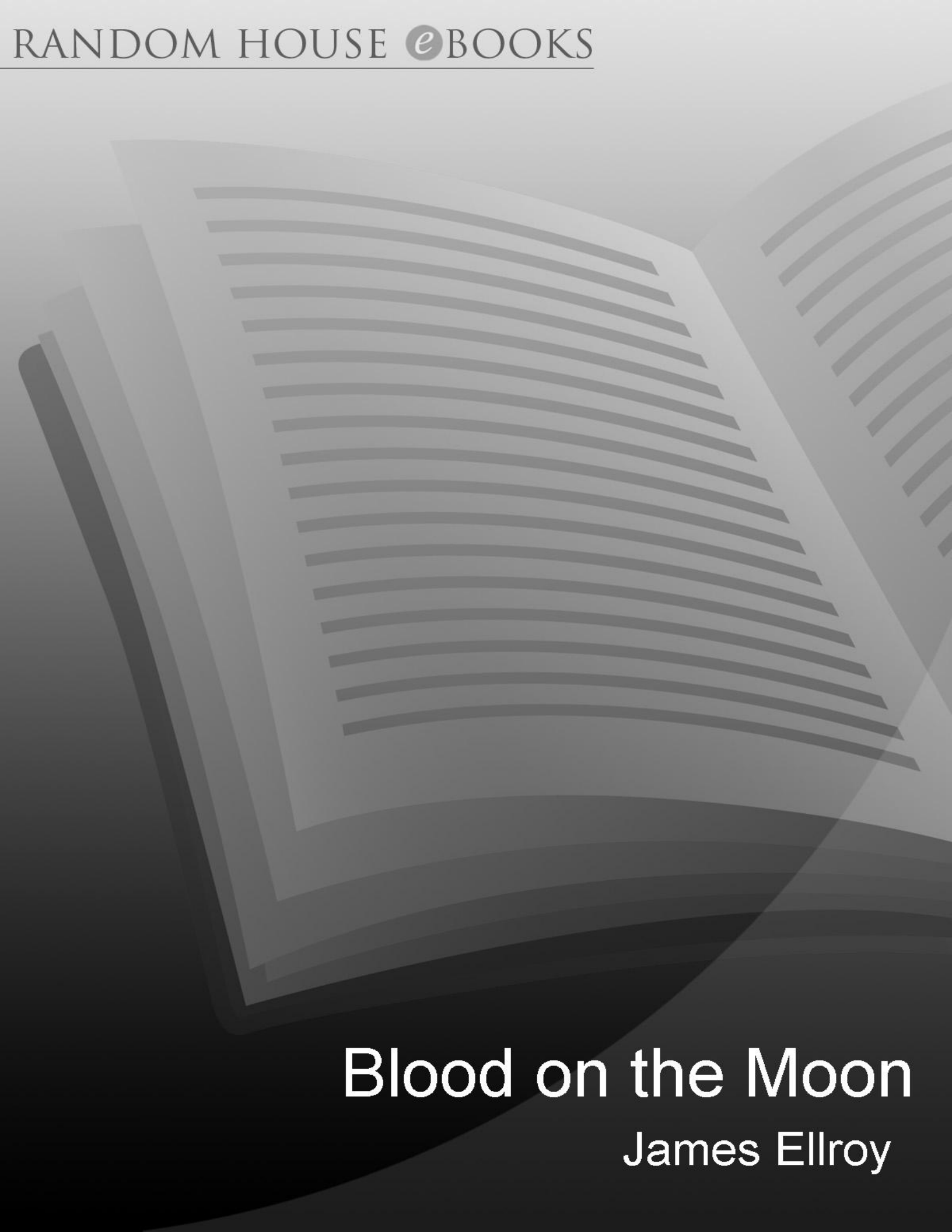


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



Blood on the Moon

James Ellroy

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About the Author

James Ellroy was born in Los Angeles in 1948. He is the author of the acclaimed 'LA Quartet': *The Black Dahlia*, *The Big Nowhere*, *LA Confidential* and *White Jazz*. His most recent novel, *Blood's a Rover*, completes the magisterial 'Underworld USA Trilogy' - the first two volumes of which (*American Tabloid* and *The Cold Six Thousand*) were both *Sunday Times* bestsellers.

ALSO BY JAMES ELLROY

THE UNDERWORLD U.S.A. TRILOGY

American Tabloid
The Cold Six Thousand
Blood's a Rover

THE L.A. QUARTET

The Black Dahlia
The Big Nowhere
L.A. Confidential
White Jazz

MEMOIR

My Dark Places
The Hilliker Curse

SHORT STORIES

Hollywood Nocturnes

JOURNALISM/SHORT FICTION

Crime Wave
Destination: Morgue!

EARLY NOVELS

Brown's Requiem
Clandestine
Because the Night

Suicide Hill
Killer on the Road

Blood on the Moon

James Ellroy



arrow books

In Memory of
KENNETH MILLAR
1915-1983

The bay trees in our country are all withered,
and meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven;
the pale face moon looks bloody on the earth,
and lean look'd prophets whisper fearful change.

Shakespeare
Richard II

PART ONE
FIRST TASTES OF BLOOD

CHAPTER ONE

FRIDAY, JUNE 10TH, 1964 was the start of a KRLA golden oldie weekend. The two conspirators scouting the territory where the “kidnaping” would take place blasted their portable radio at full volume to drown out the sound of power saws, hammers and crowbars – the noise of the third floor classroom renovation and the music of the Fleetwoods battling for audial supremacy.

Larry “Birdman” Craigie, the radio held close to his head, marveled at the irony of this construction work taking place a scant week before school was to close for the summer. Just then, Gary U. S. Bonds came over the airwaves, singing: “School is out at last, and I’m so glad I passed,” and Larry fell to the sawdust covered linoleum floor, convulsed with laughter. School was maybe gonna be out, but he wasn’t gonna pass, and his name was Chuck and he didn’t give a fuck. He rolled on the floor, heedless of his recently swiped purple fuzzy Sir Guy shirt.

Delbert “Whitey” Haines started to get disgusted and mad. The Birdman was either psycho or faking it, which meant that his long time stooge was smarter than him, which meant that he was laughing *at* him. Whitey waited until Larry’s laughter wound down and he propped himself into push-up position. He knew what was coming next: A series of lurid remarks about doing push-ups on Ruthie Rosenberg, how Larry was going to make her blow him while he hung from the rings in the girls’ gym.

Larry’s laughter trailed off, and he opened his mouth to speak. Whitey didn’t let him get that far; he liked Ruthie and hated to hear nice girls blasphemed. He nuzzled the

toe of his boot into Larry's shoulder blades, right where he knew the zits were really bad. Larry screeched and hopped to his feet, cradling the radio into his chest.

"You didn't have to do that."

"No," Whitey said, "but I did. I can read your mind, psycho. Phony psycho. So don't say no nasty things about nice girls. We got the punk to deal with, not nice girls."

Larry nodded; that he was included in such important plans took the sting out of the attack. He walked to the nearest window and looked out and thought of the punk in his saddle shoes and his argyle sweaters and his pretty boy looks and his poetry review that he printed up in the camera shop on Aluarado where he lived, sweeping up the store in exchange for room and board.

The *Marshall High Poetry Review* – punk, sissy poems; gooey love stuff that everyone knew was dedicated to that stuck-up Irish parochial school transfer girl and the stuck-up snooty bitches in her poet crowd, and vicious fucking attacks on him and Whitey and all the *righteous* homeboys at Marshall. When Larry had gotten zonked on glue and cherry bombed the Folk Song Club, the *Review* had commemorated the occasion with line drawings of him in a storm trooper's outfit and maiming prose: "We now have a brownshirt named Birdman – illiterate, not much of a wordman. His weapons are stealth, and poor mental health; he's really much more like a turdman."

Whitey had fared even worse: after kicking Big John Kafesjian's ass in a fair fight in the Rotunda Court, the punk had devoted an entire copy of the *Review* to an "epic" poem detailing the event, calling Whitey a "white trash loser provocateur" and ending with a prediction of his fate, phrased like an epitaph:

"No autopsy can e'er reveal, what his darkest heart
did most conceal; that shallow muscleman void,

defined by terror and hate – Let that be the requiem for this light-weight.”

Larry had volunteered to give Whitey a swift revenge, doing himself a favor in the process: The Boys’ V.P. had said that he would be expelled for one more fight or cherry bomb episode, and the idea of no more school nearly made him cream in his jeans. But Whitey had nixed the notion of quick retribution, saying, “No, it’s too easy. The punk has got to suffer like we did. He made us laughing stocks. We’re gonna return the compliment, and then some.”

So their plan of disrobing, beating, genital painting, and shaving was hatched. Now, if it all worked out, was the time. Larry watched Whitey trace swastikas in the sawdust with a two by four. The Del-Viking’s rendition of “Come Go With Me” ended and the news came on, meaning it was three o’clock. Larry heard the whoops a moment later, then watched as the workmen gathered up their handtools and power equipment and hustled off down the main staircase, leaving them alone to wait for the poet.

Larry swallowed and nudged Whitey, afraid of upsetting his silent artwork.

“Are you sure he’ll come? What if he figures out the note’s a phony?”

Whitey looked up and kicked out at a half-opened wall locker door, snapping it off at its hinges. “He’ll be here. A note from that Irish cunt? He’ll think it’s some kind of fucking lovers’ rendezvous. Just relax. My sister wrote the note. Pink stationery, a girl’s handwriting. Only it ain’t gonna be no lovers’ rendezvous. You know what I mean, homeboy?”

Larry nodded; he knew.

The conspirators waited in silence, Larry daydreaming, Whitey rummaging through the abandoned lockers, looking for left-behinds. When they heard footsteps on the second

floor corridor below them, Larry grabbed a pair of jockey shorts from a brown paper bag and pulled a tube of acetate airplane glue from his pocket. He squeezed the tube's entire contents onto the shorts, then flattened himself against the row of lockers nearest to the stairwell. Whitey crouched beside him, homemade knuckle dusters coiled in his right fist.

"Sweetheart?"

The endearment, whispered hesitantly, preceded the sound of footsteps that seemed to grow bolder as they neared the third story landing. Whitey counted to himself, and when he calculated that the poet was within grabbing range he pushed Larry out of the way and stationed himself next to the edge of the stairs.

"Darling?"

Larry started to laugh, and the poet froze in mid-step, his hand on the stair rail. Whitey grabbed the hand and jerked upwards, sending the poet sprawling over the last two steps. He yanked again, relieving the pressure at just the right angle to twist the poet into a kneeling position. When his adversary was staring up at him with impotent, beseeching eyes, Whitey kicked him in the stomach, then pulled him to his feet as he trembled uncontrollably.

"Now, Birdman!" Whitey screeched.

Larry wrapped the glue-streaked jockey shorts around the poet's mouth and nostrils and pushed until his tremors became gurgling sounds and the skin around his temples went from pink to red to blue and he started to gasp for breath.

Larry relinquished his grip and backed away, the jockey shorts falling to the floor. The poet writhed on his feet, then fell backward, crashing into a half open locker door. Whitey stood his ground, both fists cocked, watching the poet retch for breath, whispering, "We killed him. We honest to fucking god killed him."

Larry was on his knees, praying and making the sign of the cross, when the poet's gasps finally caught oxygen and he expelled a huge ball of glue covered phlegm, followed by a screeching syllable, "*sc-sc-sc*."

"Scum!"

He got the word out in a rush of new breath, the color in his face returning to normal as he drew himself slowly to his knees. "Scum! Dirty white trash, low-life scum! Stupid, mean, ugly, wanton!"

Whitey Haines started to laugh as relief flooded through him. Larry Craigie began to dry-sob in relief and molded his prayer forming hands into fists. Whitey's laughter became hysterical, and the poet, on his feet now, turned his fury on him: "Muscle-bound auto mechanic pecker-wood trash! No woman would ever touch you! The girls I know all laugh at you and your two inch dick! No dick, no sex fool. No—"

Whitey went red, and started to shake. He pulled his foot back and sent it full-force into the poet's genitals. The poet screamed and fell to his knees. Whitey yelled, "Turn the radio on, full blast!"

Larry obeyed, and the Beachboys flooded the corridor as Whitey kicked and pummeled the poet, who drew himself into a fetal ball, muttering, "scum, scum" as the blows rained into him.

When the poet's face and bare arms were covered with blood, Whitey stepped back to savor his revenge. He pulled down his fly to deliver a warm liquid *coup de grace*, and discovered he was hard. Larry noticed this, and looked to his leader for some clue to what was supposed to happen. Suddenly Whitey was terrified. He looked down at the poet, who moaned "scum," and spat out a stream of blood onto the steel-toed paratrooper boots. Now Whitey knew what his hardness meant, and he knelt beside the poet and pulled off his Levi cords and boxer shorts and spread his legs and blunderingly plunged himself into him. The poet screamed once as he entered; then his breathing settled

into something strangely like ironic laughter. Whitey finished, withdrew and looked to his shock-stilled underling for support. To make it easy for him, he turned up the volume on the radio until Elvis Presley wailed into a garbled screech; then he watched as Larry delivered his ultimate acquiescence.

They left him there, bereft of tears or the will to feel anything beyond the hollowness of his devastation. As they walked away, "Cathy's Clown," by the Everly Brothers, came on the radio. They had both laughed, and Whitey had kicked him one last time.

He lay there until he was certain the quad would be deserted. He thought of his true love and imagined that she was with him, her head resting on his chest, telling him how much she loved the sonnets he composed for her.

Finally, he got to his feet. It was hard to walk; each step shot a rending pain through his bowels up into his chest. He felt at his face; it was covered with dried matter that had to be blood. He scrubbed his face furiously with his sleeve until the abrasions ran with fresh trickles of blood over smooth skin. This made him feel better, and the fact that he hadn't betrayed tears made him feel better still.

Except for a few odd groups of kids hanging out and playing catch, the quad was deserted, and the poet made his way across it in slow, painful steps. Gradually, he became aware of a warm liquid running down his legs. He pulled up his right trouser leg and saw that his sock was soaked in blood laced with white matter. Taking off his socks, he hobbled toward the "Arch of Fame," a marble inlaid walkway that commemorated the school's previous graduating classes. The poet wiped the bloody handfuls of cotton over mascots depicting the Athenians of '63 all the way back through the Delphians of '31, then strode barefoot, gaining strength and purpose with each step, out the school's south gate and onto Griffith Park Boulevard,

his mind bursting with odd bits of poetry and sentimental rhymes; all for her.

When he saw the florist's shop at the corner of Griffith Park and Hyperion, he knew that this was his destination. He steeled himself for human contact and went in and purchased a dozen red roses, to be sent to an address he knew by heart but had never visited. He selected a blank card to go with them, and scribbled on the back some musings about love being etched in blood. He paid the florist, who smiled and assured him that the flowers would be delivered within the hour.

The poet walked outside, realizing that there were still two hours of daylight left, and that he had no place to go. This frightened him, and he tried composing an ode to waning daylight to keep his fear at bay. He tried, and tried, but his mind wouldn't click in and his fear became terror and he fell to his knees, sobbing for a word or phrase to make it right again.

CHAPTER TWO

WHEN WATTS BURST into flames on August 23, 1965, Lloyd Hopkins was building sand castles on the beach at Malibu and inhabiting them with members of his family and fictional characters out of his own brilliant imagination.

A crowd of children had gathered around the gangly twenty-three year old, eager to be entertained, yet somehow deferential to the great mind that they sensed in the big young man whose hands so deftly molded drawbridges, moats, and parapets. Lloyd was at one with the children and with his own mind, which he viewed as a separate entity. The children watched, and he sensed their eagerness and desire to be with him and knew instinctively when to gift them with a smile or waggle his eyebrows so that they would be satisfied and he could return to his real play.

His Irish Protestant ancestors were fighting with his lunatic brother Tom for control of the castle. It was a battle between the good loyalists of the past and Tom and his rabbleroising paramilitary cohorts who thought that Negroes should be shipped back to Africa and that all roadways should be privately owned. The loonies had the upper hand temporarily – Tom and his backyard arsenal of hand grenades and automatic weaponry were formidable – but the good loyalists were staunch-hearted where Tom and his band were craven, and led by about-to-be police officer Lloyd, the Irish band had surmounted technology and was now raining flaming arrows into the midst of Tom's hardware, causing it to explode. Lloyd envisioned flames in the sand in front of him, and wondered for the eight

thousandth time that day what the Academy would be like. Tougher than basic training? It would have to be, or the city of Los Angeles was in deep trouble.

Lloyd sighed. He and his loyalists had won the battle and his parents, inexplicably lucid, had come to praise the victorious son and heap scorn on the loser.

"You can't beat brains, Doris," his father told his mother. "I wish it weren't true, but they rule the world. Learn another language, Lloyd; Tom can commune with those low-lives in that phone sales racket, but you solve puzzles and rule the world." His mother nodded mutely; the stroke had destroyed her ability to talk.

Tom just glowered in defeat.

Out of nowhere, Lloyd heard the music and very slowly, very consciously forced himself to turn in the direction from which the raucous sound was coming.

A little girl was holding a radio, cradled preciously into herself, attempting to sing along. When Lloyd saw the little girl, his heart melted. *She* didn't know how he hated music, how it undercut his thought processes. He would have to be gentle with her, as he was with women of all ages. He caught the little girl's attention, speaking softly, even as his headache grew: "Do you like my castle, sweetheart?"

"Y ... Yes," the little girl said.

"It's for you. The Good Loyalists fought the battle for a fair damsel, and that damsel is you."

The music was growing deafening; Lloyd thought briefly that the whole world could hear it. The little girl shook her head coquettishly, and Lloyd said, "Can you turn the radio off, sweetie? Then I'll take you on a tour of your castle." The child complied, and fumbled the volume switch the wrong way just as the music stopped and a stern-voiced announcer intoned: "And Governor Edmund G. Brown has just announced that the National Guard has been ordered into South Central Los Angeles in force to stop the two day reign of looting and terror that has already left four dead.

All members of the following units are to report immediately ..."

The little girl fiddled the radio off just as Lloyd's headache metamorphosed into a perfect stillness. "You ever read *Alice in Wonderland*, sweetheart?" he asked.

"My mommy read me from the picture book," the little girl said.

"Good. Then you know what it means to follow the rabbit down the hole?"

"Does it mean what Alice did when she went into Wonderland?"

"That's right; and that's what old Lloyd has to do now - the radio just said so."

"Are you 'Old Lloyd'?"

"Yes."

"Then what's going to happen to your castle?"

"You inherit it, fair damsel - it's yours to do with as you please."

"Really?"

"Really."

The little girl hopped into the air and came down square on top of the castle, obliterating it. Lloyd ran for his car and what he hoped would be his baptism by fire.

In the Armory, Staff Sergeant Beller took his prize cadre aside and told them that for a few bucks they could appreciably cut down the odds of getting eaten alive in niggerland and maybe have a few laughs, besides.

He motioned Lloyd Hopkins and two other P.F.C.s into the lavatory and displayed his wares and elaborated: ".45 automatic. Your classic officer's sidearm. Guaranteed to drop any firebreathing nigger at thirty yards, regardless of where it hits him. Strictly illegal for E.M., and a valuable asset in its own right - but these babies are fully automatic - machine pistols, with my specially devised elephant clip - twenty shots, reload in five seconds flat, The piece

overheats, but I throw in a glove. The piece, two elephant clips and the glove – an even C-note. Takers?” He proffered the sidearms around. The two motor pool P.F.C.s eyed them longingly and hefted them with love, but declined.

“I’m broke, Sarge,” the first P.F.C. said.

“I’m staying behind at the command post with the halftracks, Sergeant,” the second P.F.C. said.

Beller sighed, and looked up at Lloyd Hopkins, who gave him the creeps. “The Brain,” the guys in the company called him. “Hoppy, what about you?”

“I’ll take them both,” Lloyd said.

Dressed in Class C fatigues, leggings, full bandoliers and helmet liners, Co. A of the 2nd Battalion, 46th Division, California National Guard stood at parade rest in the main meeting hall of the Glendale Armory, waiting to be briefed. Their battalion commander, a forty-four year old Pasadena dentist who held the reserve rank of Lieutenant Colonel, formulated his thoughts and orders into what he hoped would be considered a fierce brevity and spoke into the microphone. “Gentlemen, we are going into the firestorm. The Los Angeles police have just informed us that a forty-eight square mile portion of South Central Los Angeles is engulfed in flames, and that entire commercial blocks have been pillaged and then set on fire. We are being sent in to protect the lives of the firemen battling those fires and to divert through our presence the looting and other criminal activity taking place. This is the sole regular infantry company in an otherwise armored division. You men, I’m sure, will be the spearhead of this peace-keeping force of civilian soldiers. You will be briefed further when we reach our objective. Good day, and God be with you!”

Nobody mentioned God as the convoy of armored half tracks and personnel carriers rolled out of Glendale toward the Golden State Freeway southbound. The main topics of conversation were guns, sex, and Negroes, until P.F.C.

Lloyd Hopkins, sweltering in the canvas covered halftrack, took off his fatigue jacket and introduced fear and immortality:

“First of all, you have to say it to yourselves, get it out in the air, say it – ‘I’m afraid. I don’t wanna die!’ You got that? No, don’t say it out loud, that takes the power out of it. Say it to yourselves. There. Two, say this, too – I’m a nice white boy going to college who joined the fucking National Guard to get out of two years active duty, right?”

The civilian soldiers, whose average age was twenty, started to drift in to Lloyd’s drift, and a few of them muttered, “Right.”

“I can’t hear you!” Lloyd bellowed, imitating Sergeant Beller.

“Right!” the guardsmen yelled in unison.

Lloyd laughed, and the others, relieved at the break in the tension, followed suit. Lloyd breathed out, letting his big frame go slack in an imitation of a Negro’s shuffle. “And you all be afraid of de colored man?” he said in broad dialect.

Silence greeted the question, followed by a general breakout of hushed conversations. This angered Lloyd; he felt his momentum was drifting away, destroying this transcendent moment of his life.

He banged the butt end of his M-14 into the metal floorboard of the half-track. “Right!” he screamed. “Right, you dumb-fuck, pussy-whipped, nigger-scared, chicken-shit motherfuckers! Right?” He banged his rifle again. “Right? Right? Right? Right? Right?”

“*Right!!!*” The half-track exploded with the word, the *feeling*, the new pride in candor, and the laughter that followed grew deafening in its freedom and bravado.

Lloyd slammed his rifle butt one last time, to call the group to order. “Then they can’t hurt us. Do you know that?” He waited until he was rewarded by a nod of the head from every man present, then pulled his bayonet from

its scabbard and cut a large hole in the canvas top of the half-track. Being tall, he was able to peer out the top with ease. In the distance he could see the flatlands of his beloved L.A. Basin awash in smog. Spirals of flame and smoke covered its southern perimeter. Lloyd thought it was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

The division bivouacked at McCallum Park on Florence and 90th Street, a mile from the heart of the firestorm. Trees were downed to provide space for the hundred-odd military vehicles that would cruise the streets of Watts that night, filled with men armed to the teeth, and C-rations were distributed from the back of a five ton truck while platoon leaders briefed their men on their assignments.

Rumors abounded, fed by a cadre of L.A.P.D. and Sheriff's liaison officers: The Black Muslims were coming out in force, in whiteface, bent on hitting the profusion of discount appliance stores near Vermont and Slauson; scores of Negro youth gangs on pep pills were stealing cars and forming "kamikaze" squads and heading for Beverly Hills and Bel-Air; Rob "Magawambi" Jones and his Afro-Americans for Goldwater had taken a distinct left turn and were demanding that Mayor Yorty grant them eight commercial blocks on Wilshire Boulevard as reparation for "L.A.P.D. Crimes Against Humanity." If their terms were not met within twenty-four hours, those eight blocks would be incinerated by firebombs hidden deep within the bowels of the LaBrea Tar Pits.

Lloyd Hopkins didn't believe a word of it. He understood the hyperbole of fear and understood further that his fellow civilian soldiers and cops were hyping themselves up to kill and that a lot of poor black bastards out to grab themselves a color TV and a case of booze were going to die.

Lloyd gobbled his C-rations and listened to his platoon leader, Lt. Champion, the night manager of a Bob's Big Boy Restaurant, explain orders that had come down to him from

several other higher echelon civilian soldiers: "Being infantry, we will provide foot patrol, walking point for the armored guys – checking out doorways, alleys, letting our presence be known; bayonets fixed, combat stance, that kind of shit. Look tough. The armored platoon we trained with last summer at camp will be the platoon we hang with tonight. Questions? Everyone know who their squad leader is? Any new men with questions?"

Sergeant Beller, stretched out on the grass at the back of the platoon, raised his hand and said: "Loot, you know that the platoon is hanging in at four men over strength? Fifty-four men?"

Campion cleared his throat. "Yes...uh...yes, Sergeant, I do."

"Sir, do you also know that we got three men who got special M.O.S.s? Three men who ain't regular grunts?"

"You mean ..."

"I mean, *sir*, that myself, Hopkins, and Jensen are infantry scouts, and I'm sure you'll agree we could be of more value to this operation by running far point ahead of the armor. Right, *sir*?"

Lloyd saw the Lieutenant start to waver, and suddenly realized that *he* wanted it as bad as Beller did. Raising his hand, he said, "Sir, Sergeant Beller is right; we can walk far point *and* protect the platoon better *and* make it more autonomous. The platoon is over strength, and ..."

The Lieutenant capitulated. "All right then," he said, "Beller, Hopkins and Jensen, you walk point two hundred yards ahead of the convoy. Be careful – stay sharp. No more questions? Platoon dismissed."

Lloyd and Beller found each other just as the tanks and half-tracks were starting their engines, flooding the twilight air with the sound of volatile combustion. Beller smiled; Lloyd smiled back in silent complicity.

"*Far* point, Sergeant?"

"*Far, far* point, Hoppy."

"What about Jensen?"

"He's just a kid. I'll tell him to hang back with the armor. We're covered. We've got carte blanche; that's the important thing."

"Opposite sides of the street?"

"Sounds right to me. Whistle twice if it gets hairy. Why do they call you 'The Brain'?"

"Because I'm very intelligent."

"Intelligent enough to know that the niggers are destroying the whole fucking country?"

"No, too intelligent for that shit. Anyone with half a brain knows that this is just a temporary blow-out and that when it's over it'll be business as usual. I'm here to see about saving innocent lives."

Beller said scornfully, "That's a crock. It just proves brains are over-rated. Guts are what counts."

"Brains rule the world."

"But the world's all fucked up."

"I don't know. Let's see what it's like out there."

"Yeah, let's do that." Beller began to worry about his ass. Hoppy was starting to sound like a nigger lover.

They ditched the division completely, walking south towards where the flames rose the highest and the gunfire sounded its loudest echoes.

Lloyd took the north side of 93rd Street and Beller the south, rifles at high port with bayonets fixed and sharpened, eyes scanning row after row of cheap white clapboard houses where Negro families peered from lighted windows and sat on porches, drinking, smoking, chattering and waiting for something to *happen*.

They hit Central. Lloyd gulped and felt a trickle of sweat run down into his skivvies, which hung below his hipbones, weighted down by the two specially constructed automatics jammed into his waistband.

Beller whistled from across the street and pointed forward. Lloyd nodded as he felt a whiff of smoke hit his nostrils. They walked south, and it took long moments for Lloyd's head to click into place and assimilate the epiphanies, the perfect logic of the self-destruction he was viewing:

Liquor stores, night clubs, process parlors and storefront churches interspersed with vacant lots covered with abandoned cars burned out from the inside. Gutted storefront after gutted storefront spilling profusions of broken liquor bottles; broken glass everywhere; the gutters filled with cheap electric ware - non-hockable items obviously looted in haste and discarded when the looters realized they were valueless.

Lloyd poked his M-14 into smashed-in windows, squinting into the darkness, cocking his ears the way he had seen dogs do it, listening for the slightest sound or presence of movement. There was nothing - only the wail of sirens and the crack of gunshots in the distance.

Beller trotted across the street just as an L. A.P.D. black-and-white turned onto Central from 94th. Two flak-coated officers jumped out, the driver running up to Lloyd and demanding: "What the fuck are you *doing* here?"

Beller answered, startling the cops, who swiveled to face him, reaching for their .38s. "Far point, officer! My buddy and I been assigned to run ahead of our company and search out snipers. We're infantry scouts."

Lloyd knew that the cops didn't buy it and that he *had* to pursue the violent wonder of Watts without his low-life partner. He sent a sharp look Beller's way and said, "I think we're lost. We were only supposed to go out three blocks ahead, but we took a wrong turn somewhere. All the houses on these numbered streets look alike." He hesitated, trying to look bewildered.

Beller caught the drift and said, "Yeah. All these houses look alike. All these niggers on their steps sloppin' up juice

look alike, too.”

The older of the two cops nodded, then pointed south and said, “You guys with that artillery down near 102nd? The heavy-duty coon hunting?”

Lloyd and Beller looked at each other. Beller licked his lips to try to keep from laughing. “Yes,” they said in unison.

“Then get in the car. You ain’t lost no more.”

As they highballed it southbound without lights or siren, Lloyd told the cops he was flagged for the October class at the academy and that he wanted the riot to be his *solo* training ground. The younger cop whooped and said, “Then this riot *is* a preordained training ground for you. How tall are you, six-four? Six-five? With your size, you’re gonna get sent straight to 77th Street Division, Watts, these self-same fucking streets we’re cruising right now. After the smoke clears and the fucking liberals run off at the mouth about the niggers being victims of poverty, there’s gonna be the job of maintaining order over some very agitated bad-ass niggers who’ve had a distinct taste of blood. What’s your name, kid?”

“Hopkins.”

“You ever kill anyone, Hopkins?”

“No, sir.”

“Don’t call me ‘sir.’ You ain’t a cop yet, and I’m a plain old patrolman. Well, I killed lots of guys in Korea. Lots and *lots*, and it changed me. Things look different now. Real different. I’ve talked about it to other guys who’ve lost their cherry, and we all agree: You appreciate different things. You see innocent people, like little kids, and you want them to stay that way because you got no innocence yourself. Little things like little kids and their toys and pets get to you, ‘cause you know they’re heading straight into this big fucking shitstorm and you don’t want them to. Then you see people who got no regard for gentle things, for decent things, and you gotta come down hard on them. You gotta protect what two cents worth of innocence there is in the