



BEYOND THE EDGE

by T. R. Uthco

Tuumba 8

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Cover Photo by Diane A. Hall

Verbal Muzak *From Beyond The Edge*

April 26, 1976. San Francisco. Doug Hall and Jody Procter of T. R. Uthco, a San Francisco art/performance group, sat 60 feet above the pavement in chairs bolted to the masonry wall outside the east windows of the third floor La Mamelle Gallery on 12th Street. They sat from 9:00 in the morning until 3:00 in the afternoon, and during this time they talked continuously. The two performers were clearly visible to spectators on the street below. The sounds of their amplified voices and video images from two nearby cameras were fed into the gallery space. Their monologues, performed previously, but never for longer than two hours, were restricted in only one way — both presented a narrative description in the third person, male gender, past tense. They conceived of their voices as verbal muzak and maintained a constant babble, an endless stream of consciousness. Sitting so high above the ground, occupied with this ceaseless talk, the performers, who are both afraid of heights, created a psychic climate in which they believed they were going crazy. The event was called "32 Feet Per Second Per Second".

What follows is a transcript of 22 minutes taken from the last hour of their spontaneous double monologue.

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He said, "It couldn't be any worse than a lot of stuff I've had in my life." So he got down on the floor on his hands and knees. And he leaned his face down into the dish. And he sniffed it, and he said, "I ain't gonna eat this." He said, "No wonder the cat won't eat that. I bet the cat would like a t.v. dinner." And anyway he was getting hungry himself. It was time to eat dinner. He was hungry, he was tired, but he was mainly hungry, he decided. So he went into the freezer and he had a choice between four turkey dinners with rice and peas, and with a baked alaska, or some kind of dessert. It wasn't baked alaska. He couldn't really tell what it was. But it looked good. He could tell from the outside of the package that it definitely looked good. It looked wholesome and by God, it looked American. So he took the t.v. dinner, the turkey t.v. dinner for himself. And he took the beef t.v. dinner for the cat. And he turned his oven to 275°, and he slipped them in. And he said, "In three quarters of an hour. . ."

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And he took his cock out. He had a hard on. And he jerked off in the dog dish. And the man watched him. And the man kicked him. The man kicked him hard in the ass and he rolled over. And then the man kicked him in the face and he felt the boot biting into his jaw, felt his jaw snap. And the man kicked him in the nuts. And his nuts were open. And the man kicked him again. The man took a knife. The man said he wanted to cut one of his fingers off. The woman was screaming, "Stop! Stop!" The woman was screaming, "Stop!" The woman was screaming, "Stop!" And he kicked him. And he took him and dragged him out of the door and he left him on the front door step. He lay there bleeding, he lay there bleeding on the front door step. And he said, he said to himself, he said, "Maybe this was what was meant to happen. Maybe this is what today was all about. Maybe this is why it all happened. Maybe that is why the house was burned. Maybe it is related to that. Maybe it was related to the sheet." The sheet

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He said to himself, "In three quarters of an hour. . ." He really thought to himself. He mainly talked to himself when he was out on the street, but he talked to himself sometimes when he was in the apartment. But he usually just thought to himself when he was in the apartment. And he thought to himself, and he talked to himself while he was thinking to himself, and he said to himself, "By God, that's gonna be a good dinner for a cat to eat." He sat back down at the kitchen table and took a drag off his cigarette. He felt good. He felt okay. He picked up the dish of cat food and put it next to the sink. He could understand why a cat wouldn't want to eat such food, I mean it was a little bit disgusting. It smelled a little bit disgusting. And there's no reason why a cat would eat such food that tasted so disgusting. And probably he'd never had to eat such food before. He went back and sat down in the chair. It was beginning to get dark. It was beginning to get slightly dark. It was beginning to get dark enough to turn on the lights. He went over to the door where the light switch was for

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was soaked in blood. And he felt with his fingers. He rubbed his fingers up along his jaw and felt the broken bones. He felt the blood and the teeth missing, and he looked up to see the man's fat face staring down at him from the window of the front door, shaking his fist. The silent sound, the man staring at him. Bitter, confused, dejected, he wondered if he could walk, he wondered if he could stand up. His knees felt weak. He knew that his jaw was broken, but he wondered if he was hurt in any other way, and he stood up and wrapped the sheet around him, and he walked back out. And he wondered if it had really been necessary to shave that day. Maybe it hadn't been necessary. Maybe it was unimportant. Maybe it was inconsequential. If it really was not necessary to do it, maybe he could have left his beard. Maybe he could have left, and maybe he should have driven past work. Maybe he should have kept going. Maybe he could have gone on, maybe he could have kept going down to Los Angeles, found a small hotel out by the beach, a little motel. He liked the little motels with little,

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the kitchen and flipped the switch. The light bulb burst out. It didn't burst but it fizzled. It didn't really fizzle, it just didn't go on. Well it went on, and then it went off right away with a little poof. Oh, not a real poof but just a little pop. More of a pop than a poof. And the light went off. So he said, "It's obvious that I have to change this light bulb." So he went into the pantry. He said, "Isn't it amazing how many times I use a ladder in one day. I've used this ladder more times today!" I've used this ladder four times today, he realized. He took the ladder and put it right in the center of the kitchen, right underneath the light bulb, and climbed up the ladder and took the light bulb and threw it in the trash can. Then he walked over to the pantry where he kept the other light bulbs and grabbed one, a seventy-five watter. He liked bright lights in his apartment. He took the light bulb and walked over to the ladder and climbed the ladder. He slowly climbed the ladder because he was afraid of heights, and even though it wasn't very high, it was plenty high enough. It was plenty high

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little spots, little kitchens, beds, vibrabeds, the little coffee machines on the wall, all provided for you like a hospital. And he decided that he should go to a hospital because his jaw was broken. And his mouth was bleeding. And he was weak. And his nuts felt like they'd been kicked into the middle of the stomach. And his knees were hurting. He was having a difficult time. It was difficult for him to walk. It was extremely difficult. He walked slowly down the driveway. He wondered where he was. He had been driving for a long time. He had been dreaming, dreaming of other times, dreaming of his dreams. Remembering dreams he had had in the past. And wondering if the dreams were the real things that had happened to him. What were they? Were they important? Were they meaningful to him? He wondered if he could do it. He wondered if he could continue. He wondered if he could go on at all. He was still halfway down the driveway. He could feel the man's eyes staring at him, the children laughing. And he grabbed the sheet and wrapped it close

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for him. It was high enough, and he screwed the other light bulb in place. And then he climbed down the ladder and went over to the switch and turned the switch on and the light went on, and it stayed on and he felt satisfied. And he took down the ladder and returned it into the pantry. And then he sat back down in the chair. He knew that it wouldn't be long before it was time to go to bed. And that there would be no television to watch tonight. That he'd have to find something else to do. He remembered his idea about taking out subscriptions to magazines. That would seem like a good thing for him to do. It would give him something to do in the evening. It would give him something to do during the day, too, although he really had plenty to do during the day. He had proven that today because he had done a lot. He had done more than most men do. It was tiring, his life was tiring. But it was exciting to be making the kind of progress he was making. It wasn't as frightening any more. It felt good to be doing what he was doing, and he felt that he

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around him against the cold wind that came up. The wild wind across a green meadow. The flowers. The flowers blooming, the things growing, things beautiful. Times gone by, the times that were so exciting to him, things that he had remembered, beautiful times, meals, Christmas dinners that he had had, presents that he had received, his mother listening to the radio, his mother listening to the radio in the living room, while he lay in his bed asleep. And he wondered. He wondered if he could go on further, if he could continue to walk. He felt faint. He felt the blood coming out of his mouth. And he dropped down on his knees. And he lay out on the gravel of the driveway, with his mouth and face pressed against the soft, green grass on the edge. And . . . and he closed his eyes. And he wanted to sleep, and maybe someone, somehow, would look after him, would take care of him, would do something for him, would trouble themselves. He wondered if it was time. He lay down. He was lying down. He was absorbed in himself. He wondered if the police would find him, if the police

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was doing the only thing he could do anyway. So what difference did it make? It didn't make any difference to him. It did make a difference to him. And it didn't make a difference to him. But it mainly didn't make a difference to him. He closed his eyes. He rubbed his eyeballs. He closed his eyes and rubbed his eyes and he felt good. He felt better than he had felt in a long time. He looked at the clock. He knew it wouldn't be long before the t.v. dinners were done. He couldn't decide if he was going to give the cat the beef t.v. dinner or the turkey t.v. dinner. Which would be better for him? Or which would be better for the cat? He should really make a decision about which one would be better for him over which one would be better for the cat, because he knew that either one would be perfectly good for the cat. If it was good enough for a human being it was certainly good enough for a cat. He wanted to find his cat again. He walked into the living room and there was the cat curled up on the sofa. One eye opened as he walked in. He got down on the floor

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would come and take him to the hospital. He wanted to go to the hospital. He wanted to be in the hospital. Somewhere, lying in a white room. He wanted to be in a white room doing something. He wanted to look. He wanted to be. He wanted to be taken care of. He thought it was very important. It was something he had to do. Somehow he had to get there. He wanted them to stick. . . ah. . . to stick, to stick needles in his arms. He wanted them to stick tubes down his throat. He wanted them to stick tubes up his ass. He wanted to be in traction. He wanted to have his jaw fixed. He wanted to be fed. He had to crawl down further to the street. And he went on. He got up. He staggered forward. He dragged his body slowly forward. Down, down the hill, through a wide field. With the flowers, with the open green field. He walked across the field. He saw a road in the distance, in the background. He saw the road. He saw something in the distance, maybe a car, somebody who would stop. Would someone stop his mouth bleeding? The blood on his sheet. The blood rushing,

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and crawled on all fours toward the cat, pretending that he was a big huge cat. And as soon as he got closer he went, "Rrrrrrr. Arrrrggghhh." The cat jumped up because he took a swat at it, and grabbed at his finger, and he liked that. It was a real response. It was an instinctual response but it was also a playful response. It made him happy. His new cat made him happier than anything he ever had. It was much better than a television set or a radio or an alarm clock, or even a broom. It was even better than a broom, which made him think, it made him realize, that his bathtub was now filled with old appliances, including his treasured broom and dustpan, his favorite two tools, the ones that he used most often, the ones that he was proudest of. He hurried into the bathroom and took out the soaking wet broom, and shook it as best he could. And then dried it with a towel. And even talked to it. "I'm sorry, broom," he said, "I'm sorry that I treated you this way today. I know you're a useful friend. And I shouldn't have reacted this way. But I was upset over that damn tele-

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rushing through him, falling out of him. He wondered if he was going to die. He wondered if he would die in this field, whether he would just simply go to sleep and never wake up, and whether he would dream that he was dying, that the dream death would become the real death. He felt his body. He knelt down in the field. He took his hands, and he pressed them across his body. He felt his jaw. The pain was staggering. The pain was desperate. The blood was coming. He felt weak. And there was only about forty feet between him and the street. And he wondered if he could make it. He wondered if he would be able to crawl that far. And if anyone would come. If anyone would care. If it would be the black Cadillacs and the Army trucks. And that they would not stop. That they would be all that was left on the road. That the chicken-shits would pass him by. That he had lost his job, that he had moved the things out of the house. That the man had kicked him, done him in, it was possible. Was it possible? It was possible. He wondered. He wondered if it was possible. He wondered if

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vision, and all my other addictions. And the television and the sound and. . . you know how it is." Of course the broom couldn't talk back to him, but he felt as if it could. He felt a certain rapport with the broom, that he never felt with any other object before, with any other physical object. He rubbed its handle gently, imagining that it was some sort of long penis. It felt good to be doing this and it made him laugh. It made him laugh to realize what he was doing. That he was making that kind of comparison. He took the broom and returned it into the closet in the pantry. He was carrying the dustpan which he replaced there as well. He left them there neatly placed, the dustpan on the shelf, and the broom hanging by a hook in the closet. Again, he apologized. "I'm sorry, broom. I'm very sorry, broom," he said, "But I had to do what I had to do." He walked back into the bathroom and looked down at the mess in the tub. Should he clean it up, or should he leave it that way for a couple of days? He couldn't decide. It was obviously true that all the applian-

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it could happen. He wondered if there was trouble. He couldn't decide. He didn't know what he was going to do. He thought it might be important. He thought it was necessary. He thought if he could get there he could somehow find what he needed. If he could get to the street, if he could determine if the street was there, if he could do what he had to do. He could determine it for himself, and then perhaps he could do what he had to do. Perhaps he could find it. It was possible, it was possible that he could, it was possible that someone would find him. Perhaps they would take care of him. Perhaps they would look after him if they could. If somebody stopped, if anybody stopped. If he was there. If he was there on the roadside wrapped in a bloody sheet, dragging himself across the gravel, pressing his body against the hot asphalt, the cars racing by, the black Cadillacs and the Army trucks, and the tanks. The windows were closed up. There were no faces, all the windows reflected. There was nothing available, nothing to be seen, no one

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ces that were there were totally ruined by now. And just as well, he reasoned. He went over to the sink. He was going to wash his hands, and he looked down in the sink and there it was, still there, the .22 caliber pistol, that he had put there earlier in the afternoon. "That fuckin' pistol, I wonder where it came from?" he said, "I can't remember where I ever got ahold of that thing." He couldn't decide what to do with it. He couldn't decide what to do with the pistol, with that .22 caliber pistol. He couldn't decide whether it would be better to take it back and put it into the drawer where he had found it, or whether he too should take a positive direct action with that piece of equipment. I mean, it was just another tool, and it was a tool that he had no use for, because he didn't plan on shooting anybody, and he wouldn't shoot anybody, and he couldn't shoot himself, and he would never shoot himself. So he had to make a decision. He took the gun out of the sink. He walked into the kitchen. He placed the gun next to the stove, and sat down in the chair and looked at the

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to stop him, no one to wonder. No one could see anything. No one could determine what it was. It was always the same. The same difficulty. Released, repressed, regressed, uncooperative, the same blank faces, the same blank stares. The same difficulties and problems. The same loneliness—that it wasn't worth it, even worth it for him to feel loneliness for himself, inside himself. The people that went by him. And they felt his own loneliness, and his own difficulties, in fact, his own problems. Related, related to himself, and to the difficulties that he expressed and felt. The difficulties that were sympathetic and synonymous. That were partial. That were understanding. The time. The time that went by. The cars that went by. He couldn't believe it. He could not believe it. It suddenly struck him. He realized, in its totality he realized, that what had struck him and what he realized, was that no one was stopping. He was there, wounded, bleeding, kicked, beaten, hurt, desperate, on the verge of death and nobody was stopping, nobody was going to pick him up, no one was

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stove, and looked at the gun, and looked at the kitchen, and tried to make a decision as to what should be done with this piece of equipment, what should be done with this weapon that was made for killing people. He could understand why people used guns, he could understand the power of guns. But he knew he didn't want to be part of that. He didn't really want that power. But he could understand how it would be for somebody to be able to point their finger the way children, when they're playing, point their fingers and pretend that it's a gun and go "bang", and their friend falls dead. He could understand. He could understand the joy of pointing a gun at something, and firing and watching the thing you shot die. But he also knew that it wasn't a feeling that he wanted to experience himself. He was just as happy to have other people have that experience. And have him experience other things. Have his quest be different from other people's quests. Have him learn his own things, for him to learn from his own experiences. But he couldn't decide what to do with it. He

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coming. And he wondered. He wondered if maybe a policeman would come, would stop. And he lay out, and went to sleep, and he tried to dream. He tried to sleep and to dream, and he dreamt. He dreamt of old straw mats covered with dirt. Of old scrap books filled with pictures, photographs and snapshots. Old pictures of himself and his life, old things that had happened to him. Old things that were related to him. He dreamt of these, and he was, he was woken up. They woke him up. It was the police. There were two police officers. And they picked him up. And one of them said, "Looks like you had a lot of trouble, buddy." And the other said, "Yeah." And he said, "Yeah." He said, "Yeah, I had a lot of trouble. Somebody beat me up. Somebody kicked me in the face. Somebody kicked me in the nuts. Somebody tried to kill me. He's a big, rich man. He lives up there. He took me, he picked me up as a hitchhiker. He probably gets his kicks kicking hitchhikers. That's probably what it's all about. That's probably why he's so interested. That's prob-

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didn't know that he wanted to destroy it, but he wanted to have a relationship with it. Ah, he realized now, he realized something that he had never realized before. What he really wanted was a relationship. And, in fact, he'd always had a relationship with everything in his environment. He'd had a relationship with his television set. He killed his television set. He had a relationship with the radio and his broom. He loved his broom and he took care of it. And his dustpan. And he loved his dustpan, and he took care of that as well. And he did have a relationship with all of the tools he had. But he had no relationship with the .22, because he had never experienced it before, at least he couldn't remember experiencing it. So he took the .22 caliber pistol and he put it in his hand, and he took a frying pan from underneath the oven. He took a frying pan out and he put it on the stove. And he put the gun in the frying pan and he turned on the stove. And then he went to the sink, and got a glassful of water and poured it in. He decided he'd boil the son-of-a-bitch. And maybe he'd

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ably why he does it. Because he picks up hitchhikers and then he takes them up to his house, and then he kicks the shit out of them. And I didn't do a thing. I had a, there was a sheet, he had a sheet, he had a sheet in the back of his car, and the sheet was there, and I just wrapped myself in the sheet, and I got. . . and I went to sleep, and I dreamed about this Indian putting butter on my face. And this bus that took me to California, that didn't have an engine. And I dreamt about that. And I woke up. I was at this house, and he was inside, and he was going to barbecue meat. I'd been in supermarkets all day. I'd shopped in ten supermarkets. And I was, I was busted from my job. I was fired. For, for stealing. I'd been stealing things. I'd stolen. I'd stolen things. And, and they found out about it, and they fired me. And I came back and I, I took all the things out of my house, and I burned my other house, because it was all over, it was the end. It was the end of everything and I had to burn it, I destroyed it. I ripped it all apart. It was necessary to destroy it because it was over.

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cook spaghetti with it. Who knows, it might really taste good. Anyway, it's a better thing to use a gun for, for some sort of spaghetti sauce or something, than it is to have it sitting around the house, the way it is now. I mean, I wouldn't really be ruining it, but I would be experiencing it, and I would be having a relationship with it. That's meaningful to me. I may not be using it the way it's supposed to be used. I may not be killing somebody with it. I may not be pointing it at people. But I'd be doing something with it. And one should do things with the things one acquires. "For sure," he said, "most people just acquire things and then use them for a while and then discard them. That's why the world is just filled with junk." He felt that he was making more breakthroughs than he had ever made before in his life. This had probably been the most important day since the day he was born. That he could remember. And remember, he had no memory. It's very possible that he would go to sleep that night and wake up in the morning and have no memory of that day at all. Have

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And I wanted to finish with it, I wanted to finish with everything I had done. Because it was all related to the same thing, it was all related to Ray and Gladys, and loneliness. And to looking at rows of houses all the same. From the top of the hill. People I knew that were nervous, and worried and tense and distraught and difficult. And painful. And I wondered if it was necessary to do that, if really it could be done. If it was related and if you could take me, if you could take me to the hospital. If you would. If you would give me something for this. Give me something for my broken jaw. Give me something because my nuts feel like they've been crushed. Because somebody kicked me in the balls when I was down on my hands and knees." And he thought that he might tell them that he had been eating dog food, and then he thought that he shouldn't do that. He shouldn't tell them. He shouldn't really say that he had done that, that he had been eating dog food. There was something wrong with that. There was something difficult and uncomfortable and horrifying about

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no awareness of all the breakthroughs that he had made and all the decisions that he had made. It's possible. He usually remembered the day or two before. What he couldn't remember was a week before or two weeks before. There's a name for that but he couldn't remember what it was. He couldn't remember the name for that. "Sometimes you have fun and sometimes you don't have fun," he said. Sometimes you have fun and sometimes you *do* have fun, he thought. It doesn't really make any difference because one day you will and one day you won't. And maybe if I forget today, I'll remember tomorrow. And maybe I'll have more fun tomorrow than I've had today. The water was beginning to boil in the frying pan, and the gun was boiling, the gun wasn't boiling but it was sitting in boiling water. The water was boiling with the gun in it. He liked his idea about the spaghetti. It seemed like a very creative way to deal with the problem, and it would be an individual relationship with that gun. His own relationship, one that he'd never had before. So he decided that

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the sight of somebody eating dog food. The dog food was somehow related. That was the reason. The sight of that had been too much. The sight of him down on his knees on the floor, and with a sheet, eating dog food, was something that had driven the man to the point, the chairman of the board, he couldn't, he couldn't tolerate the sight of someone. Someone not eating his steaks. And it was related to that. To the sight, the horror, the horror of that sight, of seeing something like that, of seeing it, of seeing somebody kneeling on the ground with their face in a dish. With a sheet over them. And then he remembered. He remembered that he had masturbated. And he wondered if that was the reason. And that the children had laughed. And that the man had kicked him. And the wife had yelled "Stop! Stop it! Stop! Stop it!" And the man had done it. The man had kicked him. And the police took him to the hospital. They wheeled him out onto a small dolly. They laid him out. They stuck needles into his arms. They wheeled him in. They anesthetized him. They sewed him

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that's what he'd do. He went to the shelf to the right of the stove. And from the shelf he took out the spaghetti. He broke the spaghetti in half, and dropped it into the boiling pan of water, that also contained the pistol, the .22 caliber pistol that he had found in his drawer, the one that he'd found in his drawer underneath the sweaters and shirts, that he hadn't known was there. The one that he'd never seen before, to the best of his knowledge. The one he had no bullets for. The one that had no bullets in it. The one that he'd never used and never planned to use. He sat down in the chair in the kitchen. He put his index finger, he put his right index finger, he put his right index finger into his right nostril. He took his left index finger and he put it into his left nostril. And he took his two thumbs and put them into his mouth. And it felt good. And he was glad he was doing it. And he had to breathe through his mouth very carefully. He said, "It would be weird not to be able to breathe through one's nose, to never be able to breathe through one's nose." It wouldn't

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back together again. He had multiple lacerations, bruises, broken bones, wires. And he woke up four hours later in a small white room, and he looked at the white room. And he said, "This is it. This is what I need. This is what I needed. I needed this kind of place." It was all white and there was a television set. And there was a small little control dial next to the bed. And he turned on the television set. And he turned on the evening news that he had heard before. It was the same news he had heard in the morning. The same news that he had heard before. News that he had heard before. It was the same thing. It had all been going on the same as always. The same murders, the same destruction, the same fires, the same trips to foreign places. The same understanding. The same thing over and over and over again. But he felt good. He felt relaxed. He felt whole again. It felt good to be taken care of. It felt good to have somebody looking after him. It felt right. It felt good. It felt good to be lying in the bed, it felt good to be lying there. It was comfort-

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be very much fun, he realized. To do that, he realized. I mean some things you can do and some things you can't do. "I don't think I could breath without a nose," he said. "What if somebody taped over my mouth and I didn't, I couldn't breath through my nose, that would be very unpleasant." He began to panic and get claustrophobic, and he took his fingers out of his nose, and his thumbs out of his mouth, and he could breath again much more freely. He said, "Maybe I shouldn't do that anymore. Even though I enjoy it, I didn't enjoy it that time. Its the first time I've ever done that that I haven't enjoyed it." The spaghetti was cooking on the stove now. The water was boiling briskly and beginning to boil over. He could hear the hissing of the water as it hit the flame. He walked over and looked into the pan. The spaghetti was well entangled with the .22 caliber pistol, that he found in his drawer, which he had placed in the sink, and then later placed in the frying pan with the water, to boil and to cook and to experience. . .

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ing. And the nurse came in. A nurse came and put her hand on his head and looked at him and asked how he felt, and he said that he felt really good. That he felt a lot better. That he had. That he had felt bad and now he felt good. That he felt better. It was good. It was good to feel better. It was wonderful to be there in the hospital and to feel the comfort. And care. To feel that someone was looking after him. That they were looking after him and taking care of him. And he was happy. He was happy to be there. It seemed to him that almost, that it was almost, that it was almost a good thing. It happened. And that it had happened in the right way. That it was. That it was the right thing. That he, that he had been fired. That it was good that he had been fired. That it was nice, that it was good, that it was all right. And she. And she said. The nurse said to him, she said, "You're going to be all right." She said, "You're going to be all right."

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