to him and he knew he needed to. "All I can say is she is scared. She said she did not know where to go, that anyone she went to she might be putting in danger. She thought she could trust me because I would see things her way."

"Yes, I see." Gandolfini gave Taylor a larger smile, which may have intended to be reassuring but Taylor took as anything but. "Alright, I have a plan. Mitch, I want you to go back to your apartment, tell Jordan that you did meet with this Lazlo character. Tell her that she is to be at the northeastern corner of Washington Square at midnight. That is it, I leave it up to you to fill in the details. You see, I trust you can do this, as I said, you inspire confidence. After she has left your apartment, we will intercept her. George, you and Mitch here will be kept out of the capture. That's all there is to it."

At that, George stood, followed by the two others. They shook hands and departed. Taylor was exhausted and didn't realize it was George who hailed a cab and put him into it.

"Gandolfini is a good man. The Feds have a lot of bureaucrats and dogs on short leashes. Gandolfini is good for his word. It will all be worked out." Taylor nodded, saving his strength for when he got home.

They exited the cab two blocks from the apartment building so that Taylor could walk the rest of the way alone. George gave Taylor a pat on his back, but Taylor's mind was occupied with what he was going to say when he got home. He nodded an acknowledgment to George and, realizing he was being terribly ungracious, shook his hand and told him thank you one more time. George's pink face smiled at him, and with that Taylor turned and began the short walk towards the apartment. Surely, he thought, Gandolfini already had it under surveillance. He probably has had it watched since George called him. He looked for some sign of being watched, but saw none. Everything looked the same as any other day he came home from the university. Everyone seemed oblivious to him. It all looked so ordinary, but to him, it all seemed unreal, as if the normalcy was just a mask, like the facade of a movie set. Behind the fake front, there were motives and agendas, and he could feel them pulling at him.

1.2.4

The elevator up was empty except for Taylor, who allowed himself to collapse into

its corner until the doors opened onto his floor. Everything felt so different, so surreal. The idea jumped into Taylor's head that Gandolfini didn't believe him, or that he simply didn't care. He saw himself in jail again. For what? Nothing. It did not matter what he did or did not do, he was just there to go through the motions, to play his role, his fate someone else's decision. No matter which role he had chosen, he would still be walking down the hall to his door, just as he did every day.

He unlocked the door to the apartment. It was dark. He closed the door and it took a minute for his eyes to adjust. For a second he thought perhaps Jordan had gone. He whispered her name in the dark. No answer. His eyes acclimated to the lack of light and he saw a lump in his bed. Walking closer he saw she was laying there under the covers. For he didn't know how long, he stood over her in the dark, watching her sleep. He could see her chest rising and falling as she breathed. He placed his hand on her shoulder and gently shook her. She woke as he sat down on the arm of the couch and watched her stretch and rub the sleep from her eyes.

"I'm sorry, after you left I just crashed. I was exhausted. I didn't think you would mind."

"No, it's fine."

"I'm surprised I actually fell asleep, I was a bundle of nerves. I suppose I was just worn out."

"It's okay."

"Did you find Lazlo?"

Taylor nodded.

"So what's the plan?"

"I saw Lazlo."

"What did he say?"

"Your are to go to Washington Square. You should be there at midnight. He will meet you there."

"It's late, you were gone a long time."

"He wasn't there when I got there, I had to wait for him. I left and came back. Then when I met him he had to make arrangements."

She reached out and gently held his arm. "Thank you. I couldn't have done this with out you."

She sat on the edge of his bed and stretched her arms, letting out a little yawn. A desire to confess shot through him. I have betrayed you. There are men waiting to take you. You are done.

"It was nothing. I just want it to be done with."

Jordan began to talk again, about the cafe and how she used to sit there and talk with Lazlo and others, how they would sit there and plan. She could not draw attention to the cafe, it would be dangerous if she had waited for Lazlo there. Again, Taylor noticed that she had thought of everyone's safety but his own.

"You really are saving me, and protecting us," she said. "I knew I could depend on you. You listen so closely to everyone, you take everyone seriously, I knew you would understand." She kept talking, though Taylor could not concentrate on the words, his mind exhausted and losing his thoughts to self consciousness. He watched her, trying to listen, but began to worry if he was acting strangely, that as she talked she was mocking him, that some how she knew what he had done and could see through him.

She noticed his silence "Are you alright?"

Is she playing with me? he thought. "I am just anxious."

"You don't need to be anxious for me. It will be fine. I have faith in Lazlo. He's good in a pinch, he doesn't let his emotions get the better of him. He has gotten himself out of jams like this before, he knows what to do."

He sure does, Taylor thought.

"And why would you be anxious for me now? They cannot do anything to me now. I have made a statement, a greater statement than we could have dreamed. They can lock me

up, they can silence me, but there is no action they can take that will quiet what I have already done."

She is mad, Taylor thought. "Sleeping seems to have pepped you right up."

"I was caught in myself, I was caught in the moment, I couldn't step back and look at the larger perspective. The media is calling this a terrorist act, and they are right. I could never have done it if I had meant to, but this is so much more powerful."

"You are okay with killing that man?"

"I know it sounds callous, but he was going to die sometime. In other countries, civilians are caught in the crossfire of American wars all the time, and we say it is awful, but it is the part of the price of war. But war for what? Oil? Our foreign influence? Assuring resources stay cheap? We accept civilians dying because we do not know them, they are far away in another country, and we have to fight the war to preserve our way of life. But our way of life is what causes the wars. It is what needs to be stopped. His life will actually mean something, it will help to stop the wars fought in the name of our over consumption."

Taylor tried to listen, to feign interest but could only think about the time now. He kept looking at his watch, which she noticed. She laughed.

"You are so anxious, relax, there is plenty of time."

"I just feel responsible for you."

"You have done enough. They will be there for me, we are very tightly knit. Having a cause will do that, it bonds you together."

"I wouldn't know."

"You should. It is the same with my family. My mother has always been active. She passed her social conscious to my sister and me. Growing up we'd sit around the dinner table and talk about politics. I think my sister sometimes just backed me up to be on my side, but while we all had different points of view, we all agreed that social issues were something that need to be talked about, addressed. We each had our own way, but all three of us hoped to make the world better. It has bound us together so that I do not know what would happen if I was not there to support them."

Taylor could not listen to her. He felt the time ticking in his bones. He watched her get up and start to pace around the room as she talked, picking up his books and examining them. He watched her movements, trying to anticipate what the next would be. It was a game, he had to play her until the clock ran out.

"They mean the world to me. They are why I want society to change. To make their lives better, and for our children, for mine and for Jamie's, for my sister's. To really want change, it helps to have someone to do it for. You need motivation."

"I am not sure I have the same optimism you have," he confessed and immediately regretted, thinking perhaps he had given something away.

"I understand," she said, "that it is not for everyone, but surely you appreciate what we are doing."

"Oh, certainly," he hastily agreed to make up ground, then feared he had been too eager to agree with her.

But she continued. "You are simply too nice, you do not understand what our government is capable of. You do not understand the need for real action." He cringed at this, wanting to correct her, to challenge her, but he bore it. He had to restrain himself until the clock wore down.

Then, with a smile, she picks up her hat and announced nonchalantly that she should be going.

"But it is still early." It was not yet close to midnight.

"That's alright. I've imposed on you enough. I'll wait for them in Washington Square."

Taylor worried about following Gandolfini's instructions to the letter. "But it is a needless risk to be out on the streets more than you have to."

"I'll be fine, you have done more than enough." Before Taylor could object further she gave him a hug and walked out the door. She was gone. It was done.

1.2.4a

Taylor settled into the couch, wondering if it went alright. He played back the last moments in his head and realized there was nothing he could do. There was nothing to be done.

He sat for a moment before picking up the paper he had intended to revise that afternoon. After several minutes of staring at the first comment, he put it back down and reclined on the couch. His head was full of thoughts about Jordan. Would she slip past the police and the federal agents? Where would they take her? What would happen to her? Did he do what he had been asked? What should he do now? He could go to Washington Square to see what happens, but he could get in the way there. He decided to wait in his apartment for further word. He looked at his bed where she had sat, continuing to wonder. It did not feel over, her leaving had been so anticlimactic that he could hardly believe the curtain had fallen. Nothing seemed his own. His life was a negotiation between two sides he had only just encountered. There was no stake in the ground to tether him, the future, his future, floated on the currents these two sides produced. Jordan could say anything about him. Gandolfini could believe anything about him. Neither had any incentive to look out for him, and either could try to use him to their advantage.

Suddenly, a strange, unexpected feeling of corrosive hatred for Jordan came over his heart. As if surprised and frightened by this feeling, he suddenly raised his head and looked intently at the bed where Jordan had been.⁶

It was then Taylor decided to write everything down, to have his own record as best as he could remember. Each of them would have their way of seeing events. He could at least keep track of what he saw happen. Whether he would stick to this story, he wasn't sure. He began to write, standing periodically to shuffle around the apartment to think.

When it next occurred to him to check the time, he had written down his version of the day's events and midnight had long passed. Wrapped in a blanket, he lay on his couch still wondering what had happened that night and fell asleep.

1.3.1

These were Taylor's first thoughts that he entered into his journal. Recounting them, it is difficult to capture the moral dilemma he was faced with, especially along with the context, for his notes are rough and mostly incomplete thoughts. But it was clear he was troubled by what was the best thing to do. That night he did not sleep well. The next day he did absolutely nothing, trying to separate himself from the events of the previous day and let his nerves recuperate. He avoided the news, knowing whatever he learned would only be fodder for his thoughts and theories. He cleaned and shaved his face in the mirror and could see the toll the last day had taken on him. His reflection radiated unhappiness. Life without unhappiness is impossible, but even in the darkest hours, the pendulum swings so there is a reprieve, and in those lighter moments, he ate and yawned, and fell into his bed where the day before Jordan had laid sleeping. How could she have slept? Because she had found that greater perspective that allowed her to be at peace with her actions. He wondered how well Gandolfini slept. The man had the look of an easy sleeper, even for a man whose work is never done. Had he harbored suspicions about Taylor? Perhaps he was simply waiting, a loose end to be tied up. He had had the look of an easy sleeper, indeed, Taylor thought with contempt.

All that night his thoughts circled and swished like water going down a drain, only to be filled back up with doubt and worry. He needed relief, something to take his mind elsewhere, even if just for seconds at a time. He would go to lecture.

The walk to the university did him good, the sky overhead seeming to clear his mind

⁶ Crime and Punishment, p 408.

a little. He talked to no one, just wrapped his jacket about him as if he was being plagued by his own little rainstorm.

The lecture was fine, though he found it difficult to focus and he retained little. He sat silently and tried not to shift himself too much in his seat. His silence was not unusual, allowing the other students to assert their intelligence through argumentative questions. The clock moved slowly forward

After the lecture, he decided to walk to a nearby pizzeria, he had eaten almost nothing at all that he could remember. He left the building and as he did, he encountered another student from the lecture who held the door for him.

"Have you heard about the arrest?" he said as Taylor walked by.

Taylor gave him a sharp glance.

The student, tall and bone thin with a crooked nose, was taken back by the look.

"The Wall Street Killer, the one they're calling a terrorist, they say that it was Jordan."

"I've been out for the past few days." He knew the student, he tried to remember his name.

"Sick?"

"Just overworked. I need to take a break."

"Well, you know Jordan Cochran? They're trying to pin the thing on her and she's disappeared, they took her. No one has heard from her." Taylor looked at him in disbelief and changed the direction he was walking in, hoping the other would have to go a different way, but he stayed with him and kept talking. "The news has been saying that they're looking for her, but she's disappeared. I know her through some of the protests, she's worked with a group I'm a part of, and we thought maybe she went to see her brother..."

"You mean her sister." Taylor interrupted, and immediately regretted his instinct to correct him.

"You know her?"

"We just talked once or twice. I never really knew her. Look, I have to go." He looked at the other student as he walked away, his eyes recessed behind his large nose. The student gave him an understanding look, as if it was alright to be afraid, that it made sense to be careful. Taylor instantly hated him for it. It was because of the people like him that he felt he had to be careful, but it shouldn't be that way. They had chosen to protest, to go up against the system, to shout and march and yell at the police who were there because the students were being loud and obnoxious. They had created the response to themselves. They threw their public temper tantrums, caused a mess, in order to be for something and against someone. They created the response to their actions and would be watched so they didn't get out of hand. But he did not want to be watched, did not want to be one of those sulking about their self-imposed oppression.

These thoughts carried Taylor to his apartment without another thought of where he was going. He took the elevator up, still fuming. But as the door opened up, he saw the janitor standing outside his apartment with his door open. Taylor knew the small man in the blue shirt, his name was Jose. Taylor had never had to ask Jose for anything other than to replace the washers in his sink faucet. It had taken five minutes. Jose knew the minute details of the building down to those basic nuts and bolts. Taylor respected that kind of dedication to one's work, and the knowledge generated over hours and hours of labor.

"The police, they came, they wanted to search the room."

Taylor looked inside, his books and papers were all over the floor. He said nothing. He swallowed, noticing that there was nothing melodramatic about it, he just had to swallow.

"I was going to leave you a note. The door is fine. I used the spare. It is fine."

"It's alright. Thanks, Jose. It's fine."

"No problem." Jose looked at the room, not looking at Taylor. "It's a mess. I'm sorry."

"That's alright, Jose. Thanks."

"No problem." Jose gave him a quick glance, as if by letting the police in, it was he

who had done something wrong, and then walked down the hall to the elevator. Taylor closed the door behind him and looked at the papers everywhere. He pushed a few papers aside on the couch and wondered what it meant. He felt broken.

1.3.2

That evening, Taylor cleaned up his apartment, sorting and collating his papers, putting his books in order. There was no sign of what the police had been searching for. What could they have wanted? What did it mean? Gandolfini had suspicions. Taylor's anger swung back and forth from Gandolfini to Jordan and her activist friends. No matter what he did, he felt damned.

I have done nothing wrong, he thought to himself more than once. But what security do I have? I do not even know the rules of the game. I have just been pulled in without my consent.

He wrote down all his thoughts that night, trying to exorcise his emotions, as he put it in his words, and at some point he fell asleep exhausted on his couch, curled up in a blanket.

The next day he decided to try again, to go to the university. Warily leaving his apartment, he talked to no one, avoiding the eyes of all those he passed, focused solely on where he was going. He attended his lecture and was pleased that he was able to concentrate on some of it, which calmed him down. It was enough to swing his mood for the better when, leaving the lecture room, he received a pat on the shoulder. Wolowitz.

"Good to see you Mitch." Wolowitz gave him the smile that was almost permanently plastered across his face for any conversation. He looked up at Taylor, he looked up to everyone. His casual plaid shirt and jeans fit him, as always, remarkably well, smelling clean and without a wrinkle. Taylor despised Wolowitz for being a professional student of life, someone whose parents paid his way as he searched for himself without ever finding anything interesting. Not that he was unpleasant. He was gratefully gracious on this occasion, as always. "I understand you haven't been feeling well."

Taylor assumed this was his attempt at subtly demonstrating he had been brought up to date by the student who harassed him the day before.

"I have been over working myself."

"That's too bad. You know, if there is anything I can do, just let em know. I'm always glad to help."

"No, I am feeling much better, thank you." He began to walk to the exit.

"Have you heard any further news?" Taylor glanced at him while he talked, agitated by each twitch of Wolowitz's smile.

"News of what?"

Wolowitz grabbed him by the arm to stop him. "You know," he whispered. "I'm really very reliable. You can depend on me."

Taylor shook his arm loose. "I'm feeling quite fine now, thank you," and began again towards the exit.

Wolowitz persisted in a whisper besides him as they continued faster down the hall. "I understand your reticence to talk. But you know I can be of help. I really want to help. My family has some clout, if you need anything, I want to help, no one has to know where it came from."

Taylor, still moving towards the exit, his eyes straight ahead. "No, I am fine. You're offer is very kind, but I'm fine."

"I just want to help, some how, I feel so useless, I..."

Taylor turns to him. "I have to leave now. I can't talk now, I have to leave." He began again to walk quickly for the exit. As he opened the door, he looked back to see Wolowitz still standing there, instantly straightening up as he realized Taylor was looking at him.

Taylor walked home, consumed with agitation, unable to focus. They are murdering

my intelligence, he thought over and over again. The very repetition of his thoughts frustrated him. His mind was in such a state he was completely taken aback when two men in dark suits stepped out of a car, one in front of him, the other behind him. They efficiently told him they were special agents and that he had been summoned to answer some questions. Without resistance and in acceptance that this was now the life he was leading, he stepped into the car with a sigh and a complete lack of astonishment.

Now I am a suspect, he thought. His head returned to his life just a few days ago, of the paper still waiting for revisions in his apartment and he could not contain a giggle. One of the special agents looked at him without the knowing smile Gandolfini wore. Gandolfini. His very presence had embodied autocratic power. He seemed to have lounged in it. Taylor supposed it was his job to personify suspicion. He lived on the front lines of consciously maintained order. His ease, almost offhand approach to the situation, this was his domain. To Taylor it was unfathomable, a life of maintaining the borders of the social contract. Or perhaps Gandolfini had ceased to care, he saw it all as a source of amusement with no skin in the actual game. Perhaps it was simply a job to be done, so many checklists to take care of, a career to mind. After all, he had not looked like he walked the streets, seeing the faces encounter his drably tailored force.

As they passed through a security gate into a subterranean parking garage, it occurred to Taylor he might actually come face to face with Jordan. What could he possibly say? Would she know what he had done, did she know already? Were they both going to be sent away together, to wait trial and charges indefinitely in some remote interrogation camp? He would have to be silent if he confronted her, if he started to talk, who knew what might escape his lips. No matter what, he had to retain control of himself as much as possible, to be prudent. Who knew what precipice he stood atop, and where one utterance might send him.

The car parked and the agents led Taylor through a maze of concrete pillars and to an elevator bank. They took the elevator up and then transferred through a series of halls to another. The elevator rose upwards, stopping periodically as it conspicuously progressed above the floors of bustling activity and suits transporting large manila folders of paper. It deposited them on a floor of empty bland whiteness, not particularly clean, but ordered in its symmetrically placed doors and name labels bathed in florescence. The agents escorted him down a hall of closed identical doors and through one as if chosen at random. One of his escorts motioned for him to sit on the couch along the wall. They spoke quickly and quietly to a secretary, who in turn spoke quickly and quietly into her phone and returned it to its cradle. Taylor, thinking this was not the place to stage any sort of stand, did what he anticipated was expected of him, and sat on the couch without a word. The agents stood nearby trying unsuccessfully to look casual, and instead looked more as if they were waiting for their respective wives at the makeup section of a department store.

Without a sound, the secretary picked up the phone, then moved the mouthpiece away from her mouth. "You may go in now," she said to Taylor, who for a moment felt as if he was in a dentist office. He looked at the agents, who looked back at him opening a second door. Taylor got up and walked through it, still mesmerized by the secretary picking up the phone. Perhaps there was a blinking light indicator, Taylor thought.

It was a typical office, conservatively trimmed in wood and dark colors. The wooden Venetian blinds were down but enough light slipped through to light the room. In front of the window stood a tall man two generations older than Taylor, his head slightly balding, his face some what pockmarked. He stood next to a large wooden desk with two chairs in front of it. He offered one to Taylor. "Sit. Please."

Taylor did what he was told. "I got here as fast as I could." The words came from him without his realizing what he was saying.

The man looked at him and smiled. "That's very good of you." He walked behind the desk and sat down, leaning back slightly and crossing one leg leisurely over the other. "I appreciate your coming..."

It was then Taylor interrupted him. "There must be some misunderstanding," he

began.

1.3.3

It took Taylor a moment to realize what he was doing and he tried to get a hold of himself, to find some graceful way to stop talking, but could not find a place, a point to finish on. He did not even know what he was saying, he heard words coming out, but all he could think about was trying to stop them. He kept saying there was a misunderstanding, they didn't understand, he was not connected with Jordan, he hated her and her activists. All they did was cause trouble, he wanted nothing to do with them, for them all to go away. That was why he had gone to Gandolfini, he wanted an end put to them. He spit the words out of his mouth with anger, it was the first time he had spoken them aloud and releasing the words felt cathartic. He knew he was saying too much, he had to end his tirade, but it was the hand of the man behind the desk that stopped him.

"You are mistaken. It is alright," he said with a smile. Taylor thought of Gandolfini, who must have been responsible for his being there.

"I am mistaken?"

"There is no misunderstanding."

"But I assure you there is. I assure you I had nothing to do with that man being killed. I only knew where the girl was."

"Yes, and it is appreciated. It was a stroke of luck she came to you."

"Dumb luck, I promise. I did not know her at all, I do not know why she came to me, other than that she was desperate."

"We can continue this way, but we will get no where quickly no, no just hold on a second. I have listened to you for a moment but I must stop you. Gandolfini was very impressed by you."

"Is that why he searched my apartment?"

"Oh, yes, that. I am sorry about that. We had to have everything look like we had followed all our leads. But before we go any further, I know who you are. I'm Inspector-Deputy Assistant Director Mikulin with the CIA. I'm head of a counter terrorism task force which sometimes works in collaboration with Gandolfini but, as you know, he works for the FBI. Your friend George is a good man, I talked to him yesterday."

Was George in on this too? Is he curious about me? Taylor wondered. The man reminded him too much of Gandolfini, his smile, his easy manner.

"You are angry about the search, aren't you?"

"Am I suspect?"

The man smiled to himself. "Should you be?" He chuckled. "No, I'm sorry. We have had to make everything official. You are not a suspect, George has vouched for you, and that is good enough for Gandolfini." Taylor had himself under control now. He was going to say as little as possible, no matter what Mikulin said. He knew one misconstrued word could lead to only further unpleasantness. "Gandolfini said he was impressed by you. He said you were a thinker. I'm a thinker too. He also said that you knew Jordan would not talk."

"She has not?" Did asking make him look more suspicious? It was a reasonable question wasn't it? It is what a reasonable person would ask, it did not necessarily mean he was worried she would reveal something about him.

"No, she has not. You knew she wouldn't?"

"I thought. She feels strongly about representing something."

"Strongly enough to justify murder. You see that, you picked that up. We haven't been able to get even that out of her."

"I just listened, she said it."

"It can be an art though. Listening, being someone people just say something to." He took a deep breath. Taylor wanted to say something but thought better of it. "She belongs to a community of activists, I suppose you know that, who have become increasingly radical

over the last year. We keep tabs on certain protest groups that use what they call black tactics. Mostly it means breaking windows, destruction of property, that sort of thing. But lately we have been seeing arson, Molotov cocktails, sabotage, though they are careful not to hurt anyone. Have you ever heard of the Monkey Wrench Gang? ... No, well, we've seen an escalation. They have become the number one domestic ant-terrorist priority. This shooting, it's an escalation, it's what we want to avoid. We had not thought that they had come this far, now we need to prevent it from going further. That is why she is so important, we have to know what their plans are. Now we can interrogate her, but if she is not going to talk, and sometimes they don't, or sometimes they just stop making sense after a while, their mind just quits on them so they are unable to answer even if they want to..."

Taylor knew what he was talking about. He was dazed by images of him in an interrogation room like the one's described in the media, images of Jordan after months in an interrogation camp, blindfolded, kept awake for days at a time, intimidated, threatened while her future lay in shatters. He wanted to get up and leave, he wants to just admit everything to the man behind the desk, just explain everything but he knows it was useless, no matter what he said, they will believe what they wanted, they had their intelligence.

"So I wanted to thank you, for your help, it means a great deal."

"So I'm not a suspect? You don't think I'm an accomplice?"

"Should we?" And having said this, the slim old man winked. Something merry and sly ran across his face, the little wrinkles on his forehead smoothed out, his little eyes narrowed, his features stretched out and suddenly dissolved into prolonged laughter, swaying his body and looking straight into Taylor's eyes. Taylor's manner suddenly went beyond all prudence. He stopped smiling, frowned and looked at Mikulin long and hatefully, not taking his eyes off him during this whole long and as if deliberately unceasing fit of laughter. He felt Mikulin was laughin in the face of his visitor, who was meeting his laughter with hatred and that he was hardly embarrassed by this circumstance. Taylor found this very telling, he realized that Mikulin had certainly not been bothered by anything in Taylor's demeanor, but on the contrary, that he himself, Taylor, had perhaps stepped into a trap, that evidently there was something that here that he was unaware of, of some goal, that everything was perhaps prepared already and now, this minute, would be revealed and come crashing down.⁷

"I don't know how many times I have to say it, what is she to me, she means nothing to me. I have never wanted any part of them. If she tells you otherwise, she is lying..."

"Don't worry, they all lie when they are questioned. At first. But we appreciate your position, the position that you and George were placed in."

But Taylor was still angry and exasperated, he just wanted things to be done, to know where he stood, he wanted the man behind the desk to show his hand. "Are we done?"

"You have somewhere to go?"

"I just don't want to be here. I've had enough of this place."

"Well then, where do you want to go?"

2.1.1

Looking back over what I have written, I realize I have not structured it correctly. As an inexperienced writer, I cannot say if this is a normal malady, but I have let myself become so consumed in the story that I have failed to provide certain background necessary to continue, so I think it is best to step back here, and relate a little more regarding my place in this story and how I fit in.

My first encounter with the Cochran women was riding the bus through Boston. It was during a weekend in the early summer where certain buildings of interest open up their doors to the public and allow them to look around or have a guided tour. As an architect, it is one of my favorite events in the city, though with so many sites to see, it is frustrating that you are limited to those you can get to during the weekend. You must be strategic in your

⁷ Crime and Punishment, p 334.

itinerary to minimize your time wasted in transit from one location to the next. I forget where I was coming from, but I had taken the bus to Court House Station and was looking for the Institute of Contemporary Art, which I had been meaning to visit for some time. It had recently been built to all sorts of hullabaloo in an effort to revitalize a section of the waterfront. As I orientated myself, I noticed a young woman holding an event map and trying to orient herself. Normally, I am not so bold, but given that it was almost assured that she was looking for the same location I was, I walked over to her and asked if she was looking for the Institute. As I spoke to her, she was still and watched me with a slight doubtfulness which slowly faded into a gently unconcern. She let her map rest and said yes she was. I told her I was headed there myself and would be glad to show her the way, that I thought I knew it. We made our way over to the building easily enough and followed the line of visitors up and through the building, taking in the sleek details of the contemporarily styled design. She was very shy, with me doing most of the talking, but a little smile would pass over her lips as I talked which I found utterly charming.

She introduced herself as Jamie Cochran, and she and her mother had moved to Boston in the past few months, her having completed her degree and obtained a job as a sales person in a small antiques shop. She enjoyed Boston, but knew few people and little about the city, and so had been trying to find interesting places to explore around town. She seemed very independent, touring locations of the city on her own, and I offered that I would be glad to show her some places I thought were interesting. She seemed to hesitate, which I took to be due to my being several years older than her. I had almost not asked because I thought myself that our age difference might be a little awkward. However, we exchanged information and the next week I took her to look at some galleries on Newberry Street, which she had not encountered and was quite enamoured with. It was there I learned of her recent relationship with a man her own age, which had ended badly and was not unrelated to her moving. She did not speak any further about it, though at times she would start to say something and check herself, and I could tell she was not absent of emotions on the subject. It was this that had made her hesitate before, she did not want to lead me to believe in any romantic expectations, yet she was so lonely in the city where the only person she knew was her mother, that she could not give up an invitation. She was starved for company.

I could not help being completely taken by her situation and told her that while I might have had some hopes of romance, and so was slightly disappointed, I would be glad to continue to show her around town as I enjoyed her company a great deal, all of which was true. A wonderful smile came over her face and she gave me a small hug which lifted her up on her toes and our friendship began.

Once every week or two we would go and explore some new neighborhood, or event or restaurant, talking about family and work, for it did seem that the only other person Jamie had to confide in was her mother and there are certain things one cannot discuss with one's mother.

The day of the Wall Street killing, particularly because it happened in the morning, the media talked of nothing else. The day after, I picked Jamie up at the house in Brighton in which she and her mother had rented a floor. To explore some vintage clothing stores I thought she might like near Reardon Square. The news coverage of the killing had been so total, I naturally brought the subject up and asked Jamie and her mother what they thought of the story.

"There will be more trouble, the police will be cracking down on protesters after this," was Mrs. Cochran's response. "They may even close the universities."

I thought this was a little severe, but said nothing, knowing her daughter had been participating in some student protests and she was only concerned.

She continued. "Things are difficult now, but it's hardship that drives people to demand change, and not settle for less."

I said something along the lines that I did not understand how peace can come from violence, that at heart there might be a conflict of interests that might not be able to be

aligned.

Jamie supported her sister's decision to demonstrate her dissent. She said, "Causing national dissent should help to find a better form of national freedom than some artificial conflict of two parties. The whole thing is wrong because it is a conflict and contemptible because it is artificial."

"She is a slave to her idea of her sister," her mother said to me, a comment that did not cause us to prolong our departure much further.

On our way, I asked Jamie if she had been in touch with Jordan, given that her mother thought there might be trouble.

"I haven't," she said, "but it's not unusual to go a few days without hearing from her, especially when something exciting is happening."

"I'm not a puppy following my sister, like my mother tends to think. I looked up to her when I was young, but we are our own individuals now. She understands me, she is a very deep soul, you would like her."

"I'd like to meet her." I said.

"Oh, you will. She has a very insightful view of the world, a way of looking directly into things and seeing how they work and what must be done."

Over the next few weeks, I did not hear from Jamie. I called her several times, and when I finally heard back from her, she was fretting because she still had not heard from Jordan since before the killing. I remarked that she had said this was not unusual, but she said that it was unusual to go so long without a message of some sort. Jamie had even contacted a friend of her sister in New York, the only other person Jamie knew in New York, but even her friend had not seen her. He could only say that she had not been in school.

Her mother had called the university, which had directed her to the police. The police had been sympathetic at first, taking down Jordan's information and promising to follow up, but no information followed. After repeated calls to the police, no details of Jordan's whereabouts had turned up. The police had begun to belittle Mrs. Cochran on the phone and make jokes, telling her that Jordan was a college student and would return home once all the drugs were gone. Other times she was told that since Jordan was an adult and since there was no evidence of foul play there was little reason to investigate. She could simply be out on a binge and have chosen to remain out of touch.

Over the weeks, the total lack of any information had begun to affect Mrs. Cochran. She had stopped making phone calls, letting Jamie take charge of them. In fact, she had slowly stopped talking almost all together, not leaving the house, but instead alternating between sitting in the living room on a couch and laying in bed in her room. Jamie watched over her carefully, taking care of the household chores. It was clearly taking a toll on her and she sounded more isolated than ever.

I tried to do my best to comfort Jamie, while being careful not to over step my bounds, for it was her ordeal, and I did not want to trivialize it by simply telling her everything would be alright. The idea came into my head that we hear of awful stories in the news, but in the news they are just stories, they are distant from us. But they must happen to someone, someone who could not imagine it happening to them. People go missing, from their ordinary lives, and for the rest of us life just continues. I did not like the thought, it made me feel even further removed from the Cochrans, as if I was watching their anxiety on a journalistic report.

2.1.2

No one likes to feel helpless. That day I sat at home and, wondering what I could do for Jamie, left a message for an old acquaintance of mine who worked with the associated press. It was later that evening when he returned my call. There were rumors floating around the killing. Some, due to Mortimer Goldfellow's position, were asserting it was an assassination. Then he mentioned Jordan's name. She had been a suspect but had disappeared. Some thought she may have been taken for questioning, others that she had

fled, which seemed to confirm her guilt. Since there was no connection between her and Goldfellow, it was believed that the killing had to be political in nature, to further disrupt the financial markets by scaring those in the financial industry, and directly disrupting any dealings Goldfellow was involved in. This made it an act of terrorism.

Federal Agents had been rumored to take over the entire investigation, but nothing was being confirmed. Up until the collapse of the World Trade Center, the Central Intelligence Agency had maintained a clandestine presence in New York behind a false corporate front housed in an innocuous 45 story office building. They shared their floors with the Department of Defense and the Internal Revenue Service and outside of Washington, it was the largest CIA installation. From here, agents would try to recruit foreigners and students to spy for them, and debrief those willing to talk to them after returning from overseas. However, their base of operations was destroyed by the terrorists attacks on the World Trade Center, after which point knowledge of their location becomes less reliable. In the following years, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began expanding its anti-terrorist initiatives past domestic borders, replacing the less visible operations of the CIA who had maintained an international focus, but also working with the CIA in New York, relying on their agents to obtain information through espionage and interrogations. The FBI's actions remained visible. The CIA, on the other hand, was known to secretly take prisoners through what the press called extraordinary rendition to their unknown sites for interrogation. The detainees at these black sites were called ghosts, no one outside the CIA knew their names, where they were, or why they were taken. Sometimes these ghost detainees were forced to disappear, never being heard from again. Of course, none of this could be confirmed, and with the lack of confirmation from investigators, and the lack of knowledge of who was doing the investigating, few in the presses were willing to run with unsubstantiated rumors. They did not fear spreading misinformation, so much as angering any authority who might potentially give them a lead in the future. Was this what had happened to Jordan? There were only theories, any new facts would have to come with patience.

I wasted no time the next day in telling Jamie what I had learned. I had been up all night wondering how to give her the news. Was it the right thing to do to give her unconfirmed rumors, or would it simply worry her? Would it simply cause her to hate me if they ended up not being true? Was it my place to play with her emotions? But I thought she would be grateful to know all the details I had and could decide for herself what to believe. I decided the news had to be delivered in person, after all there was no telling how she might take it and I wanted to be there to support her in person.

Having called her up to tell her I had important news, I took her for a walk to a park in her neighborhood. There I recounted all the details I had learned, making sure to tell her none had been confirmed. I spoke with extraordinary sympathy, but also with restraint and with a somehow eager seriousness, precisely like a doctor giving his first important consultation, not deviating from the subject a single word.⁸ She was devastated, the blood running out of her face, I had never seen someone's face look so porcelain white.

"How do they know this?" she asked me. "How could they know?"

"I do not know. It is their job. Maybe they are sensationalizing things, that is their job as well."

"I don't know what to think."

"You do not have to know. We can wait to hear."

"It sounds as if we could be waiting forever."

I did not know what to say. We stood there in the park for a moment. She looked into the distance and I could not conceive of the thoughts going through her head.

After a moment she said, "I must tell my mother." I looked her. "Right away."

"Are you sure that is a good idea?"

"I have to. She must know." She was absolutely distraught, but I was grateful she did

⁸ Crime and Punishment, p 207.

not cry. I did not know if I could have taken it.

We walked quickly back to her house where her mother was sitting in the living room. Jamie immediately told her mother everything that I had relayed. I was relegated to sitting on the sofa across the room and nodding periodically to confirm what she said, adding that if I found out any further information, I would deliver it immediately.

Jamie's mother did not say a word. She did not shed a tear the entire time her daughter spoke, but something seemed to vanish from her expression. Without saying so directly, there was the understanding that they may not see Jordan again, or that if they did, it would be to watch her go through a prolonged prosecution. Loss is familiar to everyone, but it was difficult to bring this news to these two women who had become something special to me. The night before in my unrest, I had thought that the additional information might at least ease some of the uncertainty they carried, but they were devastated, with nothing but heartache to look for in the future.

Jamie at last turned to thank me for bringing them the news. She walked over to the window and looked out, explaining as she did so that since her father had died when she was very young, it had been the three women together to support each other. And now it felt like they had lost another leg of support. Her mother sat unmoving without any sound. Jamie, still facing the window, began to cry softly. I felt unsure what to do, any consolation that I thought to offer felt hollow and insincere. It felt like a family moment and I was intruding on it. This, along with my inability to watch Jamie cry, convinced me I should take my leave, and I slowly left the apartment without a further word.

The next day I paid another visit to the house to see with my own eyes how they were faring. I told Jamie I had no further news, which disappointed her. A hint of disbelief had crept into her sentiments, that such a thing could be allowed to happen in this country.

"How could they simply take someone without any notification?" she asked. "It is something we denounce other countries for employing. This is surely unconstitutional."

"There is no way to hold anyone accountable," I replied, trying carefully not to sound like I was defending the practice. "We do not even know who should be held accountable. We do not even know what has happened yet."

"It simply is not right." And in a whisper that I almost did not catch, she added, "Someone must have betrayed her."

Everyone was silent.

The apartment had been cleaned up, I wondered if it was a coping mechanism for one of them, but Jamie said they were expecting company, which I was unsure whether or not to take as a prompt that I should be going. I decided to play the safe bet and announced that I should be going.

Jamie escorted me down the stairs of the house, mentioning she wished she knew more about Jordan's friends in New York. I wondered how Jordan allowing her family to be wrapped up in this situation reflected on her resolve. Did she know, had she given thought to what her family was going through?

"You'll tell us if you hear anything?" she said to me.

I assured her I would. I did not know how many times I had done so in the past 24 hours.

"I wonder what it means, the vagueness of the reports," she said.

"I am sure they simply do not want to stir up the media any more than is necessary," I replied.

"I told my mother that Jordan might have been betrayed by someone, that she may have even been framed." I looked at her dubiously. I had wondered from where her previously muttered comment had come. "I think it might be easier for her to handle. Mentally. It gives her someone else to blame."

I confessed that I did not know whether I thought that was realistic.

"Oh, I don't think she actually was. Who could do such a thing?"

Of course, she could not imagine someone capable of such a thing, in the same way that she could not think ill of anyone. She was truly one of the few tender flowers in the

world.

I left her on the steps and walked to the train station on Commonwealth Avenue, wondering why it was that she chose to confide in me. It was obviously not for advice, for our views on the world were so drastically different.

2.2.1

Work forced me to leave town for the next two weeks, but once I had returned, I wasted no time on my return in visiting Jamie and her mother. When I arrived at their house, I found the women had another visitor. He was introduced to me as Robert Clausson, a tall rugged man with a beard and deep baritone voice. To me he seemed to be affecting the look of a farmer but had the stance of a confident intellectual. Evidently the man had met the women before I had and had found out recently, I did not learn then how, that Jordan had been apprehended by federal agents for questioning and was not being released. Naturally he had informed the women and had been following up with them in my absence. When he spoke, I felt I detected a smug condescension towards me, as if he found it partly amusing, and partly an annoyance, to have to explain the ways of the world to me.

As I entered, he appeared to be exiting, mentioning that the new friend of his from New York he had mentioned before to the ladies had just arrived and that they were going to meet at The R. He was already standing, wished to drop a few more clever remarks before leaving. He was obviously anxious to make a favorable impression, and vanity overcame his good senses.⁹

"You, of course, are welcome to join us," the tall man said in a slightly suggestive fashion.

"Not today, but thank you," Jamie replied.

"You know that The R is known the world over to be synonymous with oppositional culture. People from all over the world visit us to see the strong hold of resistance in the center of Boston. Right now we have..."

"So I have heard," Jamie interrupted.

"Well, you should check out the art show that is going up next week. It's a fund raiser for the building. Hundreds of works on paper all by political artists who have donated their pieces. The opening is next Thursday."

"Hundreds of works? How large is the exhibition space?" I asked.

"Of course, all the works will not be hung at once," he turned to me with a grin that I am sure was meant to be charming.

"It sounds like quiet an event," I replied.

"We do it once a year. The local magazines pick it up, we're a little bit of a darling of theirs. We fill a nice niche of local grass roots culture and there are always some colorful characters."

"I'm sure it is wonderful," Jamie piped in. I think she wanted to draw the topic to a close.

"How is it, Jamie, that you have been in Boston for so long and have not come to visit our unique center for art and community?..."

"I am not sure it is the right time now. My mother needs me and I am not sure I am quite ready to be meeting a lot of new people at the moment."

As the man was beginning to agitate me, I was glad that she interrupted him and put him in his place.

"But we, including myself, would all love for you to stop by. Pay us a visit when ever you are in the need of company, I think it would do you well. You'd enjoy the conversations." I felt there was a barb in this directed at me, as his tone continued to give me the feeling he liked me as little as I did him.

She said that she might stop by, a concession which surprised me given his arrogant attitude.

⁹ Crime and Punishment, p 150.

“Good. The sister of Jordan Cochran cannot be unimportant.” He said as he opened the door to leave. He gave her a snake oil smile and a nod to me and closed the door behind him.

Once he had left, Jamie asked me if I knew who he was.

I replied I did not.

We sat down next to the window in her living room and she began to tell me how they had met.

Clausson was a friend of Jordan’s in New York and was an activist of some fame, though I admitted to Jamie that I certainly had never heard of him. He was not the common college student but had instead runaway from home at a young age and lived on the streets for most of his teenage years. He came from a factory town and by the time most people had graduated college, he was frustrated with the limited options he had with his life, working some manual labor job or another. But he had acquired a library card and had begun to educate himself, mostly reading authors who catered to the disenfranchised, those who preach how the powerful want to stay in power and ensure that those who have no power continue to have none. Later he gained some notoriety due to news reports on programs he was affiliated with in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina. The story, as Jamie told it, was more of a legend now. After the hurricane, he had taken it upon himself to buy a boat and drive to New Orleans and find a friend of his, a Black Panther, who had been out of contact and lived in a neighborhood that was underwater. He had tried to drive the boat into the city on a trailer, but was prevented by road blocks, so he decided to wade into the brackish water on foot. At some point a number of police officers, noticing him from a vantage point on a bridge, told him to stop, that he was not allowed to go further, to which he was reputed to have replied that they were on the bridge and he was beneath them, out of reach, and he did not see that they were able to stop him from trying to help his friend. And so he continued on. He proceeded until he could go no further and got stuck, but was able to flag down a Coast Guard boat and convinced them not only to take him on board, but to also search for his friend.

I asked Jamie if they had found his friend, to which she replied she could not remember. But the reckless arrogance of the story seemed to me to fit the demeanor of the man I had just met.

For someone who was angry at the empowered, the government’s response to Katrina had exemplified the lack of desire to help those in need on the part of those who had the most to give. It also had been, through a confluence of circumstances, the perfect testing ground for someone who wanted to set up an alternative to the current government enabled power structure. It was a wasteland, with no infrastructure, where someone could go in and demonstrate they could do a better job than the politicians content to wrap themselves in bureaucracy. He started a relief organization with some friends he had met through an anarchist bookstore, using the house of a Black Panther as a headquarters. (It was unclear if this was the one he had gone to New Orleans to save.) Evidently at the time, other relief organizations had not been able to get to certain wards of the city, and so Clausson had located himself in a place where often he was the only means of support. His organization offered free meals, medicine, supplies, and would go out and gut houses, which was needed to get rid of the black mold. According to the stories Jamie had heard, the police hated these young activist organizations which had no respect for the police. The young volunteers saw the police as needlessly harassing them for not having the proper permits or authorizations when all the volunteers wanted to do was to give aid. This created an atmosphere of tension, added to by personality conflicts within the organization. Some believed that the organization was one of equals and that everything should be decided by vote. Clausson felt this created the same bureaucracy that slowed the government’s response. In the end, he found the new anarchist structure they had created in their little section of New Orleans to be no better than that of Washington, crippled by its need for mass consensus. And while many of the residents appreciated the aid of the young shabby volunteers, they were not revolutionaries and were not looking to create an alternative culture. Clausson found that in

order to create significant change, what was needed was another approach, guided by someone with experience.

Shortly after the hurricane hit New Orleans, Hugo Chavez had offered humanitarian aid to New Orleans, criticizing the response of the United States Government. The offer was ignored except by the media, however Clausson took it upon himself to reach out and meet with representatives about supplying trailers where US humanitarian aid trailers had been slow in arriving. He went to Venezuela to ask for money, meeting with representatives of Chavez. Those he met with were supportive, impressed by the news coverage of Clausson's work in New Orleans and said they could supply trailers and regiments of aid workers. They further suggested Clausson go to Columbia to meet with members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia. Together, they could use Katrina as an opportunity to insert a guerrilla force into the unorganized delta region. From this foothold, they would have a base of operations from which to promote change in the United States.

This caused Clausson to take a step back, unsure if this was the direction he felt morally aligned with. He disengaged with the Latin revolutionaries and returned to the United States to think. In meditating over the direction he wanted to pursue, he wrote a short autobiography that was quickly published and was moderately successful, giving him the means to pursue his ideological agenda. He spent time in New York, where he was in touch with several activist communities, including the one Jordan joined. He also spent time in Boston working with an organization called The R, which was, as far as I could understand, was a collective of different collectives, each preaching their own take on social justice, equality, anti-authoritative alternative systems, and autonomous action. Since finding out Jordan's sister was in Boston, he had been encouraging Jamie to answer a call to action, as he called it. I was relieved that so far she had declined his offers. It reassured me, as I had the feeling he was so brazen he gave off an aura of ingenuousness. Jamie made it sound like he enjoyed preaching from the comfort of his royalties while encouraging those who were impressionable to serve his cause. However, I have no illusions that my own distaste for the man I had met may have tinted my reception of his story.

2.3.1

Jamie having relayed the story of her visitor, I inquired after her mother, who was laying down, exhausted.

"She has been so anxious about Jordan that she has had to rest during the day or she loses her head," she said. Her mother had taken the news about Jordan hard, I am not sure I had heard her say anything since she listened to the details I had brought to the house. I couldn't think of anything polite to say so I was glad Jamie decided to change topics back to her discussion with Clausson. She admitted she did feel the need for advice from someone, yet she was unwilling to be completely honest with him.

I again felt reassured, given the unfavorable impression he made on me. But what made me happier was that she revealed to me she had received a message from her sister.

"She sent it right before everything happened in New York. I came across it last night in my inbox, I must have read over it and not thought anything of it at the time. But it was interesting reading it now. It's mostly about how she wishes people would take to their own causes, that perhaps all they need is a little prodding to spur them on to action. A nudge to empower themselves."

It sounded like a pre-packaged motive being read by a district attorney, but I kept that to myself.

Jamie went on. "I don't expect you to understand. You've already made your deal."

"My deal?" I asked.

"We all make our deals, at different times in our lives. We say it is okay to compromise a little bit of our freedom for a little bit of security. We decide not to follow a

dream in order to live a more stable life. Everyone has to find their own balance.”

“I guess they do.”

“You’ve carved out a civilized life, and, being civil, you don’t want to be uncivil, with protest and demonstrations. You don’t want to get your clothes dirty.”

I felt humbled. It gave me a rare glimpse into how she saw me, certainly not as a revolutionary or a demonstrator (I had no illusions that I was, especially given the company I was finding that her family kept). While I had always considered myself someone to stand up when something was not right, compared to her sister and Clausson, even to the way her mother spoke of marching on Washington in her youth, I felt positively stodgy.

I told her that I was very impressed with her and her family, in particular her ability to always see people as themselves, to look into their heart and not be distracted by fleeting superficialities.

“Thank you. Your friendship has been very valuable to me as well,” she said softly.

“Tell me this, though. When you think of activists, like in the story you told me about Clausson, isn’t he just following a different ideology? I mean, he is not necessarily a leader if he is a slave to an idea. What might wind up being one hierarchical structure to replace the old one.”

“One has to hope though. You cannot always doubt. Those hopes may be betrayed, people can be weak, and ideas can become a parody of themselves. But I, for myself, have to believe in the strength of people. We’re used to having everything handed to us, to pulling ourselves up by other men’s bootstraps, to having our food chewed for us. When the great hour strikes, everyone will show what they are made of.¹⁰ When times are difficult, it is when you find strength, it is when the real leaders emerge. Not because they seek to be leaders, but because they believe in doing something and their confidence in their way draws others to follow them. My sister described someone like that in the message she sent me, and he is coming to Boston. She wrote about him right before everything happened and now he is coming here. It cannot be simply a coincidence.”

“Have you met him?”

“No, but he was part of the reason Robert was here. He came to inform me that he’d just arrived in the city. He’s been staying with some other activist, friends of Robert, someone I don’t know.”

I guessed that if he was coming to town to see Clausson from some other collective, he was most probably up to something.

“I have to meet him,” she said.

“Do you know how to reach him?”

She lowered her voice. “Well, no, but he is going to meet Clausson at The R. I thought I might try to run into him there. If not, perhaps I can find out how to contact him there. He is bound to know at least something more about Jordan. It can’t hurt to at least meet him.”

She was impatient with hope, hope that he would put her and her mother at ease with some bit of information, though I could not imagine what. Maybe she sensed in the opportunity a chance for some catharsis. She also wanted her mother to meet him, though not until after she had first made sure that the information would not put further strain on her.

I left Jamie that afternoon wondering exactly what was it that she wanted to know. I knew she could be impetuous, she had told me how she had moved back and forth between several schools because of her acting out when she was younger. And I could see her belief in people, even those she did not know, allowed her to be open to new ideas, in a way, I confessed to myself, that I could not be. But I could also see how that openness to new ideas might lead to her questioning of authority. How much like her sister was she? Or how much did she want to be? She had talked about the small town in western Massachusetts where she lived before coming to Boston and how she had heard her neighbors gossiping about

¹⁰ Crime and Punishment, p 151.

her, which is enough to make anyone want to speak up and straighten someone out. Her mother had said she idolized her sister's daring spirit. Jordan had been her example that she could do anything, and now she was abandoned without a reason. What was she willing to do to find out that reason? Whatever it was, it worried me. I knew that it might not be my place, that she and her family had a view of the world that differed greatly from mine, but I felt her being drawn into a tempest and had the unnerving feeling that it was being caused by Clausson. For what reason I did not know, but he struck me as manipulative and perhaps a bit of a megalomaniac, and I did not want to see Jamie used because he enjoyed being the center of attention or because of his personal hero complex.

2.4.1

It was several days before I was able to see Jamie again, but I continued to be worried by the idea of Clausson courting her. There was something in her that allowed his voice to resonate, perhaps helped by the amount of time she had been staying at home with her mother. When I stopped by in the afternoon, the potential of what she could find at The R had been festering in her, it was in her voice. I could tell that she had been to see Clausson, but I dared not ask, being careful not to broach a subject that she did not want to discuss.

Finally I was so anxious I could not take the suspense any more.

"So did you see him?"

She gave me a shy look. "I did. But only briefly." She looked in the direction of her mother's room, where her mother was resting. Then she suggested we take a walk.

She did not say a word more until we were out of the house and on the sidewalk. I waited patiently, myself not saying anything to avoid her losing her train of thought. The entire time she seemed about to speak, the tumblers tumbling away slowly in her mind.

At last she spoke.

"I went The R yesterday. It was easy to find, a number of organizations operate out of it. It's a small building, at first I thought it was condemned. The windows on the first floor are all boarded up and the building is covered in graffiti murals and leaflets. There's this kind of cage made of welded together cogs and tools that surrounds the steps to the front door, what must have been an industrial art project but feels more like a pile of scrap metal. I was intimidated, the entire time I was there. On the stoop, sitting on the steps and hanging off the metal cage were these two men wearing black leather jackets with studs and rivets and white writing all over them. One had a mohawk, the other had no hair at all, but both wore big heavy boots that came up to their knees. The bald one, who was a little tubbier than the other, was telling a story to a few others dressed similarly sitting on the steps while the one with the mohawk egged and riled him on. It was something about a couple who had run over a cat and had placed the cat in a shopping bag to take to the dump, but they had stopped at a fast food restaurant on the way there. And as they sat in the restaurant eating their food, they saw an old lady walk by and reach in through the car window and take the shopping bag. Since the two were just throwing the cat away, they don't go after her, but watched her from the restaurant, wondering what she was doing. They watched her sit down at a picnic table outside the restaurant, where she bent down to look into the bag, saw the cat, and, she was so surprised, jerked her head up, hitting it on the picnic table and passing out. Someone called an ambulance and they put the old woman on a gurney and placed her in the back, still dazed and confused. As the medic is getting the ambulance ready to leave, he spotted the shopping bag, which had been next to the old woman, and he grabbed it and put it in the ambulance with the woman before closing the doors and leaving.

"Because the group was blocking the door, I had to stand and listen to this story, the man with the mohawk constantly interrupting and laughing. Once the story was through and a few of the listeners on the stairs were chuckling, I was able to ask if the building we were in front of was actually The R. The larger man who had been telling the story said yes and I

felt all of the attention of the group suddenly thrust upon me. I stammered out that I was looking for Robert, to which the man said I must be with the film crew. Before I could object, a tall woman with long dark hair, who had not seemed very amused by the story, stood up from her perch on the steps and said she would show me where to go. She must have been over six feet tall and weighed no more than a hundred pounds, her face almost completely hidden by the hair hanging in front of it. I followed her up the stairs, her gangly figure looming above me as I navigated my way through the group still sitting on the steps. She placed her hand on the center of the front door and pushed it open with purpose. Behind the door was vast darkness compared to the afternoon light. Not a single light was on, but once my eyes adjusted I could see the elongated figure of the girl trudging her untied boots up a set of wooden stairs. A film of dust covered everything. I began to follow her and felt the stairs creak and bend underneath my feet, half-fearing I might actually fall through them.

“On the landing of the second floor were two closed doors with peepholes, the girl but continued upwards. As I followed her, she asked if I was from France like the rest of the crew, to which I admitted that I wasn’t with the film crew, that Robert had asked me to stop by sometime. I began to hear a voice above us. I walked across the third floor landing, where the girl motioned for me to stop before she continued up the stairs. Dim sunlight trickled down into the stairwell from some skylight above. The building looked like it had been built to be apartments a hundred years ago. The walls were covered with more murals, with text incorporated into them, but before I could read any of it, the girl had reappeared to tell me they were still filming upstairs, but they should be done in a few minutes if I would wait.

“I told her I would and she said she would wait with me and sat down on the steps. I had a small feeling of vertigo, imagining the wooden steps giving way and falling down the three stories we had just climbed, but I sat down next to her on the steps, there being just enough room. Above us, a large tabby cat was silently descending the stairs.

“‘That’s Cookie Puss,’ the girl said and extended her hand toward the cat, which walked up to her and began to walk in circles on the landing, rubbing itself against her hand. ‘She’s one of the most senior advocates here.’ She then looked from the cat to me. ‘Animals must fight for their rights too, you know.’

“I smiled at her.

“She asked how I knew Robert and I told her that he was a friend of my sister in New York. She gave me a knowing look and said ‘I know who you are.’

“I was startled a little, but then I was quickly reassured as I saw her smiling at me in the dim light.

“I asked if she was a friend of Robert, to which she said. ‘I’m not smart enough to talk to him, or at least that is what he thinks.’ I was shocked both by her bluntness and that he would be so rude, but she continued. ‘He’s a genius. Sometimes he doesn’t realize the way he is to people. But I supposed none of us are perfect. If we were, getting along would be easy. That’s why we have to work at it.’

2.4.2

“I had recognized that she had an accent and I asked her about it. She was from a farm in Australia. She moved to Sidney when she was fifteen to work as a model, and from there and moved to New York shortly after. She had worked as a model in New York for two years, constantly flying for shoots to Italy, France, Los Angeles, Germany, anywhere, never sleeping, running herself ragged until she was sick of it, hating everyone she worked with. She was unable to take running into them everywhere she went, and left New York for Boston and found herself alone, half way around the world from her family, with no friends, no schooling, and no money.

“She began to volunteer at a soup kitchen, feeding herself on scraps while chopping vegetables. The soup kitchen was run by a group of vegan anarchists, who liberated

leftovers from behind restaurants for supplies. The volunteers who ran the kitchen were on the brink of starving, but they cooked and distributed the food in a near by park to anyone who was hungry, mostly to the homeless who were also on the brink of starving. She was surrounded by starvation, no one had jobs, and all around people in clean clothes drove by in shiny cars. Sometimes she was so hungry her perception of reality became surreal, almost dreamlike, until she did not know if she was awake or not. At times, she couldn't even take care of herself, but the volunteers she cooked with took care of her, allowing her to sleep on a couch. They taught her how to be discreet when foraging for food in dumpsters, gave her a flash light so she could see what she was reaching for in them, how to use a stick to sort through things and told her things to look out for, like unopened containers, expiration dates, and how to consider the weather and the way it affected food.

“Soon, she was sharing a squat with some other anarchists, bringing home day old baked goods, slightly bruised vegetables, and cereal thrown out for being just past the expiration date. The clothes she wore were ones she had found or traded with someone else, and she spent her spare time reading books at the library. As she read and talked to the anarchists she lived with, she realized how excessive consumption had lured her into a life that made her miserable, led her away from her family and home. All around her she saw people spending and feeding a cycle of wastefulness, encouraging people to live far beyond their means to sustain an unsustainable pattern of growth. And so she said it was the happiest day of her life when that banker died. In her mind, Jordan is some hero, striking down the breathing personification of decadence... it is all so bizarre.

“She went on to explain how the killing had caught them completely off guard. Robert had not expected anything so monumental to take place. She asked me what my opinion was, but I told her not to expect too much from me.

“You think you couldn't have done such a thing yourself perhaps?” she asked.

“I don't know,” I replied. “I must not even ask myself until I have lived a little longer, and seen a little more of the world. But it was a bold act, without a doubt.”

“You don't think it was an act of desperation?”

“Oh, no. Not coming from Jordan.”

“I agree.”

“You know my sister?”

“No, but I have heard a great deal about her.” It was clear she appreciated that Jordan had sacrificed her life for her ideals. Her story will be written into history forever. Such a result is so much larger than a life, don't you think?”

I was so absorbed in listening to Jamie that I was taken off guard and was only able to nod instinctively before she continued.

“It was then that I recognized Robert's passionate voice and for some reason I became nervous. I told the girl next to me that I had lost track of time and that I had to be going and she began to walk with me back down the stairs, but Robert's voice was not coming from the filming upstairs, as I realized he was walking up the stairs towards us. I lost my nerve, there was no way for me to exit without passing him, and so met him on the landing of the second floor. But he was not alone! With him was the man Robert had spoken to me about, the man my sister had told me about. I could tell immediately by his quiet demeanor and a certain awkwardness that we both shared, being unfamiliar to that cave feeling building.

“Robert was visibly glad to see that I had taken him up on his invitation and introduced me to the man next to him, Mitch Taylor. He nodded politely towards me. I was so excited and anxious all at once I couldn't even speak! Mitch did not say anything. He had a stern look about him and an intensity in his eyes. Fortunately, Clausson asked the girl with whom I had been sitting if the filming was still going on. Her name was Nym I found out when he addressed her. Her reply was a curt yes. It was evident she had little desire to engage Clausson in conversation, which I can understand, the way he treated her. The people's advocate! He barely acknowledged her, and then when he did it was only for her to answer his questions. He was actually rude to her, now that I think about it. I tell you men,

whether they are famous or not, are just strange! All of them are just strange! But she paid him little mind, giving me a smile and then she traipsed off down the stairs, her boots clattering against the steps.

“My anxiety grew as I stood there, alone with the two men, and so I apologized and said that I had to get back to my mother, that I had been waiting too long, adding that I enjoyed seeing the building (I did not want Robert to think Nym had said anything against him). I told him that now I had fulfilled my obligation to visit and he could no longer badger me about it. Mitch’s eyes seemed to latch onto me as I spoke.”

2.4.3

I must say that I was glad the girl, Nym, had been there to accompany Jamie through the building. It is not that I think that Clausson is necessarily a bad person, but at the time I thought, and still do, that it could have been dangerous for her to walk into that dark building alone, as a young woman.

Later, after Jamie was done telling me the story, I looked the building up. In the 1970s, it had been a small apartment building that was abandoned by its owners and the city had taken possession of it. This was not an uncommon, just as it was not uncommon occurrence at that time for landlords to set fire to their own buildings for the insurance money, some being so underwater they were worth more destroyed than preserved. Then in the early eighties, a group of artists decided to squat in a nearby building and have an art show. It attracted enough media that the police had to shut down the art show, seizing the artwork. The artists, as a collective, bargained with the city, which allowed them to use a different building to put on the show, the building to which Jamie had gone. The artists could continue to use the building as long as they kept the building up. A few years later, the city sold them the building for the price of one dollar with the provision that they had to bring the building up to code, which has never happened. At some point in the 1990s, the city tried to push out the collective, which had by then grown into the series of groups which inhabit the building now, mostly made up of squatters, punks, and those who dwell on the fringes of society. Over the years the building gained an international recognition through art shows and demonstrations and affiliations, and for having a cockroach’s tenacity for survival. As far as I could tell, the building had never been brought up to code and just thinking of it made me want to get a tetanus shot.

But all of this I learned after Jamie had finished telling me of her first encounter with Taylor, who, by Jamie’s description, I much preferred to the bombastic Clausson. I may sound over protective of her, but I assure you that I had her best interests in mind, my friendship with her being its own reward.

Jamie continued. “Robert introduced Mitch, mentioning he had met Jordan through the university. But then he went off on some tangent about Jordan and how she was a martyr now. It was something I could hardly listen to, him implying that it was better I would never see her again as the whole world would be able to place a name with her act. All I wanted was to talk to Mitch.”

As Jamie talked about her encounter, I wondered why Taylor had not come immediately to see Jamie and her mother. It seemed like the polite thing to do, but I was anxious to hear what she thought of him, and so tried to put the thought out of my mind.

“It was then that someone from upstairs came, said they needed Robert for the filming, and raced back upstairs. Robert explained that some French filmmakers were shooting a documentary about anti-consumerist culture in America and where doing a few interviews with members of the collective. He seemed quiet pleased with it, though I thought I caught Mitch roll his eyes as Robert described the international standing of the collective.

“Finally Robert excused himself and bounded up the stairs, leaving Mitch and I together alone. It was awkward, I waited for him to speak and I think he was doing the

same. I didn't know what to say, my mind had gone completely blank. I had so many questions for him but was afraid I would overwhelm him if I just blurted anything out, but I don't think I could have done much worse than I did."

"What did you say?" I prompted her. She was worked up just remembering the conversation and I believe I was as anxious as her.

"It just came out. I said to him. 'I'm Jordan's sister.' He looked as if I had struck him, his face went white. It was clear that he was as sensitive about Jordan as I was."

I would find out later reading Mitch's journal that he had been overwhelmed by the meeting, that he had actually been angry, as he thought that the meeting with Jamie had been planned, that it had been a kind of ambush. As I listened to Jamie, I was glad for the turn the story had taken. I had the feeling that Taylor was being recruited by Clausson in the same way Jamie was, his bringing them to the famous collective, at a time when they happened to be interviewed due to their international renown. It was a relief to hear he had left them alone.

"Did you talk with him?" I asked her.

Silence. Jamie did not answer. I thought of the two of them there in the dark, both having been lured there by Clausson, and I wondered what he had thought of leaving them together.

Finally Jamie broke the silence.

"I think he is a good man who is suffering the pain of his fate."

I asked her what it was that made her think this, but she said she didn't know.

"Well, what sort of man was he?"

"What do you mean? Like what he looked like? Why?"

"Well, just what was he like?"

She thought a moment.

"He had the look of total confidence, of a man who did not care what others around him thought. You could tell he was a man who thought deeply and that others looked to him for his thoughts."

"You could tell that without him speaking?"

She gave me a look, one I could not quite discern. "He's not an ordinary man. He's a man of great passion. It's absolutely clear."

I muttered what she said to myself. She asked me what I said and I told her that I was not surprised in the least.

"Oh, I was so overwhelmed. I didn't know what to say. So it just came out like that. You should have seen the look he gave me, as if he looked right through my head and was reading my mind."

2.4.4

"Mitch didn't speak. He stood there looking at me. I wanted so much to forge a connection between us, so to reassure him, I said, 'I know who you are.' Even though he was clearly making an effort to keep himself together, I could see thinking about Jordan affected him deeply. But to this he nodded, so I continued, 'Jordan wrote me about you.' At the very mention of her name he stepped back, stunned. It was going so poorly, I couldn't speak to him, we were both so emotional at the thought of Jordan. For a while I was unable to speak. The only thing I could think to say related to Jordan and I could see that the mention of her name upset him. But finally I summoned my courage, thinking that we could support each other if we could only bridge the gap between us. I asked him if he recognized me, to which he did not answer. I wasn't sure if he trusted me yet, but surely he could tell I was telling the truth from the family resemblance. Even if my sister had not shown him pictures of us together, we look so much alike. I was afraid that I was offending him, that my chance to connect with this important part of my sister's life was slipping through my fingers. And then he stepped forward and he embraced me, without saying a word. I cannot tell you how much it meant, I wanted to cry."

Jamie and I were walking through the park near her house. I was conscious of keeping my gaze forward, and not looking at her, afraid that if she became conscious of the attention I was paying, she might not be so open. But now she was silent, so to prod her on, I said. “He must have known Jordan well.”

“He’s a very quiet man,” she replied and I could tell she was still lost in the memory. “Even when he’s clearly being moved by strong feelings.”

“Where you able to get out of the building alright?”

“Yes, I tried to speak to him for a few more minutes, but it was the same, so I asked him to meet me here today so I could try to talk again.”

I was startled. “You’re meeting with him today?”

“Yes, I’m to meet him here in the park soon. I thought it would be a nice quiet place.”

It was a good place to take someone to talk. It was certainly quiet, sitting on a bit of a hill, shielded a little from the street by the brush and the trees. It had a very relaxing atmosphere and smelled of grass and the flowers that had been planted in little patches. There were plenty of places to sit comfortably and enjoy the view of the buildings against the sky and the clouds in the distance, while at the same time having the feeling of privacy for conversation from the couples who sometimes strolled the idyllic gravel paths.

“Do you think Mitch will come? Did he understand what you meant?”

“Oh, I’m sure he did, he’s very attentive, I got the feeling he’s a very careful listener.”

As she talked, she worked herself up into a state of agitation, walking and talking faster and faster. I could tell that as she thought about talking with him, her anticipation to learn more from him about Jordan built. And at the same time, he was such a mystery. She did not know why he had come to Boston, she did not know if he would even show up to the park, of perhaps he had already come and not seen us and left. She stopped suddenly to look at her watch, saying something about not wanting to be away from her mother too long. Her cheeks and neck were flushed from the walk to the park.

It was then that she spotted him, I looked and knew instantly it was him by the way he made directly for us across the lawn. I began to leave, but she gestured for me to stay. In a second he was upon us and Jamie politely introduced us, with a giggle adding that I was not quiet of the social mind, but that I was not so bad, and looked from him to me with a smile. Jamie was on her toes with happiness.

Mitch, by comparison, was exactly as she had described. His eyes were steely and steady on Jamie, but did not look her in the eyes, which were all the time ready to meet his gaze. I felt that he was slightly suspicious of my being there, even before Jamie made her little joke about me. I saw what Jamie had meant by the look of a good listener, his eyes were focused and gave the sense that when he looked at something it stayed looked at until he was satisfied. His focus gave him an aura of studious intensity, and at the same time his silence and inability to look one in the eye betrayed a slight shyness.

Again, I made as if I should be going, but Jamie waved her hand for me to continue to stay. Despite her obvious happiness, she had become shy as well, as if infected by Mitch. She thanked him for coming, but said that we had been waiting so long that she must return to check on her mother.

He nodded.

“I appreciate you understanding.”

“How is your mother?”

It being my first opportunity to hear his voice, I noticed that it was deep and hoarse, with a bull froggish quality to it.

“She’s doing well, or, ... I don’t know, I guess as well as can be expected. She is fine, but she’s been very tired lately and I don’t like to leave her too long. But I really do appreciate you not forgetting me.”

“I don’t think I understand you.” He replied, which caused an awkward silence. I certainly did not know what he meant.

But Jamie gracefully recovered the conversation, telling Mitch that he could ask me how much it meant to her that he came. She began to say something about how ever since she heard from Clausson, but Mitch interrupted her.

“So Clausson told you about me, did he?” I detected a timbre of nervousness.

“Just a little,” Jamie replied curtly, afraid that the conversation might deteriorate as it had the day before. “But I do have to go...”

Taylor made a move to accompany her, but Jamie said no.

“I want to talk with you more, to see you again, and for you to meet my mother, but for her sake, not just now. But we’ll talk soon, we can meet again soon...”

He nodded his head, but I could tell she was thinking that she needed to determine how she was going to present him to her mother. Jamie completed her good byes and left the two of us standing in the park.

2.5.1

I watched Jamie walk off for a moment then turned to find that Mitch’s eyes were now on me. I had the distinct impression he was seizing me up. He was dressed very plainly in drab jeans and a grey shirt under a military green jacket. There was a silent weight about him, echoed by his hunched stance.

“It’s okay, you don’t have to understand her yet, I still do not think I have a good handle on her.”

He looked at me hard. I attempted to meet his gaze, but felt the attempt was making us both uneasy, so I tried to settle the tension.

“She really is something special. I don’t think I’ve ever met anyone like her. She has this lovely, breezy way about her.”

He muttered something that I could not quite understand and for the first time looked off in the distance. I had the vague feeling that I had been insulted, but I resolved to remain polite and avoid any tensions the best I could. After all, Jamie saw him as being important.

“Do you like Boston so far?” I asked.

“People are the same everywhere.” Again, I noticed the coarseness of his voice.

There was a pub I knew across the street from the park, and so I offered to buy him a drink. At the offer, he looked at me, and for the first time his face seemed to soften a little. “That’s an idea,” he said, and taking that to be as much encouragement as I was likely to receive from him, we began to head over to the pub. He walked beside me, so I could not continue to get a good look at him, but as we walked, he seemed to mumble several times, as if he were mulling over some serious thoughts. One got the feeling that his mind never stopped moving.

The pub was unassuming, the building being an old colonial house sitting on the corner lot with the first floor renovated. Above the sign over the door, two large bay windows looked out on the park outlined in white trim. Inside the pub was dark, all the woodwork, polished by years of wear, absorbing the light. It was mostly empty but for a couple of men at the bar. I gestured to a booth next to the window and we sat down. A lumpy older woman came over and took our orders and returned immediately with them. Taylor took a sip of his beer and muttered to himself. “It’s all nonsense, there’s nothing to worry about! It’s simply physical exhaustion. Just a glass of beer, and in one moment the brain is stronger, the mind is clearer and the will is firm. How utterly petty it all is....”

I was being patient with him, consciously trying to wait to see what was on his mind, but I was not prepared for the burst when he finally addressed me directly.

“Am I supposed to understand that girl? And you? What are the two of you up to?”

“Me? Well, we are not up to anything, or at least... I don’t know.” He watched me as I spoke and I felt I was not putting things the way that I wanted. “As I said, I still do not have a handle on her. I do not know women like Clausson does, he seems to have everyone under his thumb.”

He gave me a knowing look. “He seems like a controller to you? A manipulator?”

“All I know is that women are not fools. They are better at reading people than men. They have instincts, intuition, whatever you want to call it. You can even see it when they are babies.”

“I don’t care about women.”

“I only care about one.”

“What are you driving at?”

“Nothing. I just try to look out for my friends, and Jamie is wrapped up in Jordan’s disappearance. Surely you know something that she might find comforting or that would help answer her questions.”

“Why are you springing this on me? Was this what you and her had planned, a bait and switch so you could interrogate me? Who are you?”

“I’m sorry. You are right. It is an emotional subject and it is not my place. We’ve only just met. I simply want Jamie to feel better, to find some resolution.” He was uneasy and I worried I had scared him back into his shell. His demeanor was aggressive, passionate, but I felt a streak of fragility to him, that I had to handle him with care. I began to tell him how I met Jamie, of our exploring the town together, how upset she was when she had not heard from Jordan, and how I had tried to help by contacting my friend in the press.

“You know it might be a lie,” he said, referring to the news of the arrest.

“It seems to fit the facts well enough.”

“But what are facts? Simply what we are told. There are no facts these days, only the stories that others tell, and each of them have an agenda. Most of us can’t even trust our own senses, we are so wrapped up in preconceived ideas of how we think things are and how we want things to be. Objectivity! It is a ghost we chase and we call the chase the truth.”

We were silent, me in digesting what he had said, and him with his gears still turning in his head. I tried for a moment to think of what it would be to live by those words.

“Jamie told me of Jordan’s description of you.” He watched me. “It was very complementary. You must have been a close friend, you must know at least something.”

“A friend, yes, I suppose that is well known.” He looked at the window and I began to feel that he was putting on a front for me. He had been through a lot, though, it was expected that he should be somewhat guarded about what he revealed to someone he did not know.

I began to tell him about Mrs. Cochran, how upset she had been by the news of her daughter, which could partly be attributed to her guilt for influencing Jordan with her stories of marching and protesting in her youth. “They really have pinned their hopes on you to shed some light on what happened.”

“What was it that Jordan wrote?”

“It was only a few words, but it is not for me to tell. You should ask Jamie.”

Silence. There was a muskiness to the bar that gave it an old, solid feel. The silence did not feel out of place.

“What am I supposed to say? What is it they want me to say?” he asked at last.

“The truth, whatever happened.”

“The truth! What good is the truth, and who is to judge? What if the truth can only hurt, what if it does no one any good.”

“Maybe you don’t think Jordan is the hero that everyone else does?”

“Look! Don’t toy with me! I can see what is happening here! Don’t you try to tell me what to think, or put words in my mouth. I know the game. I know.”

“I’m sorry. I did not mean to put words in your mouth. I do not know anything, I am just trying to be helpful here. I have no idea what your intentions are.” I was trying to get away from anything inflammatory, but this seemed to rock him even more. “All I ask is that you should be considerate of Jamie and her mother. They are dealing with this same ordeal, and I am sure you can appreciate someone trying to help them through it.”

Again, his face softened, as if he remembered something. “I’m sorry, you are right. You must understand that I have not slept in two days. I have been travelling dealing

nothing but with people I don't know. It's taken its toll on me, I need rest."

I realized that this was true, that he probably had not had his mind at peace for weeks, and I felt bad for trying to apply pressure to him, even if it was for the sake of Jamie.

He got up to leave and I apologized, walking over to the waitress to settle our tab. When I turned around, he was already out the door and I thought he had gone, but I found him standing outside, looking off into the park. I told him I was walking to the train if he was going in that direction. I intentionally avoided asking him where he was going. He said the station was on his way, and we walked together a bit away from the bar.

"I feel like there is a curse spreading, on Jordan and Jamie and her mother, and now, if you'll pardon the assumption, perhaps on you as well."

He thought for a moment. "A curse. I like that. It is an interesting model for understanding the situation. I'll have to think about that."

"The importance, of course, being to find a way to break the curse."

He nodded. We walked in silence for a block.

"So do you know if you will be in Boston long?" I ventured.

"I have some things I need to take care of here." It was all he said, I did not press him any further on it. We walked in silence a bit more. As we reached Commonwealth where the train stopped, he asked me about my friend the journalist.

"Oh, he is nothing special, just someone I know from school. I have told Jamie that I would let her know if I hear anything further." I paused I decided to push it one more time. "It would be very nice of you to stop by and see her before you leave town, I know it would mean a lot to her."

He gave me a look which I did not understand, and we left it like that as I waited for the train and he wandered off. I wondered why it was so much effort for him to talk to Jamie, to tell her about her sister. There was something there, beneath his impatience and edginess, but waiting for my train, I could not fathom what.

3.1.1

Taylor's journal reveals what became of him after he left me by the tracks. He proceeded to stroll with his thoughts through the afternoon streets. His thinking had become murky, he was fatigued, and this bothered him. He wanted to know what it all meant, who were these people that he had been meeting, what did they want. He had tried to push me away with a cold shoulder, but had been unsuccessful. This troubled him. Why had I been so persistent, he wondered? How much did I know? What was in the letter from Jordan? What else did I know? Then his thoughts turned to Jamie and her mother. What did they hope to get from him? What is it that they wanted to hear? Would the truth satisfy them?

Well, it will have to, and they will have to hate me, he thought smugly. An emptiness came over him.

I have to be cautious, he continued to think, I have to pay attention to the details. There are so many and they can so easily get away from me.

For the next few days, he kept his distance from those he had recently come into contact with and the places he had seen them. He knew Clausson and Jamie were expecting him to pay them a visit, but he needed his rest. He walked through the city, through various neighborhoods, South Boston, Chinatown, Brighton, Cambridge. But he knew he could not stay isolated forever.

I, on the other hand, had tried calling Jamie several times to see how she was. She did not return my phone calls, so I decided to pay her house a visit. She was glad to see me, and apologized for her poor correspondence, she had had a lot on her mind. But her anxiety and energy had been replaced by a beautiful calmness, and I knew right away that she had talked further with Taylor. She did not seem to want to volunteer much information, but the topic of Taylor was a natural one to arise, so I asked her if she had seen him. She gave me a shy smile but was silent.

“Have you introduced him to your mother yet?”

“No, I still want to get to know him a little more before he talks to mother.”

This I fully agreed with, being still unsure how her mother would take any new details regarding her daughter’s disappearance. “So he has not told you about Jordan?”

“He’s very quiet,” she spoke finally. “But at the same time he is very interesting. He’s like no one I have ever met before.”

“How so?”

She thought for a moment. “Well, he understands so much. He is always deep in thought. Sometimes, when he does speak, it is not even connected to what we were talking about. Or it is connected but it is several steps further than I would have thought. He just skips steps and he is already there. Or the way he will talk about something, it shows how he’s thought about it on different levels, who it will affect and how they’ll react to it, he’s always thinking of other people. When we talk, I can feel him observing the way I react, I think he is watching me to see if I can be trusted.”

“This makes you happy?”

“Oh, yes! His mind is so occupied, I think he’s planning something and maybe he wants help with it. Maybe he thinks I can help.”

“And you want to help him?”

Again, she looked at me with a pause. “He seems so weighted down, like he’s suffering from this burden that he is undertaking and he has to bare the burden alone. It’s awful to feel something like that. I want him to know that I can help.”

As we talked, I realized that Clausson and everything else had fallen away for Jamie, everything but Taylor. Despite his eccentricities, I was glad for this, preferring it much more than Clausson to be occupying her thoughts. He at least seemed more manageable than the larger than life Clausson. Taylor may have been larger than life to Jamie, but only to Jamie.

We talked a little longer and then I left, but reaching the train station, I realized I had forgotten my book at Jamie’s house. I walked back to retrieve it and, as I neared her house, turned a corner and caught a glimpse of Taylor walking away from it on the opposite side of the street. I assumed he had stopped to drop something by Jamie’s house and I had just missed him. Spotting him, I became curious about the man Jamie and I had been talking about, and, for what reason I could not really tell you, thought it would be amusing to see in which direction he was going. After all, I could pick up my book anytime from Jamie’s house.

Coming to the corner, he crossed to the other side of the street, noticing nothing. I turned down the same street, following him on the opposite sidewalk without taking my eyes off of him. After going another block, he turned down another street and I lost sight of him around the corner of a building. I crossed back over to his side of the street, caught up with him, and kept walking a good distance behind him.¹¹

It turned out Taylor was on his way to The R. I followed him the entire trip there, getting off at Back Bay and then heading south on Dartmouth. He visibly snarled at some young people standing outside a popular little boutique just past Tremont. They were discussing the various accouterments displayed in the window and he clearly held such fleeting fashion in contempt. This was just after getting off the train where he had given the same look to the construction crew taking a break from repairing Back Bay station. They were having a grand time of telling jokes and stories while sitting and laying around in a circle. Apparently, he was in a testy mood and I gave him a few more paces in front of me.

I did not follow him into The R, but he would later write that as he climbed the stairs to the building, he remembered his first encounter with Jamie and this made him want to flee. But he continued upstairs where he encountered Clausson waiting for him.

Reading Taylor’s journal, he found Clausson even more repulsive than I did. But Clausson believed Taylor was something special, even saying so as he greeted him on the second floor landing. The two walked into a room, a minimally furnished small office, with

¹¹ Crime and Punishment, p 244.

a card table and some folding chairs. Clausson walked over to the window, warm light coming in as a slanted beam onto the floor. The air was slightly bespeckled by floating dust particles floating through the beam of light and giving the room a certain degree of comfort. However Taylor was on his guard. As I said, he did not trust Clausson any more than I did.

Clausson continued that surely Taylor knew that he had heard a few things about him from various sources.

“And I have heard a number of things about you,” Taylor retaliated, “so we can battle with gossip if you would like.”

“It is good to see you have a sense of humor. But I assure you that everything I have been told is very complementary, that you are a great revolutionary.”

“Well, people, when they don’t know about something, tend to agree so that they offend as little as possible.”

“Are you saying that people should not speak kindly of you?”

“Only that people shouldn’t speak about what they don’t know.”

“Do you not think you are a great revolutionary?”

“We are always blinded by our own biases.”

Clausson smiled at him, his mouth like a paper cut that was reopening. “You are modest. I think you know yourself much better than that.”

Taylor could feel the anxiety in him growing but tried to control it. Clausson sat in one of the chairs, arrogant and self-absorbed, folding one leg over the other. Taylor had to be wary. Clausson wore his self-confidence like a fog which obscured his thoughts from being read. All that Taylor could see in his face was his own smugness.

“What do I know, what does anyone know?” he asked Clausson, as he considered him. “Our emotions obscure what we think, why we think. Some people may be jealous, and there are some for whom nothing is ever good enough, who never say anything positive about someone else.”

Clausson leaned back. “I was not suggesting that anyone had spoken ill of you.” He smiled at Taylor again in a way that made him feel further on edge. “No one has had anything but positive things to say about you.”

“I am just a realist. You can’t please everyone in this world, you do something and it will rub someone the wrong way. I’m not trying to insult anyone, I just think you always have to consider the source.”

Clausson was amused. “Of course. Everyone uses words differently. Everyone has their own point of view. There is no reality, there is no truth, it is ours to make, each of us, what we agree upon.”

Taylor watched Clausson carefully, he felt like he was being toyed with, like Clausson was trying to get him to take down his guard.

But Clausson continued. “You seek to see things as they are, to wipe the emotion from your eyes. I see that. You are a stoic”

“Name calling is for children,” Taylor answered.

Silence. Clausson continued to smile, he was clearly enjoying himself, and Taylor knew it was clear that he was not, knew that he could not disguise his discomfort, and that it was this that Clausson was enjoying, which only fueled the cycle.

It was Clausson who broke the silence.

“You know, you are right, there is not enough known about you to hold the gossip to be true or false.”

“Is it my responsibility to prove and disprove all that people chose to say about me?”

Again Clausson smiled. Taylor’s jaw ached from being clenched.

“Mitch, you are one of us. We just want to accept you into our fold.”

“But what if I do not want to be claimed? I have not sold myself for wealth or entitlement, there is no one who can lay claim to me, to hold me in their debt. I am tied to no one, to no view. I don’t have a stake in the ground, I am not tied to any past. I am free, freer than all of the card-carrying self-proclaimed revolutionaries I see patting themselves on the back, for shaking off one power system just to replace it with another.”

Taylor watched Clausson listen to him speaking. The more he talked, the more Clausson listened, and the more dissatisfied he became with what he said. I need to be sincere, he thought, but I cannot reveal too much, I cannot give him something to hold me to. Clausson was clearly studying him, prompting him, and then soaking up his answers. For a moment he wanted to launch himself at that smile, to wail into Clausson with all his might, pummeling him with his fists, but he knew he was not match for the man in front of him, at least physically. He had to humor him, play him mentally, in particular, play to his weaknesses.

“It is not that I don’t agree with you, you understand” Taylor continued. “Because when it comes down to it, I do. You understand that I need to keep my mind free. We all should devote ourselves to keeping our mind open.”

The smile. “As long as you understand that we are proud to have you here. It is important that you are here. It is significant to people.”

“I understand.”

“People must be inspired to break free from the system of control, and your name, you, you will inspire people. What you represent will inspire people.”

“The system? What I represent? It is already more than me, I think. It is not something I can affect.”

“You belong to others now. You must not be selfish. People deserve to have their heroes. There is a responsibility to think of.”

“But if I do not belong to myself, if I am larger than myself, what is it that I am supposed to do?”

“You must serve yourself. For the sake of others, for the sake of inspiring people, inspiring change, you must play your part.”

Taylor suddenly became wary. What part did Clausson think he was playing? “Let’s drop the subject. These abstractions are making my head hurt.”

“Oh, you can handle them,” Clausson replied. “You are smarter than that. I’ve been watching you.”

“Why?” Taylor, his voice fully anxious again.

“Oh, you are clearly clever. We need clever, so many here just are not aware of what is out there. They do not see all the implications, all the facets. They are fine to get some things done, but soon we are going to need someone like you, who can think, and who people will look to.”

Again silence. Taylor wanted to ask what Clausson saw coming but did not want him to know he had played into his hands. It was bad enough already that he wanted to know what Clausson thought.

Clausson continued. “You cannot just tell someone to follow a leader, people have to look to them for answers. They have to inspire, to inspire hope and to inspire trust. And to inspire they have to have a story, a history that people can grasp onto and identify with. They cannot come from nowhere.” Clausson stood next to the window, turning to look outside into the street. “You should think about the future. It is going to come, whether you have a hand in it or not.”

Taylor remained silent, feeling out of place. He struggled with how to respond, knowing that Clausson was in control of the conversation and feeling he could not wrest the control away from him, yet he wanted to at least get his footing. “You think I have not already thought of this? That I do not think of our shortcomings, what I would change given the chance?” But then he stopped, fearing he was on the verge of saying too much.

“I think it is time you heard what we here think. I think it is time you met the others.”

There was a flash at the door. The talk lanky girl who had accompanied Jamie during that first meeting passed by, and as he listened to her boots clod up the stairs, he became aware that there were sounds above him in the building. Had he heard her boots before seeing her at the doorway? Had she been listening there? Clausson walked away from the window towards the door to the landing. “Well, come on,” he said and mounted the stairs,

still smiling reassuringly at Taylor. Taylor, rose from the gritty folding chair he was sitting in and followed him.

“None of us are perfect.” Clausson looked back on him as they ascended the stairs.

“No one is,” Taylor agreed.

“But everyone who is here has their hearts in the right place. We have the spirit, it lives in us and unites us.”

“The spirit?”

“The spirit.”

“The spirit of what?” Taylor asked.

“The people.”

“Are you being vague on purpose?” Taylor could feel himself taking the upper hand in the conversation for the first time.

“You have to spell everything out?”

“I don’t see what is wrong with being clear.”

Clausson gave him a smile over his shoulder. They had reached the top of the stairs. There was more light here than the rest of the stairwell, lit from the dim skylight above. In front of them was a door, behind which Taylor could hear shuffling noises. More light shone through the keyhole and beneath the door, and as he took it in, he realized Clausson was watching him once again. When Taylor returned his gaze, Clausson smiled and placed his hand on the door knob, pushing the door open.

“I’m back! And I have a visitor!” He strutted into the room with his signature swagger. Taylor waited a moment for his eyes to adjust to the sudden light of the room, gathering himself for a moment before entering.

3.2.1

The room was sparse and in need of paint and repair, like the rest of the building. In the center was a rectangular dining table painted green around which two women and a man sat. Taylor recognized one of the women as the lanky one who had accompanied Jamie the first time he had encountered her. Next to her sat a petite young woman with short ink black hair. She was bundled in an enormous black pashmina which wrapped around her like a blanket. Across the table from her sat a man as thin as a rail, his brown hair looking like he had cut it himself without a mirror. They were occupied with sorting through some grungy bags of food which were on the table, but now looked up to see the two men enter the room.

“Sit down, sit down, we’ve been waiting for you,” the woman with the black hair told them. Her eyes lingered on Taylor for a moment with a smile that seemed pleasant enough. Taylor felt awkward at first, he had not expected them to all be young, within a few years of himself. Clausson went over and kissed the woman in black on the cheek and Taylor immediately set about to determine the relationship hierarchy of the room, and just as quickly realized he had no real evidence to base it on. He took in the room, lit only by the warm sunshine coming through the windows, and onto the dusty wooden floor.

“We were robbed recently.” The woman in black watched him as she motioned for him to sit with them at the table.

“Eleanor, don’t get excited,” Clausson said. “It’s not worth getting all worked up about again.”

“It’s just that they don’t care! It is bad enough we have to worry about the police coming after us, but we also have to worry about our own collective? They let the punks run all over the building and don’t care what they do. They just want to have their little Saturday shows.”

“Well, they do bring money into the building.” Clausson looked at Taylor. “Mitch, this is Eleanor, she is one of the bottomliners here.”

“Bottomliners?”

“They are the ones that make sure that everything gets done, that the bottomline is met. Nym you have seen before.” She looked up from the food pile to nod. “And this

handsome lad is Neil.” Neil also looked up long enough to give an awkward wave before returning to the food inspection.

Clausson and Taylor sat down to the table, at which point the plastic packages of food began to be opened and the food further inspected. Taylor did not have to wonder why they were acting the way they did, the group was clearly ravenous and had been waiting for them to sit down. Taylor watched as each would take a bite or piece from one of the packages and then pass it to someone or place it carefully back in the pile before picking something else up and inspecting it. Nym offered him a nutritional bar made of granola, and, not wanting to be impolite, he carefully broke off a piece equal in size to those he saw being picked and popped it in his mouth. It was fine, like any other granola bar he had ever eaten.

Eleanor continued into her tirade, seeming to enjoy having something to raise her voice behind. “If they would just keep the punks on the first floor for the show and just watch the door. There is no reason why they can’t just station someone on the door and on the stairs during the shows.”

“Don’t get excited,” Clausson answered in a calming voice. “We’ve talked to them, we understand each other.”

“All they care about is having a good time. They get drunk, cause a mess, get the neighbors riled up so that the police come and then run from the police. They are just giving the police an excuse to monitor us. And they run off, and everyone left here in the building gets to be watched. They even take pride in it. They think they’re outsmarting everyone, just like they take pride in stealing anything they can. They just do whatever their little whims desire.”

“It’s anarchy,” Nym muttered barely audibly under her breath.

“Very funny. Very funny,” Clausson smiled his wound like smile. Taylor noticed that Nym kept nervously glancing around at the others, as if she was fearful of overstepping some line. He wondered if she was simply afraid of the other’s verbal responses, or if Clausson might not sometimes provide a more physical response to her.

The conversation left the inconsiderateness of the other anarchists to more loftier topics of responsibility towards each other.

“We need to continually question what we are doing,” Eleanor was saying. “We need to evaluate what we do and be self-critical.”

“There has been a lot of really good thinking going on,” Clausson interrupted. “People have been planning far in advance, though there is a lack of imagination and lack of historical context.”

“I’m worried about what we as anarchists are going to end up relating to this historical context. We need to spend time on long term strategy, strategic planning and movement building and meeting people’s needs. In this country, most people do not talk about politics. We have conversations about electoralism. It is a rare moment when mass amounts of people take action and when do we get a chance to break through to people and meet people where they are and talk about how they understand politics and how we understand politics. It is a teaching moment where we can do a huge amount of teaching. Do you understand what I mean?” Eleanor was talking directly at Taylor.

Singled out, Taylor responded. “Traction.” Before he could say more, Eleanor had agreed so enthusiastically with his response that she interrupted him and prevented him from saying another word.

“Exactly. We can explain to people if we are against statism and electoralism, what we see in place of both.”

“Face to face direct democracy.” Clausson interjected.

“Exactly. We need to illustrate what politics means to us. If we are serious about a movement, we need to build off of our successes. We need to train who we think we are, teaching where we come from. Hold training sessions. And yes, we know the cops are going to get in there. If the cops want to get in they are good at getting in there. But we can’t have people at the doors saying, ‘You are ok’ to some and letting them in and telling others ‘You aren’t’ and closing the door on them. We have to be open.”

“It doesn’t need to be insular,” Clausson said.

“We need direction action,” Neil piped in.

Eleanor nodded. “We need to have direct action, but at the same time they can be distracting. It is fun to run from cops and its exhilarating, but right now there are thousands of people excited about a movement and we don’t want to turn around a year from now wonder where did everyone go. We have seen that before. After the g20. After the RNC conventions in ‘02 and ‘04. Some how we have to channel the perception of ‘What are the anarchists going to blow up,’ ‘What are they going to do,’ and move it to more of a ‘Here we are and we want to talk, and this is what we are about. We engage with the state in a lot of ways.’ We need to reframe the moment. We need to show what a different kind of politic will look like. Like the art space. It should be beautiful and clean and light and airy with little snacks so that people can enjoy the space. And nice music. It should show this is what the future can be like, open to everyone. It can be a place where people can meet others and have dialogues about making things. What we envision the world looking like. We need to have a forum so that others can have their say and incorporate other people and the direction that we want to go.” Again she stared at Taylor, seemingly prompting him to say something.

“Increase participation.”

But again, before Taylor could say more, she nodded enthusiastically and continued. “What we need to avoid is to say that the response to this is the same old oppression. We need to be specific and confront it directly. And we need a slogan that says something. We can’t just say kill the bankers now. We need to say something specific. More than anarchists against capitalists. Something so that there is a little flag that indicates what we are about. We can give meaning to it. We can create a message saying we are against capitalism without imposing a message in an authoritarian manner. Something that says we are self-directed, self managed, self governed individuated group of people. We can’t just say we want to destroy when so many people are in a horrific situation across the country where people are loosing jobs and have no money and to say we want to destroy is only going to offend.”

“Things are fucked up, we don’t need to say that we are going to fuck shit up.” It was Nym. There was a moment of pause before Eleanor continued.

“How can we frame this not as a campaign against something and make it a movement towards something? So that all those people who have become disillusioned know that there is someplace where they can go, because I see that as our job. How do we want the world to see us as anarchists? Because this is happening all over the world and it is us in this country that made this happen and it feels pretty crummy. They are watching us as much as we are. What do we want them to see?”

“A goal,” Taylor ventured.

“Exactly. And how do we want to see ourselves? How do we feel about ourselves? We need to think about race, gender, and sexuality and explain how we are positioned. What do we do that is anti-racist and anti-sexist? We need to challenge ourselves and tell ourselves that we do not have a good position on that and come up with a good position. Have a study group. And have something to hand out. There is an opening and what are we going to do with that opening, because we lose something if it is just the same old banners and chants.”

“Capitalism commodifies everything that we do,” Clausson said. “If we are going to do spectacle we are going to have to do something damn creative, and in a manner that enables us to maintain some semblance of control. We have this idea that only we can do this and must realize there are others out there who understand that things are a mess. We know that whenever there is a vacuum of support people self-manage.”

“They have to, they have not choice.” Taylor didn’t want Clausson to take control over the conversation.

“You have clearly thought this through,” Eleanor said. “That is more than I can so for some others around here. There are some who plan ahead, it is true, but in general, there is a lack of foresight. There is not the consideration of what other’s feelings and reactions will be, what are the extended consequences. There is the attempt to do what is right, but

then we get in the routine of doing rotely what we decided once was good, without ever thinking again about it.”

Taylor sat and listened and realized that this was all that he needed to do, which suited him well. Eleanor clearly wanted to talk. The less he said, the less stress he felt over picking his words. He began to enjoy himself, periodically nodding in agreement and encouraging Eleanor as she continued on and the other’s ate. She seemed very pleased with his take on things, and, for a moment, Taylor found himself thinking back to his conversation with Gandofini. He did inspire confidence.

“I now see,” Eleanor was saying, “that what the others have said is correct. You are quiet. I cannot tell what is on your mind.”

“Oh, I just like to listen. So often I find that most people would prefer to talk than to hear someone else. I prefer to let them do what they please.”

She turns to Clausson impressed. “We must be careful not to let our lips run off with us around him.”

Clausson answers her. “Well, it is always good to be careful what you say, but I told you he was a smart one.”

“Indeed, I like his spirit. It is the spirit of a free thinker, of a revolutionary.”

If they are not contradictory, Taylor rebuked her in his head.

Eleanor continued. “Change will start when people realize the constraints they are under, when they need to free their ideas and their spirit. They have to realize their hunger for new ideas.”

“I think they might be more motivated if they realize they hunger for actual food,” Taylor answered her, this time out loud.

“You are right, it is a good point,” Eleanor again appeared impressed with him. “But people will often sacrifice their appetite to free the burdens on their mind. We see it everyday in the vegan and freegan community. Which reminds me, how is your friend, the young Jamie? We have been hoping she would pay us a proper visit.” Clausson made a gesture that he and Taylor should be leaving, but Eleanor ignored it. “What her sister has done is so important, not just here but around the world. It shows our commitment to change, to taking society forward.”

“I’m afraid I cannot speak for her. I would not really call her a friend, we have only just met.”

“But you have seen her since you have arrived?”

Taylor looked from Eleanor to Nym to Clausson. “Well, yes, we have met.”

“I see a lot of myself in her,” Eleanor said. “You must bring her here. I think she shares a great deal of our spirit. I think it must run in the family.”

For a moment Taylor was reminded of how much he loathed Jordan, but swallowed this and did his best to retain the pleasantness that had come some easily a few moments ago.

“Well, I will certainly invite her, but as I said, I cannot speak for her interests.”

Clausson was standing now and again signaling that he and Taylor should leave. Taylor stood, and saying good by to Eleanor and exchanging a polite nod of the head with the other two, he and Clausson exited the room.

3.2.2

“I am not sure I believe in this unified spirit,” Taylor spoke, watching Clausson for a reaction as he walked in front of him down the stairs.

“You will find that there is a certain unifying force between activists,” Clausson responded over his shoulder.

“You mean like gravity?” Taylor said with a chuckle to himself.

“You laugh, but you are closer than you realize. It is a kind of gravity, drawing us together as one force. It gives us strength to do things we would not otherwise do, it drives us.”

“I think what you are talking about is peer pressure.” Again with sarcasm.

“You talk like you are an island.”

“I understand that we are alone, that we are born alone and in our last breath we are alone. We may convince ourselves otherwise along the way, that others understand us, share our thoughts and experiences, but we are just projecting ourselves onto them. There is no way to tell that they truly have any insight into who we are or what we feel. It is reassuring for us, however, to believe otherwise.”

They reached the bottom of the stairs and Clausson turned to look at Taylor in silence, which Taylor noticed and cursed him in his head for watching and waiting for him to let something slip.

Taylor continued. “I know you have been watching me, I can see your condescendant weighing of me in your eyes. But I will not be deterred. I have a purpose and I will stick to it. I do not care what you or the others think. And it is absurd that I should even have to say this, because I do not have to justify myself to you. I don’t need your approval. I have no desire to be like you. You call yourself an activist but you follow your ideas. You are a slave to your ideas, you are the tool of a meme. I am no one’s slave. I am a thinker.”

Immediately, Taylor regretted his outburst, expecting Clausson to be angry or rebuke him.

“You see, “ Clausson said. “That’s exactly what we need more of. People thinking, like Eleanor said upstairs. We need people who think things through. You and I, we must talk more about this.”

“I’m sure we will.”

“And you must bring Jamie back to us. It has been too long.”

“I’m not fond of taking directions. Especially from people I have only known so long.”

Clausson chuckled. “Don’t worry, everyone will take their proper place. The time is getting close at hand. Now go out and enjoy this lovely afternoon and we will touch base later on.”

And with this he opened the front door for Taylor and smiled a wide smile. Taylor nodded in ascent and walked down the stoop stairs. If Clausson had said anything further he did not hear it, his mind had already closed the door on him and begun analyzing the meeting with full knowledge Clausson was returning upstairs to do the same.

How am I going to hold up with these people? he asked himself. How am I going to bare them and keep my head straight? I have to let them in a little for them to let me in, but I must keep them separate from myself at the same time. Even if all these progressivists are the same sort of little fools, I must still be weary. Their teachings, their little ideas do not matter. There is one object. I need only to find out at once and quickly what goes on here. Do these people have any power, or do they just play at it? Is there anything for me to fear personally? How much should I worry about being exposed? What would being exposed now mean?

In short, he faced a hundred questions.¹²

Taylor, lost in his thoughts did not hear the front door open again, only its spring suddenly pulling it closed. He turned round at the noise. Nym stood atop the stoop looking down on him. She pulled a cigarette out and lit it with a lighter, her head tilted to the side to keep her hair out of the way.

“I told them I needed a cigarette. Harm, nothing but harm, yet I can’t give them up! I cough, there’s a tickling in my throat and a shortness of breath. But how am I supposed to quit?”¹³ She laughed to herself. When Taylor looked up at her face, she looked away down the street. “I heard what you and Robert said. He has gone back up, I passed him on the stairs.”

¹² Crime and Punishment, p 364.

¹³ Crime and Punishment, p 449.

Taylor could tell she was putting up a tough front for him, but she continued to avert her eyes. “You must hear a lot of things.”

“I hear things. Robert told you he was planning something. He is.”

“Is it a secret?”

“Secrets make things sound important.”

“Well, is it?”

“To him, everything is.” She gave a reflexive look over her shoulder, then walked down the stairs to Taylor. “He always has to control everything,” she whispered to no one in particular. “Everything is always so important.”

“But how else could he lead?”

“You don’t realize what he’s like. You think you know him, I can tell, but you haven’t worked with him, you haven’t lived with him. You don’t know. Just don’t bring that girl here.”

“Why?”

“It would be better to kill her, it would be better than killing her hope. I had her hope once.”

“And not any more?”

“You are different from them. You see people as the same. I can tell. You don’t harbor their double standards, you don’t see their sides, their constant division of the world into us and them.”

It was clear to Taylor that she wanted to leave them, that she wanted out but could not get away for some reason. He felt an ally in her.

“Look,” he said. “I have a project I am working on. Not Clausson’s, this is something I came here to do. Alone.” She took his arm and pulled him down the sidewalk, a few steps away from the stoop.

“He likes to listen to people.” She pointed with her cigarette in the direction of the top floor. “He always likes to know what is going on, to have his finger in everything.”

“You seem to know a good bit, too.”

“I pay attention, sometimes when people don’t realize it.”

“And you don’t mind telling me?”

“You are different than they are. You are stronger, to believe what you do. You remind me of someone who helped me once.”

“When you had hope? Like Jamie? What do they want with her?”

“They, he, cannot stand the thought of someone escaping him. Especially a girl. Especially a girl with hope.” She flicked her cigarette butt into the street, a pet peeve of Taylor’s, and told him, “I have to go,” before running up the stoop and back inside. He watched the door close behind her for a second, again digesting his afternoon.

3.3.1

Taylor stood alone on the sidewalk under the awning of the building next door. It was a small cracker factory and smelled a bit of salt and butter. The shadow of the awning must have obscured him slightly for as a woman and a man approached The R, they did not notice him until they were about to ascend the front stairs. Taylor recognized the woman as Sophia, he had seen her before. He thought to turn away, but realized this might just draw more attention to himself and so he stood still. However she recognized him as she reached the stairs and walked over to him, her companion pausing on the stoop.

“Mitch! It is good to see you! Are you staying or leaving?”

“I am leaving. They are having a meeting upstairs, I was just introduced around.”

“I’m here for the same, to bring my friend to meet Robert. This is Yon.” He gave a noncommittal wave from his stake out on higher ground and went in the front door.

“Where are you coming from? From the farm?”

“No, I had to pick up my friend,” Sophia said. “I’d like to catch up, but time is

getting near and I should tell the others that we are here. We should get together though, all of us. You would enjoy talking to you.” Taylor, hearing the name again, recognized it. “I am supposed to be accompanying him. You know, vouching for him, that sort of thing.”

“Are you close to Clausson?”

“Well... we used to be, but that was before Katrina. But we still keep in touch. Are you alright? You look a little out of sorts.”

“Just tired,” Taylor realizing that he had stumbled on something, that she and Clausson had been lovers. It clicked now with what he knew of her. He tried to remember more. “Why didn’t you go with him to Katrina?”

“I had to help organize efforts in Washington, the march from FEMA headquarters to Capital Hill.” The way she said it Taylor felt he should have known this already. He felt exposed for having asked the question.

“You’ll have to forgive me, I’m not myself. I’m still getting my head around this urban commune.”

She grins. “Don’t worry. They are not to be doubted.”

“Are you insinuating that I am?” Taylor asked.

She made no response other than to smile.

Taylor thought back, trying to remember the few conversations they had had before. He decided that she was being genuinely friendly to him, but he was still nervous. “I think some of your friends are still evaluating me. It doesn’t help that I’ve questioned some of their sacred cows. Do you have your doubts about me?”

She put her hand gently on his shoulder. “You could be a valuable contributor, a valuable member, the problem is that you just don’t like anyone.”

“Maybe I’m just not well understood.”

“Well, how are you getting on with Robert?”

“Fine.” He was afraid to say more.

“I understand. Trust me, he can get on anyone’s nerves.”

“And I suppose anyone can get on mine.”

She laughs. “I guess that makes it inevitable.”

Taylor tried to laugh, but it came out sounding nervous.

“It’s alright,” she said. “I won’t tell him.”

“Well, you can tell him that I plan to succeed on my mission.” On the one hand, he was glad to have another person with a different view than Clausson, but it meant now not only did he have to try to appease Clausson, but he would also have to maintain a relationship with Sophia in order to keep tabs on what each thought.

“So you have a mission already? Impressive. Well, you are a thinker, a planner. I have faith that everything always works out in the end as it should.”

“Faith is for those who fail to understand.”

“You are a man. Men are different, more straight forward with their logic. They need explanations to understand how things work. Women are more comfortable dealing with things they do not understand. Men don’t believe in luck, but how else could Jordan have gotten everything right on the first try. You have to believe.”

“I suppose she did believe.” His mind ventured back to that night, knowing that he had to be careful what he said. “Men and women’s bodies are different, their brains are affected by different hormone levels. I suppose it is natural they think differently.”

“How did she act when you saw her?”

“She was nervous, like a little girl, but at the same time she was proud. She believed in what she was doing.” He realized that he was looking at the sidewalk near his feet. “But unexamined beliefs get us in trouble. There’s a girl upstairs who would agree with me on that.” He smiles sheepishly at Sophia.

“You have a lot to carry around with you, my friend.” She looked up at the top windows of the building next to them. “And I am not sure that expired processed junk food is going to help you carry it.” She smiled. “You’re a man of real character.”

Taylor could not help laughing. He knew that he had said something right. But at the

same moment it struck him as strange that he had become so animated and had so willingly uttered this last explanation, when he had kept up the whole previous conversation with sullen loathing. What if he had said something wrong? he thought. He began suddenly to be uneasy, struck by the alarming thought.¹⁴ He began to wonder how one unintentional word or one wrong piece of gossip could ruin him in the eyes of Clausson. But if he was the first to break off the conversation, he would appear disinterested, perhaps even suspect. Where did he have to go? And, at any instant, he thought, in the theoretical and criminal babble of the protesters, some momentous words might fall on his ear; from her lips, from anybody's lips. As long as he managed to preserve a clear mind and to keep down his irritability, there was nothing to fear. The only condition of success and safety was indomitable self-control, he reminded himself. And control is an illusion, even in ourselves.

3.3.2

Taylor wanted to leave, but was afraid of Sophia suspecting his uneasiness. He asked her about Eleanor, who had taken such an interest in him.

"I wouldn't be worried, she takes an interest in everyone. She has her uses, the major one is money."

"She's rich."

"She likes to pretend that she doesn't have anything, but when the collective needs something, she always makes sure it gets it."

"Well, it is good to know they are willing to make sacrifices," Taylor mutters to himself, "even if they don't need to."

She smiled. "People use people. That will always be the way it works. I'm sure she gets what she wants out of the deal."

"What? Clausson?"

She laughed. "I wasn't thinking that specifically. Just that every choice means we sacrifice something in the hopes of gaining something else. Choosing to read a book means I'm sacrificing doing other things with that time. And if we don't like the trade off, then we make a difference choice."

But Taylor was only half listening to her. He was obsessed with leaving, fearing that he would let his guard down. His thoughts were scattered. He thought of Eleanor being jealous of Clausson's interest in Jamie. What did that mean for Jamie? Was that why they really wanted him? To get to her? He felt Sophia inspecting him, but tried to reveal nothing.

"Well, if she is independently wealthy, she is wearing her poor activist mask well."

"You think she is wearing a mask? Just because you have money doesn't mean you have to buy into the system."

"First everyone wears a mask, a different one for each role we play. You act differently towards me than you do to the police or Clausson. In each relationship, we play a different role and wear a different mask to a degree. And if you are a rich person living in squats and fighting the empowered, then I would say your mask is hiding more than most."

"We all hide things, though. Everyone has secrets. As you said, we all wear masks. We like to play roles. People like to act. People love drama."

"It is all drama. It is all a joke. We are all building anticipation for what we think is going to happen, only it never happens exactly like we think. There's always a twist."

"We are speaking in such generalities. They're hardly worth the effort of words."

"Nothing is worth the effort of words."

"Ah," she said winking at him, "but I enjoy talking to you. And you chose to talk to me, so you must think it's worth the effort, or else you would do something else. Your choice betrays you."

Taylor at that moment realized that she was talking with him not just to hear his answers. She was watching him to see how he responded. She was analyzing him. What he

¹⁴ Crime and Punishment, p 270.

said was not nearly as important as how he acted. There were deeper levels to the conversation than what appeared on the surface, and he realized he was not prepared to handle them. He knew he could never prepare for every conversation, but the innuendo made the conversation so much more complex, it was more than he could process, weighing his responses for what was appropriate. The ambiguity left too many possibilities for meaning. Why was she bringing up secrets? How had he betrayed himself? He was becoming anxious and wished she would go inside, but he could not just break off and leave her. “Aren’t you scared Clauson will think that we are plotting something if talk with me too much?”

“Robert trusts me. I told you that. Or are you trying to forget it?”

“I must have. Or maybe I just didn’t believe you.” He could not get a handle on the tone of his voice. It made him even more anxious. He realized he was fidgeting.

“Well, where you come from must have made you distrustful.”

“I want change, it is my place to be distrustful of the present.”

“True, but we must stick together, not fight over petty things. Trust is influence.”

Taylor was now tired by the effort it took to play his role. He put so much effort into monitoring himself that he could not listen. He knew she was inspecting him, but could not guess what she was thinking. He felt awkward under her gaze.

“Is it true,” she asked, “you attended lectures and took notes at the university the morning of the killing?”

“I did ... We thought it was best to keep up appearances, each of us separately, as long as possible. It worked didn’t it?”

“It was brave.” Silence. “You are always so quiet, you never want to tell the story. You never boast of your own achievements. It’s very gentlemanly of you.”

He felt he was dodging bullets, though perhaps she did not mean to fire them at him. He could not tell. But whether she meant to be or not, she was dangerous.

“Fine.” She smiled at him. “Be mister cool. It’s amazing that you just planned to walk away like that. Just walked away, not a second thought. That takes strength. Real strength. And coolness.”

He was silent, he did not know how to respond, but knew he would have to say something. “That day, after classes, I walked home. Like nothing happened. To be myself. I found her there at my apartment and she told me it was done. I couldn’t believe it. It was unreal. Surreal. I still wanted to go on with my life, my life wanted to continue the momentum it had built. But I knew it wasn’t possible. I knew I had to do what must be done, that the easy path would not do us any good for long.” He fell silent.

She placed her hand on his arm. “I like it when you talk about yourself, when you take pride in your actions. You deserve it.”

He could feel her hungry for more details. He asked himself, Is she curious, or does she want to report them to others? Does she want to be the one to tell the others because of pride or because she thinks it is important, that the others should know? And what should they know? What details seem out of place? And how had she found out about the lectures? Who in New York would have told her that?

3.3.3

“You were lucky to get away with it,” she said. “It’s funny, you don’t have the appearance of someone who is lucky.”

“If we had been lucky, then perhaps we would have both gotten away.”

“You think that would have been better?”

“It would not be so ... emotional.”

“You feel guilty for having gotten away.”

“We were not focused on getting away. I said we but it was Jordan really. She was focused on the thing itself, getting it done.”

“You’re sorry for the way things turned out?”

“I would have liked to stay in New York, to stay in school. It was a good place, it suited me. It is what I want to protect.” He knew he was not answering what she really wanted to know. Her questions continued to make him nervous.

“What was it the act was supposed to accomplish? What was it that Jordan wanted?”

“I couldn’t say.”

She is silent for a moment. “That’s interesting.”

“It is hard enough for me to determine why I do something. How well do we ever know why we do something, what drives us? You can trace why through someone’s personal history as long as you want. It’s like falling down the rabbit hole.”

“You always want definitive answers, don’t you?”

He felt himself trembling and tried to resist it. “You seem to understand how it is, the feelings one goes through, the anxiety.”

“I know what it’s like to lose a comrade in a fight.”

“You do?”

“There are always sacrifices for the choices we make. With rebellion there is imprisonment. With life there is death.”

“You are speaking in generalities again.”

“That is what life and death are. Life is everyone, and everyone dies, but their lives are unique.”

“Lives are not that unique, it just depends on what you focus on. We have the same wants, needs, weaknesses and strengths. They are what define us, they make us human, the same.”

“I know you do not think you are the same as everyone else, as them sitting around that table upstairs. You are not. They are enthusiasts. You’re not. You have a force within you, you’re compelled by something.”

His anxiety swelled. “We all have the ability to be compelled by something, only some of us have not been struck with something that compels us.”

“Been struck?”

“I did not go out and seek something to drive me. I am compelled by what I think is right, a vindictive justice. It is not something I sought.”

“I believe you.”

Taylor was pleased with his answers. He felt he had regained his bearings again, but talking was like quicksand, and he knew the best thing was to get away from it. But if he could not, he knew he should stay close to his true feelings. The more he tried to act, the more creative he got, then the more exposed he was and the deeper he sunk.

Sophia began to talk about what drove her. Her father had died in the Vietnam War before she could remember. Her mother had never understood why. She had protested against the war and Sophia grew up not understanding the conflict at all and why her father had died. Her mother would get so emotional talking about it Sophia could not understand her.

Taylor tried to listen, but he was tired, his mind would not focus. He had to rely on instinct, nodding periodically, understanding a sentence detached from the rest. His desire to leave and acting like he did not had worn him down.

He told her that she was a good story teller, that she should make her story known.

She was modest. “Enough people know my story. Those who need to know about me know enough.”

Taylor looked at her with respect. He noted she had the look of an honest revolutionary. She was not posing as something, it was not just a look or something to do for her, like the students he remembered in New York. They had set out to be activists in order to live through something. Sophia was the opposite. She had lived through something which drove her to become an activist.

“I’m leaving town, so we will not see each other for a while,” she said. “But we should keep in contact through Robert.”

“Through Robert?”

“It’s less dangerous, our network. But at least we had a nice chat.”

Taylor made a last effort to focus, to leave a good impression. “Yes, it was good to see you.”

3.4.1

The two were interrupted by the opening of the door to the building, and from behind it emerged the thin shaggy haired man who had been silent at the table upstairs. His downcast eyes from the top of the stairs rested on the two for a moment then he looked down the street at the oncoming traffic. Sophia gestured for him to join them with the arm movements of a crossing guard.

“Neil, have you met Mitch?” she asked as if she were the hostess at a dinner party.

Neil joined them, his eyes switching between the two of them beneath the shadow of his hair. Then he returned to their gaze down the street. “Yes. I’m a fan of your work.”

The man only made Taylor still more anxious. He remained silent.

“Neil is one our most experienced soldiers.” But Sophia did not need to tell Taylor who he was. Taylor had heard stories of him in New York and on the farm he had stayed at a number of nights on his way to Boston. His skeleton of a frame hardly seemed capable of the stories Taylor had heard. Neil was one of the founding members of the Environmental Liberation Front, a group that used sabotage and guerrilla tactics to deter what they deemed as exploitation of the environment and its inhabitants. There was no hierarchy or membership, just individuals and cells working in a decentralized fashion and attributing their actions to the group’s name. Taylor had been told stories of firebombing ski resorts, releasing testing animals, destroying construction sites, like many groups with similar acronyms, sinking whaling ships, and more. The group was an off shoot of the strictly non-violent Environmental Liberation Army, but that did not stop them from hammering metal spikes into trees so that when loggers tried to cut them, their chainsaws would bounce off the spikes, sometimes taking off an arm or a leg. Neil had reportedly wanted to take the group further, removing the non-violent stance and creating The Front. If the forces they were attacking were not afraid of blood, then they were not going to be afraid of it either. They were named the top domestic terrorist threat in the United States by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, but by then had spread through Canada, Mexico, and Europe. There was no telling how many active cells existed, as they all worked independently, but someone had suggested to Taylor that much of the work could be done by Neil, who constantly traveled on a path of destruction. Taylor knew all this as Sophia introduced them. His impatience to leave grew.

“Sophia, I’m exhausted, I can’t take any more of this. It’s too much!” He felt his restraint slipping out of his reach.

“Neil, would you excuse us for a second?” The man gave Taylor a studied glance, then nodded and returned to the stoop to sit. He pulled a package of tobacco from his back pocket and began to roll himself a cigarette. “Mitch, you need rest, your head is overwhelming itself. It’s all in your head, it’s just new people. No one expects you to change.”

“No, they just berate me about New York and Jordan.”

“No one expects you to have given yourself up because your friend was taken. It was not your fault.”

Taylor knew she was trying to calm him down, to make him feel at ease. Was she trying to make him let down his guard? To create a bond between them so he would confide in her? He knew she was dangerous.

“Don’t concern yourself with Jordan,” she continued, “there is nothing to be done now. Lazlo told us that it’s done.”

The hairs on the back of Taylor’s neck felt electrified. Lazlo. She, someone was in contact with Lazlo. What had he told them?

“Jordan mentioned him, I think. I never met him. But he can usually be found in a café, right?”

“He’s very active in New York. I’m surprised you did not meet him.”

“Jordan sometimes thought highly of people that she might should not have. That was these sense I had of him.”

“You’re just on edge. Don’t worry, it’s understandable.” She smiled at him, but Taylor felt there was something different lingering behind it.

It did not help him. He felt her becoming suspicious of him.

3.4.2

“He was in the end a good man,” she said, lowering her voice.

“Was’?”

“He hanged himself after Jordan was caught. He blamed himself.” Sophia noticed that this had an effect on Taylor. “He was supposed to have helped get Jordan out of the city.”

“That sounds right.”

“We’re certain of it. It’s so interesting that the two of you didn’t plan your escape together. It’s lucky.”

Taylor was amazed, still trying to hold himself together. How did she know these details? “As I said, we focused on the plan itself, then we were to go separate ways. We didn’t want anything traceable.”

“Well it’s a good thought in case one of you got caught. Anyway, I’m not sure I completely disagree with you about Lazlo. We heard rumors that he was drinking too much. He was drunk when he hung himself. Perhaps it was because he was a little bit of a loudmouth. Evidently he was proud, he liked to boast, that sort of thing.”

“You do not think he is the reason why Jordan...”

“We received a couple of messages he sent before he died. I need to give a full report of it to Claussion, that’s the other reason I am here. Also why it was good to run into you.”

“Well, as I said, I never met him.”

“Still, it’s good to hear your perspective. Some people have said that he was kind of flighty, that he wasn’t dependable, that maybe he should not have been trusted.”

Taylor stayed silent.

“Some thought that he might have been informing the police of what was happening in New York, giving them a heads up. He had his fingers in a lot of pies there, but he was never thought of too seriously. That is until the killing. Now we are looking into him very carefully.”

“How does that work?”

“What do you mean?”

“Did someone order you to look into him?”

“It’s not like that.”

“Oh.” Taylor did not want to appear too interested.

“It has just been a coincidence that a couple of details have come to the surface. He sent a couple of messages before he died, which showed more concern that he normally had. But it was clear that he felt guilty for Jordan being captured. You know how it goes.”

Taylor nodded.

“We have another contact at the university that knew Jordan through protesting. It’s how we confirmed that you worked with her...”

“You validated me?”

“Don’t take it personally, you could actually take it as a compliment. Only those who are important get verified.”

“I suppose we all have to be careful what we say to whom.” It occurred to Taylor who their contact must be. The student with the crooked nose that approached him after

class. It had to be! It had felt so odd at the time. He thought for a moment about the trail of gossip running from New York to Boston, his eye being caught by Neil smoking his rolled cigarette on the stoop. There were so many pieces, he could not keep track of them. He could not control his story if he could not incorporate all the scraps of information from all the various sources. He thought it was good that Lazlo was dead and a chill ran down his spine. It simplified things. No more information would be coming from him that Taylor would have to worry about. And his guilt over not helping Jordan had pulled suspicion to him and away from Taylor. Especially with Lazlo's reputation. "Well, he did himself justice."

"What?" Sophia asked.

"Lazlo. He did himself justice."

"Everyone has weaknesses, we are all human. And we don't know exactly what happened. Maybe we won't know. It could be that he just got scared one time. Can you blame him for that?"

"No, I suppose I cannot."

"Not everyone has your strength of character. The system can place incredible pressures on someone, it's unfair to blame them for not being able to bear it all the time. It's why change is needed."

Taylor nodded. He felt proud having held together his cover.

"But listen to me," she laughed. "Pretty soon I'll be reciting greeting cards."

"As you said, everyone has weaknesses. Everyone has the right to get sappy now and then."

She smiled at him. "You see?"

"Yes."

Taylor wondered why he was persuaded to risk coming to The R in the first place. He was lost in his thoughts when he heard Sophia mention Lazlo's name again. "What was that?"

"There is one thing. We know that someone went to visit Lazlo the day of the killing, but Lazlo didn't mention it in his messages. It's an odd thing because the person who visited him was very agitated, so we had assumed it had something to do with the plan."

"What do you think?" Taylor asked, trying to make sure his words came out smoothly.

"The café owner saw him and said he looked like a student and asked for Lazlo, so it wasn't just a coincidence. But it might have had to do with something else entirely."

"Maybe someone he owed money to?"

"Who knows? And the woman, the owner, is a bit of a bitch anyway so who knows how much trust to place in her. For all we know, it could have been the police coming to question him, and once they got Jordan, they didn't need him any more."

Silence. Taylor watched Neil smoke his cigarette and stare out at the street. The more he talked, the more he put himself at risk. "I should be going."

"You're exhausted, I know. Don't worry so much and get some rest. It was good to run into you." She smiled again at him.

They said their good byes and Taylor walked away, choosing the direction such that he would not have to walk by Neil, even though it was the opposite direction he wanted to head. He then turned the first corner that he could so that he was no longer in sight of the building. Finally, he sighed.

They had an explanation.

3.4.3

Taylor felt better. He should have known that people would have had their doubts. It was ignorant of him not to anticipate it, a more nuanced perspective would have. And it seemed that the doubts had subsided. For a moment he was thankful again of Lazlo's

suicide, but again he felt a shiver. He was not thankful for Lazlo's death he decided. He was thankful for the consequences of his death, the way in which things worked out. He began to pity the man who succumbed to the same feelings of guilt that he himself had felt.

Sophia's explanation for his visit to Lazlo nagged at Taylor slightly. It was the kind of conspiracy theory mentality that he was finding pervaded the culture he had stepped into. It was paranoia and self-aggrandizement. They wanted to assign importance to their acts and so imagined armies of persecutors. Perhaps it was less guilt and more fear that led Lazlo to commit suicide. He could easily have imagined someone had learned of his connection to Jordan and feared a fate similar to hers. He imagined Lazlo as a kind of doppelganger, who, by personifying his actions of helping Jordan and then going to the police, had freed him from the darkness of Jordan's death. No, not doppelganger, what was the word he was looking for? Surrogate? His nerves were worn, and so was his head. But it didn't matter, what mattered was it was no longer his fault. From now on, he just had to keep an alert ear and confirm the proper theories, being careful not to add any details. The hard work was over, he just had to maintain.

Taylor had now walked around the block and headed toward the Back Bay station when he spotted someone he knew walking towards him on the sidewalk. It was a short man name Laspara, whom he had met with Sophia on the farm. He always had a serious face surrounded by bushy, silvery hair. Taylor attempted to walk by him with a simple nod, but Laspara stopped directly in front of him and they began to talk. Taylor asked after his daughter, a very inquisitive young girl who he and his ex-wife were home-schooling together on the farm. She would often help with chopping vegetables for the commune's dinner, though someone always had to keep an eye on her skinny little fingers when she chose a big knife.

The little man seemed in as good spirits as ever; Taylor did not think he had ever seen the man smile. "I recently had to explain to her the question of freedom of entry into rooms on the commune."

"What does that mean?"

"The freedom for a member of the commune to enter another member's room, either a man or a woman's, at any time. It's a complex issue.¹⁵ And you?" he asked Taylor, "Are you planning to return to your studies?"

"I would like to," Taylor said. "I'm not sure when I will get the chance, but I would like to."

"Well, do it as quickly as you can. The longer you stay away, the harder it will become to return. At any rate, you should write something for us." Taylor knew the man was not making small talk, but that he was actually a very smart man and did a lot of writing. He operated an old printing press on the farm which was used to make leaflets and posters to be circulated.

"I would like that, I would like to do some serious writing again."

"You must never stop writing. It is absolutely necessary to promote clarity. Writing forces us to make our ideas concrete, forcing us to analyse what we mean. Even if it is just writing down what you thought that day, it is the greatest tool we have for understanding."

"I will let you know if I write something worthwhile."

The man made him promise, which Taylor did before they headed on their separate ways.

When Taylor got to the station, he could not bare to go underground and so continued to walk along the sidewalk. He looked at the stores and offices he passed with contempt. Everywhere he looked, it was the same. Advertisements and marketing urging conspicuous consumption to further more conspicuous consumption. People only serving to sell others more things they did not need. He thought of Laspara and his daughter, who he could not remember the name of, living on the commune in western Massachusetts, his entire life devoted to raising her without being corrupted by commercial culture. It was an

¹⁵ Crime and punishment, p 370.

impossible task, but Taylor viewed him nobly, like Sisyphus, knowing the vainness of his task and still struggling onwards towards completion. He liked Laspara and decided that he was correct. He would be more diligent about his writing, starting with his journal. It would help him keep his mind in check and fortify himself against the theories of the group. He would start immediately.

He walked around, musing in his head and looking for a suitable place to write. He found a little square that reminded him of what a town commons would have looked like to his grandparents. It was calm, despite the cars starting and stopping in front of the stores facing the green. They were supposed to be there, people going about their afternoon shopping. (I have tried to retrace his steps and my closest guess is he stopped in Peter's Park, near the little bakery and formagerie. With its dog run and hardwood trees for sitting under, it has the feeling of a place to gather, perhaps as Taylor imagined a commons would.)

He walked out on the grass, away from where a few others were sitting in the sun, and sat down. The grass felt cool under him. He pulled the leather bound journal out of his jacket and began to reread his recent entries, filling in gaps of detail, putting down everything in his head. (As a consequence, the reader may notice, some of the details in the journal were filled in days after the events actually occurred, or with the benefit of hindsight, so their accuracy might be a little circumspect. When one reads through the journal, with certain lines crossed out and scribbles written in the margin, it had a certain linearity of thought that one would not think to find in a journal. But when talking with Taylor, a keen listener would detect the same unwavering trajectory in his thoughts, so it is not terribly surprising.)

It is here, with a particularly bold lettering he wrote, "I feel completely safe. It is remarkable to think of the complex world that should bring me here to where I am today."

4.1.1

Here seems as good a place as any to confirm what the reader has probably already assumed. When Mikulin in his office asked Taylor where he was going, Taylor realized he had no real answer to give him. He was afraid to appear weak and so kept silent, feeling his anger radiate out from him.

"I like you," the old man said. He wagged his head in a grandfatherly way when he spoke. "I know what you did was hard. I did not bring you here to patronize you and tell you it was the right thing to do. I brought you here to thank you for doing something that I know was difficult, and it will only be more difficult going forward."

"Why?" Taylor asked him angrily. "Am I going to be followed? Watched?"

"No. Because now you will have to live with the consequences of what you have done. You will live with your questions of what if you had done this or that. Usually, when people make a decision, they think about how to get through the present. They think about surviving the situation that they are in, what they are able to see with their eyes. They don't think about what it will be like to live with their decision. I can see you understand what I mean. Maybe you know this already, maybe you are at peace with the decision you made. I see you and I as believing in the same things. We are compatriots. We believe in thinking through the consequences of our actions."

Taylor did not believe him, but he kept silent.

"I want you to know what you did was important. It is not about one girl shooting one man. If it were, the news cameras would be pointing somewhere else by now. She, as I am sure you know, is part of an organization, just as he was part of an organization. His will call for blood and retaliation with the full force that comes with controlling the world's financial markets, because hers is trying to wrestle that control from them. And they have shown they will use any tactics that serve their purposes. This is not their first act, it is an escalation. They have blown up buildings, torn down radio towers, the list goes on and on. Most times it's by young kids stirred up by some self-appointed spokesperson spouting off

inflammatory urges to wage war by any means necessary. They sit safely at home behind their computer while convincing kits to fight their battles and get them publicity so they can go on the lecture circuit.” Mikulin leaned forward over his desk. “You know what irks me the most about it? Not that they’re lying; lying can always be forgiven; lying is a fine thing, because it leads to the truth. No, what irks me is that they lie and then worship their own lies.¹⁶ We have been able to turn some. Some have been incredibly cooperative, once they realize the sentences they face. And in most cases, there are no winners. The buildings are rebuilt, tensions are higher, and a lot of time and money, taxpayer money, yours and mine, is wasted. This time, though, they found a building that could not be rebuilt. He’ll be replaced, but there will still be a hole left.” He paused now, leaning forward on his elbows over his desk. “She did not come to do this on her own, just like a stick up kid doesn’t just decide to go and rob a liquor store. Pulling him off the street will not put an end to robberies. We have to go after the system, and we can do that with her.”

Taylor remained quiet as he began to feel a little sheepish.

“Well, I will not detain you any more, I have taken up enough of your time.” He cleared his throat. “We live in a time of monsters. We take our neighbors, bring out their worst qualities, and must live with the results. I hope you have no more trouble, but now you know where I am.” He stands up. “I am sure we will meet again, sometime. You are a good man, I wish you good luck.”

Taylor stood, his anger replaced by awkwardness. Without saying a word, he nodded an acknowledgment to the man behind the desk, shook his hand and left. He could not wait to leave. But as he made his way back through the building to the street, he felt that Mikulin was perhaps the only man that understood his position. He was indebted to George, but George led a life of retirement. He did not have his life ahead of him. Mikulin knew what he had been through and knew the dangers he now faced. The activists had already come to his door once, there was nothing to stop them doing it again. He was struck with the desire to turn around and go back to Mikulin, to tell him more, but he had already been so open, there were no more details worth telling. It was true, he had not mentioned that he had tried to carry Jordan’s message to Lazlo, to help her escape, but there was not reason to include this now. It would only make things more complicated and single the detail out as if it were important. Still, the urge struck him to be even more open.

For the next several days Taylor rested at home, not being keen on dealing with anyone. But he had to return to the university some time, and so after a few days he went and attempted to resume his normal life. Everything seemed so trivial. He could not get his mind in it. Going through his morning routine. He got up, ate his bowl of cereal, flossed and brushed his teeth, showered, shaved, got dressed. But he found himself having to think about the routine, things he did robotically before almost still asleep. He went to his lectures and tried to keep his mind in the room, but nothing held his interest. The world around him went on, he could not help but notice it feeling out of place around him. He watched it go by, watched the students running past him, listened to the traffic stop and start on the streets. The shadows continued to glide along the sidewalk. And he was aware of Wolowitz watching and following him around the university like a puppy, but never approaching him.

For those days, when he went home, he could not concentrate on his reading. He sat down on his couch and an hour later found himself in the same place staring at the molding where the wall met the ceiling. His professors noticed a change in him, but he brushed off their concerns. After all, they were only interested in his putting out work, for him to become their famous student. But the memory of Jordan followed him everywhere. His apartment felt comforting imagining the two of them together that night, him finding her sleeping in his bed. At the same time it was maddening, here was where his entire life had changed.

Weeks wasted by with nothing happening. He treaded water, knowing this was no way to live. He could run away, but from what? And to where? Any place he went he would

¹⁶ Crime and Punishment, p 134.

carry his thoughts with him. He kept tormenting himself, taunting himself with these questions, even taking a certain delight in it. The question of what to do was not new or sudden, it was an old sore. Long ago this present anguish had been born in him, had grown, accumulated, and ripened recently and become concentrated, taking the form of a horrible, wild, and fantastic question that tormented his heart and his mind, irresistibly demanding resolution. He had to decide at all costs to do at least something, or...

"Or renounce life altogether!" he suddenly cried out in a frenzy. "Accept fate obediently as it is, once and for all, and stifle everything in myself, renouncing any right to act, to live, to love!"¹⁷

He tried to write the thoughts out of him, to exorcise them with his pen, but he only dug deeper into them, unearthing more questions and making himself more unbalanced.

He thought, I am young. With time, these thoughts will die away. Or am I confining myself to a lifelong sentence in my head? A prison of unanswered questions.

At last, finally, Taylor had had enough. He decided to pay Mikulin another visit.

4.1.2

It was late afternoon when he wove an elaborate path through the city to make sure he was not being followed. Then he realized that it might be natural that he had to go see Mikulin. It would be natural that they had more questions for him. Who knew what they had found out from Jordan, or what they thought he could reveal.

I do not know a great deal about Mikulin other than he worked for the CIA, and perhaps this is why. What I do know comes mostly from the few contacts in journalism that I have, and their information is mostly vague generalizations. It all came down to the fact that it was a time of terrorism, and men like Mikulin were the ones who dealt with it head on, who had the means to do what needed to be done.

I do not know where Taylor went to meet Mikulin, but it was as if he was expected, for Taylor only had to sit for a few minutes to be seen. Maybe he was afraid Taylor would change his mind if he had to wait, or maybe a recommendation that he was a man of good character held that much weight. Maybe Mikulin was desperate for a lead, or maybe the situation was that high a priority with the financial sector and the media both watching it closely. For whatever reason, when Taylor saw him, Mikulin seemed instantly gratified.

There is no need to go into the details of their meetings, other than to say that Taylor recounted to Mikulin that he could see no life ahead of him. Taylor did not know what to do and he had to escape the ghost of Jordan.

"What is it that you want?" Mikulin asked.

"I want to see this thing through."

"You want to be in it to the end?"

"I already am, I just don't know what is going on, I am not doing anything proactive."

"And what do you propose to do?"

"I could bring you information. You had said that Jordan was not the end of it. Tell me where to go, where the rest are, and I will bring you information."

Mikulin thought on this. His weighty eyes in his thin drawn face rested on Taylor. Neither spoke.

"Alright," Mikulin said after a moment. "We think that Jordan's contacts are reaching out to her sister. Maybe they want a face or a voice to go with the act. Someone they can parade around and with whom people will sympathize. She might already be working with them."

"You want me to go to Boston to watch her?"

"You know her family?"

"Only that they are in Boston. Her sister and her mother. She told me that much."

¹⁷ Crime and Punishment, p 45.

Believe me, I will not forget that."

"Alright, go to Boston. See if you can make a connection with the sister."

"That's it?"

Mikulin clapped his leathery hands together softly. "That's it. If you find out anything, you call me."

And based on Taylor's journal, that was the initial talk. He didn't say anything about hoping to find resolution in talking to Jordan's family, and Mikulin didn't say if he thought any serious plot was suspected to be developing. They saw that both had something to get out of it and left it at that.

Over the next few days, Taylor met with agents a number of times to get information. They suggested he go to a commune in western Massachusetts they knew of as a place to get out of the city. They could provide a simple cover story to get him there. They had a contact in the students at the university who could float a rumor. (It was best, the agents said, that he did not know who it was.) Basic, the fewer details the better. Taylor could not stand to remain in the city, he had to get out, but he had no where to go. The contact would suggest someone offer to give Taylor directions to the commune where the student protesters had friends. Taylor would just wait for the invitation. The rest of the story would be his own. It would be enough to get him a place to stay for a few days. From there he could make his way to New York with references from the commune.

The air of purpose revived Taylor. His gears were engaged again. He wrote, he read, he thought, sharpening his mind to a point. A few days after his meeting with Mikulin he was energized, cleaning his apartment and thinking about the nature of politics and representation when there was an unexpected knock on his door. He opened it to find the tall student with the crooked nose. The student gave him a nod and without saying a word pushed past him into the apartment. Taylor, slightly astounded, let the door close.

"You are living in false security," the student said to him quietly but quickly, leaning forward as he did so. "They may arrest you soon."

"For what?" snapped Taylor, still regaining his composure. "What are you doing here?"

"Conspiring with Jordan."

There was silence.

"How do you know? Are you sure?"

"You're being watched, followed when you go to class. That is why I can't say too much." He dramatically pointed to his ear and then to the ceiling. "It's dangerous for me to even talk to you, but we thought you should know after everything you have done."

"Who thought? What have I done?"

"You helped Jordan."

Taylor again was silent.

"You did, didn't you?"

"Well, yes," he stammered. "I did what I could."

The student smiled. "That is all any of us can do. Here." He thrust a piece of folded yellow paper into Taylor's hand. "These are directions to a farm north of here. It's about four hours. You can go there, rest, get your bearings. It is the middle of nowhere. If someone is watching you there, you'll be able to see them too. If someone is following you, you'll be able to see them coming."

"Is this really necessary?" Taylor asked him, trying to sound incredulous.

But the student was already moving towards the door. Opening it, he said, "That's for you to decide. We've done what we can." And then he closed the door behind him and was gone.

Taylor thought, considering what the agents had told him, what he thought Mikulin might know, and what the students might know. Whatever he did, he had to be careful.

Calling Mikulin that night, he told him that it was a good time for him to leave, that the rumors were floating around. Taylor told him that he just needed to see one person and then he would make his way to the farm as discussed. Mikulin was anxious, he trusted

Taylor, he said, but wanted to have control over the time table. Taylor assured him and said good bye. He was not naive enough to think that Milkulin was actually worried about him, only that the loss of control made the agent nervous.

The apartment was dark, but Taylor did not want to turn on another light. He looked around. He was leaving. What was he taking with him? None of the furniture belonged to him. There was no television, only his small computer which he could tuck into a bag. His walls were bare. In his closet were clothes and notebooks of old papers he had not looked at in years. He would bring the clothes, but the notebooks he wanted to throw away. Was that all he was to take with him, clothes and his computer? Kitchenware? He had two plates, two sets of utensils, a pot and a frying pan. He could leave them. What else? Books. As much as he wanted to, he could not take all of them, he could not carry them. And only a few were actually his. Most of them belonged to the library. He would return them tonight. He had to go to the library anyways.

Campus was getting dark when Taylor walked onto it. Most classes were over for the day, the department offices was quiet. The library was busier, the study carrels were full with books and bags scattered around them. He checked several popular spots, and after the third found who he was looking for.

Wolowitz sat at a long table with a book open in front of him and his eyes intent on a girl sitting at a table facing away from him. He didn't notice Taylor approach him.

"I need your help," was all Taylor said to him.

Wolowitz gasped slightly, startled, but quickly regained his typical energetic smile. "What can I do?"

"I need money. I have to leave town tonight. As quickly as possible." He looked around himself dramatically. "The police may be watching me."

Wolowitz pushed his books into his bag and motioned for Taylor to follow him. They walked through the stacks to the entrance. Wolowitz's head swiveled on its little neck. Taylor wondered if he was looking for the police or to see what students saw him walking urgently along side Taylor.

"How much do you need?"

"As much as I can get. Whatever it is, I am going to have to make it last for as long as I can."

Wolowitz did not try to hide his excitement. "I can get it from my dad. We'll go to my apartment and I'll see what I can get."

"It may not be a good idea for me to go with you. It is very possible I am being followed. For all I know, it is the CIA."

A pale panic flashed across Wolowitz's face but was then gone, leaving only an uncomfortable nervousness. "Alright. Meet me at the fountain in two hours. I'll bring as much money as I can."

"The fountain?"

"In the center of Washington Square."

Taylor started to argue, but thought better of it. It was settled and two hours later, Taylor sat on a small wall looking at the fountain and the students who milled about it, listening to the guitar players, and catching bits of conversations as they drifted by. He thought of the irony that this was where he had sent Jordan.

The figure of Wolowitz was easy to make out beneath the street lamps. Taylor could see well before he reached him that Wolowitz had lost the spring in his step. He marched straight for Taylor, but kept his eyes on the ground in front of him. It was clear he had had second thoughts, but he handed Taylor a small folded up shopping bag, telling him it was two thousand dollars.

"Thank you," Taylor said in a sort of whisper, feeling genuine appreciation with a tinge of guilt. He quickly followed, "I have to leave, it is too dangerous." He tried to remember the way the student with the crooked nose had acted.

"Can I see you out of the city? Do you need a ride?"

It was not until then that Taylor felt the weight of what he was doing. Before it had

been plans, a fantasy, a theoretical problem to be solved. The details had been trifles he had not begun to think about, nor did he have time. He had thought about the main thing, and put the trifles off until he himself was convinced of everything. But this seemed decidedly impossible. At least it seemed so to him. He could no way imagine, that one day he would finish thinking, get up, and simply begin.¹⁸ Now he was at the brink, and again genuinely appreciated that Wolowitz was there, that he was not totally alone. Wolowitz must have felt that some important transition was occurring. Taylor could tell Wolowitz was more emotional than he was himself. Scared of what the sentimentality could do to him, he faced Wolowitz, shook his hand forcefully, thanked him again, and then walked away.

Still unable to believe what he was doing, he kept telling himself, “Walk away, just walk away.”

4.2.1

The sun had began to go down and the ground under Taylor was cool. By now the reader can guess what a mess the journal was, but it is clear that he spent a good deal of time writing and reading that afternoon on the lawn, analyzing his own actions. Yet even with all of his retrospection, he still had trouble comprehending he was on an actual mission. Granted, he told himself, it was not what Mikulin intended. What he could not tell Mikulin, what Mikulin would not believe, was that the killing had been an accident, that Jordan had not meant to shoot that man and there was no plan of escalation. Perhaps it did not matter. The effect was the same whether it had been planned or not, and there were those on both sides who would say it had been planned, no matter what he truth was.

But Taylor could do his part to make sure that the escalation went no further.

He removed his phone from his pocket. It showed he had missed several calls from Jamie. He knew she wanted to talk more about her sister, but that would have to wait.

“Agent Mikulin?”

“Mitch. Any news to report?” He was always straight to the point.

“No changes to report.” He forced his voice to sound official, to make it sound beyond reproach. “I have come from another visit at The R.”

“Anything new mentioned there?”

“No. I met some new people...”

“Who?”

“Neil was there, the man you had told me about.”

“Interesting. So he did show up. We never should have repealed the Immigration Act.”

“The what?”

“Nothing. The Immigration Act. It replaced the Anarchist Exclusion Act but it was repealed years ago. But never mind. Did he say anything?”

“Not a word. He seemed like he keeps his mouth shut.”

“Anyone else?”

“There were others there, but nothing that seemed out of the ordinary. I sat and ate with them for a little while.”

“Good. Was the Cochran girl there? Where are you with her?”

“She was not there. She is staying away from them. As I mentioned before, she and her mother are not involved with them and is keeping her distance from them.” If Mikulin thought some action could or should be taken against them, at least he could try to insulate them from it.

“All the same, keep an eye out. You’ve been in touch with her?”

“Minimally.” Mikulin wanted Taylor to be able to report on her, but if Taylor stayed away, there was little he could report. “I have seen her, but have not been able to keep up with her.”

¹⁸ Crime and Punishment, p 70.

“Alright, well keep trying. You are doing well.” Mikulin wanted him to be a flag, a signal that Jordan’s family was involved as much as she was. Taylor would never give that signal. Of course, there could be other’s who could give it. Agents monitoring the activists. Members of the community who worked with them. The agents in New York had a contact within the student protestors. There could be a similar informant in Boston. Taylor had kept his eye out for such a person. The skinny girl, Nym, persisted with the group despite insinuating her disillusionment with them. But to confirm that she was working with the authorities would be risky. The risk was not warranted yet. He had not been told that there was a contact embedded in the group, there might not be one at all. Taylor knew there was vast amounts of information kept from him, both by Mikulin and Clausson. Trust was something that would have to be earned at the risk of his neck. The question was whether it was riskier to become more intricately woven into the conflict, or was it riskier to simply not know with what he was dealing.

“Nothing much else to report,” Taylor continued after a pause. “The mother is still confined to the house. As far as I can tell they have few visitors. That is it. Just checking in.”

“Alright. No need to do anything else. Just contact me if there are any developments.”

“Will do.”

“Alright, Mitch. Be careful up there.”

“Will do.”

The line went silent.

His reports were not much, Taylor knew that, but it was at least one source telling Mikulin that he could leave Jordan’s family alone, that nothing of interest was happening at The R, that there was no escalation. With no escalation, there was no reason to increase counter measures against them and raise the tension levels all around.

Taylor looked at his phone again, reminded of the missed calls from Jamie. He was hesitant to call her back, he felt more in control if he talked to her in person. He would need to pay her a visit.

4.2.1.a

Having followed Taylor to The R, the next day I decided to pay another visit to Jamie. Taylor had looked up to something, at the time I did not know how to explain how I knew this other than his mannerisms betrayed him. His agitation with everyone he encountered on the street as I trailed behind him. His nervousness. His quick visit to Jamie’s house followed immediately by his trip to The R. Not knowing the details of what was happening, I became more concerned for Jamie. Taylor had become a fixture for her and his affectations coupled with his proximity to her worried me.

I know that some readers may comment that I think about Jamie a great deal and all I can say is that, to me, as a very dear person, she was worthy of the concern. In particular, I was afraid of her ending up like her mother, consumed with the absence of Jordan and the helpless feeling of not knowing her fate. At some point both her mother and she had stopped calling the authorities. No one would tell her anything, or even say that they had heard of Jordan. It was as if she had never existed. This denial of her existence, that there was even a problem, it was as if someone had told her that the idea of her daughter was just a fantasy. I did not want Jamie to end up like this as well. But I am digress.

As I walked up to Jamie’s building filled with concern, she was on her way out. She was off to find Taylor to convince him to visit her mother.

I was startled.

"She knows I am keeping something from her," she explained. I began to accompany her as she walked hurriedly down the street. "I am afraid she thinks I am turning away from her. I cannot have her think that."

"What do you want him to say to her?"

"I don't know." She was on the verge of emotions. "I don't know what to do. But I

have already told her about him."

"What did you tell her?" I was afraid of her mother working herself up, even with just the thought of what he might know.

"I could feel her turning away from me. I had to tell her. I told her I was going to bring him to her and have him explain to her what he knew about Jordan."

I was still shocked.

"I am going to The R. Do you know where Mitch lives?"

I told her I did not.

"He is not answering his phone. Or I could go to Robert's house." She looked at me as if it were a question.

"I would think you would have better luck at The R. That way if Robert is not there, there may be someone else you could ask." Anything was better than her delivering herself to his apartment. "How is your mother? You just talked about this right now?"

"A friend is sitting with her. I don't know. Alright, The R."

I was able to convince her to let me accompany her. Perhaps it was just to reassure myself, but I was worried about her, she was in such a state.

4.2.2

The R was dark, but the front door was not locked. I pushed on the door and it slid heavily open, the bottom of it scraping across the dusty floor. I saw the stairs I had heard about and there seemed to be a light coming from one of the floors above. I gave Jamie my arm, afraid she might trip in the dark. She slid her arm through mine and for a second there was a moment where her eyes looked up at mine with vulnerability and apprehension. It was as if I had just asked her to dance and she was afraid she didn't dance well. Her resolve was slipping away with the gentle squeeze of her arm against mine and I knew she was looking to me to have the strength to go upstairs. I wanted to take her out of that dark building, some place full of light where the sun would bake us until our skin tightened and felt it might crack. But then I would be encouraging her to run away.

We mounted the steps, and as we climbed, we began to make out the peaks of muffled voices behind a closed door.

For a moment we stood on the landing looking at the door. The light illuminated the floor before it through the crack at our feet. I knocked gently and the voices faded to silence in the room before us. The door was opened by a woman, closer to my age if not older, with prematurely gray hair. I later learned this was Sophia. At the time I was stuck by her intense presence, but her face softened when she saw Jamie standing behind me.

"We're terribly sorry to interrupt. Is Robert here? We need to ask him a quick question."

"Of course." She smiled and moved to let us pass inside.

The room was bare, with a long wooden table painted green and a few chairs occupied around it. We stood silently, having killed the conversation in the room, the eyes of the others seated at the table taking us in.

After a moment, Clausson came in, having been in the next room, from what I could see, conferring in whispers over a map with a lanky unkempt young man.

"You come to visit us again at last!" Robert was immediately pleasant and welcoming on seeing Jamie.

"Yes. Actually we came looking to talk to Mitch. I don't suppose you have him hidden around here, do you?" she teased, playing up her charm.

Clausson looked back to the room he had come from and then back at us. "What? No, he isn't here. I am not sure where he is. I take it you have tried calling him."

"He's not answering his phone."

"Interesting," Clausson said to himself thoughtfully. He was silent for a moment. "Well, I'm sorry, I'm not sure where he could be."

"Do you know where he lives?"

"No, I'm not sure where he is staying at the moment. Sophia, do you?"

"No, he didn't mention it."

Claussion looked around. "Laspara?"

A short man said gruffly, "No."

Claussion looked back at Jamie. "That's alright," she said to him. "I'll just keep trying his phone."

"I'm sorry we couldn't be of more help."

There was an awkward silence.

"Well, thanks all the same. It was good to see you again," I said, sensing they wanted us to leave them.

"Yes, good luck, and come back and visit us whenever you'd like." Claussion was still looking at Jamie.

"Certainly. Well, have a good night," she said generally to the room.

"You, too," Claussion smiled. And we turned to head back downstairs and Sophia took a step towards us.

"I'll walk you out," she said and escorted us down the stairs.

Once we reached the bottom of the staircase, Sophia turned and said, "I am a great admirer of your sister."

We stood illuminated in yellow light by a street lamp. Jamie smiled at her. "I just wish everything could be forgotten, even if it meant forgetting Jordan. I just want everything to be better, for the suspense to end."

"It will be better, I promise." She smiled. There was something very genuine and warm about her. Perhaps it was the soft lighting from the street lamp. "If you talk to Mitch, you can tell him I have told everyone about Lazlo."

"Lazlo?"

"He is a friend of ours. He committed suicide recently."

"I'm so sorry."

"Thank you, but it's alright. Mitch can explain it better than I can, if you want."

I remember asking myself, Why would we want to bother someone about a thing like that? But I said nothing.

We said our good byes again and left the building, this time walking at a much slower pace.

"Where to now?" I asked.

"I don't know. I suppose I should go home and see about my mother."

"Isn't someone sitting with her?"

"Yes, but I'd rather be there if we aren't going to find Taylor."

"Would you like for me to escort you home?"

She looked at me with sad eyes. "You don't have to, it's out of your way."

"I'm glad to do it. You're not keeping me from anything."

"Alright." She was dejected. It made my heart break to see her so sad.

We made our way back to her house on the train, which seemed overly lit given our mood.

4.3.1

The weather was starting to turn when we arrived at Jamie's house, but I decided to go in briefly to hear how her mother was doing. The faint sound of talking came from her mother's bedroom, so I remained in the living room while Jamie went to her mother's door to tell her we had returned. When she got to the doorway, she paused, and then emphatically waved for me to come over. Taylor was sitting with his back to the door talking to Mrs. Cochran. Jamie was clearly upset, as I am sure she, as I, wondered about his tact in coming to speak to her. We heard him talking about Lazlo, the man Sophia had mentioned to us, so

we decided not to interrupt him by making our presence known.

Evidently Taylor had already said what he came to say. After he had spoken a few sentences he stopped talking. He waited for Mrs. Cochran to speak, but nothing followed. From my vantage point, I could not see her, but I imagined her staring out the window into space. Receiving no further response, Taylor stood and walked into the living room. He noticed the look on Jamie's face.

"I came as quickly as I could," he said. He spoke with some difficulty. "I learned something today that I thought you should know."

"About Lazlo?" Juila asked.

This took him by surprise. "How did you know..."

"We just came from The R looking for you. Sophia asked us to tell you she has told everyone of Lazlo's suicide. She said you could explain who he was better than she could."

Taylor looked exhausted. "I thought I would find both you and your mother here, that I could tell you the full story I had heard and leave. Now, I am not sure that I can go through with it again. Watching your mother's face as I told it, I could not do that again." It was clear telling the story to her mother had drained him. He slumped down on the edge of a chair and looked at his hands.

It was silent.

"It's alright," Jamie said. "We can wait. You can rest. There's no rush."

"You don't understand. I've trapped myself. I cannot do this any more."

She looked at him with complete sincerity. "I don't understand. You don't have to do anything you don't want to. It's alright."

He hung his head. Jamie's very presence was taking a toll on him. "I can't play this character any more. I can't watch you ... watch you listen. She just stared with those blank eyes. I could see her heartbreaking with every word I said."

"My mother has had a hard time with all of this. We've both cried I don't know how many times. But I believe in the future. And when I found out that you were here, in Boston, I knew that you were the only one who could help us, to help me with her. Don't you understand? Nothing can be as bad as the not knowing. No one has told us anything."

"Men are weak. I am weak. You've come too late. I don't have the strength to delve back into the quagmire of politics and men's selfish motives, the deficiencies that have destroyed your sister."

"But I need to talk to you. You alone understand these things."

"I can't. I must go."

"I already know part of the story. Sophia told me about Lazlo."

Taylor hung his head again. I watched them, again feeling like an observer. This was not my affair. I happened to be there when they realized that they needed each other, that they desired each other.

4.3.2

I realized this as Jamie continued.

"When we were looking for you. I was worried about my mother and was going to ask you to talk to her. But I wanted to know what you would say, to make sure she could take it."

"She was expressionless the entire time, just staring into space."

"She's lost hope of ever seeing her again."

Taylor looked at her for a moment. "I was going to leave tonight. I was going to tell you the story and leave."

"Why?"

"I have to be done with it, I cannot keep playing this character."

"What does that mean? What character?" Jamie was becoming distressed.

Taylor ignored her. "What did Sophia tell you?"

“Nothing. She seemed to like you. She just wanted me to tell you that she had told the others about Lazlo. She thought it would reassure you.”

“As everything is falling into place...” he said, more to himself than to anyone else. He began to mumble to himself in an agitated fashion. It worried me. I was unsure what he was going to do and Jamie was becoming increasingly agitated, her leg pulsing up and down like a sewing machine needle.

Then Taylor fell silent. After a minute Jamie worked up her nerve. “What is it?” she asked. He raised his head. “Why is it you always look at me that way? I won’t hurt you. I just want to talk with you, but you’re making me so nervous.”

“How do you feel about revenge?”

“Revenge? Oh, Mitch! Revenge never does anyone any good. Is that what you are worried about?” She let out a deep breath. “I think the future’s going to be merciful to everyone, no matter what we did before.”

“The moment I saw you, I knew how it would all be. Lies and temptation and remorse and terror. If you had met me before, you would have thought nothing of me. It is all because of this. In New York, I could see it all, how it would pull on me, but I thought I could do it. It was the only thing I could do.”

“It’s alright, it was the right thing to do.”

“You don’t know, though. You think ... you think the banker, that it was the right thing to kill the banker?”

“I wish it were all forgotten. I wish none of this had happened. But I trust my sister to do the right thing, I’m sure she did what she thought was right.”

“And me, do you trust me?”

“Of course! That’s what I want you to believe more than anything. I believe in you.”

“And what if it was all a lie? What if the story were different, that what everyone now believes is wrong and the truth was something else? Something that would cause heartache and pain.”

“I don’t understand.”

“I know you don’t. How could you? That is what is so wonderful about you. I do not want to see it vanish. I wanted to stop this. It had to stop somewhere and I thought I could stop it. I thought I could save you, your mother, from further pain, but you deserve to know the truth.”

“Oh, how tormented you are!¹⁹ Mitch, just tell me, please! What are you talking about?”

“What if the truth was your sister was betrayed by people she knew, people close to her? What if someone she thought was her friend was the one who made her disappear? Is the truth worth the pain? To know that her friends deliberately hurt her and abandoned her?”

“What are you saying?” she asked, but I knew. Taylor did not want to tell her. He knew the second he said it he would not be able to take it back and she would be lost to him. Once he took that step, it was done, he had come too far to go back. He just teetered on the edge of the abyss, unable to step away, savoring his last moment before jumping in as long as he could. He did not want to hurt her, but he knew he had to and it was killing him. She could see this too, the pain he was in. She just had not put the pieces together. Her attachments stopped her from making the connections.

There was silence.

“It was me.” He lifted his head to look at her face. “I betrayed Jordan. I told them where she was and where she was going so they could get her. I looked in her eyes and told her I would help her, and I lied.”

It took a moment for Jamie to take this in, that he was responsible for taking her sister away from her. Then she collapsed, her body went limp. I went to her and took her arm to support her, but her eyes were blank. It took a moment for the tears to come, and as they did she folded into herself and all I could do was to keep a hand on her back to let her

¹⁹ Crime and Punishment, p 409.

know that I was there.

There were no more words. Taylor stood up, and watched her for what felt like minutes, and then walked to the front door and left. I stayed next to her, knowing anything reassuring I said would sound condescending. So we sat in silence.

Finally, she lifted her head for a moment and said out loud, “It is impossible to be more unhappy.” Anyone looking on would feel the enormous emptiness inside her where her heart had just been broken. I thought to myself that hope can be the cruelest illusion. It leads to the most pain.

4.4.1

Taylor must have gone straight home to write after that. His emotions were in control of him now and he wrote passionately, almost incoherently. To give you an idea, here is a passage straight from his journal:

“When you stood before me that first time, I remembered the sound of your sister’s voice. I looked into your eyes. Something had happened, but I did not know then what.... But don’t be deceived. I believed that I had nothing but an inexhaustible anger and hate for her. Her, who had robbed me of my hard-working, purposeful existence. I, too, had my guiding idea; and remember that it is more difficult to lead a solitary life of toil and self-denial than to go out in the street and cathartically act out one’s frustrations. But hate or no hate, I felt at once that I could never succeed in driving away her image. I would say, addressing your sister, ‘Is this the way you are going to haunt me?’ It is only later that I understood, only a few hours ago. I should have known, but sometimes we are too close to the source. Your sincerity made me betray myself back into truth. And you have done it in the same way, too, in which she disrupted my life: by forcing upon me your trust. Only what I detested her for, in you ended by appearing noble and gentle. But I had given up to evil. I relished inducing that silly insolent fool to steal his father’s money. He was a lonely fool looking to belong, but not a thief. I made him one. It was necessary. I had to confirm myself in my contempt and hate for what I betrayed. I had my security stolen from me, my world. To save me, it was your trustful eyes that constantly imbued me with the confidence of your pure heart.

“Perhaps no one will believe me. It is certain that, when we parted that day in the park, I was worried in playing my double role. I doubted my ability to play the part. The man you introduced me to insisted on walking with me. He talked of you, of your lonely, helpless state, and every word of that friend of yours was egging me on to confess. I returned to look at you every day, and drink in your presence the poison of my infamous intention. But I foresaw the difficulties and then they started to seep in, disguised. How was I to know? Sophia, of whom I was not thinking—I had forgotten her existence—appeared suddenly with that tale from New York.... The only thing needed to make me safe—a blanket of never ending concealment.

“It was as if Lazlo had hanged himself to help me. The story seemed irresistible. These people stood doomed by the illusion that was in them, being used to living in a world of theories. I even gave myself up to it for a time. It was too tempting, after all, you yourself were the prize of it. I sat alone in my room, planning a life, the thought of which makes me shudder now, as if seduced by a new religion. But there seemed to be no air in it. And I was afraid of your mother. I never knew mine. I’ve never known any kind of love. There is something in the mere word.... Of you, I was not afraid—forgive me for telling you this. You could not suspect me. As to your mother, you yourself already worried for her thoughts. Who could believe anything against me? Had not Lazlo hanged himself from remorse? I said to myself, ‘Let’s put it to the test, and be done with it once and for all.’ I trembled when I went in, but your mother hardly listened to what I was saying to her, and, in a little while, seemed to have forgotten my very existence. I sat looking at her. There no longer stood

anything between you and me. For days you have talked with me, opening your heart. I remembered the shadow of your eyelashes over your grey trustful eyes. It was as if you bore a light which fell on me, searched my heart, and would not let me lie. Your light! Your truth! I felt that I must tell you that I had ended by loving you. And to tell you that I must first confess. Confess, go out, and perish.

"Suddenly you stood before me! You alone in all the world to whom I must confess. You fascinated me, you have freed me from the blindness of anger and hate. The truth shining in you drew the truth out of me. Now I have done it; and as I write here, I am in the depths of anguish, but there is air to breathe at last. And, that man sprang up from somewhere as I was speaking to you, with eyes that raged at me. I may suffer, but I am not in despair. There is only one more thing to do for me. After that, if they let me, I shall go and live in obscurity. In giving Jordan up, it was myself, after all, whom I have betrayed the most. You must believe what I say, you can not refuse to believe this. You showed me this. After all, it is they and not I who have the right on their side? Theirs is the strength of invisible powers. So be it. Only do not be deceived, Jamie, I am not converted. Have I then the soul of a slave? No! I am independent, and therefore perdition is my lot."

Later, Jamie found Taylor's journal left at her door. She read it, or most of it at least, and gave it to me. She couldn't stand to have it any longer.

As far as I can determine, the next thing that Taylor did was to go to The R, where he interrupted some gathering or meeting of Clausson's. Taylor was told they were in the middle of something, but he insisted that he had an important message for them.

"I know. Sophia has already told me the facts regarding Lazlo," Clausson said to him. She was evidently not there, having left the city.

"But you don't. You don't understand. Lazlo was not responsible for Jordan's arrest."

"I know that. Sophia has told me the facts."

But Taylor would not be stopped. "Or whatever you think he did, he had nothing to do with it. He did nothing. It was a student who went to the feds and gave them Jordan."

They were all staring at him. He could not believe he had to say it again, but this time he had momentum behind him.

"It was me. I told them. I lied to Jordan and told her I would help her and I delivered her to them. They told me to come to Boston and I came, to watch you and report back to them. I told them nothing. I promise, what could I tell? I told them that I saw Neil. That was it. I had to tell them something so they would believe me, believe me that nothing else was happening. I did it only because I felt sorry for betraying Jordan. I wanted to make sure to stop the escalation. To stop them from harassing Jamie and her mother. To stop them from thinking that you planned the killing. I wanted to stop the whole thing."

The room was fused with anxious energy but no one moved. Clausson alone seemed composed.

"As I said. I know. Sophia told me."

There was silence as Taylor looked at him, unsure what this meant.

"You mean you knew?"

"We know you met with the federal agents. We know that you came here to watch us. We know that Lazlo did not commit suicide. It only made sense that you were the one who gave Jordan away."

"Wait. Lazlo ... he didn't commit suicide? He is alive?"

"If you want to call what he does living. He is cooperating with federal agents. He has ratted us out. It is not the first time, either, but this time everyone knows." He was grinning again, and Taylor looked sick to his stomach.

"But why? Why pretend...?"

"Because you were useful. You are part of the story now. Everyone believes that Jordan's act was purposeful, a willful demonstration of outrage. You have verified it, you are our witness. You have shown everyone what we are capable of. Your name is ours now. Yours and Jordan's, and with your help, Jamie's. We needed you to turn her for us. You've

told her the truth now haven't you? You wouldn't tell us before you told her, correct?"

Taylor looked guiltily at the floor.

"You see?" Clausson continued. "She will join us too. The world knows what has happened now and those responsible are our comrades. If you contract the story now, no one will believe you. Or at least those who matter to us. We will lead the world forward to change."

Taylor did not speak. He looked at the room around him, which was silent and looked back at him. He turned to go, but behind him someone yelled "Wait!" Taylor turned back and looked at the crowd of people seated around the table. Neil had stood to go after him if he had walked out.

"It's alright," Clausson said. "He can go. There is nothing he can do. His credibility is shot and he knows nothing. It's alright." He waved off Taylor like an unwanted fly. "You can go."

Again Taylor turned back to the door and this time slowly began to descend the stairs back to the entrance. He heard someone come after him, but there were no words, so he just focused on putting one foot in front of the other, moving closer to the door. He did not look behind him. It was not until he was reaching for the front door knob that a voice behind him said, "Stop."

Taylor turned around. Neil had followed him down the stairs. Taylor said nothing.

"What is it you told them about me?"

"Just that you were here. That is it."

"That's all?"

"Yes. What else could I say? What else do I know?"

There was silence for a moment. Taylor tried to prepare himself for what he was sure to come. He did not know exactly what it was, but could feel it looming ahead of him, waiting.

"Most of them upstairs don't believe in violence. Sure, they are happy when some banker gets shot, they want to say they know the newsmakers, but then when you try to pin them down, they'll never say they condone violence. They think we can evolve past it, that somehow thinking means that fighting isn't necessary anymore."

Taylor was still silent.

"They think that it doesn't resolve anything. Or at least that's what they say, their probably just too afraid to get their hands dirty. But they are right. It doesn't resolve anything. It only changes them, and sometimes it is the only thing that can. Whether you fight or not, people will feel greedy, vengeful, dejected. Just because there isn't violence doesn't mean that people are happy with the outcome. And sometimes violence is the only way to get to the outcome. You understand me?"

"Yes."

"And no matter what we think, violence is natural. We will always instinctually want a visceral response. It is the natural law. Those who do not defend themselves are defenseless. I want you to understand this."

"I understand."

"Good." It was dark in the front entry way. There was no noise from above, just the occasional sound of a car driving by, muffled by the closed door. "So I am going to ask you one more thing. Did you communicate anything else to the Feds?"

Taylor looked into the shadows and tried to look into where his eyes were. "I promise all I said was that I saw you here."

"Alright. I believe you." Neil took a step towards him and for a second Taylor thought he was going to pat him on the shoulder. Then suddenly he felt raw pain explode from his cheek in time to realize Neil's knuckles slide across it, he did not even see the punch coming. His neck snapped sideways and then his lips burst with electricity as his head jolted back. He breathed in sharply just before he felt the next fist sink softly into his stomach and the wind moved in the wrong direction from his mouth. His stomach ached bruised as he bent over gasping for breath, but he could not get any air inside of him. He

could hear the door open behind him, felt the light of the street come in around him, then felt a hand grab the hair on top of his head and begin to drag his staggering body down the front stairs. His legs fumbled to keep up with the stairs. He could now see in the yellow light of the street when he was able to keep his eyes open for a second. His lungs labored in and out through the ache. The hand still gripped his hair. He felt his head pulled up of a second and thinking something just before the hand pulled it down again and smashed it into Neil's boney knee.

Taylor collapsed. His face pulsed and he struggled for breath. But the hand reached into his hair again, clenched into a fist, and pulled him up to standing.

"Now go," he heard Neil's voice say. His eyes tried to stay open but they kept shutting themselves in pain. "Never come back."

Taylor slowly took a step forward, then another, aiming for the next street light. Then the next.

Afterword

Jamie's mother died shortly after learning the story of her daughter. I never asked what story Taylor had told her, or whether she believed him, but whatever she thought, it was enough for her heart to give out. It was a small, but a very moving funeral. I knew no one other than Jamie. There Jamie told me she was moving to New York.

I asked if she had heard what had happened to Taylor.

She said she didn't care. She was silent for a moment, then said. "I understand the predicament he was in, and yet I have trouble forgiving him. Does that seem wrong?"

"No, I don't think so at all."

"I supposed it is something I will have to learn to deal with." She reached into her purse and gave me a parcel, wrapped in a paper bag. "It's his journal. He left it for me. I have read it, but I can't keep it. Will you take it for me and give it to Robert?"

"Of course," I said and quickly put it at my side to make it as unobtrusive to her field of visions as possible.

"You should read it. You were a part of this. But when you do, just remember that I only did what I thought was right."

"I would never think anything else," I told her. She gently touched my arm and again I felt in my heart the way I did when I last saw her cry.

We said our goodbyes, she saying that she looked forward to a time when our country would move forward again, no matter what it takes.

At that time, I had not read any of Taylor's confessions or accounts. It made for interesting reading, peaking into his brain, how he described his motives. Once I had read it, I decided to make a copy of the journal to give to Clausson. I wanted to keep the original, just in case Jamie ever wanted it back.

Clausson was not there when I went to The R to give him his copy, but I was able to leave it with Sophia. She recognized me from my previous venture inside the building and was very appreciative. She informed me that Jamie was doing well in New York, that she had met some of the collective there and was making fast friends. The authorities had announced they had Jordan in custody and she had been formally charged with the shooting. Jamie helped coordinate the defense, having become fully engaged in the activist network at the side of her sister. They had detained her for a month for interrogation, but once they were done, the news leapt to life with the story that the terrorist had been caught, so I had already heard this. I was surprised, but not so much as when she told me that Taylor had moved back to New York as well.

"You keep in touch with him?" I asked.

"Well, some of the activists down there just like to make sure they know where he is. He keeps to himself, but a few activists have visited him." She gave a little shake of her head, not quite involuntarily, letting her hair fall to one side of her face. Her hand ran

through it and then swept it gently over her shoulder. She told me the story of his coming to the building and confessing, making sure I promised not to spread it around. I liked her quite a bit, when she talked she had a worldly kind of care-freeness.

"But why go visit him? I would think he was the last person you would want to talk to."

"He's a smart man, and he has a very well thought out view of the world. Talking with him can be very entertaining. Sometimes aggravating, but always entertaining." She sighed. "Everyone makes poor judgments sometimes, when their character is tested. This is something our community knows about more than its share about. You don't get here if you haven't seen people face difficult situations. Granted, some of us are more forgiving than others. Some will post another's picture up and say 'Don't support this person! He's a rat! Spit on him!' But you have to worry about those people. Neil is that kind of person, and he ended up being an informant too."

"The man who beat Taylor?"

"He just wanted an excuse to play demolition, to destroy. There are those like that everywhere too. That was why he acted against Taylor without authorization, he was worried about his own story with the Feds. He looks after himself." I could tell she was getting angry, her cheeks were beginning to flush. "He told them that Jamie had visited The R, something that Taylor had not. And Lazlo had told them that Mitch had actually tried to help Jordan, that he had come to Lazlo to get her out of the city. They picked up Mitch and questioned him."

"How do you know all of this?" I couldn't keep half of it straight in my head.

"Oh, Mitch told one of us in New York. They let him go, but he's burnt any connections he had there. He's burnt his connections with the Feds, with us, and he's been stigmatized by the press so who knows what his neighbors think of him. I feel sorry for him, and I'm not the only one, especially after what Neil did. He may have deceived us, but everyone lies. Lying is human's only privilege over other organisms. If you lie, you get to the truth. Not one truth has ever been reached without first lying fourteen times or so, maybe a hundred and fourteen, and that's honorable in its way, but we can not lie to our own minds. The truth won't go away.²⁰"

She was calming down. I asked her, "So Neil acted without orders? It's kind of ironic, isn't it? For an him to need authorization? I thought you were anarchists. No rules, isn't that the way that it is supposed to work?"

She laughed. "Everyone gets their say. Robert likes to get more say than most, but everyone gets their say. If you want to get anything substantial done, if you want to change things, then you have to get organized. That means different people doing different things, and that means people asking each other to do things for them. It just has to be fair, a two way street."

She was smiling and me so I asked jokingly, "And Clausson does things for other people?"

"He can be a little much to deal with, but he is a good man."

We talked for a little while longer, then said our goodbyes. She said she was travelling some but would be back in the city soon, so we exchanged numbers. It was something I had not done since I first met Jamie.

²⁰ Crime and Punishment, p 202.