CHAPTER 8

"London is an inexhaustible place,"
he mused. "Its variety is infinite.
A minute ago we walked in a glare
of light, jostled by a multitude.
And now look at this little street.
It is as dim as a tunnel, and we
have got it absolutely to ourselves.
Anything might happen in a place
like this."

. . .R. AUSTIN FREEMAN
"The Magic Casket"

I had plenty of time for reflection the next day, especially in the morning. I was sitting in a large auditorium with two hundred and fifty other people. It was a typical lecture hall of the fifties, steeply banked with narrow desks separating the tiers of seats and all done in blond stained wood. At the front of the hall were acres of blackboards, waiting patiently to be covered with miles of chemical formulas. That made the blackboards different from the audience which buzzed impatiently for the lectures to begin and end and release them once again to the wonders of London. Around the podium hung the tour leaders. Every now and then they'd look up and count the audience as though the fate of the world hung on the number of people there. Finally, while the rest dropped back against the walls, one of them stepped before the podium. Hands spread across the blond wood, he looked at the audience expectantly, waiting for silence. Travel-Counselors looked along their rows of kids. If looks could kill, half the kids would have been wiped out. Silence came unwillingly.

"Welcome once again to London," the speaker began. He outlined the nature of the lecture series and stressed the importance of relating the lectures to the panorama of Europe. He then introduced his first lecturer, a dark-haired hawk-faced kid in a Yale blazer. The Yalie strode elegantly to the podium and spread his hands out across the wood, bracing his body. He stared off into a corner of the room as though he was seeing something no one else could see — eternity probably. He held the pose. He opened his mouth and the lecture series began.

He was going to talk about nostalgia. Kids held pens over open notebooks, waiting. He talked. The pens relaxed, after a while they were put away. After a longer while they were picked up again. I craned my neck to see what they were writing. Doodles. I saw girls passing notes. I watched yawns. I yawned. I picked my mind up and let it wander. As I said, I had plenty of time for reflection that morning. Every now and then I would yank my mind back to the lecture. Now he was describing the difference between comedy and tragedy. One was a circle, the other was an uncompleted arc. I thought about arcs. I thought about bridges. I was seeing suspension bridges. Maybe tragedy was a suspension bridge. Quiet like a mouse I slid out of my seat. I backed slowly toward the door. The room was too quiet. The monotonous voice droned on. I left. Outside the world was cool and damp and refreshing. I filled my lungs with air.

Yessir, I thought, that is one relevant lecture for some kids on a tour of Europe. Maybe it will help them see their experience with the tour as an arc, tragedy, unresolved. It sure is no comedy. Nothing I was involved with was ever less funny. I walked around Bloomsbury admiring the wide streets and the quiet squares. In Tavistock Place I

walked through a gaggle of birds feeding on the walk. They couldn't be bothered with getting out of my way. They had no fear of humans at all. I guess I learned more about the English then than I could in fifty lectures. Education. I sneered. I made it back to the lecture hall just as the kids were getting out. Relief was written on every face. Even the T-C's looked like you would imagine someone looking who had spent the last three hours in a small paper bag. I fell in with the girls I had been with last night and we walked to lunch together. Had they liked the lectures? What lectures?

"They were okay...I guess," one of them said. They still didn't know if I were a spy or not. Bob joined us. Dismay was written over his face like Coca-Cola is painted on a billboard. During lunch we circulated among the tables, reminding the kids about the mapping session that night. Lunch looked like the usual cafeteria affair. Everyone said they would make it if they could. It was scheduled for 5:30.

The afternoon was free, for us and for the kids. Bob and I wandered down Tottenham Court to Oxford and down into Soho. It was a different city than I'd seen on the tour bus. We looked in a lot of windows. By the time we'd passed through Picadilly to Trafalgar we were both feeling empty inside. The National Gallery looked like a giant restaurant. St. Martin's in the Fields made me think of church suppers. We entered the first place that really sold food and settled down in padded chairs and pushed our knees beneath real linen. It was an Indian restaurant and I had curry that for once didn't taste like yellow chile.

"This is more like it," I said over the black steaming coffee.

"What do you mean," Bob asked, smoking one of my Passing Clouds.

"Well, when I think of travel, I think of long interesting walks and decent restaurants placed at pleasing intervals and most of all of service. This business where you make your own bed and fight with the hot water faucet and stand in line to eat —— and carry your own tray back and then board a hot bus..." I trailed off to sip my coffee. We luxuriated in the hush and the food-feeling and the soft-footed waiters.

Bob looked at me. "What are we going to do about the project?"

I shrugged. We looked around the room for inspiration. We found none. We paid the bill and left.

At 5:30 we'd been waiting out in front of the dorms for the kids to come back for half an hour. It was pleasant. The afternoon sun was

warm but not hot and hit us dappled by the trees in Cartwright Gardens. From the tennis court came the sounds of tennis balls going thonk-thonk. By 6:00 it was replay time. None of the kids had materialized and when they did it would mean eating, washing, changing and off to the theater for an organized night-life experience. Then the kids came in floods.

Sorry we're late but it's too late now. Got to eat. Got to shower. Got to change. Got to go see some play.

That's okay. We'll catch you another time. I looked at the schedule and crossed off the fourth missed meeting. That left two scheduled meetings to go. What a wonderful project. We'll get maps of the kids as they experience London, on the first day, on the third day, on the last day. Sure, in a pig's ear. We hung around the dorms as the kids gathered to leave for the show. We chatted. Susan Lincoln and Rhoda Noyes got lost that afternoon and had ended up at the police station before getting home. Boy, would I like a map from them! A couple of girls complained about not being able to mail their postcards. We took them to mail. Had we anything else to do?

After they'd gone we strolled to St. Pancras Station to mail the cards. It was cool in the station, and dim. It was also big enough to dock the Queen Mary and the Queen Elizabeth and have room left over for a brace of aircraft carriers. It was the kind of building that you enter and your insides expand to fill the space. It was a building for big ideas and free ideas. We bought a bag of purple plums and sat down on a scarred luggage cart. I didn't think it would mind. We read the postcards while we ate the plums. We talked about them and after a while I got up and looked at the tracks. They used only four bolts to connect track sections. We used six. I figured it was the narrower gauge that allowed it. I couldn't see any creepers at all. It looked like a well maintained section of track. It was probably fun to work on, a lot more fun than being a social scientist. I returned to the luggage cart and started copying down the postcards.

"That's unethical," Bob said.

"I know."

"Then what are you doing?"

"I'm copying the postcards."

"But that's unethical."

"Yeah," I said, "and it's also the only —— data we've got so far. Unethical, unsmethical."

"But you can't use it."

"I know."

The post cards were nice. Three of them were in a hand that used little circles to dot the i's, something girls pick up in the seventh or eighth grade and never lose. I never saw a boy dot his i's that way. We has seven cards. Four of them were of the Tower, one was of the Abbey we never entered, one was of Piccadilly at night, one was one of those cards with seven or eight tiny pictures on it. The cards mentioned the Tower four times, the Changing of the Guard four times, shops twice and the Abbey once. Data. What did it mean?

Hi! Having a wonderful time. Sorry
I didn't get a chance to say good-bye.
London is beautiful. It's just like
New York in many ways. Will tell
you about my trip when I get home.
Love,

Hi! Having a wonderful time. Sorry
I didn't get a chance to say good-bye.
London is beautiful. It's just like
Rome (the boys are gorgeous) in many
ways. Will tell you about my trip
when I get home.
Love,

Hi! Having a wonderful time. Sorry I didn't
get a chance to say good-bye. London is
beautiful. It's just like home in many ways.
Will tell you about my trip when I get home.
Love,

I still can't believe I'm here! It's
really something else. Yesterday
I saw the Changing of the Guards,
Tower of London, and Westminster
Abbey. They're really great.
Love,

> Hi! It's really exciting here and fast. We rode the subway which was a lot of fun. We went sight-seeing all day yesterday and saw the Changing of the Guards. See you.
>
> Love,

As I sat there in the dim writing out those cards a cold hand crept up my back and for a moment I saw just exactly what those cards meant. They meant that we were on the original magical mystery tour. The kids were in Europe to see what they were supposed to see and they were supposed to see everything they had already seen a thousand times. In magazines. In brochures. On TV. You cross an ocean and go to London to see the Changing of the Guards and the Tower and the Abbey. You take pictures to prove you were there, to convince yourself that you were there. You write postcards home saying you were there. Everybody's happy and your're cultured.

In Sam Johnson's day, "A man who has not been in Italy, is always conscious of an inferiority." In our day, it's the same if you have never been to Europe. At any cocktail party you can say:

> "The guide told us that if we took our jeep on the road that night the Indians would have our blood..."
>
> "Uh-huh. Well, what's new?"
>
> "Two months later we became the first white men to be initiated into the tribe and to photograph that strange ritual..."
>
> "Is that (yawn) a fact?" (Snore.)
>
> "And then in July I went to Europe..."
>
> "WHAT!! YOU WENT TO EUROPE. WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO. IS IT TRUE THAT THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE AT THE CHANGING OF THE GUARDS THAT YOU CAN'T SEE ANYTHING? DID YOU SEE THE BLOODSTAINS AT THE COLESIUM? DID YOU EAT THAT ICE-CREAM IN THE PIAZZA NUVONNA?"

With all due apologies to Richard Bissell, it's true. Nobody wants to hear about experiences with the Zinacatan Indians, they just want

to talk about THAT trip down the Seine or the crowd at Speaker's Corner.

Sitting there with those postcards I began to feel slightly sick. Who knows? Maybe it was the plums, but those postcards didn't help things any. We bought the stamps from a machine, dropped them in the box and left. We walked down Euston to Portland Place and so down Regent Street to Piccadilly.

Regent Street. John Nash. One great architectural monument. The famous crescent at the top of Portland Place was a bunch of old buildings with cracked plaster and chipped paint. Through the fan-lights I could see bare bulbs hanging. In the gutters the afternoon papers and the empty paper yogurt cartons stirred uneasily. Shabby people passed us on the street and they looked old and mean and very tired. Portland Place was a wide street like any other wide ugly street. It would make a good place for a murder. All Soul's Church was a cement wedding cake with an oil can on top. It articulated the curve into Regent Street with all the power of the Civil War cannon on the Worcester Commons. Architecture, phooey! You're not human tonight, Wood.

We crossed Oxford Street at the Circus. Why a Circus? It's like every street-crossing in Worcester is a Square. The store windows along Regent were a blaze of lights. One sold china, the next cut-rate clothes, the next trusses. You could tell we were approaching Piccadilly. The curve in Regent Street was something that impressed me greatly, but not as much as the dirt on the sidewalk. We turned into Piccadilly. It was lighted up and about as gaudy as a streetwalker dressed for a night on the town. The fountain was surrounded by the dregs of the international poor set and was as inviting as a stale doughnut. On Piccadilly Road we had that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be appraised by uniformed doormen, those buck-fifty an hour guys whose glance starts at your shoes and moves up your body mentally totaling the value of your clothes. If it doesn't add up to at least three hundred bucks you can try another door and get the same treatment. We turned up Berkeley and looked at the used cars in the show rooms. The Queen Mother's old Daimler could be had, if you had a barn to park it in. Over on Bond Street the tourists were parking themselves in expensive coffee houses whose tables spilled out onto the street. We picked one that tried to pretend it opened in 1920. The rickety tables could just stand up. Ray Noble played on the jukebox. We sat on the street and drank fifty cent cups of coffee. You're not human tonight, Wood.

So? Give me three reasons why I should be. I broke my back getting ready for this trip. My academic future lies in the gutter. My wife is in another world. All I had so far were seven postcards that made me feel like a thief reading them. Why should I be human?

"It's not that bad, Denis," Bob said.

"It's worse. If we don't get any maps tomorrow, I'm going home."

"I don't get you. You're here in Europe. All paid for. Enjoy the trip at least."

"I didn't come here to see Europe," I wailed. "I came here to get my Ph.D. I'm not getting it so far. Let me out, that's all. Let me go back where I belong." I put my cup down with a bang, spilling coffee on the table. A couple of hot shots looked disapprovingly from another table. I looked right back.

The trouble was, Bob really agreed with me. He asked me for a cigarette. I was smoking #999's now. We puffed away on the cigarettes, trying to make an oval fit where a circle usually does. Bob looked up sharply. "We'll get a map set tomorrow," he said.

"How? It's a free day. The kids'll never be together. Half of them are going on a trip to Greenwich. Some othere are going to Windsor. Who knows what the rest are doing?"

"That's just it," Bob said. "We've been trying to do them as a group. Let's forget the schedule. We know it doesn't work. Let's stop trying to do them all at once. We know that doesn't work. Let's take them on one at a time whenever they have time." He stubbed out the cigarette.

I lit another one and looked the idea over. It looked beautiful. It looked too beautiful to be true, but it was the best thing I'd heard in days. "Okay. It sounds good. What do we do? We go and sit in the lounge and wait for them to come. We should bracket dinner pretty widely on both sides, say from 4:00 to 8:00. As they come in, we tell them what to do, they do it and go. Others come in. It looks good."

"We can't lose anything," Bob added.

"We've got to let them know, though. I'll put it up on both bulletins first thing tomorrow morning and tell everyone I see. We also ought to tell each T-C if we get the chance. Let's go home."

We paid for our coffee. If the thing panned out, the coffee would be cheap. If it didn't, it was just another gyp. One more in that long line wouldn't matter.

* * *

I was up early the next morning posting my notices and talking to people. Nobody screamed with joy, but I hardly thought they would. As soon as I could I put a call through to my wife in Worcester. I still couldn't shake my underlying gloom. The call didn't help things any. Getting the States was no problem at all, but getting the English operator was a whole other story. More than anything I have ever run across I hate foreign phones. I spoke with Ingrid longer than we could afford too, but it was part of the game. I told her to expect me any time, that I could well be on my way home that very next day. She told me about the Fourth of July in Worcester, the Puerto Ricans playing guitars in the streets, the big bon-fire up on Castle Hill. She told me about Homer. She told me she was lonely. I hung up with my ears ringing. Those phone ads are a phoney, the ones that say "GO HOME THIS WEEKEND — BY PHONE." You call and you talk and you still aren't home. Those long conversations just make the distance greater than ever.

We had coffee around noon at an Italian place around the corner from the dorm. Bob tossed some Italian at them and they tossed it right back. It was some comfort to know that he really did speak all those languages. It was also nauseating because I couldn't. We went back to my room and wrote up all the stuff about the kids that we knew so far. Sometimes we knew something, but sometimes we didn't. We went through the list of names systematically filling out a sheet for each name. On this sheet we'd record what we knew so far. We didn't know very much about anybody really, but we did our best. Here's what we had for Joy Gray:

> Very sophisticated. Wore boots and pants on first day's tour and was photographed outside Buckingham Palace by the Daily Mail because she was well dressed. Very smartly got up. Bob says she's a career girl but I say out for a man, but a very classy man. She's a bit of a dish, says Bob. Brown hair, he adds. Also freckles, but I think not. Heavy in thighs, he notes. Very aloof, cool, clean. She's alluring in a Dolores del Rio manner. Horsey. Took copious notes on tour of London. Looks askance at our project. Intimidates Bob. I think she can be put in her place. Not sweet like Nybia.

But for Candy Fisher we could only write:

No face for Fisher for either Bob or me.
Small, thin, blond, quiet at back of bus.
A grey sheep.

Of course Candy Fisher was nothing like that at all, not even blond, but it was the best we could do. We began to laugh at our ignorance. Every time we would get a grey sheep we would laugh uproariously. I listened to the laughter and didn't like it. It was hysterical. It sounded like we were going mad. I didn't like that. Do another name.

Taylor Nash. Greek type with brownish, very curley hair. Wears casual beachboy shirts. Strikes me as strong silent type. Bob knows nothing of Taylor at this point, says he has long hair. Taylor is not keen on mapping and says so outright. Taylor was one of the first people I met in the airport and his negativism toward the project was chilling. Taylor is like Joy Gray. I like Taylor. (Was very hostile about taking bags off the truck.)

William Brown. Small, Skinny, T-shirts, young looking and yet not like those thirteen-year-olds. Quiet, bright, immature. Bob will check to see if he's with Jane. (So what?) Seems to have a camera. Blue eyes.

Jane Brown. Small, blond, slight, gray pale person. But I talked to her at some length and still I ask: who is Jane?

Another one of those. Pow. We'd be rolling on the floor in paroxysms of laughter. What fools we were. It was some way of releasing in ourselves the tension that had been built up so far by frustration after frustration. The afternoon sun left my side of the building and the room turned gray. We looked at the clock. It was 3:30. Time to get ready. Bob went to his room to change while I collected the things we'd need for the mapping session: box of pencils, already sharpened, set of map blanks, set of tracing paper, set of Environmental A's, set of nerves, book to read just in case. What I needed was a job, my wife, a Ph.D. and home. What I had was a box of pencils and a lot of paper. I looked the room over, snapped off the light and left closing the door very gently behind me.

The big Commons Room on the second floor of the dorm was bathed in sunlight. It was a long room. One wall was practically all glass. In front of the windows hung luxurious drapes, some pulled back, but others negligently screening the afternoon sun. Through the windows you could see Cartwright Gardens and hear the tennis balls going thonk-thonk. A lot of chairs were pulled up to the window and in them lounged students, some with the Sunday paper piled around them, others just quietly staring. Scattered around the length of the room were other chairs, deep, comfortable looking chairs, gathered into small groups around tables. A light green carpet covered the floor. It was a very nice room, the sort of room you imagine in an English men's club. It was hushed and warm. It was a room in which work was never done. It was made for relaxing.

We made a small nest out of a table and a few chairs. I laid out my materials neatly on the table. We sat and waited. It was 4:00.

At 4:10 the first kid appeared. The door opened cautiously at the far end of the room and in he came. He had to walk the entire length of the room to reach us. Halfway he came between us and the sun. It gave him an aureole all his own. It was well deserved. He was an angel to us. The door had scarcely stopped swinging when it opened again and three of the girls entered. They too created their own aureole. The room filled with angels and it was heavenly. Bob and I spoke softly and handed out the materials. The kids scattered to various seats and went to work. It was like that for nearly two hours. There were never so many kids that we couldn't answer questions and keep our eyes on the mapping progress, and sometimes for a few minutes there would be none at all. The maps grew in a wonderful pile beneath my elbow. It was the most wonderful room in the whole world that afternoon. As it rolled on to 6:00 nearly half the kids had shown up.

Bob and I were to spell each other for dinner. At 6:00 I would go eat and at 6:30 Bob would. I patted my pile of maps as I stood up and looked around. Over by the windows two girls were bent over their tracing paper overlays. Another was sitting off in a corner by herself. She was staring at that sheet of paper as though at a rattlesnake. I opened the door and passed out into the hallway.

Heading toward the cafeteria I ran into Taylor Nash. True to form he was wearing a beachboy shirt. He nodded at me and said:

"How's it going?"

I looked at him. A slight smile played at the corners of his mouth. "It all depends," I said.

"On what?" he asked.

"Do you want to draw maps for us?"

"I don't want to," he said, "but I will."

* * *

July 5th was a Monday and a big day for the tour. It was the day of the first field trip. We were all going to Stratford-on-Avon with a stop at Oxford. I was up bright and early. I felt fine and didn't care who knew it. I even got hot water out of the tap without breaking my wrist. I even changed my shirt. Before I left the room I glanced lovingly at the folder filled with maps. I had qualms. What if somebody stole it? Wood, for Christ's sake, nobody's going to steal a bunch of old maps. Yeah, I know, but if they do? One half of me was disgusted with the other. Where's your love of humanity? Right here in this map folder, I answered. I picked up the folder and placed it in my suitcase under dirty clothes. I looked around one more time and left. Over my shoulder was my sisal fiber book bag and it was filled with bus seating charts and Stereomatrices and a box of sharpened pencils.

The breakfast room was quiet, too quiet. I sat down with the Indiana contingent to eat. They looked slightly subdued, as though the night before had lasted longer than it should have. I said nothing, but somehow I felt oddly left out. The conversation dragged. They looked exhausted. Bob came down and joined us just as the kids were leaving. It was an eight o'clock departure and not much time remained.

Bob smoked one of my cigarettes over his coffee. He looked fine.

"Do you have everything?" he asked.

I said I did. "What's wrong with the kids this morning?"

"Anything?"

"Yeah. They looked washed out."

"Probably just too early in the norming." He yawned.

I grunted and downed my last bit of coffee. We smoked in silence, and then went up to the buses. It was a huge bus waiting for us. It wasn't as long as the Thames but it held forty-nine people, which was ten more than our group. So we had some of another group with us. We

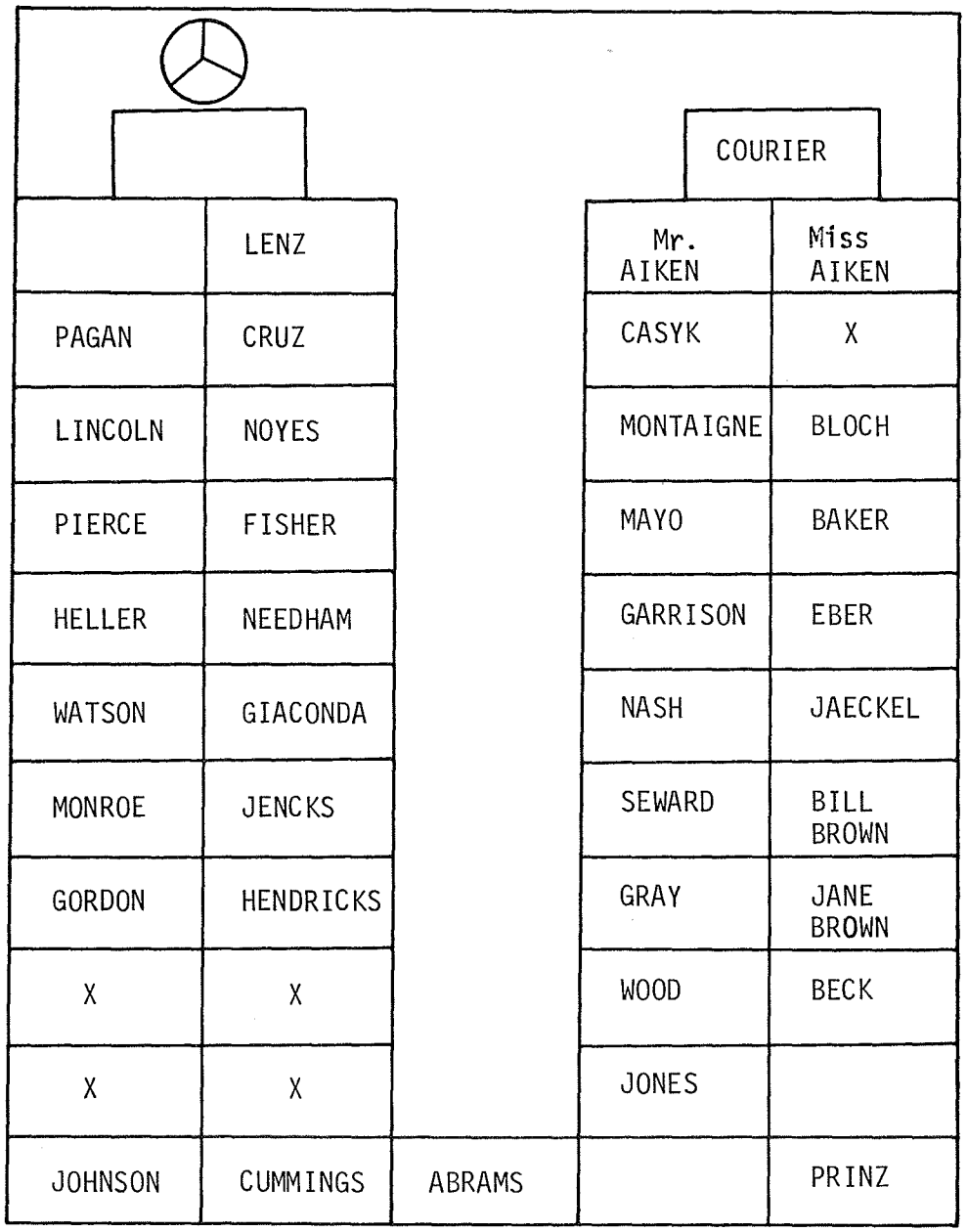

Figure 8.0. Bus seating chart, 8:30 a.m., 5 July, on the road to Oxford. This chart does not reflect the size of the bus utilized on this trip, and consequently a row of seats has been omitted. This row was immediately behind that of Wood and Beck and was completely filled with "X's", representing the kids from other groups. Unoccupied seats are blank.

got on the bus among the last and found an empty pair of seats near the back. The bus started and we were off.

We looked around. Group L was sitting together and the kids from the other group were sitting together. We got out our charts and went to work. It was getting to be easy. But something had happened. This chart didn't look like the chart we'd taken on the London tour. Wow. I whistled silently between my teeth and pointed it out to Bob. Marina Giaconda was sitting with Robert Watson and Lana Monroe was sitting with Desmond Jencks. True, Bobbi Seward was sitting with William Brown, but that was different. They were'nt talking. But Marina and Watson and Lana and Desmond looked like pairs.

Another thing was interesting. Sitting at the very back of the bus where the aisle ends and there are five seats across — from my point of view the very worst seats on any bus — were four Group L kids. What was interesting was that they were separated from the rest of the group by outsiders. Did they want to sit in those seats? Laura Johnson, Tracy Cummings, David Abrams and Karl Prinz. Data. What did it mean? I had no idea. Since thinking about it was getting me nowhere fast, I yanked my mind loose and turned it out the window.

The English country-side was moving by. At first it was flat, as flat as a flat bicycle tire, but then hills started poking their heads up here and there. The country became rolling with long straight stretches that the road rose and fell over easily as though it didn't want to bother our stomachs. And then they were real hills. We crested one of the long straights and made a sharp turn and the country fell away from us in sweeps of green covered with sheep. Some of the kids were sleeping and others were playing cards, but as we made that turn the bus emitted a sigh and cameras snapped and the sleepers stirred. Timed to the second the courier picked up his microphone and started talking. Somehow the passing scene made no impression on him for he was telling us about the history of Oxford and then we were in Oxford driving down a main street that could have been in Iowa except for the obvious age of the buildings, and that's something we fake fairly well these days anyhow. The bus stopped and let us off.

We stood in front of an ancient archway. Through the archway filed two-hundred and fifty kids. The quadrangle inside would have been serene except that our tour put a stop to that. One of the couriers started talking, explaining the difference between the American and British university systems. After a while he stopped and explained that we had half an hour to see the town. We wandered off in small groups. I got separated from my group by a bookstore. When I came out I ran into Miss Bloch and Therese Montaigne. We chatted pleasantly on the corner

until Miss Bloch said:

"We're going to take a look at Magdelen. Will you join us?"

"Certainly," I said. "Any particular reason?"

"Well, do you read Dorothy Sayers?" We hurried across a crowded street.

"Of course," and I snapped my fingers. "Gaudy Night."

"Oh, you do!" A smile crossed her face. "Then you know why I want to see the college. I promised myself that I would try to see where Harriet taught." She paused, thinking. "I think Gaudy Night is the finest of the series."

"Well," I said, "I think it's a fine book, but The Nine Tailors is my favorite." Therese Montaigne wanted to know what we were talking about so we explained the great romance of Wimsey and Vane as we ploughed up the street. By the time we reached the college we had six minutes to get back to the bus. We tossed a glance at the walls, figured which was the gate that was used after hours, and returned to the bus talking about Wimsey the whole way.

Miss Bloch and I probably had nothing else in common, but that alone could have let us prowl Oxford in contentment together for an afternoon at least. It was too bad we had only six minutes, but it summed up the nature of this tour completely:

> "Okay kids, this is the world. You've got six minutes to catch it." Six minutes is a long time. You can get married in six minutes. You can register for kindergarten in six minutes. You can lose a job in six minutes. You can even make it back to the bus in six minutes. Six minutes, phooey.

Forty-five minutes later we were eating lunch. It was the usual cafeteria fare, beverages extra. It was a meal you had to work to keep down. I ate with Ann Hendricks. Ann was a frail girl, a girl so silent you might think she was dumb. But she could talk and we did. Her love in life was music, and home, but Europe was marvelous. Sort of. While I wolfed my food down, I watched her push it around on her plate. She didn't like this, she didn't like that. As far as I could tell, she didn't like food at all. Maybe that's why she was so skinny. But she had a smile that could make a doorman lose his cool. She was pleasant to be with when

she smiled.

Forty-five minutes later we were looking at a tombstone. In life there is no thrill for spine-tingling excitement to compare with looking at a tombstone, even if it's got Winston Churchill's name on it. It was small and gray and long blades of grass tickled its edges. The small plot was surrounded by wild roses. If you looked up the silhouette of Bladon was there, breaking up the horizon. I stood there a long time with David Abrams and Taylor Nash after the rest had gone. Then we hurried through the village streets to catch up with the rest of the group.

It was one of those villages that lets you know life is worth living. The houses snuggled into the ground comfortably and surrounded themselves with riots of flowers. The hollyhocks whispered to each other in the aurous sunlight. We were impressed. Taylor talked about the pleasures of living in a place like this. We caught up with the rest of the group and the spell was broken.

It was all very pleasant except that forty-five minutes later we were in Avon standing in a line a mile long to get a chance to walk through Ann Hathaway's cottage. You didn't move fast, you didn't move slow. You just moved. Back on the bus. Shakespeare's birthplace. An hour's free time. I took a picture with Erica's camera of Erica and Nybia and then I took one of them with Nybia's camera. Back on the bus. Out to some schlocky restaurant on the edge of town. Back on the bus. To the theater. We had balcony seats. I got to read the piece in the Daily Mail about Joy Gray. It said she had a good body but did all the wrong things with it. I'd have been pleased just to find myself in the center spread of the Daily Mail. Joy was furious. We had comfortable seats if you go for hard wood benches with straight backs in a steam bath. I slept through the first half of the play and discovered during intermission that I wasn't alone. I dozed through the second half.

Outside evening had come slowly. Lanterns hung in the branches of the trees around the theater and their reflections in the water danced and shimmered. A huge moon hung in the sky. Daylight flickered at the edge of the world. As you like it. This beat the play six ways to paradise. But there was no time to see all this, for it was back to the bus and home to London. For the first part of the return I sat with Bill Brown. But that's all I did was sit. Either he wanted to sleep or we had nothing to talk about. When I found myself apologizing for smoking, I figured I'd better find another seat. I sat with Jill Needham and talked about the project and the tour. Miss Bloch turned around in her seat and made it a threesome. We talked quietly. In the back of the bus people slept and did other things, quietly. We were all alone in the world, hurtling through narrow streets and small villages. The headlights of the

bus would rake a closed pub coming into a curve.

That day, we somehow had become a group.

* * *

The next two days passed quickly. The morning following the field trip made history: a scheduled map session came off. Each group was to spend an hour or two that morning working on the special London project. This was to take a hunk of As You Like It and transmogrify it into something relevant to the twentieth century. I guess you could even deal with it as a circle if you'd stayed awake for the first lecture. Group L did their second London map instead. They were excused from all special projects because they had one all their own. Bob went to the Group K session to collect a set of maps from kids who hadn't been introduced to the point-line-area business. Everyone was willing and cheerful.

I spent that afternoon and evening with Hugh Prince, a geography professor from the University of London. He'd spent the previous semester with Clark and I'd taken him on a long walk through Worcester. Now he took me on a long walk through London. Hugh Prince is the archetypal Englishman. He wore a dark suit and carried a tightly furled umbrella. When we found Covent Garden closed he hammered on the door with his umbrella and argued with a caretaker about the rights of Englishmen on public property. He took me to see the Temple and we found the crack between two buildings that is 5A King's Bench Walk where Dr. John Evelyn Thorndyke, M.D., still lives in our imaginations. The greensward where Thorndyke and Jervis would walk on an evening arm in arm was paved and filled with cars. I don't think Thorndyke would like that. We took the train to Hugh's home and shattered another cherished illusion: maybe Holmes and Thorndyke and French were just used to it, but I never sweated as I did on that train. On the wall in front of Hugh's home a fat black bird let me touch it. English animals.

We looked at the garden in the back of the house. A long oblong of immaculate grass was boardered with an incredible display of flowers. It was as though I had entered a Medieval tapastry and found that it wasn't a dream, but the real McCoy. Hugh appologized for the condition of the garden. I looked around to see what was wrong. I saw nothing.

"What are you talking about?" I finally asked.

Hugh moved the toe of his perfectly polished shoe through the grass. "It's too long."

He took me over to a wall of roses. The smell of them was strong enough to build dreams on and the range of reds was infinite. He poked at them. "Too tangled."

I laughed in amazement. I met his wife and two kids. They reminded me of the garden except that Hugh didn't apologize for them. We had a dinner that was a dinner worth eating and sat around afterwards talking. I probably talked too long and too much about myself, but I felt sort of like I had just returned to civilization after two months alone at the North Pole. I missed the last train in and spent the night.

Before we parted the next morning Hugh showed me Jeremy Bentham. In a corridor in University College stands a wooden box about six feet tall. It's kept locked, but Hugh had a guard unlock it. In the box sits Jeremy Bentham dressed in his best suit of clothes. Jeremy Bentham has been dead a hundred and forty years. In a separate box standing over a doorway is his pickled head. Hugh says that the head sits at the head of the table at certain meetings of some board of the College. He may have been pulling my leg, but I believed him. I understood the phrase: "Mad dogs and Englishmen..."

I left Hugh and crossed the street to the auditorium where the tour was gathered for the presentation of the group projects. It was a different bunch of people than had been gathered there for the first selection of lectures. They were more comfortable and the chatter died down even less willingly. The groups began their presentation. There was a recital of lines from the play. Very dull. There was a skit spoofing the tour along the lines of the play. Funny but high school. There was a mad presentation utilizing tapes and a chorus that chanted something or other interminably. It was fascinating but strange. The tour leaders put on frowns and looked like they were suffering from burst apendices. During the break Cliff Jaeckel passed a Punch back to me. Indiana had been laughing over it for the last fifteen minutes. It was a punch at the Common Market countries, the ones we'd be visiting. It was as funny as Bob Hope in a Las Vegas lounge.

Two more groups presented. It was coming time for the leader to say that Group L was excused from participation. Des Jencks looked back at me. Pain was on his face, pain from having nothing to put on, pain of not taking part. It was all my fault. I shrugged my shoulders. Des started whispering with his neighbors and then went out into the aisle, squatting to talk with the rest of the group. I felt my stomach muscles tighten and sweat on my brow.

The London dorm organizer stood up as the applause for the last presentation died down. "Group L," he began, "has the option—"

Des Jencks stood up and shouted, "We take it!" His voice filled the auditorium. He walked quickly to the stage followed by most of Group L. There was a hurried consultation lasting about a minute. My pulse was racing.

The group turned to the patient blackboards and picked up pieces of colored chalk. Some started putting points down. These were followed by kids connecting them with lines. Other kids covered this skeleton with areas. I let out a deep eternal sigh. They were mapping. I didn't even see what else they did. My eyes were covered with an aqueous film of grey. Maybe it was tears. It was one of those moments that lasts a lifetime and then ends too suddenly. The group was returning up the aisle, faces flushed, smiling.

The skit came in third in a field of six, but for me they came in first in a field of one. No other group was in the game.

* * *

Later on in the trip Omar Lenz was to compare life to the road we were on. The road would wind along the edge of a hill all sunny and then dive into a dark tunnel. Omar said that such was life, good and filled with light and then bad and suffused with darkness. The last day in London was like that. The morning with the skit was good and vital. Later on we passed through a tunnel.

It came in the form of a conflict of interests. That day the head honcho for the entire tour in Europe arrived in London. He was a hatchet-faced European with just enough of that European charm to make you wonder if his ugliness wasn't really something else — rugged handsomeness, for instance. He just didn't have quite enough charm and in the end you knew he was ugly. He also had that sallow dissipated look that comes, not from degeneracy, but from living too long in too many hotels. He spoke with an accent but his command of English was perfect for his needs, as was his command of Italian and French. He was a master courier from endless experience and knew Europe the way a mailman gets to know his route. He knew it road for road and bump for bump. He liked me, probably too well, and had been the one who had set up our aborted schedule. He set up every schedule and knew how to keep them and expected others to do likewise. Let's call him Odin, not because that was his name, but because like Odin, he saw well through one eye only. He had set up a 3:00 courier meeting for that afternoon and since I was to become a courier later, I was expected to attend. Both Bob and I showed up just before 3:00 to find only two people in the room, the unit director, and Odin, tapping his fingers impatiently on the table.

"Robert! Denis! How very good to see you." He stood up with a smile of pleasure on his face and outstretched hands. His accent turned Denis into Daynise and Robert into Rhhoberrt. It was good to see him and we shook hands all around.

"How is the project coming? Everything is going well?" Everything was going well and we told him so. It seemed pointless to bring up the questions of non-cooperation and schedule abortion. We chatted amicably for half an hour. Every now and then Odin and I would check our watches. He was waiting for the others to show up and I was making sure we didn't miss our last mapping session.

At twenty of four, I stood up. "I'm sorry we can't wait any longer, Odin, but we have a mapping session at 4:00."

He looked at me sharply and then rummaged in his briefcase for a copy of our schedule. All of a sudden I felt very weary.

"But I don't understand what is going on. On the schedule you are not having a session since yesterday."

He put a very concerned look on his face. He may have even been concerned. Something had happened to his precious schedule. Both Bob and I began explaining. I was somehow for placation. Maybe I should stay for the meeting and Bob could run the session. I felt like I was stabbing Bob when I suggested it. Bob looked daggers at me, and I knew he was right. Give an inch and you've lost the game in this arena. Some of the late couriers dribbled into the room, and Odin moved our conference out into the hallway. It was futile. He didn't believe us. Of course the London staff had cooperated! Hadn't he told them too? Bob stayed behind to explain some more and I went off to the Commons Room to collect maps.

The kids came and drew their maps and everything was fine except that I felt sick inside, sick like I hadn't been since we got our first map. Sicker, because that first map was preceeded by frustrations. This blow came from euphoria. Bob appeared looking like an old mail sack someone found in a mud puddle.

"It's okay," he whispered to me as Janine Eber handed in her map. But his eyes told another story. If it had been okay, relaxation would have shown there. All there was in Bob's eyes was determination. Grim determination. Something resolved but far from okay.

The success of the map session calmed us both. Twenty-nine kids drew maps that evening, some their second, some their third and a few their fourth. We took the maps with us to dinner. They were

marvelous. Group L knew how to map. Why should Odin upset us?

We both had the answer to that. He was going to be our courier for the next six and a half days. Whew. By the time dinner was over we felt fine. A cigarette or two over good coffee can work wonders. London was over. Everything would be better in Europe. I tried to believe that. As we left the restaurant, I think I did.

I went to my room to pack away the project. The first thing I put away were the predeparture mailings that had been given to us in London. We'd collected three sets of hometown maps, predictive morphologies of London, and ideal cities. Seventeen kids had given us the second part of the psychological questionnaire, and nine had handed in their predeparture stereotypes. It made a biggish bulge in the data case. I patted them lovingly as I put them away.

Next I put away the stereotypes we'd collected in London. Twenty-two kids had completed them, two had handed in uncompleted sets, one had completed only one variable, and one, Agatha Jones, had started it but refused to finish. It wasn't a matter of disinterest on her part, but as close as I could make it, a matter of principle, something to do with God. I sighed as I put them into the data case.

I put away the Adjective Checklists. These also had a series of questions on the back. Every single kid had filled them out and five of the T-C's had joined them. I caressed the folder lovingly and added it to the data case.

I picked up the Group K folder. This was the control set that Bob had administered two days earlier. Each map had a series of questions on the back, the same questions we'd asked Group L on the Checklists. There were forty-three Group K maps. I smiled as I slipped them into the case.

There was one pile left on the table: Group L's London maps. I picked the pile up and riffled the sheets of paper. I divided them into four folders. In the first folder I placed the first maps the kids had drawn. There were thirty-one of these. Five T-C's had joined them. Thirty-six first maps of London. In the second folder I placed the second set. There were twenty-six of these. In the third folder I placed the third set of maps: nineteen. There were only four maps in the fourth set. They were drawn by Des Jencks, Leslie Casyk, Marina Giaconda and Robert Watson. Bob and I called these kids "the faithful." I put them into the fourth folder gently, as though they would disappear if I breathed too hard. Eighty-five London maps. I snapped a giant band around the four folders. I weighed them in my hands. The maps were doubly

precious now. They were my future. And they were the kids.

I stood there with them in my hands smiling faintly, remembering London. My smile froze on my face until it hurt. I stopped smiling. I looked at the folders in my hands, lowered my head and gave them a quick kiss. Then I looked around sharply to make sure no one had seen me do a thing so crazy.

I slipped them into my case and snapped the locks.

* * *

Out in the hallway it was in the air. We were leaving. The doors to the boys' bedrooms were open and there was coming and going.

In Robert Watson's room clothes were spread all over the place. His wig was on the dresser. Yeah, he wore a wig. Some barber had ruined his own hair and he had bought a wig.

"All packed?" he asked me.

"Yep," I said.

Des Jencks bustled in. We talked. Cliff Jaeckel joined us. He was smiling and full of something good. I said something about all the clothes. Cliff faked astonishment.

"If you want to see clothes, you've got to see what Taylor's got." We all went down to Taylor's room. Yeah, he had clothes all right. He was one of the few kids that smoked and he had cartons of Kools with him. He also had anything else you'd need for a year's trip around the world. Had he pulled out a set of tails and a white tie I wouldn't have turned a hair.

Across the hall David Abrams was packing.

Everyone was packing. I went down the hall to my room and climbed out of my clothes. I looked for my pajamas and swore softly. I'd already packed them. I turned off the light and opened the curtains and climbed between the sheets. Street lights shining through trees made patterns on my wall. I watched them.

The air was soft and slightly chilly. Somewhere down the hall someone turned up a transistor radio. The sounds carried on the night air to my room. It had made it in England. I listened closely:

And it's too late, baby. Now, it's too late,
Though we really did try to make it.
Something inside has died, and I can't hide
And I just can't fake it.
No, no, no, no, no, no.

It's too late, baby;
It's too late now, darling;
It's too late.