

English 1101: Argument and Interpretation

Keep this packet in your class folder and bring it to class every day

Assignments and Readings

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Grading Standards:

- The A paper is rare (90-100 points). It is of outstanding quality in all, or almost all, respects. The paper is free of grammatical errors. It presents a clear, organized, and well-supported thesis. The essay is well focused, and all paragraphs clearly work toward furthering the main point. Examples and ideas are well elaborated and rooted in concrete detail without being redundant. The body of the piece is well organized with smooth transitions. The paragraphs build on each other such that thoughts are developed from the beginning of the essay to the end. The prose is clear, mature and engaging; sentences evince by precise word choice, syntax, and grammar. With few exceptions, there is substantial revision from beginning to end.
- The B paper (80-89 points) is a successful representation of the writer's thoughts. This essay shows readers that the writer knows how to construct an argument (including an introduction, topic sentences that reflect the main idea of the paragraph, and a conclusion). Furthermore, the essay is clearly organized with a well-developed thesis. However, this essay could be improved by further emphasis on revision and editing. Some grammar flaws sneak through, but don't seriously undermine reader comprehension. Language and word choice throughout may be bland and uninspired. The essay may be "choppy," needing smoother transitions or better organization. There may be a flaw in an otherwise coherent, persuasive argument. Part of the argument may be undeveloped.
- The C paper (70-79 points) needs substantial revision. It usually exhibits problems in organization, development, and style, but offers sufficient content to make a single, fairly basic point. Serious grammar flaws may stall the flow of reading. Oftentimes, the paper is underworked, having not been put through the series of vigorous revisions that are necessary components of A and B papers. Revision may be needed on one of these major areas: thesis, focus, organization, topic choice, analysis. The thesis may be obvious, unoriginal, or inadequate to the assignment. The argument may be undeveloped. The focus may be so broad that the essay merely skims the surface of the assignment without going into anything in any depth.
- The D paper (60-69) is almost always profoundly lacking in content and/or evidence of standard American English writing skills. The paper contains five or more serious spelling, grammatical, mechanical, or stylistic errors. Furthermore, ideas and organization may be suggested but are seriously underdeveloped. Sometimes the flaws in this paper are so numerous and compacted that single sources of error are difficult to isolate and analyze. Often, this paper is significantly short of required length or word count. This essay has serious and consistent problems. Such problems may include: little or no sense of writing purpose; lack of logical organization (points lack unity or connection to one main point); inconsistent use/failure to use appropriate evidence; and/or failure to maintain a respectable prose style.
- The F paper (59 and below) is oftentimes a work characterized by a lack of care or effort. It is under-done in every sense of the term. Other times, however, this paper may exhibit characteristics of the higher grade paper, even an A-level paper, but is undermined by grammar and mechanical flaws so numerous and serious that no skilled assessor of college-level writing can give it a pass. This essay is unacceptable because: it may not meet the minimum requirements of the assignment; it may show a complete misunderstanding of the material with which it deals; its prose style may fail to meet the basic communication requirements of standard written English.

Essay 1 Fiction Summary

Assignment: You have read several stories so far this semester from *Best American Short Stories*. Summarize one of them. Simply re-tell the story in a concise form in your own words. **Do NOT quote from the story; write your summary entirely in your own words.**

Content:

- Your essay must begin with an introduction that identifies the story you are summarizing by title and tells your reader who wrote it.
- Your introduction must contain a thesis that describes, in one or two sentences, what the story is generally about. You may write a thematic summary, with a thesis that describes what the story *means*, or an expository summary, with a thesis that briefly encompasses what happens in the story.
- Your body paragraphs must discuss details from the story.
- Your paragraphs must begin with interesting transitions that move the reader from one major plot point to the next.
- You must write your paragraphs in accordance with the MEAL plan.
- Your essay must be written entirely in your own words; you may not quote from the story or any other source for that matter.

Format:

- Papers that do not adhere to all of these formatting instructions will receive an automatic 10 point deduction.
- Type your name, a title for your paper, the number of words in your paper, and your class number and time on the top-right-hand side of your first page.
- Indent all paragraphs.
- Refer to works correctly as either short stories or essays. Put all short story and essay titles in quote marks. Put titles of longer works (films, novels, books) in italics. Papers that fail to do so will receive an automatic five point deduction.
- Type your essay with double spacing and 1" margins; use 12 pt. Times New Roman font and left justify your body paragraphs.
- You must write a minimum of four fully-developed paragraphs and a maximum of six fully-developed paragraphs. A fully-developed paragraph is a minimum of five sentences long.
- Your essay must be written in Standard American English, making use of proper grammar, diction and spelling. Papers with excessive serious errors will not receive a passing grade.
- **You must upload a properly formatted file of your paper to turnitin.com in order to receive a grade**

Essay 2

Creative Non-fiction Interpretation

Assignment: You have read several essays in *Best American Essays* in which an author makes an argument. Pick one of those essays and interpret that argument in a concise form for your reader. Your interpretation should implicitly answer the following questions: what is the author's main point? how does the author make that point in his essay? **Do NOT quote from the essay; write your interpretation entirely in your own words.**

Content:

- Your essay must begin with a fully developed introduction that contains your thesis, a precise statement about what point your chosen author is making.
- Your body paragraphs must discuss details from the essay you are writing about; paraphrase your author's supporting points, proof, examples, etc. where appropriate.
- Your paragraphs must begin with interesting transitions that move the reader from one point to the next.
- You must write your paragraphs in accordance with the MEAL plan.
- Your essay must be written entirely in your own words; you may not quote from the piece you are writing about or any other source for that matter.
- Your essay must end with a fully developed conclusion that wraps up your argument.

Format:

- Papers that do not adhere to all of these formatting instructions will receive an automatic 10 point deduction.
- Type your name, a title for your paper, the number of words in your paper, and your class number and time on the top-right-hand side of your first page.
- Indent all paragraphs.
- Refer to works correctly as either short stories or essays. Put all short story and essay titles in quote marks. Put titles of longer works (films, novels, books) in italics. Papers that fail to do so will receive an automatic five point deduction.
- Type your essay with double spacing and 1" margins; use 12 pt. Times New Roman font and left justify your body paragraphs.
- You must write a minimum of four fully-developed paragraphs and a maximum of six fully-developed paragraphs. A fully-developed paragraph is a minimum of five sentences long.
- Your essay must be written in Standard American English, making use of proper grammar, diction and spelling. Papers with excessive serious errors will not receive a passing grade.
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Essay 3

Compare and Contrast

Assignment in-class: Write a paper in which you compare and contrast director Joyce Chopra's film, *Smooth Talk*, and author Joyce Carol Oates's short story, "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Your essay should implicitly answer the following questions: do Chopra's and Oates's treatments of the same grotesque story have similar or different meanings? Do the characters in the film and the short story behave the same way, learn the same things, and meet the same ends?

A videotape of the film *Smooth Talk* is in the library, so you may watch it again if you wish.

Content:

- Your essay must begin with a fully developed introduction that contains your thesis.
- Your essay must end with a fully developed conclusion that wraps up your argument.
- Use summaries when necessary in your essay.
- You must use at least four direct quotes and/or paraphrases from Oates's story and/or Chopra's film in your essay. When using parenthetical citations, cite Oates's story using parenthetical citations with Oates's name and the page number in them, as in (Oates 85); cite Chopra's film using parenthetical citations with only Chopra's name in them, as in (Chopra).¹ Use signal phrases and helping verbs to incorporate your quotes and paraphrases into the flow of your own writing.
- When discussing the choices made in directing the film, refer to the film's director just as you would refer to author of a work of literature (e.g., "Joyce Chopra changes the setting of Oates's story, opening the film not at a mall but on a beach...").

Format:

- Papers that do not adhere to all of these formatting instructions will receive an automatic 10 point deduction.
- Type your name, a title for your paper, the number of words in your paper, and your class number and time on the top-right-hand side of your first page.
- Indent all paragraphs.
- Refer to works correctly as either short stories or films; put all short story titles in quote marks; italicize all film titles: *Smooth Talk* and "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Papers that fail to do so will receive an automatic five point deduction.
- Type your essay with double spacing and 1" margins; use 12 pt. Times New Roman font and left justify your body paragraphs.
- You must write a minimum of four fully-developed paragraphs and a maximum of eight fully-developed paragraphs. A fully-developed paragraph is a minimum of five sentences long.
- Your essay must be written in Standard American English, making use of proper grammar, diction and spelling. Papers with excessive serious errors will not receive a passing grade.
- **You must upload a properly formatted file of your paper to turnitin.com in order to receive a grade.**

¹ You don't need to put page numbers in your citations of Chopra's film because a film does not have pages. If the text you are citing (such as a film or webpage) doesn't have page numbers, don't put page numbers in your parenthetical citations; use only author or director names in that case.

Essay 4

Film Review

Assignment: Write a review of director Billy Ray's film, *Shattered Glass*. Your review should discuss whether it is worth watching and give specific reasons for your recommendation. Drawing upon the notes you took in class during our film viewing, make reference to specific scenes and elements of the film in the body of your essay to support your review. The film is also on reserve in the library, so you may watch it again if you wish.

Content:

- Your essay must begin with an introduction that contains an evaluative thesis.
- Your essay must end with a conclusion.
- When discussing the choices made in directing the film, refer to the film's director just as you would refer to author of a work of literature (e.g., "Billy Ray has Stephen living in a cold, lifeless apartment where a black stereo fills the fireplace...").
- When discussing the choices made by the actors as they created their characters, refer to the actors' names as well as the names of the characters they play (e.g., "Hayden Christensen plays Stephen as a nervous, oily little boy..."). You may want to consult the website imdb.com to get precise information about actor and character names.
- Draw upon the skills of summary, interpretation, and compare-and-contrast that you have practiced this term to organize your essay. What is the film about? What are the texts it is based on about? How does it compare and contrast to the work it is based on?
- Your essay must refer to specific elements of the film as criteria for your evaluative thesis. Ask yourself, what elements of the film prove my thesis? Its plot structure? Specific scenes? Characters? Acting? Direction? Theme? Imagery and symbolism? Setting? Style? Etc.
- Use direct quotes and/or paraphrases from the film or Glass's essays as need be.

Format:

- Papers that do not adhere to all of these formatting instructions will receive an automatic 10 point deduction.
- Type your name, a title for your paper, the number of words in your paper, and your class number and time on the top-right-hand side of your first page.
- Indent all paragraphs.
- Refer to works correctly as either short stories or essays. Put all short story and essay titles in quote marks. Put titles of longer works (films, novels, books) in italics. Papers that fail to do so will receive an automatic five point deduction.
- Type your essay with double spacing and 1" margins; use 12 pt. Times New Roman font and left justify your body paragraphs.
- You must write a minimum of four fully-developed paragraphs and a maximum of six fully-developed paragraphs. A fully-developed paragraph is a minimum of five sentences long.
- Your essay must be written in Standard American English, making use of proper grammar, diction and spelling. Papers with excessive serious errors will not receive a passing grade.
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Essay 5 Narrative

Assignment:

This semester we have been reading and writing about many works of narrative fiction and film. The stories we have read and the films we have seen have had interesting characters, unique settings, and different tones and styles.

Taking inspiration from the stories and essays we have read as well as drawing from your own experiences, write a narrative of your own invention. Describe characters and settings, plot out a series of events, and write with your own tone and style.

Content Requirements:

Remember all the qualities of narrative that we have discussed. You will have to work out the details of your characters, setting, and plot; you will have to decide when to quickly summarize non-essential events and when to describe scenes in detail; you will have to decide when to use imagery (metaphors and similes); you will have to choose a tone in which to write; and you will have to choose a point of view from which to write.

Appeal to all the senses as you describe your scenes. Strike a balance between description and dialog that is appropriate to your theme. Make your characters come alive through vivid and unique details. Get inspired by the stories that we have read.

The rule for writing dialog is to start a new indented paragraph each time someone else speaks. Model your dialog on the stories we have read, as follows:

“How do I write dialog?” she asked.

He looked at her for a while and then said, “Like this.” He stood there staring at her as she pondered what he had just said.

“So I should write dialog like this?” she asked, demanding more clarification.

“Yes,” he said after a short, thundering silence, “exactly like this.”

Format Requirements:

- Papers that do not adhere to all of these formatting instructions will receive an automatic 10 point deduction.
- Minimum length 500 words; maximum word limit ∞.
- Format: typed, double-spaced, with 1” margins, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, left justified.
- Include the following in the upper right hand side of the first page: your name; the title of your paper; the number of words in your paper; the name, number, section and time of your class; and your professor’s name.
- Number each page.
- Proofread carefully. Use your spell check function on your word processor.
- Write within the rules of Standard American English. However, since dialog represents how people really speak, you can break every single rule of grammar in your dialog—but only in your dialog.
- **You must upload a properly formatted file of your paper to [turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com) in order to receive a grade.**

Film Terms and Topics

If you are writing an essay about a film, consider incorporating some of this specialized vocabulary into your argument.

Theme: the ideas that drive and structure a film, what a film is about

Narrative: the flow of a film's parts over time to form a coherent, connected whole
story: all the events in a narrative
plot: specific arrangement of events

Most Hollywood films are "classical narratives," meaning that there is a logical connection between their plotted events, there is "closure" at the end of the film, the film's focus is upon characters, and the film's style is presented "objectively" to give us the illusion that what we are seeing is "real," even though everything in a film is a product of many people's artifice.

Characters

explore types, focus on choices made by actors, directors, and crew to create "people." Characters are not real; they are made.

Point of View

objective pov: the illusion that the camera is showing us everything
subjective pov: the sense that we are seeing things through one character's eyes

Mise en scene: what is 'put in the scene,' everything independent of camera position, movement, and editing. The most common kind of mise en scene is 'the illusion of realism'

setting: where a scene is set in 'the real world'
sets: a space designed to look like a place in the world
acting styles, define characters
costumes, define characters
lighting, creates feeling and meaning
use of space, puts characters in relation to one another and the world

Composition of Image

The Shot: the basic unit of film, the image you see before a cut to another image.
Shots have several photographic properties

tone (range and texture of colors)
film speed (slow, normal, fast)
perspective: what you are allowed to see clearly (and not clearly)
 deep focus: everything looks clear
 shallow focus: only one thing is clear
 rack focus: clarity shifts suddenly
frame; the border that contains the shot.
properties of still frames:

- widescreen
- standard screen
- high-angle
- low-angle
- canted/unbalanced
- close-ups (eg, of faces)
- medium-shots (eg, of people's full bodies)
- long shots (eg, of large groups of people)
- off-screen space (what isn't in the frame)
- properties of moving frames:
 - crane shots (camera is on a crane, swooping image around)
 - tilting shots (shot is not true to the horizontal of the frame)
 - panning shots (camera stays still, follows action)
 - tracking shots (camera moves to follow action, usually on a track or with a body-mounted 'stillcam')
 - hand-held shots (camera held by hand, moves with body of cameraman)

Editing: the linking of shots between **cuts**

Editing establishes a film's **pace** (speed of a film's action), **rhythm** (pattern to film's pace), **scenes** (action confined to one place and time), and **sequence** (interwoven action, times, locations) through a number of techniques:

- long takes: drawn-out scenes with no cuts
- rapid-cuts: quick editing, lots of cuts
- continuity or 'invisible' editing: illusion of continuous action, viewer does not notice the editing
- jump-cuts: cuts that break up a scene
- establishing shots: locate a scene clearly in space and time
- shot-countershot editing: usually featured in dialog, cuts between faces in conversation, creates illusion of intimacy, featured in dialog

Other editing techniques:

- fade in and out (image darkens and lightens on new scene)
- iris in and out (circle closes in and opens out on new scene)
- wipe (a line 'wipes' one scene off the screen, replacing it with another)
- dissolve (one image becomes more translucent as image of new scene replaces it)
- match-on-action (two separate events in time and/or space are edited so as to appear synchronous)

Sound: everything that you hear while watching a scene, human and nonhuman

- pitch, loudness, timbre
- effects (offscreen voiceover, distortion)
- music

“It’s All Over Now, Baby Blue”

By Bob Dylan

You must leave now, take what you need, you think will last.
But whatever you wish to keep, you better grab it fast.
Yonder stands your orphan with his gun,
Crying like a fire in the sun.
Look out the saints are comin' through
And it's all over now, Baby Blue.

The highway is for gamblers, better use your sense.
Take what you have gathered from coincidence.
The empty-handed painter from your streets
Is drawing crazy patterns on your sheets.
This sky, too, is folding under you
And it's all over now, Baby Blue.

All your seasick sailors, they are rowing home.
All your reindeer armies, are all going home.
The lover who just walked out your door
Has taken all his blankets from the floor.
The carpet, too, is moving under you
And it's all over now, Baby Blue.

Leave your stepping stones behind, something calls for you.
Forget the dead you've left, they will not follow you.
The vagabond who's rapping at your door
Is standing in the clothes that you once wore.
Strike another match, go start anew
And it's all over now, Baby Blue.

"Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" and *Smooth Talk*: Short Story Into Film

By Joyce Carol Oates

Originally published in the *New York Times*, March 23, 1986

Some years ago in the American Southwest there surfaced a tabloid psychopath known as "The Pied Piper of Tucson." I have forgotten his name, but his specialty was the seduction and occasional murder of teen-aged girls. He may or may not have had actual accomplices, but his bizarre activities were known among a circle of teenagers in the Tucson area, for some reason they kept his secret, deliberately did not inform parents or police. It was this fact, not the fact of the mass murderer himself, that struck me at the time. And this was a pre-Manson time, early or mid-1960s.

The Pied Piper mimicked teenagers in talk, dress, and behavior, but he was not a teenager—he was a man in his early thirties. Rather short, he stuffed rags in his leather boots to give himself height. (And sometimes walked unsteadily as a consequence: did none among his admiring constituency notice?) He charmed his victims as charismatic psychopaths have always charmed their victims, to the bewilderment of others who fancy themselves free of all lunatic attractions. The Pied Piper of Tucson: a trashy dream, a tabloid archetype, sheer artifice, comedy, cartoon—surrounded, however improbably, and finally tragically, by real people. You think that, if you look twice, he won't be there. But there he is.

I don't remember any longer where I first read about this Pied Piper—very likely in *Life* Magazine. I do recall deliberately not reading the full article because I didn't want to be distracted by too much detail. It was not after all the mass murderer himself who intrigued me, but the disturbing fact that a number of teenagers—from "good" families—aided and abetted his crimes. This is the sort of thing authorities and responsible citizens invariably call "inexplicable" because they can't find explanations for it. They would not have fallen under this maniac's spell, after all.

An early draft of my short story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"—from which the film *Smooth Talk* was adapted by Joyce Chopra and Tom Cole—had the rather too explicit title "Death and the Maiden." It was cast in a mode of fiction to which I am still partial—indeed, every third or fourth story of mine is probably in this mode—"realistic allegory," it might be called. It is Hawthornean, romantic, shading into parable. Like the medieval German engraving from which my title was taken, the story was minutely detailed yet clearly an allegory of the fatal attractions of death (or the devil). An innocent young girl is seduced by way of her own vanity; she mistakes death for erotic romance of a particularly American/trashy sort.

In subsequent drafts the story changed its tone, its focus, its language, its title. It became "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Written at a time when the author was intrigued by the music of Bob Dylan, particularly the hauntingly elegiac song "It's All

Over Now, Baby Blue," it was dedicated to Bob Dylan. The charismatic mass murderer drops into the background and his innocent victim, a fifteen-year-old, moves into the foreground. She becomes the true protagonist of the tale, courting and being courted by her fate, a self-styled 1950s pop figure, alternately absurd and winning. There is no suggestion in the published story that "Arnold Friend" has seduced and murdered other young girls, or even that he necessarily intends to murder Connie. Is his interest "merely" sexual? (Nor is there anything about the complicity of other teenagers. I saved that yet more provocative note for a current story, "Testimony.") Connie is shallow, vain, silly, hopeful, doomed—but capable nonetheless of an unexpected gesture of heroism at the story's end. Her smooth-talking seducer, who cannot lie, promises her that her family will be unharmed if she gives herself to him; and so she does. The story ends abruptly at the point of her "crossing over." We don't know the nature of her sacrifice, only that she is generous enough to make it.

In adapting a narrative so spare and thematically foreshortened as "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" film director Joyce Chopra and screenwriter Tom Cole were required to do a good deal of filling in, expanding, inventing. Connie's story becomes lavishly, and lovingly, textured; she is not an allegorical figure so much as a "typical" teenaged girl (if Laura Dern, spectacularly good-looking, can be so defined). Joyce Chopra, who has done documentary films on contemporary teenage culture and, yet more authoritatively, has an adolescent daughter of her own, creates in *Smooth Talk* a vivid and absolutely believable world for Connie to inhabit. Or worlds: as in the original story there is Connie-at-home, and there is Connie-with-her-friends. Two fifteen-year-old girls, two finely honed styles, two voices, sometimes but not often overlapping. It is one of the marvelous visual features of the film that we see Connie and her friends transform themselves, once they are safely free of parental observation. The girls claim their true identities in the neighborhood shopping mall. What freedom, what joy!

Smooth Talk is, in a way, as much Connie's mother's story as it is Connie's; its center of gravity, its emotional nexus, is frequently with the mother—warmly and convincingly played by Mary Kay Place. (Though the mother's sexual jealousy of her daughter is slighted in the film.) Connie's ambiguous relationship with her affable, somewhat mysterious father (well played by Levon Helm) is an excellent touch: I had thought, subsequent to the story's publication, that I should have built up the father, suggesting, as subtly as I could, an attraction there paralleling the attraction Connie feels for her seducer, Arnold Friend. And Arnold Friend himself—"A. Friend" as he says—is played with appropriately overdone sexual swagger by Treat Williams, who is perfect for the part; and just the right age. We see that Arnold Friend isn't a teenager even as Connie, mesmerized by his presumed charm, does not seem to see him at all. What is so difficult to accomplish in prose—nudging the reader to look over the protagonist's shoulder, so to speak—is accomplished with enviable ease in film.

Treat Williams as Arnold Friend is supreme in his very awfulness, as, surely, the original Pied Piper of Tucson must have been. (Though no one involved in the film knew about the original source.) Mr. Williams flawlessly impersonates Arnold Friend as Arnold

Friend impersonates—is it James Dean? James Dean regarding himself in mirrors, doing James Dean impersonations? That Connie's fate is so trashy is in fact her fate.

What is outstanding in Joyce Chopra's *Smooth Talk* is its visual freshness, its sense of motion and life; the attentive intelligence the director has brought to the semi-secret world of the American adolescent—shopping mall flirtations, drive-in restaurant romances, highway hitchhiking, the fascination of rock music played very, very loud. (James Taylor's music for the film is wonderfully appropriate. We hear it as Connie hears it; it is the music of her spiritual being.) Also outstanding, as I have indicated, and numerous critics have noted, are the acting performances. Laura Dern is so dazzlingly right as "my" Connie that I may come to think I modeled the fictitious girl on her, in the way that writers frequently delude themselves about motions of causality.

My difficulties with *Smooth Talk* have primarily to do with my chronic hesitation—about seeing/hearing work of mine abstracted from its contexture of language. All writers know that Language is their subject; quirky word choices, patterns of rhythm, enigmatic pauses, punctuation marks. Where the quick scanner sees "quick" writing, the writer conceals nine tenths of the iceberg. Of course we all have "real" subjects, and we will fight to the death to defend those subjects, but beneath the tale-telling it is the tale-telling that grips us so very fiercely. The writer works in a single dimension, the director works in three. I assume they are professionals to their fingertips; authorities in their medium as I am an authority (if I am) in mine. I would fiercely defend the placement of a semicolon in one of my novels but I would probably have deferred in the end to Joyce Chopra's decision to reverse the story's conclusion, turn it upside down, in a sense, so that the film ends not with death, not with a sleepwalker's crossing over to her fate, but upon a scene of reconciliation, rejuvenation.

A girl's loss of virginity, bittersweet but not necessarily tragic. Not today. A girl's coming-of-age that involves her succumbing to, but then rejecting, the "trashy dreams" of her pop teenage culture. "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" defines itself as allegorical in its conclusion: Death and Death's chariot (a funky souped-up convertible) have come for the Maiden. Awakening is, in the story's final lines, moving out into the sunlight where Arnold Friend waits:

"My sweet little blue-eyed girl," he said in a half-sung sigh that had nothing to do with [Connie's] brown eyes but was taken up just the same by the vast sunlit reaches of the land behind him and on all sides of him—so much land that Connie had never seen before and did not recognize except to know that she was going to it.

—a conclusion impossible to transfigure into film.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?

(1970)

FOR BOB DYLAN

1 Her name was Connie. She was fifteen and she had a quick nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors, or checking other people's faces to make sure her own was all right. Her mother, who noticed everything and knew everything and who hadn't much reason any longer to look at her own face, always scolded Connie about it. "Stop gawking at yourself, who are you? You think you're so pretty?" she would say. Connie would raise her eyebrows at these familiar complaints and look right through her mother, into a shadowy vision of herself as she was right at that moment: she knew she was pretty and that was everything. Her mother had been pretty once too, if you could believe those old snapshots in the album, but now her looks were gone and that was why she was always after Connie.

2 "Why don't you keep your room clean like your sister? How've you got your hair fixed—what the hell stinks? Hair spray? You don't see your sister using that junk."

3 Her sister June was twenty-four and still lived at home. She was a secretary in the high school Connie attended, and if that wasn't bad enough—with her in the same building—she was so plain and chunky and steady that Connie had to hear her praised all the time by her mother and her mother's sisters. June did this, June did that, she saved money and helped clean the house and cooked and Connie couldn't do a thing, her mind was all filled with trashy daydreams. Their father was away at work most of the time and when he came home he wanted supper and he read the newspaper at supper and after supper he went to bed. He didn't bother talking much to them, but around his bent head Connie's mother kept picking at her until Connie wished her mother was dead and she herself was dead and it was all over. "She makes me want to throw up sometimes," she complained to her friends. She had a high, breathless, amused voice which made everything she said sound a little forced, whether it was sincere or not.

4 There was one good thing; June went places with girl friends of hers, girls who were just as plain and steady as she, and so when Connie wanted to do that her mother had no objections. The father of Connie's best girl friend drove the girls the three miles to town and left them off at a shopping plaza, so that they could walk through the stores or go to a movie, and when he came to pick them up again at eleven he never bothered to ask what they had done.

5 They must have been familiar sights, walking around that shopping plaza in their shorts and flat ballerina slippers that always scuffed the sidewalk, with charm bracelets jingling on their thin wrists; they would lean together to whisper and laugh secretly if someone passed by who amused or interested them. Connie had long dark blond hair that drew anyone's eye to it, and she wore part of it pulled up on her head and puffed out

and the rest of it she let fall down her back. She wore a pull-over jersey blouse that looked one way when she was at home and another way when she was away from home. Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere that was not home: her walk that could be childlike and bobbing, or languid enough to make anyone think she was hearing music in her head, her mouth which was pale and smirking most of the time, but bright and pink on these evenings out, her laugh which was cynical and drawing at home—"Ha, ha, very funny"—but high-pitched and nervous anywhere else, like the jingling of the charms on her bracelet.

6 Sometimes they did go shopping or to a movie, but sometimes they went across the highway, ducking fast across the busy road, to a drive-in restaurant where older kids hung out. The restaurant was shaped like a big bottle, though squatter than a real bottle, and on its cap was a revolving figure of a grinning boy who held a hamburger aloft. One night in mid-summer they ran across, breathless with daring, and right away someone leaned out a car window and invited them over, but it was just a boy from high school they didn't like. It made them feel good to be able to ignore him. They went up through the maze of parked and cruising cars to the bright-lit, fly-infested restaurant, their faces pleased and expectant as if they were entering a sacred building that loomed out of the night to give them what haven and what blessing they yearned for. They sat at the counter and crossed their legs at the ankles, their thin shoulders rigid with excitement, and listened to the music that made everything so good: the music was always in the background like music at a church service, it was something to depend upon.

7 A boy named Eddie came in to talk with them. He sat backwards on his stool, turning himself jerkily around in semi-circles and then stopping and turning again, and after a while he asked Connie if she would like something to eat. She said she did and so she tapped her friend's arm on her way out—her friend pulled her face up into a brave droll look—and Connie said she would meet her at eleven, across the way. "I just hate to leave her like that," Connie said earnestly, but the boy said that she wouldn't be alone for long. So they went out to his car and on the way Connie couldn't help but let her eyes wander over the windshields and faces all around her, her face gleaming with a joy that had nothing to do with Eddie or even this place; it might have been the music. She drew her shoulders up and sucked in her breath with the pure pleasure of being alive, and just at that moment she happened to glance at a face just a few feet from hers. It was a boy with shaggy black hair, in a convertible jalopy painted gold. He stared at her and then his lips widened into a grin. Connie slit her eyes at him and turned away, but she couldn't help glancing back and there he was still watching her. He wagged a finger and laughed and said, "Gonna get you, baby," and Connie turned away again without Eddie noticing anything.

8 She spent three hours with him, at the restaurant where they ate hamburgers and drank Cokes in wax cups that were always sweating, and then down an alley a mile or so away, and when he left her off at five to eleven

only the movie house was still open at the plaza. Her girl friend was there, talking with a boy. When Connie came up the two girls smiled at each other and Connie said, "How was the movie?" and the girl said, "*You should know.*" They rode off with the girl's father, sleepy and pleased, and Connie couldn't help but look at the darkened shopping plaza with its big empty parking lot and its signs that were faded and ghostly now, and over at the drive-in restaurant where cars were still circling tirelessly. She couldn't hear the music at this distance.

Next morning June asked her how the movie was and Connie said, "So-so."

She and that girl and occasionally another girl went out several times a week that way, and the rest of the time Connie spent around the house—it was summer vacation—getting in her mother's way and thinking, dreaming, about the boys she met. But all the boys fell back and dissolved into a single face that was not even a face, but an idea, a feeling, mixed up with the urgent insistent pounding of the music and the humid night air of July. Connie's mother kept dragging her back to the daylight by finding things for her to do or saying, suddenly, "What's this about the Pettinger girl?"

And Connie would say nervously, "Oh, her. That dope." She always drew thick clear lines between herself and such girls, and her mother was simple and kindly enough to believe her. Her mother was so simple, Connie thought, that it was maybe cruel to fool her so much. Her mother went scuffling around the house in old bedroom slippers and complained over the telephone to one sister about the other, then the other called up and the two of them complained about the third one. If June's name was mentioned her mother's tone was approving, and if Connie's name was mentioned it was disapproving. This did not really mean she disliked Connie and actually Connie thought that her mother preferred her to June because she was prettier, but the two of them kept up a pretense of exasperation, a sense that they were tugging and struggling over something of little value to either of them. Sometimes, over coffee, they were almost friends, but something would come up—some vexation that was like a fly buzzing suddenly around their heads—and their faces went hard with contempt.

One Sunday Connie got up at eleven—none of them bothered with church—and washed her hair so that it could dry all day long, in the sun. Her parents and sister were going to a barbecue at an aunt's house and Connie said no, she wasn't interested, rolling her eyes to let her mother know just what she thought of it. "Stay home alone then," her mother said sharply. Connie sat out back in a lawn chair and watched them drive away, her father quiet and bald, hunched around so that he could back the car out, her mother with a look that was still angry and not at all softened through the windshield, and in the back seat poor old June all dressed up as if she didn't know what a barbecue was, with all the running yelling kids and the flies. Connie sat with her eyes closed in the sun, dreaming

and dazed with the warmth about her as if this were a kind of love, the caresses of love, and her mind slipped over onto thoughts of the boy she had been with the night before and how nice he had been, how sweet it always was, not the way someone like June would suppose but sweet, gentle, the way it was in movies and promised in songs; and when she opened her eyes she hardly knew where she was, the back yard ran off into weeds and a fence-line of trees and behind it the sky was perfectly blue and still. The asbestos "ranch house" that was now three years old startled her—it looked small. She shook her head as if to get awake.

It was too hot. She went inside the house and turned on the radio to drown out the quiet. She sat on the edge of her bed, barefoot, and listened for an hour and a half to a program called XYZ Sunday Jamboree, record after record of hard, fast, shrieking songs she sang along with, interspersed by exclamations from "Bobby King": "An' look here you girls at Napoleon's—Son and Charley want you to pay real close attention to this song coming up!"

And Connie paid close attention herself, bathed in a glow of slow-pulsed joy that seemed to rise mysteriously out of the music itself and lay languidly about the airless little room, breathed in and breathed out with each gentle rise and fall of her chest.

After a while she heard a car coming up the drive. She sat up at once, startled, because it couldn't be her father so soon. The gravel kept crunching all the way in from the road—the driveway was long—and Connie ran to the window. It was a car she didn't know. It was an open jalopy, painted a bright gold that caught the sunlight opaquely. Her heart began to pound and her fingers snatched at her hair, checking it, and she whispered "Christ. Christ," wondering how bad she looked. The car came to a stop at the side door and the horn sounded four short taps as if this were a signal Connie knew.

She went into the kitchen and approached the door slowly, then hung out the screen door, her bare toes curling down off the step. There were two boys in the car and now she recognized the driver: he had shaggy, shabby black hair that looked crazy as a wig and he was grinning at her.

"I ain't late, am I?" he said.

"Who the hell do you think you are?" Connie said.

"Toldja I'd be out, didn't I?"

"I don't even know who you are."

She spoke sullenly, careful to show no interest or pleasure, and he spoke in a fast bright monotone. Connie looked past him to the other boy, taking her time. He had fair brown hair, with a lock that fell onto his forehead. His sideburns gave him a fierce, embarrassed look, but so far he hadn't even bothered to glance at her. Both boys wore sunglasses. The driver's glasses were metallic and mirrored everything in miniature.

"You wanta come for a ride?" he said.

Connie smirked and let her hair fall loose over one shoulder.

"Don'tcha like my car? New paint job," he said. "Hey."

"What?"

"You're cute."

She pretended to fidget, chasing flies away from the door.

"Don'tcha believe me, or what?" he said.

"Look, I don't even know who you are," Connie said in disgust.

"Hey, Ellie's got a radio, see. Mine's broke down." He lifted his friend's arm and showed her the little transistor the boy was holding, and now Connie began to hear the music. It was the same program that was playing inside the house.

"Bobby King?" she said.

"I listen to him all the time. I think he's great."

"He's kind of great," Connie said reluctantly.

"Listen, that guy's *great*. He knows where the action is."

Connie blushed a little, because the glasses made it impossible for her to see just what this boy was looking at. She couldn't decide if she liked him or if he was just a jerk, and so she dawdled in the doorway and wouldn't come down or go back inside. She said "What's all that stuff painted on your car?"

"Can'tcha read it?" He opened the door very carefully, as if he was afraid it might fall off. He slid out just as carefully, planting his feet firmly on the ground, the tiny metallic world in his glasses slowing down like gelatine hardening and in the midst of it Connie's bright green blouse. "This here is my name, to begin with," he said. ARNOLD FRIEND was written in tarlike black letters on the side, with a drawing of a round grinning face that reminded Connie of a pumpkin, except it wore sunglasses. "I wanta introduce myself, I'm Arnold Friend and that's my real name and I'm gonna be your friend, honey, and inside the car's Ellie Oscar, he's kinda shy." Ellie brought his transistor radio up to his shoulder and balanced it there. "Now these numbers are a secret code, honey," Arnold Friend explained. He read off the numbers 33, 19, 17 and raised his eyebrows at her to see what she thought of that, but she didn't think much of it. The left rear fender had been smashed and around it was written, on the gleaming gold background: DONE BY CRAZY WOMAN DRIVER. Connie had to laugh at that. Arnold Friend was pleased at her laughter and looked up at her. "Around the other side's a lot more—you wanta come and see them?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Why should I?"

"Don'tcha wanta see what's on the car? Don'tcha wanta go for a ride?"

"I don't know."

"Why not?"

"I got things to do."

"Like what?"

"Things."

He laughed as if she had said something funny. He slapped his thighs. He was standing in a strange way, leaning back against the car as if he were balancing himself. He wasn't tall, only an inch or so taller than she would be if she came down to him. Connie liked the way he was dressed, which was the way all of them dressed: tight faded jeans stuffed into black, scuffed boots, a belt that pulled his waist in and showed how lean he was, and a white pull-over shirt that was a little soiled and showed the hard small muscles of his arms and shoulders. He looked as if he probably did hard work, lifting and carrying things. Even his neck looked muscular. And his face was a familiar face, somehow: the jaw and chin and cheeks slightly darkened, because he hadn't shaved for a day or two, and the nose long and hawk-like, sniffing as if she were a treat he was going to gobble up and it was all a joke.

"Connie, you ain't telling the truth. This is your day set aside for a ride with me and you know it," he said, still laughing. The way he straightened and recovered from his fit of laughing showed that it had been all fake.

"How do you know what my name is?" she said suspiciously.

"It's Connie."

"Maybe and maybe not."

"I know my Connie," he said, wagging his finger. Now she remembered him even better, back at the restaurant, and her cheeks warmed at the thought of how she sucked in her breath just at the moment she passed him—how she must have looked to him. And he had remembered her. "Ellie and I come out here especially for you," he said. "Ellie can sit in back. How about it?"

"Where?"

"Where what?"

"Where're we going?"

He looked at her. He took off the sunglasses and she saw how pale the skin around his eyes was, like holes that were not in shadow but instead in light. His eyes were chips of broken glass that catch the light in an amiable way. He smiled. It was as if the idea of going for a ride somewhere, to some place, was a new idea to him.

"Just for a ride, Connie sweetheart."

"I never said my name was Connie," she said.

"But I know what it is. I know your name and all about you, lots of things," Arnold Friend said. He had not moved yet but stood still leaning back against the side of his jalopy. "I took a special interest in you, such a pretty girl, and found out all about you like I know your parents and sister are gone somewhere and I know where and how long they're going to be gone, and I know who you were with last night, and your best girl friend's name is Betty. Right?"

He spoke in a simple lilting voice, exactly as if he were reciting the words to a song. His smile assured her that everything was fine. In the car, Ellie turned up the volume on his radio and did not bother to look around at them.

"Ellie can sit in the back seat," Arnold Friend said. He indicated his friend with a casual jerk of his chin, as if Ellie did not count and she should not bother with him.

"How'd you find out all that stuff?" Connie said.

"Listen: Betty Schultz and Tony Fitch and Jimmy Pettinger and Nancy Pettinger," he said, in a chant. "Raymond Stanley and Bob Hutter—"

"Do you know all those kids?"

"I know everybody."

"Look, you're kidding. You're not from around here."

"Sure."

"But—how come we never saw you before?"

"Sure you saw me before," he said. He looked down at his boots, as if he were a little offended. "You just don't remember."

"I guess I'd remember you," Connie said.

"Yeah?" He looked up at this, beaming. He was pleased. He began to mark time with the music from Ellie's radio, tapping his fists lightly together. Connie looked away from his smile to the car, which was painted so bright it almost hurt her eyes to look at it. She looked at that name, ARNOLD FRIEND. And up at the front fender was an expression that was familiar—MAN THE FLYING SAUCERS. It was an expression kids had used the year before, but didn't use this year. She looked at it for a while as if the words meant something to her that she did not yet know.

"What're you thinking about? Huh?" Arnold Friend demanded. "Not worried about your hair blowing around in the car, are you?"

"No."

"Think I maybe can't drive good?"

"How do I know?"

"You're a hard girl to handle. How come?" he said. "Don't you know I'm your friend? Didn't you see me put my sign in the air when you walked by?"

"What sign?"

"My sign." And he drew an X in the air, leaning out toward her. They were maybe ten feet apart. After his hand fell back to his side the X was still in the air, almost visible. Connie let the screen door close and stood perfectly still inside it, listening to the music from her radio and the boy's blend together. She stared at Arnold Friend. He stood there so stiffly relaxed, pretending to be relaxed, with one hand idly on the door handle as if he were keeping himself up that way and had no intention of ever moving again. She recognized most things about him, the tight jeans that showed his thighs and buttocks and the greasy leather boots and the tight shirt, and even that slippery friendly smile of his, that sleepy dreamy smile that all the boys used to get across ideas they didn't want to put into words. She recognized all this and also the singsong way he talked, slightly mocking, kidding, but serious and a little melancholy, and she recognized the way he tapped one fist against the other in homage to the perpetual music behind him. But all these things did not come together.

78 She said suddenly, "Hey, how old are you?"

79 His smile faded. She could see then that he wasn't a kid, he was much older—thirty, maybe more. At this knowledge her heart began to pound faster.

80 "That's a crazy thing to ask. Can'tcha see I'm your own age?"

81 "Like hell you are."

82 "Or maybe a couple years older, I'm eighteen."

83 "Eighteen?" she said doubtfully.

84 He grinned to reassure her and lines appeared at the corners of his mouth. His teeth were big and white. He grinned so broadly his eyes became slits and she saw how thick the lashes were, thick and black as if painted with a black tarlike material. Then he seemed to become embarrassed, abruptly, and looked over his shoulder at Ellie. "Him, he's crazy," he said. "Ain't he a riot, he's a nut, a real character." Ellie was still listening to the music. His sunglasses told nothing about what he was thinking. He wore a bright orange shirt unbuttoned halfway to show his chest, which was a pale, bluish chest and not muscular like Arnold Friend's. His shirt collar was turned up all around and the very tips of the collar pointed out past his chin as if they were protecting him. He was pressing the transistor radio up against his ear and sat there in a kind of daze, right in the sun.

85 "He's kinda strange," Connie said.

86 "Hey, she says you're kinda strange! Kinda strange!" Arnold Friend cried. He pounded on the car to get Ellie's attention. Ellie turned for the first time and Connie saw with shock that he wasn't a kid either—he had a fair, hairless face, cheeks reddened slightly as if the veins grew too close to the surface of his skin, the face of a forty-year-old baby. Connie felt a wave of dizziness rise in her at this sight and she stared at him as if waiting for something to change the shock of the moment, make it all right again. Ellie's lips kept shaping words, mumbling along, with the words blasting in his ear.

87 "Maybe you two better go away," Connie said faintly.

88 "What? How come?" Arnold Friend cried. "We come out here to take you for a ride. It's Sunday." He had the voice of the man on the radio now. It was the same voice, Connie thought. "Don'tcha know it's Sunday all day and honey, no matter who you were with last night today you're with Arnold Friend and don't you forget it!—Maybe you better step out here," he said, and this last was in a different voice. It was a little flatter, as if the heat was finally getting to him.

89 "No. I got things to do."

90 "Hey."

91 "You two better leave."

92 "We ain't leaving until you come with us."

93 "Like hell I am—"

94 "Connie, don't fool around with me. I mean, I mean, don't fool around," he said, shaking his head. He laughed incredulously. He placed

his sunglasses on top of his head, carefully, as if he were indeed wearing a wig, and brought the stems down behind his ears. Connie stared at him, another wave of dizziness and fear rising in her so that for a moment he wasn't even in focus but was just a blur, standing there against his gold car, and she had the idea that he had driven up the driveway all right but had come from nowhere before that and belonged nowhere and that everything about him and even about the music that was so familiar to her was only half real.

"If my father comes and sees you—"

"He ain't coming. He's at the barbecue."

"How do you know that?"

"Aunt Tillie's. Right now they're—uh—they're drinking. Sitting around," he said vaguely, squinting as if he were staring all the way to town and over to Aunt Tillie's backyard. Then the vision seemed to get clear and he nodded energetically. "Yeah. Sitting around. There's your sister in a blue dress, huh? And high heels, the poor sad bitch—nothing like you, sweetheart! And your mother's helping some fat woman with the corn, they're cleaning the corn—husking the corn—"

"What fat woman?" Connie cried.

"How do I know what fat woman. I don't know every goddam fat woman in the world!" Arnold Friend laughed.

"Oh, that's Mrs. Hornby. . . . Who invited her?" Connie said. She felt a little light-headed. Her breath was coming quickly.

"She's too fat. I don't like them fat. I like them the way you are, honey," he said, smiling sleepily at her. They stared at each other for awhile, through the screen door. He said softly, "Now what you're going to do is this: you're going to come out that door. You're going to sit up front with me and Ellie's going to sit in the back, the hell with Ellie, right? This isn't Ellie's date. You're my date. I'm your lover, honey."

"What? You're crazy—"

"Yes, I'm your lover. You don't know what that is but you will," he said. "I know that too. I know all about you. But look: it's real nice and you couldn't ask for nobody better than me, or more polite. I always keep my word. I'll tell you how it is, I'm always nice at first, the first time. I'll hold you so tight you won't think you have to try to get away or pretend anything because you'll know you can't. And I'll come inside you where it's all secret and you'll give in to me and you'll love me—"

"Shut up! You're crazy!" Connie said. She backed away from the door. She put her hands against her ears as if she'd heard something terrible, something not meant for her. "People don't talk like that, you're crazy," she muttered. Her heart was almost too big now for her chest and its pumping made sweat break out all over her. She looked out to see Arnold Friend pause and then take a step toward the porch lurching. He almost fell. But, like a clever drunken man, he managed to catch his balance. He wobbled in his high boots and grabbed hold of one of the porch posts.

"Honey?" he said. "You still listening?"

"Get the hell out of here!"

"Be nice, honey. Listen."

"I'm going to call the police—"

He wobbled again and out of the side of his mouth came a fast spat curse, an aside not meant for her to hear. But even this "Christ!" sounded forced. Then he began to smile again. She watched this smile come, awkward as if he were smiling from inside a mask. His whole face was a mask, she thought wildly, tanned down onto his throat but then running out as if he had plastered make-up on his face but had forgotten about his throat.

"Honey—? Listen, here's how it is. I always tell the truth and I promise you this: I ain't coming in that house after you."

"You better not! I'm going to call the police if you—if you don't—"

"Honey," he said, talking right through her voice, "honey, I'm not coming in there but you are coming out here. You know why?"

She was panting. The kitchen looked like a place she had never seen before, some room she had run inside but which wasn't good enough, wasn't going to help her. The kitchen window had never had a curtain, after three years, and there were dishes in the sink for her to do—probably—and if you ran your hand across the table you'd probably feel something sticky there.

"You listening, honey? Hey?"

"—going to call the police—"

"Soon as you touch the phone I don't need to keep my promise and can come inside. You won't want that."

She rushed forward and tried to lock the door. Her fingers were shaking. "But why lock it," Arnold Friend said gently, talking right into her face. "It's just a screen door. It's just nothing." One of his boots was at a strange angle, as if his foot wasn't in it. It pointed out to the left, bent at the ankle. "I mean, anybody can break through a screen door and glass and wood and iron or anything else if he needs to, anybody at all and specially Arnold Friend. If the place got lit up with a fire honey you'd come running out into my arms, right into my arms and safe at home—like you knew I was your lover and'd stopped fooling around. I don't mind a nice shy girl but I don't like no fooling around." Part of those words were spoken with a slight rhythmic lilt, and Connie somehow recognized them—the echo of a song from last year, about a girl rushing into her boy friend's arms and coming home again—

Connie stood barefoot on the linoleum floor, staring at him. "What do you want?" she whispered.

"I want you," he said.

"What?"

"Seen you that night and thought, that's the one, yes sir. I never needed to look any more."

"But my father's coming back. He's coming to get me. I had to wash my hair first—" She spoke in a dry, rapid voice, hardly raising it for him to hear.

124 "No, your daddy is not coming and yes, you had to wash your hair and you washed it for me. It's nice and shining and all for me, I thank you, sweetheart," he said, with a mock bow, but again he almost lost his balance. He had to bend and adjust his boots. Evidently his feet did not go all the way down; the boots must have been stuffed with something so that he would seem taller. Connie stared out at him and behind him Ellie in the car, who seemed to be looking off toward Connie's right, into nothing. This Ellie said, pulling the words out of the air one after another as if he were just discovering them, "You want me to pull out the phone?"

125 "Shut your mouth and keep it shut," Arnold Friend said, his face red from bending over or maybe from embarrassment because Connie had seen his boots. "This ain't none of your business."

126 "What—what are you doing? What do you want?" Connie said. "If I call the police they'll get you, they'll arrest you—"

127 "Promise was not to come in unless you touch that phone, and I'll keep that promise," he said. He resumed his erect position and tried to force his shoulders back. He sounded like a hero in a movie, declaring something important. He spoke too loudly and it was as if he were speaking to someone behind Connie. "I ain't made plans for coming in that house where I don't belong but just for you to come out to me, the way you should. Don't you know who I am?"

128 "You're crazy," she whispered. She backed away from the door but did not want to go into another part of the house, as if this would give him permission to come through the door. "What do you . . . You're crazy, you . . ."

129 "Huh? What're you saying, honey?"

130 Her eyes darted everywhere in the kitchen. She could not remember what it was, this room.

131 "This is how it is, honey: you come out and we'll drive away, have a nice ride. But if you don't come out we're gonna wait till your people come home and then they're all going to get it."

132 "You want that telephone pulled out?" Ellie said. He held the radio away from his ear and grimaced, as if without the radio the air was too much for him.

133 "I toldja shut up, Ellie," Arnold Friend said, "you're deaf, get a hearing aid, right? Fix yourself up. This little girl's no trouble and's gonna be nice to me, so Ellie keep to yourself, this ain't your date—right? Don't hem in on me. Don't hog. Don't crush. Don't bird dog. Don't trail me," he said in a rapid meaningless voice, as if he were running through all the expressions he'd learned but was no longer sure which one of them was in style, then rushing on to new ones, making them up with his eyes closed, "Don't crawl under my fence, don't squeeze in my chipmunk hole, don't sniff my glue, suck my popsicle, keep your own greasy fingers on yourself!" He shaded his eyes and peered in at Connie, who was backed against the kitchen table. "Don't mind him honey he's just a creep. He's

a dope. Right? I'm the boy for you and like I said you come out here nice like a lady and give me your hand, and nobody else gets hurt, I mean, your nice old bald-headed daddy and your mummy and your sister in her high heels. Because listen: why bring them in this?"

134 "Leave me alone," Connie whispered.

135 "Hey, you know that old woman down the road, the one with the chickens and stuff—you know her?"

136 "She's dead!"

137 "Dead? What? You know her?" Arnold Friend said.

138 "She's dead—"

139 "Don't you like her?"

140 "She's dead—she's—she isn't here any more—"

141 "But don't you like her, I mean, you got something against her? Some grudge or something?" Then his voice dipped as if he were conscious of a rudeness. He touched the sunglasses perched on top of his head as if to make sure they were still there. "Now you be a good girl."

142 "What are you going to do?"

143 "Just two things, or maybe three," Arnold Friend said. "But I promise it won't last long and you'll like me that way you get to like people you're close to. You will. It's all over for you here, so come on out. You don't want your people in any trouble, do you?"

144 She turned and bumped against a chair or something, hurting her leg, but she ran into the back room and picked up the telephone. Something roared in her ear, a tiny roaring, and she was so sick with fear that she could do nothing but listen to it—the telephone was clammy and very heavy and her fingers groped down to the dial but were too weak to touch it. She began to scream into the phone, into the roaring. She cried out, she cried for her mother, she felt her breath start jerking back and forth in her lungs as if it were something Arnold Friend were stabbing her with again and again with no tenderness. A noisy sorrowful wailing rose all about her and she was locked inside it the way she was locked inside the house.

145 After a while she could hear again. She was sitting on the floor with her wet back against the wall.

146 Arnold Friend was saying from the door, "That's a good girl. Put the phone back."

147 She kicked the phone away from her.

148 "No, honey. Pick it up. Put it back right."

149 She picked it up and put it back. The dial tone stopped.

150 "That's a good girl. Now come outside."

151 She was hollow with what had been fear, but what was now just an emptiness. All that screaming had blasted it out of her. She sat, one leg cramped under her, and deep inside her brain was something like a pinpoint of light that kept going and would not let her relax. She thought, I'm not going to see my mother again. She thought, I'm not going to sleep in my bed again. Her bright green blouse was all wet.

Arnold Friend said, in a gentle-loud voice that was like a stage voice, "The place where you came from ain't there any more, and where you had in mind to go is cancelled out. This place you are now—inside your daddy's house—is nothing but a cardboard box I can knock down any time. You know that and always did know it. You hear me?"

She thought, I have got to think. I have to know what to do.

"We'll go out to a nice field, out in the country here where it smells so nice and it's sunny," Arnold Friend said. "I'll have my arms around you so you won't need to try to get away and I'll show you what love is like, what it does. The hell with this house! It looks solid all right," he said. He ran a fingernail down the screen and the noise did not make Connie shiver, as it would have the day before. "Now put your hand on your heart, honey. Feel that? That feels solid too but we know better, be nice to me, be sweet like you can because what else is there for a girl like you but to be sweet and pretty and give in?—and get away before her people come back?"

She felt her pounding heart. Her hand seemed to enclose it. She thought for the first time in her life that it was nothing that was hers, that belonged to her, but just a pounding, living thing inside this body that wasn't really hers either.

"You don't want them to get hurt," Arnold Friend went on. "Now get up, honey. Get up all by yourself."

She stood up.

"Now turn this way. That's right. Come over here to me—Ellie, put that away, didn't I tell you? You dope. You miserable creepy dope," Arnold said. His words were not angry but only part of an incantation. The incantation was kindly. "Now come out through the kitchen to me honey and let's see a smile, try it, you're a brave sweet little girl and now they're eating corn and hotdogs cooked to bursting over an outdoor fire, and they don't know one thing about you and never did and honey you're better than them because not a one of them would have done this for you."

Connie felt the linoleum under her feet; it was cool. She brushed her hair back out of her eyes. Arnold Friend let go of the post tentatively and opened his arms for her, his elbows pointing in toward each other and his wrists limp, to show that this was an embarrassed embrace and a little mocking, he didn't want to make her self-conscious.

She put out her hand against the screen. She watched herself push the door slowly open as if she were safe back somewhere in the other doorway, watching this body and this head of long hair moving out into the sunlight where Arnold Friend waited.

"My sweet little blue-eyed girl," he said, in a half-sung sigh that had nothing to do with her brown eyes but was taken up just the same by the vast sunlit reaches of the land behind him and on all sides of him, so much land that Connie had never seen before and did not recognize except to know that she was going to it.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does Connie feel about her mother's constant nagging? How does Connie react?
2. What is most important to Connie? Why?
3. Why does Arnold Friend fake laughter and pretend to be a teenager even though he must know Connie will see through his charade? What attracts Connie to Arnold and Ellie? What frightens her?
4. How does Arnold know so much about Connie? How does Arnold convince Connie that she is powerless before him?
5. What will happen to Connie?

VALENTINE

(1999)

¹ In upstate New York in those years there were snowstorms so wild and fierce they could change the world, within a few hours, to a place you wouldn't know. First came the heavy black thunderheads over Lake Erie, then the wind hammering overhead like a freight train, then the snowflakes erupting, flying, swirling like crazed atoms. If there'd been a sun it was extinguished, gone. Night and day were reversed, the fallen snow emitted such a radium-glare.

² I was fifteen years old living in the Red Rock section of Buffalo with an aunt, an older sister of my mother's, and her husband who was retired from the New York Central Railroad with a disability pension. My own family was what you'd called "dispersed"—we were all alive, seven of us, I believed we were all alive, but we did not live together in the same house any longer. In fact, the house, an old rented farmhouse twenty miles north of Buffalo, was gone. Burned to the ground.

³ Valentine's Day 1959, the snowstorm began in midafternoon and already by 5 p.m. the power lines were down in Buffalo. Hurriedly we lit kerosene lamps whose wicks smoked and stank as they emitted a begrudging light. We had a flashlight, of course, and candles. In extra layers of clothes we saw our breaths steam as we ate our cold supper on plates like ice. I cleaned up the kitchen as best I could without hot water, for that was always my task, among numerous others, and I said "Goodnight, Aunt Esther" to my aunt who frowned at me seeing someone not me in my place who filled her heart with sisterly sorrow and I said "Goodnight, Uncle Herman" to the man designated as my uncle, who was no blood-kin of mine, a stranger with damp eyes always drifting onto me and a mouth like a smirking scar burn. "Goodnight" they murmured as if resenting the very breath expelled for my sake. *Goodnight don't run on the stairs don't drop the candle and set the house on fire.*

⁴ Upstairs was a partly finished attic narrow as a tunnel with a habitable space at one end—my "room." The ceiling was covered in strips of peeling

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MAY 18, 1998

SECTION: Washington Scene; Pg. 12

LENGTH: 1082 words

HEADLINE: HACK HEAVEN

BYLINE: Stephen Glass

BODY:

Ian Restil, a 15-year-old computer hacker who looks like an even more adolescent version of Bill Gates, is throwing a tantrum. "I want more money. I want a Miata. I want a trip to Disney World. I want X-Man comic book number one. I want a lifetime subscription to Playboy, and throw in Penthouse. Show me the money! Show me the money!" Over and over again, the boy, who is wearing a frayed Cal Ripken Jr. t-shirt, is shouting his demands. Across the table, executives from a California software firm called Jukt Micronics are listening--and trying ever so delicately to oblige. "Excuse me, sir," one of the suits says, tentatively, to the pimply teenager. "Excuse me. Pardon me for interrupting you, sir. We can arrange more money for you. Then, you can buy the comic book, and then, when you're of more, say, appropriate age, you can buy the car and pornographic magazines on your own."

It's pretty amazing that a 15-year-old could get a big-time software firm to grovel like that. What's more amazing, though, is how Ian got Jukt's attention--by breaking into its databases. In March, Restil--whose nom de plume is "Big Bad Bionic Boy"--used a computer at his high school library to hack into Jukt. Once he got past the company's online security system, he posted every employee's salary on the company's website alongside more than a dozen pictures of naked women, each with the caption: "the big bad bionic boy has been here baby." After weeks of trying futilely to figure out how Ian cracked the security program, Jukt's engineers gave up. That's when the company came to Ian's Bethesda, Maryland, home--to hire him.

And Ian, clever boy that he is, had been expecting them. "The principal told us to hire a defense lawyer fast, because Ian was in deep trouble," says his mother, Jamie Restil. "Ian laughed and told us to get an agent. Our boy was definitely right." Ian says he knew that Jukt would determine it was cheaper to hire him--and pay him to fix their database--than it would be to have engineers do it. And he knew this because the same thing had happened to more than a dozen online friends.

Indeed, deals like Ian's are becoming common--so common, in fact, that hacker agents now advertise their commissions on websites. Computer Insider, a newsletter for hackers, estimates that about 900 recreational hackers were hired in the last four years by companies they once targeted. Ian's agent, whose business card is emblazoned with the slogan "super-agent to super-nerds," claims to represent nearly 300 of them, ages nine to 68. A failed basketball agent, Joe Hiert got into the industry when one of his son's friends, 21-year-old Ty Harris, broke into an Internet security firm three years ago and came to him for advice. The software maker paid Harris \$1 million, a monster truck, and promised "free agency"--meaning he can quit and work for a competitor at any time.

Of course, a cynic might say hacker schemes look an awful lot like protection rackets. That's an awfully nice computer network you got there. It'd be a shame if somebody broke into it... Law-enforcement

officials, in particular, complain that deals between companies and their online predators have made prosecution of online security breaches impossible. "We are basically paralyzed right now," explains Jim Ghort, who directs the Center for Interstate Online Investigations, a joint police project of 18 states. "We can't arrest or prosecute most hackers, because corporate victims are refusing to come forward. This is a huge problem."

In March, Nevada law-enforcement officials got so desperate they ran the following radio advertisement: "Would you hire a shoplifter to watch the cash register? Please don't deal with hackers." The state took to the airwaves shortly after a hacker broke into a regional department store's computer system and instructed it to credit his Visa card about \$500 per day. According to Nevada officials, the boy racked up more than \$32,000 in credit before he was caught--but the store wouldn't press charges. It let him keep the money, then threw in a \$1,500 shopping spree--all in exchange for showing them how to improve their security.

Little wonder, then, that 21 states are now considering versions of something called the Uniform Computer Security Act, which would effectively criminalize immunity deals between hackers and companies--while imposing stiff penalties on the corporations who make such deals. "This is just like prostitution," says Julie Farthwork of the anti-hacker Computer Security Center, which helped draft the legislation. "As a society, we don't want people making a career out of something that's simply immoral."

Not surprisingly, hackers hate the proposed legislation. They see themselves as "freelance security investigators," and they even have their own group--the National Assembly of Hackers--to lobby against the new law. "Really, hackers have to put in a lot of sunk costs before they find the one that's broken and get paid," says Frank Juliet, the group's president. "So, it's definitely a large community service that we are doing."

Less predictable, however, is the opposition of companies that have been hacked. It seems they don't like the proposed law, either, because they're worried they'll be stuck with no legal way to patch holes in their security systems. The Association of Internet-based Businesses has actually formed a task force with the National Assembly of Hackers to lobby against the law.

It remains to be seen who will win, but, until new laws are passed, hackers like Ian Restil will continue to enjoy a certain exalted status--particularly among their peers. At a conference sponsored by the National Assembly of Hackers last week, teenage hackers and graying corporate executives flocked to Ian, patting him on the back and giving him high-fives. "We're so proud of him," said Ian's mother. "He's doing such good things, and he's so smart and kind." At the formal dinner that followed, the emcee explained that Ian had just signed a contract for \$81,000 in scholarship money--and a collection of rare comic books. The audience applauded wildly. Then, Ian stood on his chair and took a bow. He announced that he had hacked into a new company and frozen their bank account temporarily. "And now they're going to show me the money," he said, swirling his hips and shaking his fists. "I want a Miata. I want a trip to Disney World...."

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LOAD-DATE: May 14, 1998

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MARCH 31, 1997

SECTION: Pg. 18

LENGTH: 2208 words

HEADLINE: SPRING BREAKDOWN

BYLINE: Stephen Glass

HIGHLIGHT:

Conservative youths despair, drink, debauch.

BODY:

On the fourth floor of Washington's Omni Shoreham Hotel, eight young men sit facing each other on the edge of a pair of beds. They are all 20 or 21 and are enrolled in Midwestern colleges. Each is wearing a white or blue shirt with the top button unfastened, and each has his striped tie loosened. One of the young men, an Ohioan, is wearing a green and white button that reads: "Save the Males." The minibar is open and empty little bottles of booze are scattered on the carpet. On the bed, a Gideon Bible, used earlier in the night to resolve an argument, is open to Exodus. In the bathroom, the tub is filled with ice and the remnants of three cases of Coors Light. The young men pass around a joint, counterclockwise. "I'm telling you, I'm telling you, we don't know what we're doing," says Jason, a brown-haired freckled boy from Iowa, between puffs. "We've got no mission. We've got no direction. Conservatives--we're like a guy who has to pee lost in the desert, searching for a tree." The other seven young men nod and mumble in agreement.

Over the next hour, in a haze of beer and pot, and in between rantings about feminists, gays and political correctness, the young men hatch a plan. Seth, a meaty quarterback from a small college in Indiana, and two others will drive to a local bar. There, the three will choose the ugliest and loneliest woman they can find. "Get us a real heifer, the fatter the better, bad acne would be a bonus," Michael shouts. He is so drunk he doesn't know he is shouting. Seth will lure the victim, whom they call a "whale," back to the hotel room. The five who stay behind will hide under the beds. After Seth undresses the whale, the five will jump out and shout, "We're beaching! Whale spotted!" They will take a photograph of the unfortunate woman.

This is the face of young conservatism in 1997: pissed off and pissed; dejected, depressed, drunk and dumb. The eight young men were visiting Washington, D.C., in early March, as they did last year and the year before that, for the Conservative Political Action Conference (cpac), arguably the most important event of the conservative year. Over the past twenty-four years, cpac, hosted jointly by the American Conservative Union and Human Events, and sponsored by every conservative group from the Christian Coalition to Citizens for a Sound Economy, has become the greatest draw on the right-wing circuit. Last year, more than 1,000 conservatives paid about \$100 just to hear the lectures. Many coughed up another \$200 to attend the banquet and receptions. During the 1996 primaries, every major Republican presidential candidate tried to shore up their conservative credentials by speaking at cpac. As the young men on the fourth floor smoked and swilled and schemed, Jack Kemp was delivering this year's keynote address.

cpac became a rite of passage for young conservatives in the Reagan glory days. Every year, hundreds of college students and recent graduates drove to Washington from around the country. Often sleeping five to a room, they made up nearly half of the participants, and they gave cpac the abundant raw energy that made the event special. They filled the conference room to hear discourses in tax cutting (good) and feminism (bad). They gave standing ovations to Phyllis Schlafly and Pat Robertson. Every year, they believed victory was close at hand. Patience, they said, was all that was needed.

But, this year, cpac bore no resemblance to a victory party. Turnout was down 50 percent. Not just seats, but entire tables were empty during Newt Gingrich's opening address. Vendors said they sold fewer GOP buttons, stuffed animals, aprons, T-shirts, books and tea-cozies than in years past. His arms windmilling and flailing in the air, Gingrich begged the audience to be more excited. This is "one of the first times that I've ever seen where the winning team feels defeated," he screamed at the glum faces. "And people walk around with long jaws and talk about how concerned they are that the Republicans lost their way." Later in the day, when Alan Keyes, one of the right's most popular speakers, ascended the podium, the room was even emptier. Keyes often paused as if waiting for thunderous applause, but there was only silence. When he looked up, puzzled, a few individual claps could be heard from the back of the room. "For those people who have been conservatives their whole lives and are stumbling about right now asking themselves all kinds of strange questions about conservatism, I simply feel sorry for them," Keyes proclaimed. "We have the moral structure to lead us ahead." Ralph Reed, the Christian Coalition's executive director, spent much of his time at the podium, blaming the GOP funk on "muddle-headed" moderates who don't accept a socially conservative agenda.

Something quite peculiar has happened to conservatives. As they keep telling each other, they should be delighted with the way things are going. In 1996, they passed a test of historic importance in holding Congress. Although weakened, Newt Gingrich remains speaker, and the vacuum left by his political diminution has been at least partly filled by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott. The Democratic president is in the worst trouble of his frequently troubled tenure, and these troubles will, at the least, consume the president's attention and energy for much of 1997. In recent weeks, the trouble has spread to Vice President Gore, the presumptive Democratic nominee in 2000. Conservative ideas so dominate the political agenda that the debate between the White House and Congress largely concerns questions of degree and methodology, not principle. By logic, this should be a season of GOP contentment, or at least relative satisfaction.

Yet the sound of right-wingers bitching and moaning is all over Washington. The money wing of the GOP and the Christian moralist wing are no longer on speaking terms; they snipe at each other from opposing columns on the op-ed page of The Washington Times. The Weekly Standard, which seeks to supplant National Review as conservatism's arbiter, ran a cover story exhorting the faithful to shape up and get tough. But the most telling of all these signs of conservative malaise is that, suddenly, the movement's youth look like a lost generation. The youth turnout at this year's cpac was so dismally low that the event's organizers won't release specific numbers, but veterans of the event estimated it was 75 percent less than in years past. Several College Republicans running for national chairman canceled the small parties (called, in genteel fashion, "hospitalities") that have been used for years to woo supporters. And, at a booth for recent college graduates, stacks of free blue and white "conservative and proud" bumper stickers remain untouched. Meanwhile \$1 "show us the way" stickers, bemoaning the void of leadership, sell out. For youth at cpac, idealism is out. Despair and hedonism are in.

Around 9:30 p.m., Seth, Rick and Jason drive to a popular downtown bar. They park in front of a fire hydrant. Within fifteen minutes they spot their victim. About 5'3" and stout, she is standing near the bar, alone. Her lipstick has rubbed off on her wine glass, leaving only the cherry outline. Jason says this may be the only time he has wished a woman would wear a longer skirt to hide her legs. Seth walks up to her, and they exchange smiles. Forty minutes and two gin and tonics later, he invites her back to his hotel to get stoned. He signals the other two, and they drive back to make sure everyone is hidden under the beds. Twenty minutes after that, Seth arrives with the young woman in a taxi. The two go into Seth's room. From the hallway, they can be heard through the door talking loudly. Half an hour later, the woman begins screaming. The door flies open, and she runs out. Tears, black from the mascara, stream down her

face. She is holding her shoes and gripping her crumpled blouse to her chest. Inside the room, Charlie gives Seth a high-five. He promises to get the photo developed and duplicated in the morning. The men start chanting Seth's name over and over. Shirtless Seth bows and then flexes his biceps over his head. He grunts loudly.

This repellent scene was only a little beyond the norm of the conference. A wash of despair and alcohol and brutishness hung over the whole thing. Everywhere I went, it seemed, something sad or sordid was underway, or just finished, or about to begin. Halfway through the Keyes speech, I leave to go to the men's room. Inside, a wiry mustached twentysomething is getting to second base with a svelte blonde. The woman is sitting on the sink counter, her white blouse unbuttoned and hands above her head, pressed against the mirror. His face is buried between her breasts. I ask them why they ditched Keyes.

"Get out of here. Can't you see we're busy? This is way not cool," the man snaps back.

"Since I've already interrupted you, could you please just quickly answer the question?" I ask politely.

"Get out. Get out. Look, it's just not interesting listening to all them. I was having fun here. Now get out," he yells.

The blushing woman starts buttoning up her shirt to leave. But the man pleads: "Come on, stay. Please stay. You know this is what it's about."

A hotel janitor says he discovered two college students having sex on the dais in the middle of the night. At 4 a.m., in the hotel's empty garage, three students smoke pot. They explain that the sidewalk is too public, and they don't want the professor who came with them to smell it in their rooms.

Kids at cpac have always gotten drunk and laid, but that wasn't always the primary reason they came. This year, it seems, it was. "Yes, of course we're here to have fun," explains 19-year-old Jon Segura, a Vermont student who shakes hands with everyone who walks by the College Republicans' booth. "We like to say that up in Vermont there are more cows than girls... And sometimes you can't tell which one is which. It's not the same here." Several college sophomores standing around the Christian Coalition booth say that they party so hard because partying is all that the event--all that conservatism--really offers them. "Our problem is there is no defined torchbearer," explains Jason Burgen, the treasurer for North Carolina's College Republicans. "Now there is no Reagan, no one to lead us. So, there's a cynicism and a depression that has set in."

On Friday night, forty of the young conservatives ditch Lott's speech and pack a sweaty hotel room on the second floor. On the door someone has taped a sign that reads: "The lost ones--in here." Again, the bathtub is filled with beer, and a thick cloud of marijuana smoke hangs above the crowd. A red-headed guy whose name tag only says "Greg" tries unsuccessfully to program the pay-per-view to show an X-rated movie. Almost everyone in the room says they supported Phil Gramm or Pat Buchanan in last year's election.

"Look around, you'll see we're wandering," says Chuck Reingold, a College Republican from California. "I didn't even sign up for the conference this year. What's there to learn? You see that? That's why I come now." Reingold points to the bed. A short, busty woman is standing on the foot of the bed to kiss a very tall man. One hand is wrapped around his torso, the other is holding a cigarette with an ever-extending and fragile ash. When the two come up for air, the woman tucks her cigarette-free hand into the man's front pocket. She is, it turns out, a 22-year-old Marylander, and a big fan of the Republicans' chief moralizer, Bill Bennett. "He has some good morals to impart, and I really like his book," she says. "Is that an okay answer? I'm not really sure what else to say."

As the night drags on, two people begin snorting what looks like cocaine in the bathroom. Several bottles of vodka are brought in. By 1 a.m., more than half the guests have paired up and are making out. The fog of marijuana and cigarette smoke gives the scene an unfocused, almost slow-motion quality. Two women

wearing Buchanan buttons, and swaying to a beat only in their heads, move from man to man along the windows, kissing the men and rubbing their breasts against them. One of the partygoers invites "everyone who wants to get naked" to his hotel room. Five men and four women, all college students, high and drunk, follow him to the elevator.

In the get-naked room, everyone disrobes immediately, without a hint of embarrassment. One couple fondles each other in the corner. A muscular man, apparently hallucinating, prances around the room like a ballet dancer. A woman locks herself in the bathroom, crying and shouting out the name "Samuel. " No one knows who Samuel is. The rest lounge on the beds, watching television and eating pretzels. They stare glassily at the screen, and, when they speak, they sound like they are talking through Jell-O. Among the naked bodies on the bed is Cynthia, a Dole supporter who lives less than a mile from the hotel. "What would give you the idea we're having problems? Huh? Why do you think that?" she asks me. "What was I saying? Oh, yeah. This is, like, just how the movement is now. Get used to it."

LOAD-DATE: March 27, 1997

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APRIL 13, 1998

SECTION: Pg. 11

LENGTH: 973 words

HEADLINE: MONICA SELLS

BYLINE: Stephen Glass

HIGHLIGHT:
Washington Scene

BODY:

It's been said that no previous White House perfected the art of rapid political response as well as President Clinton's has, so perhaps it was not surprising to find a Democratic loyalist camped out at this year's National Memorabilia Convention, held last weekend in Rockville, Maryland. With the Monica Lewinsky scandal nearly three months old, the novelty industry is well on its way to cashing in with a variety of knickknacks ranging from the silly (a computer game where players must guide Lewinsky from the Watergate to the Oval Office) to the salacious (an inflatable "Leaves of Grass"-reciting sex doll with the word intern stenciled across its chest).

Although a few of these goods are available already, the real onslaught won't begin until early summer--peak season for novelty sales--which means there's still time for Clinton supporters to minimize the public relations impact. In February, some Democratic fundraisers got together and helped create a new organization called Patriotic Profits. Its self-proclaimed purpose: to "uphold the esteem of the office of the presidency" by encouraging manufacturers not to put out such denigrating merchandise. "There is some fear here that a new fad glorifying Lewinsky could be born and heavily marketed," said P.J. Hozell, the organization's director. "Say it becomes like the Rubik's Cube; that would be bad for us."

Maybe so, but Patriotic Profits will have a hard time holding back this merchandising bonanza. As Hozell was explaining her strategy to me, she had to shout over the throngs of merchants chortling over an item on display in the very next booth: a talking figure called "Loving Lewinsky" that looks and works like a child's doll. (Pull the string, and it says, "I'm a good intern," "All hail to the chief," "I can fetch your mail," and "Whatever you want, Mr. President.") It was one of the more than 3,000 Monica-related items either on display or promised in catalogs at the convention. According to Clay Resin, a financial analyst who studies the collectibles markets, scandal-related novelty sales could top \$80 million. "This is the biggest event ever to be sold in U.S. history," he explained to the convention-goers. If Resin is right, the Lewinsky scandal will sell more than five times the merchandise that the Gulf war did and 15 times Watergate.

Some of the wares on display were predictable, like the countless Lewinsky t-shirts and more than 70 varieties of berets (available in more than 30 colors). Some were more creative, like a "Naturally scary Linda Tripp" Halloween mask for adults and a Lewinsky microcassette recorder that attaches to any telephone. Still others came with their own add-on accessories. Users of the inflatable Monica sex toy, for example, can also purchase Lewinsky wigs (the new pageboy cut goes for \$24 while the old do with bangs runs for \$22) and different voices (it's \$13 for the "hot-talk voice" and \$15 for the "little-girl

voice"). There are greeting cards for Christmas (a Lewinsky caricature chanting "Ho-Ho-Ho") and birthdays ("I'll blow out your candle!").

Hozell realizes the scandal is a kitsch-maker's dream; she says her organization merely hopes to nudge manufacturers, ever so slightly, in a more constructive direction. "We want them to make money; we understand that, so I am offering novelty designers profitable alternatives that validate the office of the presidency," she says.

Incredibly, she's had some success. Last month, fashion newsletters reported that at least seven companies, including the Gap, had considered postponing plans to feature berets in upcoming headwear lines. It turns out that Patriotic Profits had arranged for several prominent Democratic donors to call designers and sway them toward "fashion that affirms our nation's greatness." "You won't see any more berets than normal next year," Hozell beamed. "We are successful because our callers explain the sensitive nature of how fashion and politics intersect." Indeed, although the companies won't officially comment on whether Patriotic Profits influenced fashion decisions, one designer who received a call told me his firm was nervous about getting mixed up in politics in any way and decided the wisest course of action was to simply hold off introducing the line.

But it may be easier to win over skittish fashion houses than it will be to convince the P.T. Barnum-types who manufacture gags. Take Joel Carni, whose family business, Four Aces, is one of the nation's largest political novelty manufacturers. This summer, stores will be hit with Four Aces's newest product: the Monicondom. "It's thinner--specially designed for oral sex, when people often forget" to be safe, Carni said, boasting of its public health utility. "The Centers for Disease Control would be proud of this item." The cardboard box encourages users to put it on their "slick willy" and to "turn the White House scandal into a safe-sex public service."

Hozell insists Monicondoms could be just as profitable with some "tinkering." Her suggestions: change the flavors "beret berry" and "intern ice" to "berry good" and "interesting ice," and remove the word "slick willy" from the box and change the name to "My condoms." "None of these changes alters the meaning of the product, which is to prevent HIV transmission, something the White House is for," she earnestly explained. "But what they do is respect the presidency."

But Carni rejected those suggestions. "She doesn't get it. The whole point of a novelty is a gag," he added, clearly annoyed by the proximity of Patriotic Profits's booth to his. "The Star Spangled Banner' is not funny. The Pledge of Allegiance is not funny... The president with an intern under the Oval Office desk. That's funny. We sell funny."

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LOAD-DATE: April 9, 1998