

Chapter 15 – A Born Again Turkey is Still a Turkey

Still active in whatever church the Lord led me to, I was having some problems with the local body, and chose this Sunday morning to exercise some independent spiritual direction and stay home. It was very difficult not to feel guilty, as the same voices that encourage you to stay in your bathrobe eviscerate you afterwards for not going. *Think how disappointed The Lord is, and the pastor, too.*

However, it was becoming obvious that my relationship with the pastor was souring. I had become obsessive about listening to preaching and teaching tapes, read the bible constantly, and occasionally preached to small mens' groups. I was suffused in chapter, verse and a theology I understood, and was very well read concerning Israel and Old Testament prophecy. Obsessive reverie on chapter and verse had replaced *Fluphenazine Hydrochloride*. When my mind raged, scripture gave it a healing balm, or at the very least a mental band-aid.

I was fairly conflicted over some serious disappointment I felt in the pastor. I had begun to see some genuine 'feet of clay' on this local leader.

Consequently, I began to enjoy this Sunday morning freedom; perhaps it was a sign from the Lord that it was time to move on to another church. Placing my breakfast on the TV tray, and setting my bible next to that, and flipped on the Sunday morning TV to watch world renowned tele-evangelist Jimmy Swaggert do his thing. I had seen him in person, and once sent him money I really couldn't afford, but I was "into the Lord," and listening to my thoughts as if hooked up to Him with a dedicated hardwire, I was sure the story of the poor woman who tossed in her two mites was my ticket to the Lord's approval as well. Jimmy's ministry had these great singers, and one or both would open his show with truly remarkable talent. Then here comes the man himself, with his unique hypnotic southern cadence, that interesting accent and rhythm, emphasizing certain words that had you lfeeling that emotional empathy that only comes from above.

"I feel a burden on my heart to speak to a matter that has become such a danger to so many Christian families. I am talking about the horrible consequences of this rock music phenomenon. Especially the hero worship, the idolatry that often accompanies the music itself. I received a letter last week from a dear friend. A woman trying to raise her teenage daughter by herself.

She wrote to me, 'Dear Brother Swaggert, I'm at my wit's end. The devil himself has invaded our house. My Jeanne was a good girl (Jimmy would raise his already misting eyes to the audience), "and then she started listening to rock

music. She became angry. Angry towards me, angry and disrespectful. Last night I found this letter. I fell on my knees and cried out to the Lord. I'm enclosing it to you, Brother Swaggert. Please help me."

Jimmy looked up at the camera,

*"My brothers and sisters, I cried after reading that letter. I wept before the Lord and asked Him what can I do to help this child? What can I do after reading this? It was a letter describing herself, a young, attractive teenage girl - in detail, and then offering herself... Yes, I mean she was offering herself to this band, my brothers and sisters. She would become theirs to do with as they wished. She would no longer be Jeanne, a girl committed to her mother, to the church, to Jesus. No, she would be **a tool for their pleasure...***

The cameras panned the audience, settling on an attractive teenage girl listening intently. The TV screen switched to show people slowly shaking their heads in sympathy, others bowing theirs in prayerful devotion to the cause. But Jimmy isn't through.

*"This girl went on to describe, my brothers and sisters, in detail, every act she would allow them to perform on her, and every behavior she was willing to perform on them; begging them to just allow her to try – let her have the **opportunity** to please them."*

The camera settled again on yet another teenage girl whose sultry face and cleavage created some kind of stunning tractor-beam. I found I had to move the tray in my lap to rearrange elevation issues which were being raised achingly, the result of Jimmy's *"She described how she would dance for them. What she would wear. A willing **slave** to do anything they wanted with her for even for a short period of time! My brothers and sisters, this is devil worshi..."*

Unable to take any more *ministering*, I was on my feet clicking off the set on my way upstairs. After being preached to in this fashion by Brother Swaggert, I was not all that surprised to hear of his later ministry-ending disaster, caught in liaison with a prostitute from whom he was receiving "special" treatments.

Entering my bedroom carrying my bible, I traded the book for a bottle of lotion sitting on the dresser. It was as if the book, silent and ultimate father-symbol that it was, might effect some observance of my inner and outer explorations, and should best be kept out of direct sight. I felt relieved just to lie down.

‘Ooh, Cindy girl,’ came the thought as I entered the seminar room for my first “*African-American Studies*” class. ‘Someone is beginning to grow as a person here, yes... This is so much cooler than that lame religious school mom and dad wanted me to go to. Sure, like it wasn’t enough being in that all-girls school my whole life.

I had to stifle my smile, as the words “*grow as a person*” returned to my mind attaching themselves to some very non-academic images. Memories of my two sexual episodes this past summer added to the previous rush of “filling out” my 36C bra (*and these boys here never seemed to stop staring*). It is just so great to be away from mom and dad. This is like *arrival*. Suddenly he took over my world.

“*You are not just a student in this class,*” spoke the commanding black figure at the podium in a stern voice. “*You are here to be part of a universal effort to further racial justice and social equality. This isn’t just a resistance to racism we seek to inculcate in this class but a resistance to all forms of social inequality and oppression. The inequality women suffer, not only in the workplace - but universally as sex objects - has got to be torn down and done away with as well.*”

My jaw slacked as I found myself staring blankly at this strange, dark man.

“*We know that history is written from the perspective of whites, and that laws and policies benefit whites while putting minorities at an immediate disadvantage. The people who make these laws and policies believe only White Europeans and White Euro-Americans should set the world’s agenda and control and distribute the world’s resources.*”

‘... *the way he sneers*... I thought of my poor father looking up at the professor trying to combat these dominating hammer-like observations. Instantly I saw myself speaking these same pearls of wisdom to my family over holiday dinners, bending their sophomoric understandings to these unavoidable truths. I could also speak these same words; appropriately disdainful to all who might disagree. It was suddenly easy – surprisingly easy – to be angry at anyone who might disagree with this point of view. That could be excused. After all, isn’t anger what we should have towards racists? I bet the abolitionists of the 1850’s were pissed too.

“*Whites are like addicts who are unaware of their addiction and how they benefit from - and even depend on - the sufferings of others for their happiness. How can you – if you are psychologically in denial; if you are unaware of your own racism, how can you – be set free?*” he asked, ending the sentence with a surprisingly soft tone that made me feel like I was being stroked somehow. “*That’s what we intend to discover in this class. How many of you are ready?*”

Ohmagod! Was I the only one in the class starting to send her hand up?’

“*Many are called,*” the impressive man added, passing an imperceptible glance over me as he eyed the room dramatically (*did he just look back directly at me?*); “*but few are chosen.*” He concluded his last statement with a voice not only low in tone but tinged with remorse. No doubt from a life of pain and caring, I ached. I gazed at him spellbound; the scowl on his face reflecting all the injustice of this dark world.

The bell rang. “Those who didn’t get a chance to sign up for the next special forum, please see me,” he added in a quick flat tone.

Did he just look at me again? I’d better get to the podium quickly... probably be a line waiting to talk to him. But there was only me. I nervously approached him as he gathered up his notes to put them in his case.

“Uh, excuse me Professor, I, uh, didn’t know about the special forum.”

“No problem. What’s your name again?”

“Cindy Scheiner.”

“Cindy, I’m having some of the students over to my house Sunday afternoon around three. We’ll talk more about it then. He looked closely at me and said, “See you there. My address is in the syllabus.” Without waiting for a response, he picked up his case and walked away from the podium and out the door.

“Oh my G-d. What have I got myself into? What will I say? Suppose I’m the only white person there? And ohmagod, what will I wear?”

Sunday I soaked in scented bath oil, slipped on my new (*talk about expensive!*) matching bra and panties, tried on three different outfits and finally settled on a short off-white summer dress. I mean, why get my legs all tan and then cover them up? Besides, my cleavage looks great in this, (*with their new fully-expanded mode!*), and I couldn’t resist primping in exaggerated innocence in the mirror while bending low, showing off the natural gifts that men find in centerfolds. I straightened up, and, looking myself over in the full length mirror further, concluded, ‘*The back falls just right, proving,*’ I had to admit to myself, ‘*that four years and a thousand hours of gym work can get a girl one bad behind.*’

I touched up my makeup and walked the short distance across campus to the professor’s house, arriving five minutes early. Reminding myself that every boy I passed had stared approvingly - if not hungrily - I nonetheless felt less than

empowered as I turned up a narrow walk surrounded by trees and flowers. I arrived and knocked nervously, standing on the small porch.

He came to the door in his bare feet, wearing jeans and an unbuttoned white shirt. My heart alarmed.

“Oh,” he said, bringing his left hand to his forehead in a how-could-I-forget-gesture, “Cindy, your name is new to the list. I forgot to call you. The meeting’s cancelled.”

I froze like an idiot, standing there wooden.

“No, but come on in, this is good, I want to talk to you...please.” I entered, reflecting on his six-pack abbs; and for a man his age...

Within a short time I learned the professor felt the usual rules regarding student and faculty were anachronistic, and insisted on adding wine to the occasion. “*Like they do in Europe*, he said, adding, “Wine is like a social lubricant among intelligent adults.”

“I agree, and thank you, Professor,” I said, even though I could hardly remember the last time I drank wine, probably two years before at my Sweet Sixteen. I was surprised how pleasant-tasting the alcohol was, and how easily it went down.

“I thought you seemed a little different than the others,” he smiled.”

“I hope that’s good,” I added with a pretend scared-face and a laugh.

“I think it is,” he said seriously, refilling my glass as he hesitated. He was obviously choosing his words carefully.

“I like to **speak my mind**, but that often gets a man in trouble... especially,” he added with a soft, sudden vulnerability, “a **black man**. But I’ve gotten to a point in my life that I just say ‘the hell with it,’ and I already sense in you a person I can speak like this to.”

I lowered my eyes hoping to hide my spreading smile. Excitement... and realization; this is a real man... who sees the **real me**... A true renaissance man...

“Most of the class is just middle class white-bread repeating back to me what they think I want to hear. But you strike me as somehow... more... uhmm, real,” he added, as his expression showed he had found just the word he was looking for. He lifted his glass, and with a glance urged me to do the same.

“*Here’s to real*,” he said.

“*To real*,” I added, my face flushing as I began to feel a little dizzy.

We finished that glass and were into one more when the subject of racism arose.

“We have to see racism in ourselves, Cindy,” he said quietly. “It’s a personal thing, a very subjective thing. That’s where it must be rooted out, and when it’s rooted out at its most basic level, that’s when true equality begins. As well as true freedom for the person who will then be released from their own bigotry.

“My head nodded up and down as I tried to comprehend what that might mean. “I...I agree,” I found myself saying, “but how...”

He had stood up and walked to his entertainment center, pushed some buttons and *Sade* began to sing. The notes of a beautiful French ballad filled a room that suddenly seemed to go a little dim at the same time the music began. The professor turned from the entertainment center.

“How, Cindy? As one person interacts with another. As just two people, that’s how. You knew that intuitively, I think... didn’t you?” he concluded softly as he reached out his hand to me, his brown eyes softly holding mine.

“I gue... yes.” I said, trying to give the right amount of assurance to my answer. As I stood up I realized suddenly the wine’s effects. My face felt very warm, and my tingling body mindlessly eager to float on the soft chords of the French ballad.

“Yes, there **is** something very special about you,” he said warmly, as his arms encircled me, sending my mind into heavenly realms as my eyes closed and I allowed him to lead me in very slow movement. I soon found myself blushing, my face running red and hot. While we were moving slowly, he was holding me really close. While it was easy to flow along in a dreamy sway with his arms guiding me, I could not mistake the persistent large bulge pressing against my stomach through his thin baggy jeans.

Within a few moments, I felt his hand, which had up till that time rested on my lower back, gently caress and squeeze my thousand-hour behind. I jumped. I automatically pushed his hand away.

He didn’t react. His voice still soft, inquiring gently,

“Tell me, Cindy, what were you thinking just now when you pushed it away?”

Ohmagod. Laughing nervously, I stammered:

“I... I thought, he’s got his hand on m... uhh... behind?” I squeaked out the last word, with unsure questioning hanging on in my tone. In reality I had thought ‘*on my ass*,’ but I didn’t dare sound so condescendingly brazen.

“But your thoughts, Cindy. The thoughts and pictures coming through your mind. Wasn’t it his *black* hand? Isn’t it that *black* hand on my pretty silky dress and on my little silky underthings? Isn’t it, after all, a *black* hand that you’re still seeing, Cindy?” he asked so very softly.

I couldn’t breath. Ohmahgod, please don’t, please don’t make me talk about this. I pressed my face against his chest hoping the world would just go away with my heart beating too wildly for me to even think. I was so not going to bring my face up. I’d have to drop his class, leave school and maybe I’ll just die when this French woman stops singing. That would be my way out. Beginning to squeeze my eyes shut in panic, I am realizing that these are my only options.

Then, it happened: ”*Redemption!* My own grateful whimper was heard before I even comprehended why. I realized the return of his hand. It was actually happening between us just as the professor had said it would. Just between two people on a non-racist plane! It was like a miracle, arriving right on my thousand-hour behind. He had forgiven me. Realization flooded my brain. The relief was palpable. I could breathe again. Face still pressed to his chest, my arms hugging him tighter, I welcomed the return of his hand to its rightful place. Now aware again of the music, my hips began to undulate with a welcoming action all their own. With eyes closed, I moaned in penance as his dark fingers now explored with growing boldness under my sundress. With this return to our non-racist plane, I brought my face up to his. He looked at me softly; smoldering:

“Cindy, have you ever kissed a black man?”

“Not yet,” I heard myself whisper, as a voice inside my head screamed “*slut!*” Half wondering if this meant he was going to have sex with me, I raised my face anyway. Moving my mouth closer to his, I tasted the first of the many interchanges to come, his mouth and thick dark lips providing new territory for my small pink expression to explore.

He immediately began to explore, fondle and caress every part of my backside and thighs with such slow, possessive confidence that I became lightheaded. I heard his moan of satisfaction and felt intoxication wash over me. Somehow, a cold, realistic thought overtook me: ‘*Break free from this and go home.*’ So with my mind on fire and my body barely moving to the music, I turned my face up to his to say something like good-bye. Since the wanton excitement was becoming so palpable, I was encouraged to feel this pleasure was surely bringing further proof that I wasn’t a racist.

“Professor, I...” “Maybe I should go, I’ve never just... done it, y’know, without dating for a while, and stuff...” He nodded at my words and took my hand.

“We don’t have to do anything, Cindy.” I was astonished to see him looking a little bashful, “and, to be truthful, I just got carried away... I guess I like being with you.”

He looked at me with the softest brown eyes I’d never seen.

“Don’t you like being here with me?”

“Oh, yes, of course!” the words tumbling out of my mouth with such enthusiasm that as he kissed me, I realized that somehow I was, by my enthusiastic response, saying I was staying longer. He smiled, and taking me by both my shoulders looked squarely at me, softly imparting to me his sincerity in a pleasant, nothing-to-worry-about attitude.

“I don’t want you to do anything you don’t want to do, OK? You can keep your clothes on.” I felt embarrassed; as if I was a child being assured no one would hurt me. Before I could answer, he added with a sweet smile and a long look. “Most of them, anyway...” Even as we laughed, I pretended to be angry with a mock attempt to hit him, but I was tingling in places I never tingled in before. He was like no one I had ever met.

He started to lead me towards the bedroom. I saw myself breaking from his hand, running down the hall and out the door. Instead, I continued to note the swirling excitement of my pounding heart. I don’t have to go all the way. I still have my clothes on. Trembling with excitement, I entered his bedroom.

He kissed me again and somehow the top button of my dress became undone.

“Professor, we, uh, we don’t have to... you’re not going to...”

“Of course not,” he cooed throatily. I thrilled to the Barry White-ness of his voice as the light material of my sundress floated onto the carpet at the same time the alcohol-tinged thought crossed my mind how great I looked in my new bra and panties. As I slowly turned back to him stepping out of my dress, I couldn’t help but be drunkenly aware how his eyes flared with lust. I was stunned to see how quickly he was already nude and under the sheets. As I faced him wearing only my new lingerie, I hesitated for a moment, but was reassured by the notion that (*for today, anyway*) I wasn’t going to be taking off any more of my clothes. He slowly lifted up the sheets in an invitation for me to get in. Knowing now that I could trust

him, I scooted under the covers. As he drew back the sheet for me to slide under, I couldn't help glancing at the strange dark flesh between his legs.

I was now on my back with the soft brown eyes of the professor inches from my face. I craved his full dark lips on mine again, and got my wish. His mouth drew lightly away, kissing my upper lip, my cheek, my neck, as his hands slowly caressed every part of me; his warm, slow fingers grasped and fondled my flesh, making it yield in pleasure wherever he touched me: he kissed me longer, sending my mind spiraling into euphoric excitement. Always his hand, like an eager child seeking love but being turned away, would return with increasing urgency to my left breast, his thumb pressing down on my nipple, only the thin lace of my bra between his fingers and my flesh. His arms encircled me. I felt his hands circle around my back.

I heard myself moan rather than speak, "Oh, you're not going to... you promis..." as his tongue continued to drive my mouth crazy.

"...don't worry," he moaned throatily as he rocked me, and his fingers just grazed the back of my bra and it was undone.

As if by magic, I thought. I can't take my own bra off that easily. I didn't even feel his fingers on the clasp. By the time I had completed my amazement over 'how did he do that?' I saw my bra straps sliding down my arms and being tossed to the floor. I couldn't help but delight in hearing his exclamation.

"Oh, they are **beautiful**," he cried, and his mouth proceeded to devour my right nipple while his right hand squeezed my left breast. This new rush of heady delirium had me crying out with all restraint evaporating. Soon he reversed the procedure of mouth and fingers so each of my nipples responded erectly to his squeezing, licking and sucking. He slowly took both my hands, crossing them at my wrists so they were being held there only by his left hand. My arms were stretched over my head. Now he was no longer so gentle, and while kissing and slightly biting and sucking at my neck, he started to squeeze my left breast and nipple with such savagery that I was soon crying out and having to catch my breath. Lightning flashes crazed red behind my tightly closed eyes.

Just when I absolutely couldn't stand the pain any longer he'd switch to the other nipple; while licking, blowing, kissing and sucking the tortured one back to normalcy. While mending the feel-good pain there, the other was then pinched through the same exquisite torment. Just when the pain became too agonizing, he would make me take a little more of it before releasing and licking my nipple back

to a greater and greater pleasure-filled ache. When he placed his hand between my legs I realized I had never been this like this before. I immediately raised up my hips for his probing fingers to grab and drag the thin garment off me. I felt the small satin *shwish* its way over my knees, the demands of the professor allowing me total freedom from my clothing.

He laid down next to me, his fingers taking possession of me between my legs. His lips covered mine as he quickly found my swelling oily button with his right hand. I cried out unashamedly, and found myself beginning to slowly undulate my hips shamelessly as he fingered, grasped and plundered every part of me with such a sudden ownership.

What a thoughtful lover he was! He wasn't going to mount me just then, but would allow me more of himself. Locking eyes with mine, he nodded at the prize I hadn't yet explored. What I saw between his legs reminded me immediately of the comedic expression 'a black baby's arm with a purple plum in its fist.' I found myself drawn to it hypnotically. I slid down next to it; this engorged black snake I couldn't take my eyes off. He lightly took my hand to this new discovery, silently encouraging me to know it better. My breath started coming harder and my hand trembled as I reached for the swollen flesh on my own initiative. I gave out a low whimper as I squeezed the hardening pole for the first time. Now I can't stop myself from continuing to squeeze it. Soon it responded with such stiffness that I could no longer get my hand completely around the swollen shaft. A proposed recklessness ran through me. The word *anything* began to make a wanton whisper inside my raging consciousness. My white hand looked small softly stroking the shiny smoothness of his ever-stiffening black shaft, finally moving slowly and lightly around the velvety hardness of the dark head. I could feel it respond like a separate being with a life all its own. Alcoholic sensuality mingled with the unthinkable desire to be ravaged by this very monster.

He was so intuitive he knew before I did what I wanted to do. It was like the professor could read my mind. Placing his hand on the back my head, he gently pushed me in the direction of his lust, adding in a gasping voice:

“Go ahead, enjoy yourself. Get used to it.”

I brought myself to it. The amazing velvet-like hardness of the dark, smooth flesh was intoxicating, and, getting close to the mammoth alien, I wetly took what I could of it into my eagerly opening maw. The shock of the bulbous, rubbery smoothness filled my salivating mouth. The thought that if I engaged in this effort

long enough I would actually cause the monster to orgasm into my suckling service added a danger and excitement to the act that made me weak. I felt a slow, warm swoon start to flow through me as I took a deep breath and sucked the giant head down my throat as far as I dared swallow. It was as if I was swallowing him in my serving, while losing myself in the slavery. The gagging. I stopped, took it out of my mouth, caught my breath, took a deep holding breath and tried yet again to encircle the headed guest with as much wet, oral devotion as I could muster. I welcomed it down my throat; immediately hearing him gasp and moan. I felt the professor's arms drawing me back up. With my head now resting on the pillow next to him, I whispered:

“Sorry I didn't do that very well.”

“It takes time,” he responded in a gasping, strained voice, as he mounted me, lowering his hand underneath to guide in his rock hard staff. Out of my mind with lust and excitement, I whispered back in his ear:

“Can I make it my term project, professor?”

“Gawd!” he cried, as I felt his huge hard wood demand entrance into my barely used womanhood. His hard insistence received more of my surrender. I could feel myself part for his ram, and soon the huge shock gave way to the accepting, all encompassing wet heat that I'd heard about but I'd never really known before. His huge, ever-stiff invasion took over my entire world, and, losing all control, I kept unfolding from a deeper submergence below, slavishly giving more and more of myself to him. His spontaneous cries of pleasure as he experienced my almost virginal architecture drove me over the edge. Normal inner consciousness and reason dissolved as I writhed and moaned, impaled by my own ecstatic submission to this giant live invasion - which plundered with a life of its own. An eager and willing vessel, my yielding rewarded me a volcanic pleasure along with the rising, rippling spasms of a physical and mental intoxication I had never experienced before. I was soaring up into the orgasmic explosion. Then I realized:

‘Holy shit! **This** is what my girlfriends were talking about! **I am finally really getting fucked!!** Oh yes, I'm coming! **Oh, this is it! This is it!**’ The climax of my orgasm had me losing consciousness, and then into blissful floating...

Now still in the resulting light sleep, I can do little except to realize that the sudden and loud knocking on my door is real. This can't be happening, I think; the afterglow will be ruined!

I knock over the tissue box as I hurriedly dry myself with one quick swipe n'grab a nearby sweatshirt. As I jump into some pants I realize a painful protest from my testes. I get to the door to see a somewhat familiar face.

“Hi, Marty! It’s Nick from church. Remember you said if you weren’t at church to come and get you? Remember?”

“No, I didn’t remember,” I said, hoping – so badly – that he was mistaken. Why had I gone and told this rather bizarre individual to “come get me” if I’m not in church? I just want to go back to bed. Now I’m also remembering that I have one-foot-in-shit at church since the moving van incident, and realize I have no choice if I am to be taken seriously there at all. Besides, I can’t let that pastor bum-rap me as someone wimping out of the witnessing I had promised I’d do.

“Yeah, we’re going witnessing at the lake, and we’re late. You remember we agreed that I’d come by and pick you up? When we were talking with the pastor?” he repeated.

He was right of course. My head was clearing. “Oh, yeah, I remember. Yeah, yeah, yeah. My fault. I spaced it out. I was just napping. I’m sorry. Gimme a moment to get dressed.”

“You’re dressed perfect right now,” he says, pointing to his own identical Church sweatshirt. I then realized that I had thrown on mine as I made my way to the door.

“Let me get some shoes on and brush my teeth.”

“Right, cause we’re really late.”

Nick has a particular odor that never fails to surround him, even on Sundays. He works in some kind of industrial cleaning capacity and the smell – while not offensive – is not pleasant either. It follows him everywhere. As we leave my house I notice we’re walking towards a brand new minivan.

“Nick, what’s this?” I ask, remembering the dented bomber I had seen him getting into after church. “Another gift from the Lord.”

“Woah, very nice. Praise the Lord.”

“Marty, last Monday the mechanic told me my old beater had just had it. Needed all new rods ‘n stuff; so like forget that. I just asked the Lord, I mean, I didn’t know what to do; and then about 5pm, the Lord told me ‘Go to Bob’s Chevrolet.’ I had \$15 in my pocket, and I drove out with this...”

Silence from me.

“...no money down,” he adds, his exuberance waning slightly. Well, he brought it up. I can’t resist twisting it in a little, although my voice remains neutral.

“*Sixteen percent interest?*” I ask innocently.

“*Twenty-one.*”

“*Oh.*”

Feeling guilty for both making him squirm at the usury while at the same time being jealous of his new ride, I need something to talk about. I bring up the message I had begun to listen to earlier.

“*Jimmy Swaggert had a message this morning on rock music and it’s satanic qualities. I wonder how much of that is actually present in the life of believers, even if we’re not listening to the more obvious satanic stuff.*”

Nick had a way of smiling when he felt particularly emboldened. A small upturn of the mouth combined with an imperceptible shaking of the head. I half expected him to say ‘*Oh ye of little faith, how long must I suffer you?*’

“Having to worry about stuff like that is OK for your normal believers, regular churchgoers,” he said, “but,” he added with a facial expression that said *puhleeze*, “not for a prophet.” Nick was of a mind that if you didn’t agree with him concerning his own spiritual gift, you obviously lacked spiritual insight, but he would of course pray for you to attain the proper level of discernment.

I worried briefly that he really was a prophet and knew of the seditious sexual initiatives that had filled my very recent behavior. Although this kind of hospital mentality hovered in my consciousness just long enough for me to resent the thought; react to it and make me anxious, it almost never broke out into verbal expression. The latter behavior, as everyone knows, has a category associated with it, called *schizophrenia*.

He turned briefly toward me. “Did I tell you what the Lord did for me a few days ago?”

“No.”

“It was a sign from the Lord regarding my spiritual gift. I’ve felt his leading in this area for a while now. I was driving my cab – y’know, my second job – going down the freeway, and the next thing I know, I’m at the airport! The Lord just picked me up and put me down at the airport line for taxis.”

“Wow! Praise the Lord!” I said unsteadily. “Uhh, I’m not quite sure wha...”

“Marty, I was on the freeway on my way out to the airport to get on the taxi line, and G-d just put me there. In a twinkling of an eye.”

“Wow, isn’t this kind of like Elijah? Did you see anything, like up in the air?”

“No. it was almost like suddenly waking up, and snap! There I was... at the airport.”

With my energy spent and my balls aching terribly, I pass on the urge to comment in a way that might contradict the ethereal nature of his experience.

We park and I see two other men from church standing with the assistant pastor. My spirits start to rise as I remember a couple of others from the previous week’s meeting who said they would come, and apparently have chosen not to. Gloating over this situation, I can now look forward to receiving approval compared to those MIAs. I say with innocent curiosity, “Where’s Sam and Ron?”

“Not here,” Nick says with a voice barely able to control his own glee. He too is elated to be able to appear superior to those who have been found wanting. The lack of commitment on the part of the no-shows will allow us the opportunity to happily judge them within a proper Christian framework. With proper forethought, a prayerful allusion could be made to the parable of the two sons Jesus speaks of. Each one ordered into the vineyard, but only one went, doncha’ know...

We approach the pastor, assistant pastor, Bill and Robbie, who each offer us a warm smile and a wave.

“Marty, glad you’re here, brother.”

“Sorry I’m late. I just...forgot. Forgive me.”

“You’re here. That’s all that matters. Let’s pray.”

Standing off to the side of the parking lot, all six of us hold hands in a circle. People walk by and I feel a natural embarrassment, which I simply attribute to satanic imps.

“Lord,” Pastor Phil begins, “we ask you to bless our time here today, that we might fulfill your word to go out into all the world and make converts of the nations. We realize there are many hurting people here, Lord, who need the saving grace of the Lord Jesus, and we pray that we may bring many into the Kingdom, in Jesus name, amen.”

The pastor was holding my left hand, and Nick my right. It was at that moment that I realized with increasing irritability that many of the little hairs around my

belly-button were trying to break free from their pasted-with-body-fluid state, a result of my hurried one-swipe-dry less than an hour before.

The itch – and my concomitant awareness of it – was becoming almost unbearable, as both my hands were imprisoned in the prayer circle. The assistant pastor was on the Pastor’s left, and the prayers started to be spoken one person at a time as each believer had his turn.

“Satan, we bind you in the name of Jesus.”

“Yes, we bind you Satan,” I chirp in, stamping my foot and swiveling my hip a little in the hope that would break these tiny hairs free from their agonizing semi-imprisonment. They stretched but would not break free of their tormenting state, the pasting tendency of my drying bodily fluid waning *oh too slowly* with every breath I took. I started to feel panic as I obsess over the itch, and it is threatening to overrun my consciousness.

“You have no place here, devil.”

“We count these people saved in Jesus name!”

“Hallelujah!”

“Glory to G-d.”

“Go, in Jesus name,” Nick adds.

Finally, enduring it no longer an option, I enter into the itch, become its substance, ride its river of calling beyond the flesh into the very spirit of the itch, urging its benefaction on. I ride at the head of an imaginary antennae-like-itch-worm crying out for greater itch even as it buries its tic-like antennae into my skin. I then pull its mammoth head up, increasing the itch beyond any red-line. I stand, riding the largest itch-worm in all of creation, a master of nature – a lesson served in Jedi mind control.

Now it’s my turn.

“Father, we know it is your spirit that saves, not our efforts. Nevertheless, help us, Lord, to be clean on the inside, that we would not be like the hypocrites, Scribes and Pharisees, all clean like white-washed sepulchers on the outside, but inside like unto dead men’s bones and all corruption. Have mercy on us all, and give grace upon all that we do, that none would be lost because of our own weakness and failing. Help us Lord, in Jesus name.” Amen.