

1972 . . .

1.

A pounding on the thin panels of the dorm-room door invaded the young man's sleep. He dreamt briefly of the caissons being driven for the Hancock Center construction when he and his father and older brother visited the site in Chicago in 1968, but the banging woke him in time to hear the door opening. What he saw first against the weak early-spring light from the windows was a tall, disheveled, middle-aged man with short salt-and-pepper hair wearing an inexpensive suit. *Cop?* was his first thought. The man glanced around the messy room, then stared down at the student as another heavier officer moved through the entranceway, holding aside a burlap screen the young man's roommate had hung between the room and the closets. Finally a remotely familiar short bald man with a beard entered quickly, looked down at the young man and said, "That's him." The bald man pivoted and disappeared. The young man thought he recognized the beard, but not the bald head or the tie.

"What?" the young man breathed as the heavier cop twitched away his blanket and with an air of perfunctory finality clutched his upper arm, pulled him upright, turned him toward the windows and clipped handcuffs around his wrists. His rights were a blur. Salt-and-pepper rummaged through the top drawer of his desk and pulled out his checkbook. The young man sat naked on the bed with his hands cuffed behind his hips.

The heavier cop stared down at him, then seemed to relent

and said, "You're under arrest." An inane idea entered the young man's mind—he thought it was an April Fool's joke. The door to his room stood open, and he could hear activity down the hall, more pounding on doors.

Salt-and-pepper opened the checkbook and said, "Michael J. Pollitz. That you?"

"You don't know who I am?" Michael felt a rush of sleepy terror. His narrow face reddened.

"We know," said the heavy cop. Both men moved around the room, opening drawers in the desks and small dressers. They walked across his clothing. The heavy cop kicked aside some junk food wrappers on the floor and used his foot to rearrange a pile of papers and books. Salt-and-pepper opened one of the closets, looked down at the pile of clothing, luggage, books and trash, and shut the door again. It occurred to Michael that they weren't searching for anything, their indifferent examination a matter of going through the motions. Both seemed bored.

"Can I put on some clothes?" Michael asked. He was well-muscled in a way that echoed high school athletics, but he was small and felt shriveled and unbearably vulnerable, nude and handcuffed. His nineteen-year-old mind flashed a brief homophobic panic, even though he knew he was dealing with police. The freeze-dried fantasy included a grisly murder. The heavy cop exchanged a look with salt-and-pepper, then nodded. Michael stood and turned, and the detective removed the cuffs. Michael self-consciously shifted his body as he grabbed a pair of threadbare blue-and-white-striped bell bottom pants from the floor and pulled them on. He picked up a wrinkled blue work shirt and buttoned it, and he tied his tennis shoes without sitting. He combed his long hair away from his face with his fingers before the detective replaced the handcuffs, and Michael sat again.

"Feel better?" salt-and-pepper asked with an ironic smile.

Then he left the room. The heavy cop positioned himself in the entrance, in front of the flimsy curtain, and stared impassively. Michael looked at the windows, brighter now as dawn filled the sky. Almost to himself, he said, "What is this?"

"You're under arrest," the detective repeated.

"Why?"

The detective didn't answer, and Michael wasn't able to endure his stare. He looked through the windows again. His room was at the end of a long hall on the top floor in one of the older dormitories on the small campus, a three-story building with just two floors of rooms, the building shaped like a T with a central staircase that led down to the Student Union. The noises from the hall had died down, but he could hear voices. Still bleary, he couldn't sort out his thoughts. Why was he being arrested? He hadn't done anything. It was something with the bald guy, but he couldn't fill in the blanks.

His friend John Calabria's father came into his mind. He was suddenly overcome with a desire to be sitting in the office at Dominick Calabria's farm northwest of Chicago, untouchable, waiting for the man's sharp smile to fade as he offered a serious solution. What would Dominick Calabria do? Nothing. He would say nothing at all and wait for his lawyer. Lawyers. An army of lawyers.

"Can't you tell me what's going on?" Michael asked, overcome by confusion and anxiety. The heavy detective's expression didn't change even as salt-and-pepper returned.

"Set?" the heavy detective asked.

"Yeah. Let's go." Both cops stepped to the bed and raised the young man by his arms.

As they walked down the hall, Michael said, "I need to piss," nodding toward the common bathroom. The cops followed him to the urinals, and the heavy detective removed the handcuffs. When Michael finished, they didn't replace the restraint. The young man felt a childish flush of relief that

was almost pride for the miniscule favor: He was trustworthy, they could see that. And this added an absurd hope that the arrest was a mistake that would soon be clarified.

Outside, a friend from the sophomore class, Pat Kinnealy, whose room was down the hall from Michael's, stood in handcuffs near an unmarked car in the small parking area next to the dorm. It was brightening into a lovely day. Michael glanced up at the sky, then back toward the parking spaces. Behind the unmarked car were one local squad car and three state cruisers. State troopers stood near their cars. Strangers were seated in the backseats of two of the state vehicles. He could see another acquaintance, a man two years older who lived in an apartment in town, with another stranger in the backseat of the local car. Both sat with the awkward tilt of handcuffed prisoners. Two freshmen from the floor below Michael's stood in the parking area, also with their hands manacled behind their backs, and a small comprehension formed: The two roommates sold reefer, LSD, mescaline and amphetamines in small quantities from their room—he had purchased from them. Michael suddenly felt conspicuous without handcuffs, caught somewhere in the hostile twilight between Us and Them.

He and Pat were ushered into the backseat of the unmarked car. The two freshmen were placed in one of the state cruisers. "Why aren't you handcuffed?" Pat asked. Beneath a taut strain of somnolent shock, his pallid face was a mixture of relief and accusation.

"They took them off when I peed," Michael said. "They didn't put them back on." The cops were talking outside the cars.

"Did you recognize the bald guy?" Pat asked.

"Not really."

"I think I sold him some white cross last fall," Pat said mournfully. "Dan brought him over with another guy," nodding toward their friend in the local squad car. "I think he

was wearing a stocking cap, but I recognize the beard." Pat seemed on the verge of tears, the skin pale around his eyes.

"I never sold him anything," Michael mused, feeling relieved and silently reassuring himself that a mistake was being made. His roommate had from time to time sold an ounce or two of excess grass; they must have intended to arrest him instead. A straw to grasp. He didn't know about the strangers in the state cars, but even though the two freshmen usually had hallucinogens or speed to sell, they weren't serious dealers, and he, Pat and Dan weren't dealers at all. Not in the sense of buying quantities and selling again for a profit or even for a supply of free drugs. But he had an uneasy feeling. He thought he recognized the bearded bald man as well, and Pat confirmed it. He thought he had met him once, when Dan brought him to his room in search of drugs. Michael had shown him to the freshmen's room several months earlier, before Thanksgiving. Could that be it? It seemed too inconsequential to be real.

2.

The young man's college was located in a small city in central Illinois, its population only about 35,000, even though it was a county seat. The college was also small, with just some 1,300 students enrolled in 1972, but even this comparatively insignificant student body had managed to enrage the surrounding voters with miniature demonstrations against the Vietnam War and a one-night occupation of a historic campus building in 1970—the little liberal arts school's reaction to the Kent State shootings in May. The great majority of students were drawn from affluent suburbs of Chicago, often

the wealthy North Shore communities, almost exclusively the offspring of comfortable parents in any case. Michael had written in the school newspaper, “However thinly attended our protest rallies may have been, the noise has been loud enough to stir resentment in the town’s working population. They find in their confused patriotism the voice with which to express their bleak, suspicious anger that the well-off, educated white people who so bitterly oppose this damn war are not those who are dying in it.” This simple, well-written note had provided him with some notoriety, but he never met anyone who truly understood what he was trying to say. Dom Calabria had read the letter and shrugged, smiling fondly, and asked Michael what made him so sure he understood what the townspeople were thinking. “Although I can see that you might have a better idea than some of your classmates,” Dom had concluded.

A scholarship student who was attending the expensive little school on personal loans, Michael was anomalous in terms of family money, and he understood the local community’s injured pride better than most of his peers. He could be forgiven for believing there was a political aspect to his arrest, but he had the nature of the politics wrong. As he and the other prisoners were led through a side door into the small police station just three blocks from the campus, he harbored naïve fantasies of some vaguely conceived martyrdom—to *what?* he would later wonder. *Recreational drug use?* But at the moment he was unable to recall any good reason to be fingerprinted and photographed, and he blurted out, “What the hell is this?” to an indifferent technician who rolled his fingers across a blotter and shrugged.

Salt-and-pepper disappeared, leaving the heavy detective to run his name and process him. Michael never again encountered either the older officer or the heavysset cop who had arrested him, and he would never suspect the pity with

which each had regarded his naked helplessness and the soft, boyish contours of his startled, groggy face as they had cuffed him. He answered the detective’s questions politely and sat, still without restraints, as the detective left his desk to run his name through the state files.

“You never even had a traffic ticket,” the detective said, shaking his head. “What are you doing here?”

“I wish someone would tell me,” Michael replied, feeling even more confident that everything would soon be all right.

The detective finished with another form and said, “That’s it, kid. Just wait there,” and rose to leave.

“What’s next?” Michael asked, unable to mask the fear in his voice.

“This is a state operation,” the detective replied. “We’re just processing you here. You’ll be taken over to the county jail when we’re done with everyone.” He paused to gaze briefly at the young man, thinking that the timing of the arrest might make assembling bail tough, especially for the five townies who had been arrested along with the five students. He added compassionately, “Don’t worry about it, kid. I don’t think there’s more than five guys over there right now.”

It took more than two hours to process all ten men, and the sky was bright when they were led back outside to a line of waiting state police cars for the short ride to the county jail.

The small, Civil War-era stone and brick building was located directly across the street from the south end of the college campus, its deep-set, tall windows barred with thick, rusted iron. Above the front entrance was a small apartment for trustees in which one of the young man’s friends who had been arrested for marijuana possession had spent six consecutive weekends.

The men filed through a side entrance and, after a brief check-in, were each issued a rolled foam mat, sheets, a pillow and an enameled pail with a lid. They were told to find an

unoccupied cell. The jail was decrepit, with a small barred entrance onto a large common room with tables and a small bookshelf. An opening screened by a heavy lattice of overlapping strips of steel on the long wall facing the door swept up two stories; a small gate led to three tiers of six- by eight-foot cells, six cells per tier. At the end of the bank of cells were two toilets sitting on the floor. Next to the toilets was a single open shower, the spigot hanging from the wall above a drain in the floor. The cells contained only a shelf for the foam mattress; the enameled pail was the nighttime toilet. Michael followed Pat into the cellblock. The detective's estimate had been too high; only three men were incarcerated, but three of the local men who had been caught in the same sweep as the students rushed to the unoccupied floor-level cells. Michael and the other students carried their mattresses up to the second tier. The windowless cells had hinged, barred gates that faced the deep outer windows. Michael couldn't shake a sense of unreality, as if he was having a bad dream. He dropped the rolled pad onto the shelf and set the other items beside it, feeling dislocated in time in the ancient jail. It occurred to him that he should have called his parents from the police station, but he hadn't thought to ask for a phone, and besides, the person who kept entering his mind was Dominick Calabria—he certainly knew good criminal lawyers.

Michael stepped out of the cell and put his hands on the rail of the cantilevered gangway, feeling numb. He glanced toward the other cells as Pat stepped out, his face pale. Behind Kinnealy, Dan and the freshmen emerged, their eyes wide and frightened but also showing traces of the otherworldly confusion he could feel fogging his own thoughts. As they descended toward the common room, they heard their names being called from the entrance. Peering at them from behind the bars was the agitated face of the student-affairs director, a man no more than nine years older than Dan named Reynolds

Muldaur, himself a graduate of the school. He wore his red hair stylishly long and parted down the middle. They moved toward him with a mixture of embarrassment and profound relief, but his news wasn't encouraging.

"Listen," he began. "You're in a lot of trouble. The charges are all felonies." Michael raised his hands in protest, but Muldaur cut him off with a wave. "Mike, Pat and Dan—you're facing \$50,000 bonds. You two," he faced the freshmen, "are looking at \$100,000 apiece." He let the sums sink in.

Finally, Dan overcame his dismay and asked, "What do we do?"

"Bail is ten percent," Muldaur answered, "and there won't be any banks open until next Monday." After a lengthy pause he went on, "I don't know if the college has \$35,000 on hand, but we may. The county may accept our guarantee on the bail. I don't know. We've called your parents."

Pat began to break down but regained control.

"I just wanted to be sure you were all okay. There's a student-administration meeting in an hour. I'll come back when that's over," Muldaur finished.

"What meeting?" one of the freshmen asked. His voice was like a man emerging from anesthesia. Muldaur didn't answer, which was an act of kindness—none of them needed to know that a fierce debate was developing, with the student-assembly president arguing vigorously that the school wash its hands of the five "pushers," as he phrased it. That evening, Michael would announce in rage, after half a bottle of wine, "I'm going to knock some teeth out of that student-council weenie," but his friends would prevent him from hunting down the student leader.

"Look," Muldaur said, "try not to worry too much. One way or another, you should all be out of here soon." He looked from face to face and nodded. "I'll be back this afternoon, either way."

They moved away from the bars and into the common room. Dan, Pat and Michael sat on either side of one of the tables. The two freshmen sat on the floor, leaning against the wall. Neither would speak another word the entire time they were in the jail. Pat held his head in his hands, tugging at his lank blond hair. Michael studied one of the townies, who had spread his foam mattress on the floor and was stretched out on it, and made an obvious observation—the man was a heroin addict, and the early stages of withdrawal were underway. One of the jailers also noted the man’s agitation and sweat-shine and remarked familiarly, not without sympathy, “Looks like a long day, don’t it?” The townie shuddered with his eyes closed.

“Jesus, five grand,” Pat moaned.

“What a shitty place,” Dan said, looking at the thick brick walls and patched mortar.

“It’s an old jail,” Michael replied. His thoughts again returned to Dominick Calabria. If necessary, he would call John and ask if his father could lend him the cash to make bail. He could hear John’s piercing laugh on the line, “What the hell you doin’ in jail, Mikey?” He smiled to picture their reaction to this beat-up old county jail, this relic of the 1860s with enameled pots to shit in. Dom wasn’t the laughing type, and Michael didn’t think he would share John’s amusement about his arrest, but he would have the money and a kind word, perhaps even reassurance. Although Dom had never been in prison, Michael couldn’t think of a single man among the dozen or so he had regularly seen over the years at their sprawling home who hadn’t done some time. Three years here, five or six there. Salvatore Bruno had once done an eight-year jolt, Michael recalled hearing years before, and like all the others he spoke about it with a matter-of-fact bravado, as if it was just another aspect of existence, like eating, breathing and dying. Angelo DeMicco had said once, when Michael and

John asked, “It ain’t fun. No one likes it.” He had paused to idly trace his forefinger along the scar that creased his face from the left side of his mouth up to his cheekbone. “It’s just somethin’ ya get through, kid, and that’s that.” Sal had grunted agreement but added with a rumbling laugh, “It’s worth avoidin’, if ya can.”

Despite an adolescent tendency to romanticize things, Michael didn’t glamorize the Outfit. He had spent too much time around thugs. That this was a drug charge would probably make Dom angry, Michael realized, but he knew without thinking about it that his friend’s father would be a reliable shoulder to lean on, if he needed one. He tried not to think about his parents or older brother.

The guy on the floor was getting bad, twitching with panicky eyes and a running nose, when Reynolds Muldaur returned in mid-afternoon with the welcome news that the college had posted bond. The five students were sent back to the cells to retrieve the mattresses and other goods, and they were released. They emerged into the cool April air, the low sun casting a bronze light through the budding trees, and walked across the street to the campus and across the broad quad to the dean of students’ office. Michael wearily combed back his dirty hair with his fingers and said, “Thanks for getting us out, Reynolds.”

“Save your thanks for Dean Walker,” Muldaur answered.

3.

Dean Howard Walker met them in his outer office. A tall, imposing, silver-haired man, he looked more weary than angry, Michael thought, but he glowered impressively without