

News item from the Westover (Me.) weekly
Enterprise, August 19, 1966:

RAIN OF STONES REPORTED

It was reliably reported by several persons that a rain of stones fell from a clear blue sky on Carlin Street in the town of Chamberlain on August 17th. The stones fell principally on the home of Mrs. Margaret White, damaging the roof extensively and ruining two gutters and a downspout valued at approximately \$25. Mrs. White, a widow, lives with her three-year-old daughter, Carietta.

Mrs. White could not be reached for comment.

Nobody was really surprised when it happened, not really, not at the subconscious level where savage things grow. On the surface, all the girls in the shower room were shocked, thrilled, ashamed, or

simply glad that the White bitch had taken it in the mouth again. Some of them might also have claimed surprise, but of course their claim was untrue. Carrie had been going to school with some of them since the first grade, and this had been building since that time, building slowly and immutably, in accordance with all the laws that govern human nature, building with all the steadiness of a chain reaction approaching critical mass.

What none of them knew, of course, was that Carrie White was telekinetic.

Graffiti scratched on a desk of the Barker Street Grammar School in Chamberlain:

Carrie White eats shit.

The locker room was filled with shouts, echoes, and the subterranean sound of showers splashing on tile. The girls had been playing volleyball in Period One, and their morning sweat was light and eager.

Girls stretched and writhed under the hot water, squalling, flicking water, squirting white bars of soap from hand to hand. Carrie stood among them stolidly, a frog among swans. She was a chunky girl with pimples on her neck and back and buttocks, her wet hair completely without color. It

rested against her face with dispirited soggianness and she simply stood, head slightly bent, letting the water splat against her flesh and roll off. She looked the part of the sacrificial goat, the constant butt, believer in left-handed monkey wrenches, perpetual foul-up, and she was. She wished forlornly and constantly that Ewen High had individual—and thus private—showers, like the high schools at Westover or Lewiston. They stared. They always stared.

Showers turning off one by one, girls stepping out, removing pastel bathing caps, toweling, spraying deodorant, checking the clock over the door. Bras were hooked, underpants stepped into. Steam hung in the air; the place might have been an Egyptian bathhouse except for the constant rumble of the Jacuzzi whirlpool in the corner. Calls and catcalls rebounded with all the snap and flicker of billiard balls after a hard break.

“—so Tommy said he *hated* it on me and I—”

“—I’m going with my sister and her husband. He picks his nose but so does she, so they’re very—”

“—shower after school and—”

“—too cheap to spend a goddam penny so Cindi and I—”

Miss Desjardin, their slim, nonbreasted gym teacher, stepped in, craned her neck around briefly, and slapped her hands together once, smartly. “What are you waiting for, Carrie? Doom? Bell in

five minutes." Her shorts were blinding white, her legs not too curved but striking in their unobtrusive muscularity. A silver whistle, won in college archery competition, hung around her neck.

The girls giggled and Carrie looked up, her eyes slow and dazed from the heat and the steady, pounding roar of the water. "Ohuh?"

It was a strangely froggy sound, grotesquely apt, and the girls giggled again. Sue Snell had whipped a towel from her hair with the speed of a magician embarking on a wondrous feat and began to comb rapidly. Miss Desjardin made an irritated cranking gesture at Carrie and stepped out.

Carrie turned off the shower. It died in a drip and a gurgle.

It wasn't until she stepped out that they all saw the blood running down her leg.

From *The Shadow Exploded: Documented Facts and Specific Conclusions Derived from the Case of Carietta White*, by David R. Congress (Tulane University Press: 1981), p. 34:

It can hardly be disputed that failure to note specific instances of telekinesis during the White girl's earlier years must be attributed to the conclusion offered by White and Stearns in their paper *Telekinesis: A Wild Talent Revisited*—that the ability

to move objects by effort of the will alone comes to the fore only in moments of extreme personal stress. The talent is well hidden indeed; how else could it have remained submerged for centuries with only the tip of the iceberg showing above a sea of quackery?

We have only skimpy hearsay evidence upon which to lay our foundation in this case, but even this is enough to indicate that a "TK" potential of immense magnitude existed within Carrie White. The great tragedy is that we are now all Monday-morning quarterbacks . . .

"Per-iod!"

The catcall came first from Chris Hargensen. It struck the tiled walls, rebounded, and struck again. Sue Snell gasped laughter from her nose and felt an odd, vexing mixture of hate, revulsion, exasperation, and pity. She just looked so *dumb*, standing there, not knowing what was going on. God, you'd think she never—

"PER-iod!"

It was becoming a chant, an incantation. Someone in the background (perhaps Hargensen again, Sue couldn't tell in the jungle of echoes) was yelling, "*Plug it up!*" with hoarse, uninhibited abandon.

"PER-iod, PER-iod, PER-iod!"

Carrie stood dumbly in the center of a forming

circle, water rolling from her skin in beads. She stood like a patient ox, aware that the joke was on her (as always), dumbly embarrassed but unsurprised.

Sue felt welling disgust as the first dark drops of menstrual blood struck the tile in dime-sized drops. "For God's sake, Carrie, you got your period!" she cried. "Clean yourself up!"

"Ohuh?"

She looked around bovinely. Her hair stuck to her cheeks in a curving helmet shape. There was a cluster of acne on one shoulder. At sixteen, the elusive stamp of hurt was already marked clearly in her eyes.

"She thinks they're for lipstick!" Ruth Gogan suddenly shouted with cryptic glee, and then burst into a shriek of laughter. Sue remembered the comment later and fitted it into a general picture, but now it was only another senseless sound in the confusion. *Sixteen?* She was thinking. *She must know what's happening, she—*

More droplets of blood. Carrie still blinked around at her classmates in slow bewilderment.

Helen Shyres turned around and made mock throwing-up gestures.

"You're *bleeding!*" Sue yelled suddenly, furiously. "You're *bleeding*, you big dumb pudding!"

Carrie looked down at herself.

She shrieked.

The sound was very loud in the humid locker room.

A tampon suddenly struck her in the chest and fell with a plop at her feet. A red flower stained the absorbent cotton and spread.

Then the laughter, disgusted, contemptuous, horrified, seemed to rise and bloom into something jagged and ugly, and the girls were bombarding her with tampons and sanitary napkins, some from purses, some from the broken dispenser on the wall. They flew like snow and the chant became: "Plug it *up*, plug it *up*, plug it *up*, plug it—"

Sue was throwing them too, throwing and chanting with the rest, not really sure what she was doing—a charm had occurred to her mind and it glowed there like neon: *There's no harm in it really no harm in it really no harm—* It was still flashing and glowing, reassuringly, when Carrie suddenly began to howl and back away, flailing her arms and grunting and gobbling.

The girls stopped, realizing that fission and explosion had finally been reached. It was at this point, when looking back, that some of them would claim surprise. Yet there had been all these years, all these years of let's short-sheet Carrie's bed at Christian Youth Camp and I found this love letter from Carrie to Flash Bobby Pickett let's copy it and pass it around and hide her underpants somewhere and put this snake in her shoe and duck her

again, duck her again; Carrie tagging along stubbornly on biking trips, known one year as pudd'n and the next year as truck-face, always smelling sweaty, not able to catch up; catching poison ivy from urinating in the bushes and everyone finding out (hey, scratch-ass, your bum itch?); Billy Preston putting peanut butter in her hair that time she fell asleep in study hall; the pinches, the legs outstretched in school aisles to trip her up, the books knocked from her desk, the obscene postcard tucked into her purse; Carrie at the church picnic and kneeling down clumsily to pray and the seam of her old madras skirt splitting along the zipper like the sound of a huge wind-breakage; Carrie always missing the ball, even in kickball, falling on her face in Modern Dance during their sophomore year and chipping a tooth, running into the net during volleyball; wearing stockings that were always run, running, or about to run, always showing sweat stains under the arms of her blouses; even the time Chris Hargensen called up after school from the Kelly Fruit Company downtown and asked her if she knew that *pig poop* was spelled C-A-R-R-I-E: Suddenly all this and the critical mass was reached. The ultimate shit-on, gross-out, put-down, long searched for, was found. Fission.

She backed away, howling in the new silence, fat forearms crossing her face, a tampon stuck in the middle of her pubic hair.

The girls watched her, their eyes shining solemnly.

Carrie backed into the side of one of the four large shower compartments and slowly collapsed into a sitting position. Slow, helpless groans jerked out of her. Her eyes rolled with wet whiteness, like the eyes of a hog in the slaughtering pen.

Sue said slowly, hesitantly: "I think this must be the first time she ever—"

That was when the door pumped open with a flat and hurried bang and Miss Desjardin burst in to see what the matter was.

From *The Shadow Exploded* (p. 41):

Both medical and psychological writers on the subject are in agreement that Carrie White's exceptionally late and traumatic commencement of the menstrual cycle might well have provided the trigger for her latent talent.

It seems incredible that, as late as 1979, Carrie knew nothing of the mature woman's monthly cycle. It is nearly as incredible to believe that the girl's mother would permit her daughter to reach the age of nearly seventeen without consulting a gynecologist concerning the daughter's failure to menstruate.

Yet the facts are incontrovertible. When Carrie White realized she was bleeding from the vaginal

opening, she had no idea of what was taking place. She was innocent of the entire concept of menstruation.

One of her surviving classmates, Ruth Gogan, tells of entering the girls' locker room at Ewen High School the year before the events we are concerned with and seeing Carrie using a tampon to blot her lipstick with. At that time Miss Gogan said: "What the hell are you up to?" Miss White replied: "Isn't this right?" Miss Gogan then replied: "Sure. Sure it is." Ruth Gogan let a number of her girl friends in on this (she later told this interviewer she thought it was "sorta cute"), and if anyone tried in the future to inform Carrie of the true purpose of what she was using to make up with, she apparently dismissed the explanation as an attempt to pull her leg. This was a facet of her life that she had become exceedingly wary of. . . .

When the girls were gone to their Period Two classes and the bell had been silenced (several of them had slipped quietly out the back door before Miss Desjardin could begin to take names), Miss Desjardin employed the standard tactic for hysterics: She slapped Carrie smartly across the face. She hardly would have admitted the pleasure the act gave her, and she certainly would have denied that she regarded Carrie as a fat, whiny bag of lard. A first-year teacher, she still believed that she thought all children were good.

Carrie looked up at her dumbly, face still contorted and working. "M-M-Miss D-D-Des-D—"

"Get up," Miss Desjardin said dispassionately. "Get up and tend to yourself."

"*I'm bleeding to death!*" Carrie screamed, and one blind, searching hand came up and clutched Miss Desjardin's white shorts. It left a bloody handprint.

"I . . . you . . ." The gym teacher's face contorted into a pucker of disgust, and she suddenly hurled Carrie, stumbling, to her feet. "*Get over there!*"

Carrie stood swaying between the showers and the wall with its dime sanitary-napkin dispenser, slumped over, breasts pointing at the floor, her arms dangling limply. She looked like an ape. Her eyes were shiny and blank.

"Now," Miss Desjardin said with hissing, deadly emphasis, "you take one of those napkins out . . . no, never mind the coin slot, it's broken anyway . . . take one and . . . damn it, will you *do* it! You act as if you never had a period before."

"Period?" Carrie said.

Her expression of complete unbelief was too genuine, too full of dumb and hopeless horror, to be ignored or denied. A terrible and black foreknowledge grew in Rita Desjardin's mind. It was incredible, could not be. She herself had begun menstruation shortly after her eleventh birthday

and had gone to the head of the stairs to yell down excitedly: "Hey, Mum, I'm on the rag!"

"Carrie?" she said now. She advanced toward the girl. "Carrie?"

Carrie flinched away. At the same instant, a rack of softball bats in the corner fell over with a large, echoing bang. They rolled every which way, making Desjardin jump.

"Carrie, is this your first period?"

But now that the thought had been admitted, she hardly had to ask. The blood was dark and flowing with terrible heaviness. Both of Carrie's legs were smeared and splattered with it, as though she had waded through a river of blood.

"It hurts," Carrie groaned. "My stomach . . ."

"That passes," Miss Desjardin said. Pity and self-shame met in her and mixed uneasily. "You have to . . . uh, stop the flow of blood. You—"

There was a bright flash overhead, followed by a flashgun-like pop as a lightbulb sizzled and went out. Miss Desjardin cried out with surprise, and it occurred to her

(the whole damn place is falling in)
that this kind of thing always seemed to happen around Carrie when she was upset, as if bad luck dogged her every step. The thought was gone almost as quickly as it had come. She took one of the sanitary napkins from the broken dispenser and unwrapped it.

"Look," she said. "Like this—"

— — —

From *The Shadow Exploded* (p. 54):

Carrie White's mother, Margaret White, gave birth to her daughter on September 21, 1963, under circumstances which can only be termed bizarre. In fact, an overview of the Carrie White case leaves the careful student with one feeling ascendent over all others: that Carrie was the only issue of a family as odd as any that has ever been brought to popular attention.

As noted earlier, Ralph White died in February of 1963 when a steel girder fell out of a carrying sling on a housing-project job in Portland. Mrs. White continued to live alone in their suburban Chamberlain bungalow.

Due to the Whites' near-fanatical fundamentalist religious beliefs, Mrs. White had no friends to see her through her period of bereavement. And when her labor began seven months later, she was alone.

At approximately 1:30 P.M. on September 21, the neighbors on Carlin Street began to hear screams from the White bungalow. The police, however, were not summoned to the scene until after 6:00 P.M. We are left with two unappetizing alternatives to explain this time lag: Either Mrs. White's neighbors on the street did not wish to become involved

in a police investigation, or dislike for her had become so strong that they deliberately adopted a wait-and-see attitude. Mrs. Georgia McLaughlin, the only one of three remaining residents who were on the street at that time and who would talk to me, said that she did not call the police because she thought the screams had something to do with "holy rollin'."

When the police did arrive at 6:22 P.M. the screams had become irregular. Mrs. White was found in her bed upstairs, and the investigating officer, Thomas G. Mearton, at first thought she had been the victim of an assault. The bed was drenched with blood, and a butcher knife lay on the floor. It was only then that he saw the baby, still partially wrapped in the placental membrane, at Mrs. White's breast. She had apparently cut the umbilical cord herself with the knife.

It staggers both imagination and belief to advance the hypothesis that Mrs. Margaret White did not know she was pregnant, or even understand what the word entails, and recent scholars such as J. W. Bankson and George Fielding have made a more reasonable case for the hypothesis that the concept, linked irrevocably in her mind with the "sin" of intercourse, had been blocked entirely from her mind. She may simply have refused to believe that such a thing could happen to her.

We have records of at least three letters to a

friend in Kenosha, Wisconsin, that seem to prove conclusively that Mrs. White believed, from her fifth month on, that she had "a cancer of the womanly parts" and would soon join her husband in heaven. . . .

When Miss Desjardin led Carrie up to the office fifteen minutes later, the halls were mercifully empty. Classes droned onward behind closed doors.

Carrie's shrieks had finally ended, but she had continued to weep with steady regularity. Desjardin had finally placed the napkin herself, cleaned the girl up with wet paper towels, and gotten her back into her plain cotton underpants.

She tried twice to explain the commonplace reality of menstruation, but Carrie clapped her hands over her ears and continued to cry.

Mr. Morton, the assistant principal, was out of his office in a flash when they entered. Billy deLois and Henry Trennant, two boys waiting for the lecture due them for cutting French I, goggled around from their chairs.

"Come in," Mr. Morton said briskly. "Come right in." He glared over Desjardin's shoulder at the boys, who were staring at the bloody handprint on her shorts. "What are *you* looking at?"

"Blood," Henry said, and smiled with a kind of vacuous surprise.

his back, helpless to stop, sweating, the bad taste washed away, every cell seeming to have its own climax, body filled with sunlight, musical notes in her mind, butterflies behind her skull in the cage of her mind.

Later, on the way home, he asked her formally if she would go to the Spring Ball with him. She said she would. He asked her if she had decided what to do about Carrie. She said she hadn't. He said that it made no difference, but she thought that it did. It had begun to seem that it meant all the difference.

From "Telekinesis: Analysis and Aftermath" (*Science Yearbook*, 1981), by Dean D. L. McGuffin:

There are, of course, still these scientists today—regretfully, the Duke University people are in their forefront—who reject the terrific underlying implications of the Carrie White affair. Like the Flatlands Society, the Rosicrucians, or the Corlies of Arizona, who are positive that the atomic bomb does not work, these unfortunates are flying in the face of logic with their heads in the sand—and beg your pardon for the mixed metaphor.

Of course one is able to understand the consternation, the raised voices, the angry letters and arguments at scientific convocations. The idea of telekinesis itself has been a bitter pill for the scien-

tific community to swallow, with its horror-movie trappings of ouija boards and mediums and table rappings and floating coronets; but understanding will still not excuse scientific irresponsibility.

The outcome of the White affair raises grave and difficult questions. An earthquake has struck our ordered notions of the way the natural world is supposed to act and react. Can you blame even such a renowned physicist as Gerald Luponet for claiming the whole thing is a hoax and a fraud, even in the face of such overwhelming evidence as the White Commission presented? For if Carrie White is the truth, then what of Newton? . . .

They sat in the living room, Carrie and Momma, listening to Tennessee Ernie Ford singing "Let the Lower Lights Be Burning" on a Webcor phonograph (which Momma called the Victrola, or, if in a particularly good mood, the Vic). Carrie sat at the sewing machine, pumping with her feet as she sewed the sleeves on a new dress. Momma sat beneath the plaster crucifix tatting doilies and bumping her feet in time to the song, which was one of her favorites. Mr. P. P. Bliss, who had written this hymn and others seemingly without number, was one of Momma's shining examples of God at work upon the face of the earth. He had been a sailor and a sinner (two terms that were synonymous

in Momma's lexicon), a great blasphemer, a laugher in the face of the Almighty. Then a great storm had come up at sea, the boat had threatened to capsize, and Mr. P. P. Bliss had gotten down on his sin-sickly knees with a vision of Hell yawning beneath the ocean floor to receive him, and he had prayed to God. Mr. P. P. Bliss promised God that if He saved him, he would dedicate the rest of his life to Him. The storm, of course, had cleared immediately.

*Brightly beams our Father's mercy
From his lighthouse evermore,
But to us he gives the keeping
Of the lights along the shore . . .*

All of Mr. P. P. Bliss's hymns had a seagoing flavor to them.

The dress she was sewing was actually quite pretty, a dark wine color—the closest Momma would allow her to red—and the sleeves were puffed. She tried to keep her mind strictly on her sewing, but of course it wandered.

The overhead light was strong and harsh and yellow, the small dusty plush sofa was of course deserted (Carrie had never had a boy in To Sit), and on the far wall was a twin shadow: the crucified Jesus, and beneath Him, Momma.

The school had called Momma at the laundry

and she had come home at noon. Carrie had watched her come up the walk, and her belly trembled.

Momma was a very big woman, and she always wore a hat. Lately her legs had begun to swell, and her feet always seemed on the point of overflowing her shoes. She wore a black cloth coat with a black fur collar. Her eyes were blue and magnified behind rimless bifocals. She always carried a large black satchel purse and in it was her change purse, her billfold (both black), a large King James Bible (also black) with her name stamped on the front in gold, and a stack of tracts secured with a rubber band. The tracts were usually orange, and smearily printed.

Carrie knew vaguely that Momma and Daddy Ralph had been Baptists once but had left the church when they became convinced that the Baptists were doing the work of the Antichrist. Since that time, all worship had taken place at home. Momma held worship on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays. These were called Holy Days. Momma was the minister, Carrie the congregation. Services lasted from two to three hours.

Momma had opened the door and walked stolidly in. She and Carrie had stared at each other down the short length of the front hall for a moment, like gunfighters before a shootout. It was one of those brief moments that seem

(fear could it really have been fear in momma's eyes)
much longer in retrospect.

Momma closed the door behind her. "You're a woman," she said softly.

Carrie felt her face twisting and crumpling and could not help it. "Why didn't you *tell* me?" she cried. "Oh Momma, I was so *scared*! And the girls all made fun and threw things and—"

Momma had been walking toward her, and now her hand flashed with sudden limber speed, a hard hand, laundry-callused and muscled. It struck her backhand across the jaw and Carrie fell down in the doorway between the hall and the living room, weeping loudly.

"And God made Eve from the rib of Adam," Momma said. Her eyes were very large in the rimless glasses; they looked like poached eggs. She thumped Carrie with the side of her foot and Carrie screamed. "Get up, woman. Let's us get in and pray. Let's us pray to Jesus for our woman-weak, wicked, sinning souls."

"Momma—"

The sobs were too strong to allow more. The latent hysterics had come out grinning and gibbering. She could not stand up. She could only crawl into the living room with her hair hanging in her face, braying huge, hoarse sobs. Every now and again Momma would swing her foot. So they

progressed across the living room toward the place of the altar, which had once been a small bedroom.

"And Eve was weak and—say it, woman. Say it!"

"No, Momma, please help me—"

The foot swung. Carrie screamed.

"And Eve was weak and loosed the raven on the world," Momma continued, "and the raven was called Sin, and the first Sin was Intercourse. And the Lord visited Eve with a Curse, and the Curse was the Curse of Blood. And Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden and into the World and Eve found that her belly had grown big with child."

The foot swung and connected with Carrie's rump. Her nose scraped the wood floor. They were entering the place of the altar. There was a cross on a table covered with an embroidered silk cloth. On either side of the cross there were white candles. Behind this were several paint-by-the-numbers of Jesus and His apostles. And to the right was the worst place of all, the home of terror, the cave where all hope, all resistance to God's will—and Momma's—was extinguished. The closet door leered open. Inside, below a hideous blue bulb that was always lit, was Derrault's conception of Jonathan Edwards's famous sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*.

"And there was a second Curse, and this was the

Curse of Childbearing, and Eve brought forth Cain in sweat and blood."

Now Momma dragged her, half-standing and half-crawling, down to the altar, where they both fell on their knees. Momma gripped Carrie's wrist tightly.

"And following Cain, Eve gave birth to Abel, having not yet repented of the Sin of Intercourse. And so the Lord visited Eve with a third Curse, and this was the Curse of Murder. Cain rose up and slew Abel with a rock. And still Eve did not repent, nor all the daughters of Eve, and upon Eve did the Crafty Serpent found a kingdom of whoredoms and pestilences."

"*Momma!*" she shrieked. "Momma, please listen! *It wasn't my fault!*"

"Bow your head," Momma said. "Let's us pray."

"You should have told me!"

Momma brought her hand down on the back of Carrie's neck, and behind it was all the heavy muscle developed by eleven years of slinging heavy laundry bags and trucking piles of wet sheets. Carrie's eye-bulging face jerked forward and her forehead smacked the altar, leaving a mark and making the candles tremble.

"Let's us pray," Momma said softly, implacably.

Weeping and snuffling, Carrie bowed her head. A runner of snot hung pendulously from her nose and she wiped it away

(if i had a nickel for every time she made me cry here)

with the back of her hand.

"O Lord," Momma declaimed hugely, her head thrown back, "help this sinning woman beside me here see the sin of her days and ways. Show her that if she had remained sinless the Curse of Blood never would have come on her. She may have committed the Sin of Lustful Thoughts. She may have been listening to rock 'n roll music on the radio. She may have been tempted by the Antichrist. Show her that this is Your kind, vengeful hand at work and—"

"No! Let me go!"

She tried to struggle to her feet and Momma's hand, as strong and pitiless as an iron manacle, forced her back to her knees.

"—and Your sign that she must walk the straight and narrow from here on out if she is to avoid the flaming agonies of the Eternal Pit. Amen."

She turned her glittering, magnified eyes upon her daughter. "Go to your closet now."

"No!" She felt her breath go thick with terror.

"Go to your closet. Pray in secret. Ask forgiveness for your sin."

"I didn't sin, Momma. *You* sinned. You didn't tell me and they laughed."

Again she seemed to see a flash of fear in Momma's eyes, gone as quickly and soundlessly as

summer lightning. Momma began to force Carrie toward the blue glare of the closet.

"Pray to God and your sins may be washed away."

"Momma, you let me go."

"Pray, woman."

"I'll make the stones come again, Momma."

Momma halted.

Even her breath seemed to stop in her throat for a moment. And then the hand tightened on her neck, tightened, until Carrie saw red, lurid dots in front of her eyes and felt her brain go fuzzy and far-off.

Momma's magnified eyes swam in front of her.

"You spawn of the devil," she whispered. "Why was I so cursed?"

Carrie's whirling mind strove to find something huge enough to express her agony, shame, terror, hate, fear. It seemed her whole life had narrowed to this miserable, beaten point of rebellion. Her eyes bulged crazily, her mouth, filled with spit, opened wide.

"*You SUCK!*" she screamed.

Momma hissed like a burned cat. "Sin!" she cried. "O, Sin!" She began to beat Carrie's back, her neck, her head. Carrie was driven, reeling, into the close blue glare of the closet.

"*You FUCK!*" Carrie screamed.

(there there o there it's out how else do you think she got you o god o good)

She was whirled into the closet headfirst and she struck the far wall and fell on the floor in a semidaze. The door slammed and the key turned.

She was alone with Momma's angry God.

The blue light glared on a picture of a huge and bearded Yahweh who was casting screaming multitudes of humans down through cloudy depths into an abyss of fire. Below them, black horrid figures struggled through the flames of perdition while the Black Man sat on a huge flame-colored throne with a trident in one hand. His body was that of a man, but he had a spiked tail and the head of a jackal.

She would not break this time.

But of course she did break. It took six hours but she broke, weeping and calling Momma to open the door and let her out. The need to urinate was terrible. The Black Man grinned at her with his jackal mouth, and his scarlet eyes knew all the secrets of woman-blood.

An hour after Carrie began to call, Momma let her out. Carrie scrambled madly for the bathroom.

It was only now, three hours after that, sitting here with her head bowed over the sewing machine like a penitent, that she remembered the fear in Momma's eyes and she thought she knew the reason why.

There had been other times when Momma

had kept her in the closet for as long as a day at a stretch—when she stole that forty-nine-cent finger ring from Shuber's Five and Ten, the time she had found that picture of Flash Bobby Pickett under Carrie's pillow—and Carrie had once fainted from the lack of food and the smell of her own waste. And she had never, never spoken back as she had done today. Today she had even said the Eff Word. Yet Momma had let her out almost as soon as she broke.

There. The dress was done. She removed her feet from the treadle and held it up to look at it. It was long. And ugly. She hated it.

She knew why Momma had let her out.

"Momma, may I go to bed?"

"Yes." Momma did not look up from her doily.

She folded the dress over her arm. She looked down at the sewing machine. All at once the treadle depressed itself. The needle began to dip up and down, catching the light in steely flashes. The bobbin whirled and jerked. The sidewheel spun.

Momma's head jerked up, her eyes wide. The looped matrix at the edge of her doily, wonderfully intricate yet at the same time as precise and even, suddenly fell in disarray.

"Only clearing the thread," Carrie said softly.

"Go to bed," Momma said curtly, and the fear was back in her eyes.

"Yes,

(she was afraid i'd knock the closet door right off its hinges)

Momma."

(and i think i could i think i could yes i think i could)

From *The Shadow Exploded* (p. 58):

Margaret White was born and raised in Motton, a small town which borders Chamberlain and sends its tuition students to Chamberlain's junior and senior high schools. Her parents were fairly well-to-do; they owned a prosperous night spot just outside the Motton town limits called The Jolly Roadhouse. Margaret's father, John Brigham, was killed in a barroom shooting incident in the summer of 1959.

Margaret Brigham, who was then almost thirty, began attending fundamentalist prayer meetings. Her mother had become involved with a new man (Harold Allison, whom she later married) and they both wanted Margaret out of the house—she believed her mother, Judith, and Harold Allison were living in sin and made her views known frequently. Judith Brigham expected her daughter to remain a spinster the rest of her life. In the more pungent phraseology of her soon-to-be stepfather, "Margaret had a face like the ass end of a gasoline

too this carrie she is she is beautiful and it's right and i love all of them the light the light in her eyes) and Carrie

(can't see them the lights are too bright i can hear them but can't see them the shower remember the shower o momma it's too high i think i want to get down o are they laughing and ready to throw things to point and scream with laughter i can't see them i can't see them it's all too bright) and the beam above them.

Both bands, in a sudden and serendipitous coalition of rock and brass, swung into the school song. The audience rose to its feet and began to sing, still applauding.

It was ten-o-seven.

Billy had just flexed his knees to make the joints pop. Chris Hargensen stood next to him with increasing signs of nervousness. Her hands played aimlessly along the seams of the jeans she had worn and she was biting the softness of her lower lip, chewing at it, making it a little ragged.

"You think they'll vote for *them*?" Billy said softly.

"They will," she said. "I set it up. It won't even be close. Why do they keep applauding? What's going on in there?"

"Don't ask me, babe. I—"

The school song suddenly roared out, full and strong on the soft May air, and Chris jumped as if stung. A soft gasp of surprise escaped her.

All rise high for Thomas Ewen Hiiiiiiyygh . . .

"Go on," he said. "They're there." His eyes glowed softly in the dark. The odd half-grin had touched his features.

She licked her lips. They both stared at the length of jute cord.

We'll raise your banners to the skyyyyyy . . .

"Shut up," she whispered. She was trembling, and he thought that her body had never looked so lush or exciting. When this was over he was going to have her until every other time she'd been had was like two pumps with a fag's little finger. He was going on her like a raw cob through butter.

"No guts, babe?"

He leaned forward. "I won't pull it for you, babe. It can sit there till hell freezes."

With pride we wear the red and whiiiiyyte . . .

A sudden smothered sound that might have been a half-scream came from her mouth, and she leaned forward and pulled violently on the cord with both hands. It came loose with slack for a moment, making her think that Billy had been having her on all this time, that the rope was attached to nothing but thin air. Then it snubbed tight, held for a second, and then came through her palms harshly, leaving a thin burn.

"I—" she began.

The music inside came to a jangling, discordant halt. For a moment ragged voices continued oblivious, and then they stopped. There was a beat of silence, and then someone screamed. Silence again.

They stared at each other in the dark, frozen by the actual act as thought never could have done. Her very breath turned to glass in her throat.

Then, inside, the laughter began.

It was ten-twenty-five, and the feeling had been getting worse and worse. Sue stood in front of the gas range on one foot, waiting for the milk to begin steaming so she could dump in the Nestlé's. Twice she had begun to go upstairs and put on a nightgown and twice she had stopped, drawn for no reason at all to the kitchen window that looked down Brickyard Hill and the spiral of Route 6 that led into town.

Now, as the whistle mounted atop the town hall on Main Street suddenly began to shriek into the night, rising and falling in cycles of panic, she did not even turn immediately to the window, but only turned the heat off under the milk so it would not burn.

The town hall whistle went off every day at twelve noon and that was all, except to call the

volunteer fire department during grass-fire season in August and September. It was strictly for major disasters, and its sound was dreamy and terrifying in the empty house.

She went to the window, but slowly. The shrieking of the whistle rose and fell, rose and fell. Somewhere, horns were beginning to blat, as if for a wedding. She could see her reflection in the darkened glass, lips parted, eyes wide, and then the condensation of her breath obscured it.

A memory, half-forgotten, came to her. As children in grammar school, they had practiced air-raid drills. When the teacher clapped her hands and said, "The town whistle is blowing," you were supposed to crawl under your desk and put your hands over your head and wait, either for the all-clear or for enemy missiles to blow you to powder. Now, in her mind, as clearly as a leaf pressed in plastic,
(the town whistle is blowing)

she heard the words clang in her mind.

Far below, to the left, where the high school parking lot was—the ring of sodium arc lamps made it a sure landmark, although the school building itself was invisible in the dark—a spark glowed as if God had struck a flint-and-steel.

(that's where the oil tanks are)

The spark hesitated, then bloomed orange. Now you could see the school, and it was on fire.

She was already on her way to the closet to get

her coat when the first dull, booming explosion shook the floor under her feet and made her mother's china rattle in the cupboards.

From *We Survived the Black Prom*, by Norma Watson (published in the August 1980, issue of *Reader's Digest* as a "Drama in Real Life" article):

... and it happened so quickly that no one really knew what was happening. We were all standing and applauding and singing the school song. Then—I was at the ushers' table just inside the main doors, looking at the stage—there was a sparkle as the big lights over the stage apron reflected on something metallic. I was standing with Tina Blake and Stella Horan, and I think they saw it, too.

All at once there was a huge red splash in the air. Some of it hit the mural and ran in long drips. I knew right away, even before it hit them, that it was blood. Stella Horan thought it was paint, but I had a premonition, just like the time my brother got hit by a hay truck.

They were drenched. Carrie got it the worst. She looked exactly like she had been dipped in a bucket of red paint. She just sat there. She never moved. The band that was closest to the stage, Josie and the Moonglows, got splattered. The lead guitarist had a white instrument, and it splattered all over it.

I said: "My God, that's blood!"

When I said that, Tina screamed. It was very loud, and it rang out clearly in the auditorium.

People had stopped singing and everything was completely quiet. I couldn't move. I was rooted to the spot. I looked up and there were two buckets dangling high over the thrones, swinging and banging together. They were still dripping. All of a sudden they fell, with a lot of loose string paying out behind them. One of them hit Tommy Ross on the head. It made a very loud noise, like a gong.

That made someone laugh. I don't know who it was, but it wasn't the way a person laughs when they see something funny and gay. It was raw and hysterical and awful.

At that same instant, Carrie opened her eyes wide.

That was when they all started laughing. I did too, God help me. It was so ... so weird.

When I was a little girl I had a Walt Disney storybook called *Song of the South*, and it had that Uncle Remus story about the tarbaby in it. There was a picture of the tarbaby sitting in the middle of the road, looking like one of those old-time Negro minstrels with the blackface and great big white eyes. When Carrie opened her eyes it was like that. They were the only part of her that wasn't completely red. And the light had gotten in them and made them glassy. God help me, but she looked for

all the world like Eddie Cantor doing that pop-eyed act of his.

That was what made people laugh. We couldn't help it. It was one of those things where you laugh or go crazy. Carrie had been the butt of every joke for so long, and we all felt that we were part of something special that night. It was as if we were watching a person rejoin the human race, and I for one thanked the Lord for it. And *that* happened. That horror.

And so there was nothing else to do. It was either laugh or cry, and who could bring himself to cry over Carrie after all those years?

She just sat there, staring out at them, and the laughter kept swelling, getting louder and louder. People were holding their bellies and doubling up and pointing at her. Tommy was the only one who wasn't looking at her. He was sort of slumped over in his seat as if he'd gone to sleep. You couldn't tell he was hurt, though; he was splashed too bad.

And then her face . . . broke. I don't know how else to describe it. She put her hands up to her face and half-staggered to her feet. She almost got tangled in her own feet and fell over, and that made people laugh even more. Then she sort of . . . hopped off the stage. It was like watching a big red frog hopping off a lily pad. She almost fell again, but kept on her feet.

Miss Desjardin came running over to her, and

she wasn't laughing any more. She was holding out her arms to her. But then she veered off and hit the wall beside the stage. It was the strangest thing. She didn't stumble or anything. It was as if someone had pushed her, but there was no one there.

Carrie ran through the crowd with her hands clutching her face, and somebody put his foot out. I don't know who it was, but she went sprawling on her face, leaving a long red streak on the floor. And she said, "Oof!" I remember that. It made me laugh even harder, hearing Carrie say Oof like that. She started to crawl along the floor and then she got up and ran out. She ran right past me. You could smell the blood. It smelled like something sick and rotted.

She went down the stairs two at a time and then out the doors. And was gone.

The laughter just sort of faded off, a little at a time. Some people were still hitching and snorting. Lennie Brock had taken out a big white handkerchief and was wiping his eyes. Sally McManus looked all white, like she was going to throw up, but she was still giggling and she couldn't seem to stop. Billy Bosnan was just standing there with his little conductor's stick in his hand and shaking his head. Mr. Lublin was sitting by Miss Desjardin and calling for a Kleenex. She had a bloody nose.

You have to understand that all this happened in no more than two minutes. Nobody could put it

all together. We were stunned. Some of them were wandering around, talking a little, but not much. Helen Shyres burst into tears, and that made some of the others start up.

Then someone yelled: "Call a doctor! Hey, call a doctor quick!"

It was Josie Vreck. He was up on the stage, kneeling by Tommy Ross, and his face was white as paper. He tried to pick him up, and the throne fell over and Tommy rolled onto the floor.

Nobody moved. They were all just staring. I felt like I was frozen in ice. My God, was all I could think. My God, my God, my God. And then this other thought crept in, and it was as if it wasn't my own at all. I was thinking about Carrie. And about God. It was all twisted up together, and it was awful.

Stella looked over at me and said: "Carrie's back."

And I said: "Yes, that's right."

The lobby doors all slammed shut. The sound was like hands clapping. Somebody in the back screamed, and that started the stampede. They ran for the doors in a rush. I just stood there, not believing it. And when I looked, just before the first of them got there and started to push, I saw Carrie looking in, her face all smeared, like an Indian with war paint on.

She was smiling.

They were pushing at the doors, hammering on them, but they wouldn't budge. As more of them crowded up against them, I could see the first ones to get there being battered against them, grunting and wheezing. They wouldn't open. And those doors are never locked. It's a state law.

Mr. Stephens and Mr. Lublin waded in, and began to pull them away, grabbing jackets, skirts, anything. They were all screaming and burrowing like cattle. Mr. Stephens slapped a couple of girls and punched Vic Mooney in the eye. They were yelling for them to go out the back fire doors. Some did. Those were the ones who lived.

That's when it started to rain . . . at least, that's what I thought it was at first. There was water falling all over the place. I looked up and all the sprinklers were on, all over the gym. Water was hitting the basketball court and splashing. Josie Vreck was yelling for the guys in his band to turn off the electric amps and mikes quick, but they were all gone. He jumped down from the stage.

The panic at the doors stopped. People backed away, looking up at the ceiling. I heard somebody—Don Farnham, I think—say: "This is gonna wreck the basketball court."

A few other people started to go over and look at Tommy Ross. All at once I knew I wanted to get out of there. I took Tina Blake's hand and said, "Let's run. Quick."

To get to the fire doors, you had to go down a short corridor to the left of the stage. There were sprinklers there too, but they weren't on. And the doors were open—I could see a few people running out. But most of them were just standing around in little groups, blinking at each other. Some of them were looking at the smear of blood where Carrie fell down. The water was washing it away.

I took Tina's arm and started to pull her toward the exit sign. At that same instant there was a huge flash of light, a scream, and a horrible feedback whine. I looked around and saw Josie Vreck holding onto one of the mike stands. He couldn't let go. His eyes were bugging out and his hair was on end and it looked like he was dancing. His feet were sliding around in the water and smoke started to come out of his shirt.

He fell over on one of the amps—they were big ones, five or six feet high—and it fell into the water. The feedback went up to a scream that was head-splitting, and then there was another sizzling flash and it stopped. Josie's shirt was on fire.

"Run!" Tina yelled at me. "Come on, Norma. Please!"

We ran out into the hallway, and something exploded backstage—the main power switches, I guess. For just a second I looked back. You could see right out onto the stage, where Tommy's body was, because the curtain was up. All the heavy

light cables were in the air, flowing and jerking and writhing like snakes out of an Indian fakir's basket. Then one of them pulled in two. There was a violet flash when it hit the water, and then everybody was screaming at once.

Then we were out the door and running across the parking lot. I think I was screaming. I don't remember very well. I don't remember anything very well after they started screaming. After those high-voltage cables hit that water-covered floor . . .

For Tommy Ross, age eighteen, the end came swiftly and mercifully and almost without pain.

He was never even aware that something of importance was happening. There was a clanging, clashing noise that he associated momentarily with

(there go the milk buckets)

a childhood memory of his uncle Galen's farm and then with

(somebody dropped something)

the band below him. He caught a glimpse of Josie Vreck looking over his head

(what have i got a halo or something)

and then the quarter-full bucket of blood struck him. The raised lip along the bottom of the rim struck him on top of the head and

(hey that hur)

he went swiftly down into unconsciousness. He

Q. How would you have any idea what she was thinking?

A. I don't know. I can't explain.

Q. For the remainder of your testimony, I wish you would stick to what you *saw*, Mr. Quillan.

A. Okay. There was a hydrant on the corner of Grass Plaza, and that one went, too. I could see that one better. The big lug nuts on the sides were unscrewing themselves. I *saw* that happening. It blew, just like the other one. And she was *happy*. She was saying to herself, *that'll* give 'em a shower, *that'll* . . . whoops, sorry. The fire trucks started to go by then, and I lost track of her. The new pumper pulled up to the school and they started on those hydrants and saw they wasn't going to get no water. Chief Burton was hollering at them, and that's when the school exploded. *Je-sus*.

Q. Did you leave the police station?

A. Yeah. I wanted to find Plessy and tell him about that crazy broad and the fire hydrants. I glanced over at Teddy's Amoco, and I seen something that made my blood run cold. All six gas pumps was off their hooks. Teddy Duchamp's been dead since 1968, God love him, but his boy locked those pumps up every night just like Teddy himself used to do. Every one of them Yale padlocks was hanging busted by their hasps. The nozzles were laying on the tarmac, and the automatic feeds was set on every one. Gas was pouring out

onto the sidewalk and into the street. Holy mother of God, when I seen that, my balls drew right up. Then I saw this guy running along with a lighted cigarette.

Q. What did you do?

A. Hollered at him. Something like *Hey! Watch that cigarette! Hey don't, that's gas!* He never heard me. Fire sirens and the town whistle and cars rip-assing up and down the street, I don't wonder. I saw he was going to pitch it, so I started to duck back inside.

Q. What happened next?

A. Next? Why, next thing, the Devil came to Chamberlain . . .

When the buckets fell, she was at first only aware of a loud, metallic clang cutting through the music, and then she was deluged in warmth and wetness. She closed her eyes instinctively. There was a grunt from beside her, and in the part of her mind that had come so recently awake, she sensed brief pain.

(tommy)

The music came to a crashing, discordant halt, a few voices hanging on after it like broken strings, and in the sudden deadness of anticipation, filling the gap between event and realization, like doom, she heard someone say quite clearly:

"My God, that's blood."

A moment later, as if to ram the truth of it home, to make it utterly and exactly clear, someone screamed.

Carrie sat with her eyes closed and felt the black bulge of terror rising in her mind. Momma had been right, after all. They had taken her again, gulled her again, made her the butt again. The horror of it should have been monotonous, but it was not; they had gotten her up here, up here in front of the whole school, and had repeated the shower-room scene . . . only the voice had said

(my god that's blood)

something too awful to be contemplated. If she opened her eyes and it was true, oh, what then? What then?

Someone began to laugh, a solitary, affrighted hyena sound, and she *did* open her eyes, opened them to see who it was and it *was* true, the final nightmare, she was red and dripping with it, they had drenched her in the very secretness of blood, in front of all of them and her thought

(oh . . . i . . . COVERED . . . with it)

was colored a ghastly purple with her revulsion and her shame. She could smell herself and it was the *stink* of blood, the awful wet, coppery smell. In a flickering kaleidoscope of images she saw the blood running thickly down her naked thighs, heard the constant beating of the shower on the

tiles, felt the soft patter of tampons and napkins against her skin as voices exhorted her to *plug it UP*, tasted the plump, fulsome bitterness of horror. They had finally given her the shower they wanted.

A second voice joined the first, and was followed by a third—girl's soprano giggle—a fourth, a fifth, six, a dozen, all of them, all laughing. Vic Mooney was laughing. She could see him. His face was utterly frozen, shocked, but that laughter issued forth just the same.

She sat quite still, letting the noise wash over her like surf. They were still all beautiful and there was still enchantment and wonder, but she had crossed a line and now the fairy tale was green with corruption and evil. In this one she would bite a poison apple, be attacked by trolls, be eaten by tigers.

They were laughing at her again.

And suddenly it broke. The horrible realization of how badly she had been cheated came over her, and a horrible, soundless cry

(they're LOOKING at me)

tried to come out of her. She put her hands over her face to hide it and staggered out of the chair. Her only thought was to run, to get out of the light, to let the darkness have her and hide her.

But it was like trying to run through molasses. Her traitor mind had slowed time to a crawl; it was as if God had switched the whole scene from 78 rpm

to 33⅓. Even the laughter seemed to have deepened and slowed to a sinister bass rumble.

Her feet tangled in each other, and she almost fell off the edge of the stage. She recovered herself, bent down, and hopped down to the floor. The grinding laughter swelled louder. It was like rocks rubbing together.

She wanted not to see, but she *did* see; the lights were too bright and she could see all their faces. Their mouths, their teeth, their eyes. She could see her own gore-streaked hands in front of her face.

Miss Desjardin was running toward her, and Miss Desjardin's face was filled with lying compassion. Carrie could see beneath the surface to where the real Miss Desjardin was giggling and chuckling with rancid old-maid ribaldry. Miss Desjardin's mouth opened and her voice issued forth, horrible and slow and deep:

"Let me help you, dear. Oh I am so sor—"

She struck out at her

(flex)

and Miss Desjardin went flying to rattle off the wall at the side of the stage and fall into a heap.

Carrie ran. She ran through the middle of them. Her hands were to her face but she could see through the prison of her fingers, could see them, how they were, beautiful, wrapped in light, swathed in the bright, angelic robes of Acceptance. The shined

shoes, the clear faces, the careful beauty-parlor hairdos, the glittery gowns. They stepped back from her as if she was plague, but they kept laughing. Then a foot was stuck slyly out

(o yes that comes next o yes)

and she fell over on her hands and knees and began to crawl, to crawl along the floor with her blood-clotted hair hanging in her face, crawling like St. Paul on the Damascus Road, whose eyes had been blinded by the light. Next someone would kick her ass.

But no one did and then she was scrabbling to her feet again. Things began to speed up. She was out through the door, out into the lobby, then flying down the stairs that she and Tommy had swept up so grandly two hours ago.

(tommy's dead full price paid full price for bringing a plague into the place of light)

She went down them in great, awkward leaps, with the sound of the laughter flapping around her like blackbirds.

Then, darkness.

She fled across the school's wide front lawn, losing both of her prom slippers and fleeing barefoot. The closely cut school lawn was like velvet, lightly dusted with dewfall, and the laughter was behind her. She began to calm slightly.

Then her feet *did* tangle and she fell at full length out by the flagpole. She lay quiescent, breathing

raggedly, her hot face buried in the cool grass. The tears of shame began to flow, as hot and as heavy as that first flow of menstrual blood had been. They had beaten her, bested her, once and for all time. It was over.

She would pick herself up very soon now, and sneak home by the back streets, keeping to the shadows in case someone came looking for her, find Momma, admit she had been wrong—

(!! NO !!)

The steel in her—and there was a great deal of it—suddenly rose up and cried the word out strongly. The closet? The endless, wandering prayers? The tracts and the cross and only the mechanical bird in the Black Forest cuckoo clock to mark off the rest of the hours and days and years and decades of her life?

Suddenly, as if a videotape machine had been turned on in her mind, she saw Miss Desjardin running toward her, and saw her thrown out of her way like a rag doll as she used her mind on her, without even consciously thinking of it.

She rolled over on her back, eyes staring wildly at the stars from her painted face. She was forgetting

(!! THE POWER !!)

It was time to teach them a lesson. Time to show them a thing or two. She giggled hysterically. It was one of Momma's pet phrases.

(momma coming home putting her purse down eyeglasses flashing well i guess i showed that elt a thing or two at the shop today)

There was the sprinkler system. She could turn it on, turn it on easily. She giggled again and got up, began to walk barefoot back toward the lobby doors. Turn on the sprinkler system and close all the doors. Look in and let them *see* her looking in, watching and laughing while the shower ruined their dresses and their hairdos and took the shine off their shoes. Her only regret was that it couldn't be blood.

The lobby was empty. She paused halfway up the stairs and *FLEX*, the doors all slammed shut under the concentrated force she directed at them, the pneumatic door-closers snapping off. She heard some of them scream and it was music, sweet soul music.

For a moment nothing changed and then she could feel them pushing against the doors, wanting them to open. The pressure was negligible. They were trapped

(trapped)

and the word echoed intoxicatingly in her mind. They were under her thumb, in her power. *Power!* What a word that was!

She went the rest of the way up and looked in and George Dawson was smashed up against the glass, struggling, pushing, his face distorted with

effort. There were others behind him, and they all looked like fish in an aquarium.

She glanced up and yes, there were the sprinkler pipes, with their tiny nozzles like metal daisies. The pipes went through small holes in the green cinderblock wall. There were a great many inside, she remembered. Fire laws, or something.

Fire laws. In a flash her mind recalled

(black thick cords like snakes)

the power cords strung all over the stage. They were out of the audience's sight, hidden by the footlights, but she had had to step carefully over them to get to the throne. Tommy had been holding her arm.

(fire and water)

She reached up with her mind, felt the pipes, traced them. Cold, full of water. She tasted iron in her mouth, cold wet metal, the taste of water drunk from the nozzle of a garden hose.

Flex.

For a moment nothing happened. Then they began to back away from the doors, looking around. She walked to the small oblong of glass in the middle door and looked inside.

It was raining in the gym.

Carrie began to smile.

She hadn't gotten all of them, only some. But she found that by looking up at the sprinkler system with her eyes, she could trace its course more

easily with her mind. She began to turn on more of the nozzles, and more. Yet it wasn't enough. They weren't crying yet, so it wasn't enough.

(hurt them then hurt them)

There was a boy up on stage by Tommy, gesturing wildly and shouting something. As she watched, he climbed down and ran toward the rock band's equipment. He caught hold of one of the microphone stands and was transfixed. Carrie watched, amazed, as his body went through a nearly motionless dance of electricity. His feet shuffled in the water, his hair stood up in spikes, and his mouth jerked open, like the mouth of a fish. He looked funny. She began to laugh.

(by christ then let them all look funny)

And in a sudden, blind thrust, she yanked at all the power she could feel.

Some of the lights puffed out. There was a dazzling flash somewhere as a live power cord hit a puddle of water. There were dull thumps in her mind as circuit breakers went into hopeless operation. The boy who had been holding the mike stand fell over on one of his amps and there was an explosion of purple sparks and then the crepe bunting that faced the stage was burning.

Just below the thrones, a live 220-volt electricity cable was crackling on the floor and beside it Rhonda Simard was doing a crazed puppet dance in her green tulle formal. Its full skirt suddenly

blazed into flame and she fell forward, still jerking.

It might have been at that moment that Carrie went over the edge. She leaned against the doors, her heart pumping wildly, yet her body as cold as ice cubes. Her face was livid, but dull red fever spots stood on each cheek. Her head throbbed thickly, and conscious thought was lost.

She reeled away from the doors, still holding them shut, doing it without thought or plan. Inside the fire was brightening and she realized dimly that the mural must have caught on fire.

She collapsed on the top step and put her head down on her knees, trying to slow her breathing. They were trying to get out the doors again, but she held them shut easily—that alone was no strain. Some obscure sense told her that a few were getting out the fire doors, but let them. She would get them later. She would get all of them. Every last one.

She went down the stairs slowly and out the front doors, still holding the gymnasium doors closed. It was easy. All you had to do was see them in your mind.

The town whistle went off suddenly, making her scream and put her hands in front of her face
(the whistle it's just the fire whistle)
for a moment. Her mind's eye lost sight of the gymnasium doors and some of them almost got

out. No, no. Naughty. She slammed them shut again, catching somebody's fingers—it felt like Dale Norbert—in the jamb and severing one of them.

She began to reel across the lawn again, a scarecrow figure with bulging eyes, toward Main Street. On her right was downtown—the department store, the Kelly Fruit, the beauty parlor and barbershop, gas stations, police station, fire station—
(they'll put out my fire)

But they wouldn't. She began to giggle and it was an insane sound: triumphant, lost, victorious, terrified. She came to the first hydrant and tried to twist the huge painted lug nut on the side.

(ohuh)

It was heavy. It was very heavy. Metal twisted tight to balk her. Didn't matter.

She twisted harder and felt it give. Then the other side. Then the top. Then she twisted all three at once, standing back, and they unscrewed in a flash. Water exploded outward and upward, one of the lug nuts flying five feet in front of her at suicidal speed. It hit the street, caromed high into the air, and was gone. Water gushed with white pressure in a cruciform pattern.

Smiling, staggering, her heart beating at over two hundred per minute, she began to walk down toward Grass Plaza. She was unaware that she was scrubbing her bloodied hands against her

dress like Lady Macbeth, or that she was weeping even as she laughed, or that one hidden part of her mind was keening over her final and utter ruin.

Because she was going to take them with her, and there was going to be a great burning, until the land was full of its stink.

She opened the hydrant at Grass Plaza, and then began to walk down to Teddy's Amoco. It happened to be the first gas station she came to, but it was not the last.

From the sworn testimony of Sheriff Otis Doyle, taken before The State Investigatory Board of Maine (from *The White Commission Report*), pp. 29-31:

Q. Sheriff, where were you on the night of May twenty-seventh?

A. I was on Route 179, known as Old Bentown Road, investigating an automobile accident. This was actually over the Chamberlain town line and into Durham, but I was assisting Mel Crager, who is the Durham constable.

Q. When were you first informed that trouble had broken out at Ewen High School?

A. I received a radio transmission from Officer Jacob Plessy at 10:21.

Q. What was the nature of the radio call?

A. Officer Plessy said there was trouble at the school, but he didn't know if it was serious or not. There was a lot of shouting going on, he said, and someone had pulled a couple of fire alarms. He said he was going over to try and determine the nature of the trouble.

Q. Did he say the school was on fire?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did you ask him to report back to you?

A. I did.

Q. Did Officer Plessy report back?

A. No. He was killed in the subsequent explosion of Teddy's Amoco gas station on the corner of Main and Summer.

Q. When did you next have a radio communication concerning Chamberlain?

A. At 10:42. I was at that time returning to Chamberlain with a suspect in the back of my car—a drunk driver. As I have said, the case was actually in Mel Crager's town, but Durham has no jail. When I got him to Chamberlain, we didn't have much of one, either.

Q. What communication did you receive at 10:42?

A. I got a call from the State Police that had been relayed from the Motton Fire Department. The State Police dispatcher said there was a fire and an apparent riot at Ewen High School, and a probable explosion. No one was sure of anything at

a resulting fire that raged out of control through most of the next day.

And if we look at these flash points on a municipal map (see page facing), we can pick out Carrie's route—a wandering, looping path of destruction through the town, but one with an almost certain destination: home. . . .

Something toppled over in the living room, and Margaret White straightened up, cocking her head to one side. The butcher knife glittered dully in the light of the flames. The electric power had gone off sometime before, and the only light in the house came from the fire up the street.

One of the pictures fell from the wall with a thump. A moment later the Black Forest cuckoo clock fell. The mechanical bird gave a small, strangled squawk and was still.

From the town the sirens whooped endlessly, but she could still hear the footsteps when they turned up the walk.

The door blew open. Steps in the hall.

She heard the plaster plaques in the living room (CHRIST, THE UNSEEN GUEST; WHAT WOULD JESUS DO; THE HOUR DRAWETH NIGH: IF TONIGHT BECAME JUDGMENT, WOULD YOU BE READY) explode one after the other, like plaster birds in a shooting gallery.

(o i've been there and seen the harlots shimmy on wooden stages)

She sat up on her stool like a very bright scholar who has gone to the head of the class. But her eyes were deranged.

The living-room windows blew outward.

The kitchen door slammed and Carrie walked in.

Her body seemed to have become twisted, shrunken, cronelike. The prom dress was in tatters and flaps, and the pig blood had begun to clot and streak. There was a smudge of grease on her forehead, and both knees were scraped and raw-looking.

"Momma," she whispered. Her eyes were preternaturally bright, hawklike, but her mouth was trembling. If someone had been there to watch, he would have been struck by the resemblance between them.

Margaret White sat on her kitchen stool, the carving knife hidden among the folds of her dress in her lap.

"I should have killed myself when he put it in me," she said clearly. "After the first time, before we were married, he promised. Never again. He said we just . . . slipped. I believed him. I fell down and I lost the baby and that was God's judgment. I felt that the sin had been expiated. By blood. But sin never dies. *Sin . . . never . . . dies.*" Her eyes glittered.

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"Momma, I—"

"At first it was all right. We lived sinlessly. We slept in the same bed, belly to belly sometimes, and o, I could feel the presence of the Serpent, but we never did until." She began to grin, and it was a hard, terrible grin. "And that night I could see him looking at me That Way. We got down on our knees to pray for strength and he . . . touched me. In that place. That woman place. And I sent him out of the house. He was gone for hours, and I prayed for him. I could see him in my mind's eye, walking the midnight streets, wrestling with the devil as Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord. And when he came back, my heart was filled with thanksgiving."

She paused, grinning her dry, spitless grin into the shifting shadows of the room.

"Momma, I don't want to hear it!"

Plates began to explode in the cupboards like clay pigeons.

"It wasn't until he came in that I smelled the whiskey on his breath. And he took me. *Took me!* With the stink of filthy roadhouse whiskey still on him he took me . . . *and I liked it!*" She screamed out the last words at the ceiling. "*I liked it o all that dirty fucking and his hands on me ALL OVER ME!*"

"MOMMA!"

(!! MOMMA !!)

She broke off as if slapped and blinked at her daughter. "I almost killed myself," she said in a more normal tone of voice. "And Ralph wept and talked about atonement and I didn't and then he was dead and then I thought God had visited me with cancer; that He was turning my female parts into something as black and rotten as my sinning soul. But that would have been too easy. The Lord works in mysterious ways His wonders to perform. I see that now. When the pains began I went and got a knife—this knife"—she held it up—"and waited for you to come so I could make my sacrifice. But I was weak and backsliding. I took this knife in hand again when you were three, and I backslid again. So now the devil has come home."

She held the knife up, and her eyes fastened hypnotically on the glittering hook of its blade.

Carrie took a slow, blundering step forward.

"I came to kill you, Momma. And you were waiting here to kill me. Momma, I . . . it's not right, Momma. It's not . . ."

"Let's pray," Momma said softly. Her eyes fixed on Carrie's and there was a crazed, awful compassion in them. The firelight was brighter now, dancing on the walls like dervishes. "For the last time, let us pray."

"Oh Momma help me!" Carrie cried out.

She fell forward on her knees, head down, hands raised in supplication.

Momma leaned forward, and the knife came down in a shining arc.

Carrie, perhaps seeing out of the tail of her eye, jerked back, and instead of penetrating her back, the knife went into her shoulder to the hilt. Momma's feet tangled in the legs of her chair, and she collapsed in a sitting sprawl.

They stared at each other in silent tableau.

Blood began to ooze from around the handle of the knife and to splash onto the floor.

Then Carrie said softly: "I'm going to give you a present, Momma."

Margaret tried to get up, staggered, and fell back on her hands and knees. "What are you doing?" she croaked hoarsely.

"I'm picturing your heart, Momma," Carrie said. "It's easier when you see things in your mind. Your heart is a big red muscle. Mine goes faster when I use my power. But yours is going a little slower now. A little slower."

Margaret tried to get up again, failed, and forked the sign of the evil eye at her daughter.

"A little slower, Momma. Do you know what the present is, Momma? What you always wanted. Darkness. And whatever God lives there."

Margaret White whispered: "Our Father, Who art in heaven—"

"Slower, Momma. Slower."

"—hallowed be Thy name—"

"I can see the blood draining back into you. Slower."

"—Thy kingdom come—"

"Your feet and hands like marble, like alabaster. White."

"—Thy will be done—"

"My will, Momma. Slower."

"—on earth—"

"Slower."

"—as . . . as . . . as it . . ."

She collapsed forward, hands twitching.

"—as it is in heaven."

Carrie whispered: "Full stop."

She looked down at herself, and put her hands weakly around the haft of the knife.

(no o no that hurts that's too much hurt)

She tried to get up, failed, then pulled herself up by Momma's stool. Dizziness and nausea washed over her. She could taste blood, bright and slick, in the back of her throat. Smoke, acrid and choking, was drifting in through the windows now. The flames had reached next door; even now sparks would be lighting softly on the roof that rocks had punched brutally through a thousand years before.

Carrie went out the back door, staggered across the lawn, and rested

(where's my momma)
 against a tree. There was something she was supposed to do. Something about
 (roadhouses parking lots)
 the Angel with the Sword. The Fiery Sword.
 Never mind. It would come to her.
 She crossed by back yards to Willow Street and then crawled up the embankment to Route 6.
 It was 1:15 A.M.

It was 11:20 P.M. when Christine Hargensen and Billy Nolan got back to The Cavalier. They went up the back stairs, down the hall, and before she could do more than turn on the lights, he was yanking at her blouse.

"For God's sake let me unbutton it—"

"To hell with that."

He ripped it suddenly down the back. The cloth tore with a sudden hard sound. One button popped free and winked on the bare wood floor. Honky-tonkin' music came faintly up to them, and the building vibrated subtly with the clumsy-enthusiastic dancing of farmers and truckers and millworkers and waitresses and hairdressers, of the greasers and their townie girl friends from Westover and Lewiston.

"Hey—"

"Be quiet."

He slapped her, rocking her head back. Her eyes took on a flat and deadly shine.

"This is the end, Billy." She backed away from him, breasts swelling into her bra, flat stomach pumping, legs long and tapering in her jeans; but she backed toward the bed. "It's over."

"Sure," he said. He lunged for her and she punched him, a surprisingly hard punch that landed on his cheek.

He straightened and twitched his head a little. "You gave me a shiner, you bitch."

"I'll give you more."

"You're goddam right you will."

They stared at each other, panting, glaring. Then he began to unbutton his shirt, a little grin beginning on his face.

"We got it on, Charlie. We really got it on." He called her Charlie whenever he was pleased with her. It seemed to be, she thought with a cold blink of humor, a generic term for good cunt.

She felt a little smile come to her own face, relaxed a little, and that was when he whipped his shirt across her face and came in low, butting her in the stomach like a goat, tipping her onto the bed. The springs screamed. She pounded her fists helplessly on his back.

"Get off me! Get off me! Get off me! You fucking greaseball, *get off me!*"

He was grinning at her, and with one quick,

Q. Could you see her?

A. No.

Q. Hear her?

A. No.

Q. Then how could you possibly know she was there?

A. How did Tom Quillan know? Or Cora Simard? Or poor Vic Mooney? How did any of them know?

Q. Answer the question, miss. This is hardly the place or the time for impertinence.

A. But they did say they "just knew," didn't they? I read Mrs. Simard's testimony in the paper! And what about the fire hydrants that opened themselves? And the gas pumps that broke their own locks and turned themselves on? The power lines that climbed down off their poles! And—

Q. Miss Snell, please—

A. Those things are in the record of this Commission's proceedings!

Q. That is not an issue here.

A. Then what *is*? Are you looking for the truth or just a scapegoat?

Q. You deny you had prior knowledge of Carrie White's whereabouts?

A. Of course I do. It's an absurd idea.

Q. Oh? And why is it absurd?

A. Well, if you're suggesting some kind of conspiracy, it's absurd because Carrie was dying

when I found her. It could not have been an easy way to die.

Q. If you had no prior knowledge of her whereabouts, how could you go directly to her location?

A. Oh, you stupid man! Have you listened to anything that's been said here? Everybody knew it was Carrie! Anyone could have found her if they had put their minds to it.

Q. But not just anyone found her. You did. Can you tell us why people did not show up from all over, like iron filings drawn to a magnet?

A. She was weakening rapidly. I think that perhaps the . . . the zone of her influence was shrinking.

Q. I think you will agree that that is a relatively uninformed supposition.

A. Of course it is. On the subject of Carrie White, we're all relatively uninformed.

Q. Have it your way, Miss Snell. Now if we could turn to . . .

At first, when she climbed up the embankment between Henry Drain's meadow and the parking lot of The Cavalier, she thought Carrie was dead. Her figure was halfway across the parking lot, and she looked oddly shrunken and crumpled. Sue was reminded of dead animals she had seen on 95—woodchucks, groundhogs, skunks—that

had been crushed by speeding trucks and station wagons.

But the presence was still in her mind, vibrating stubbornly, repeating the call letters of Carrie White's personality over and over. An essence of Carrie, a *gestalt*. Muted now, not strident, not announcing itself with a clarion, but waxing and waning in steady oscillations.

Unconscious.

Sue climbed over the guard rail that bordered the parking lot, feeling the heat of the fire against her face. The Cavalier was a wooden frame building, and it was burning briskly. The charred remains of a car were limned in flame to the right of the back door. Carrie had done that, then. She did not go to look and see if anyone had been in it. It didn't matter, not now.

She walked over to where Carrie lay on her side, unable to hear her own footsteps under the hungry crackle of the fire. She looked down at the curled-up figure with a bemused and bitter pity. The knife hilt protruded cruelly from her shoulder, and she was lying in a small pool of blood—some of it was trickling from her mouth. She looked as if she had been trying to turn herself over when unconsciousness had taken her. Able to start fires, pull down electric cables, able to kill almost by thought alone; lying here unable to turn herself over.

Sue knelt, took her by one arm and the unhurt shoulder, and gently turned her onto her back.

Carrie moaned thickly, and her eyes fluttered. The perception of her in Sue's mind sharpened, as if a mental picture was coming into focus.

(who's there)

And Sue, without thought, spoke in the same fashion:

(me sue snell)

Only there was no need to think of her name. The thought of herself as herself was neither words nor pictures. The realization suddenly brought everything up close, made it real, and compassion for Carrie broke through the dullness of her shock.

And Carrie, with faraway, dumb reproach:

(you tricked me you all tricked me)

(carrie i don't even know what happened is tommy)

(you tricked me that happened trick trick trick o dirty trick)

The mixture of image and emotion was staggering, indescribable. Blood. Sadness. Fear. The latest dirty trick in a long series of dirty tricks: they flashed by in a dizzying shuffle that made Sue's mind reel helplessly, hopelessly. They shared the awful totality of perfect knowledge.

(carrie don't don't don't hurts me)

Now girls throwing sanitary napkins, chanting,

laughing, Sue's face mirrored in her own mind: ugly, caricatured, all mouth, cruelly beautiful.

(see the dirty tricks see my whole life one long dirty trick)

(look carrie look inside me)

And Carrie looked.

The sensation was terrifying. Her mind and nervous system had become a library. Someone in desperate need ran through her, fingers trailing lightly over shelves of books, lifting some out, scanning them, putting them back, letting some fall, leaving the pages to flutter wildly

(glimpses that's me as a kid hate him daddy
o mommy wide lips o teeth bobby pushed me o
my knee car want to ride in the car we're going
to see aunt cecily mommy come quick i made
pee)

in the wind of memory; and still on and on, finally reaching a shelf marked TOMMY, subheaded PROM. Books thrown open, flashes of experience, marginal notations in all the hieroglyphs of emotion, more complex than the Rosetta Stone.

Looking. Finding more than Sue herself had suspected—love for Tommy, jealousy, selfishness, a need to subjugate him to her will on the matter of taking Carrie, disgust for Carrie herself,

(she could take better care of herself she does
look just like a GODDAM TOAD)
hate for Miss Desjardin, hate for herself.

But no ill will for Carrie personally, no plan to get her in front of everyone and undo her.

The feverish feeling of being raped in her most secret corridors began to fade. She felt Carrie pulling back, weak and exhausted.

(why didn't you just leave me alone)

(carrie i)

(momma would be alive i killed my momma i
want her o it hurts my chest hurts my shoulder o o
o i want my momma)

(carrie i)

And there was no way to finish that thought, nothing there to complete it with. Sue was suddenly overwhelmed with terror, the worse because she could put no name to it: The bleeding freak on this oil-stained asphalt suddenly seemed meaningless and awful in its pain and dying.

(o momma i'm scared momma MOMMA)

Sue tried to pull away, to disengage her mind, to allow Carrie at least the privacy of her dying, and was unable to. She felt that she was dying herself and did not want to see this preview of her own eventual end.

(carrie let me GO)

(Momma Momma Momma oooooooooooooooooo
ooooooooooooo)

The mental scream reached a flaring, unbelievable crescendo and then suddenly faded. For a moment Sue felt as if she were watching a candle

flame disappear down a long, black tunnel at a tremendous speed.

(she's dying o my god i'm feeling her die)

And then the light was gone, and the last conscious thought had been

(momma i'm sorry where)

and it broke up and Sue was tuned in only on the blank, idiot frequency of the physical nerve endings that would take hours to die.

She stumbled away from it, holding her arms out in front of her like a blind woman, toward the edge of the parking lot. She tripped over the knee-high guard rail and tumbled down the embankment. She got to her feet and stumbled into the field, which was filling with mystic white pockets of ground mist. Crickets chirruped mindlessly and a whippoorwill

(whippoorwill somebody's dying)

called in the great stillness of morning.

She began to run, breathing deep in her chest, running from Tommy, from the fires and explosions, from Carrie, but mostly from the final horror—that last lighted thought carried swiftly down into the black tunnel of eternity, followed by the blank, idiot hum of prosaic electricity.

The after-image began to fade reluctantly, leaving a blessed, cool darkness in her mind that knew nothing. She slowed, halted, and became aware that something had begun to happen. She stood in

the middle of the great and misty field, waiting for realization.

Her rapid breathing slowed, slowed, caught suddenly as if on a thorn—

And suddenly vented itself in one howling, cheated scream.

As she felt the slow course of dark menstrual blood down her thighs.