

## Chapter 8: Prisoner (1960-1961)

Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun:  
But if a man live many years, and rejoice in them all; yet let him remember the  
days of darkness...

Ecclesiastes 11:7-8

**This chapter continues the narrative begun in Chapter 7, on Family Power Relationships. Readers who have finished Chapter 7, which discusses my mother's obsessive dominance and my resistance to it, will have the background necessary to understand this chapter, which recounts the climax of that struggle. Readers who have not read Chapter 7 are advised to do so now, because this chapter will not be comprehensible without it.**

Against the highly political background laid out in Chapter 7, here's what happened next. In February 1960, when I was 15 and in the tenth grade at Collegiate, the conflict was getting pretty bad. Also I was under the influence of *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J. D. Salinger (1951). This was the seminal novel for my generation (boys anyway), and it focused on a teenaged boy, expelled from boarding school, who spends a few exciting days on his own in New York before going back to his parents' apartment. Almost every adolescent boy of my time felt *The Catcher in the Rye* had been written more or less about him. It is a work of genius – future researchers, if you don't know the book check it out. I had also been impressed by *Subways Are For Sleeping*, by Edmund G. Love (1957), which dealt with the author's experiences being what we would now call homeless, sleeping in New York subway cars.

I had been seeing a psychologist for years. Her name was Dr. Grace Abbate, and she had an office on Garden Place, off Joralemon Street in Brooklyn Heights. The reasons for this were quite different on all sides. My mother's reason for sending me there (and I assume she rather than my father was responsible, as she was the controlling member of that couple) was her conviction that if there was conflict between her and me, it *had* to be because there was *something wrong with me*. This sounds on its face like an incredible statement, but against the background of Chapter 7 it becomes understandable. They had brought me to psychologists as a child – I remember going to one in Stamford, Connecticut, where I played the games they give children (*Gestalt* puzzles, Rorschach tests, making drawings), and studied a map on the wall which divided Europe by linguistic groupings rather than political boundaries. I had never seen anything like this before, and I was much more interested in the map than in the psychologist.

Whether the visits to psychologists were because my mother *really* thought there was something wrong with me, or whether she just didn't know how to deal with me and

wanted some help, or whether after I scored very high on IQ tests she thought this justified further testing, I don't know. Most of the test results are lost now, but one survives from 1949, and I attach it as Document 3B-1. It reports that at the age of five I was a happy, well-adjusted child with advanced cognitive skills and no problems the Psychological Testing Center could find. This did not satisfy my mother, who believed (irrationally) that I had to have *some* kind of psychological problem. I had a problem, all right, but it wasn't psychological – *she* was my problem. But since she could not imagine any fault with herself, or with the toxically unwholesome home environment she had created, the challenge was to find some sickness in *me*. The Freudian ideology of the day held that sickness underlay every conflict, and that when it was fixed by a doctor everything would be fine.

So from my parents' point of view, my seeing Abbate was a way of dealing with conflict at home by defining it mechanically as a defect in me to be fixed by a technician. I was willing to see Abbate, but my reason (openly stated to her and to my parents) was that the appointments were scheduled during the Collegiate School athletic period. Instead of going to athletics, several times a week I got on the subway and went to Brooklyn to see Abbate. This was a fair tradeoff in my mind, and I indulged Abbate by answering some of her questions and occasionally inventing dreams for her to analyze. I did not believe at any time that I had any psychological problem, except some depression of the kind common among teenaged boys including many of my friends. Neither she nor my parents ever suggested any specific problem that I ever heard about. I made it a point of honor never to discuss anything of consequence with Abbate. For me it was a way out of athletics, and that was all I was going to allow it to be.

I assume, without actually knowing, that Abbate's interest in continuing to see a patient who had nothing particularly wrong with him and who would not play patient to her therapist was strictly mercenary. My parents were cash cows – they paid her liberally and punctually, I'm sure. She could go on meeting with me a few times a week, without working very hard at it, and string it out for years (as she did, with no noticeable result). I may be slandering Abbate here – maybe she really thought she was doing some good for someone besides herself – but I have no evidence of that and in the absence of evidence I will assume it was what it looked like.

Anyway there was Abbate, in place, and there was I, under pressure at home, and (see Chapter 3C.10) at under pressure at school too, much like Holden Caulfield, the protagonist of *The Catcher in the Rye*. I wanted to do something dramatic to show how dissatisfied I was with my situation. So one day, instead of going home, I spent the night on the subway, following the example of *Subways Are For Sleeping*. This was a major outrage – it was of course a violation of the rules several orders beyond any previous infraction. If walking a mile in cold weather was a major felony (see Chapter 7), this was more like treason. I am of course *not suggesting* it was unreasonable to have a rule that teenaged boys should not spend nights on the subway. They should certainly either be

home at night or at some known and approved location. It was a romantic gesture – under the influence, I repeat, of *The Catcher in the Rye* – and was intended as a sort of demonstration, to make my parents aware that I found my home life intolerable and something needed to change.

In the morning I called Abbate rather than home. I did not want to speak with my parents just yet, but I did want them to know I was safe and where I had been. My hope was that I could use Abbate as an intermediary to work out a kind of treaty under which (now that they knew how seriously I felt about it) I would be treated better. But they were some steps ahead of me. Abbate got back to me (on a pay phone) with the counter-suggestion that I go away and stay somewhere else for a while. That sounded pretty good – where did she have in mind? Well, there was this hospital outside Boston where I could go for a while. I could treat it as a refuge and would not need to go home for the time being. When things settled down we could work on a solution. I said that sounded all right (after all, in the book Holden Caulfield was speaking from a similar place), PROVIDED I could leave whenever I wanted to. I would go *as long as it remained voluntary on my part*; I would not consent to be locked in. Of course, Abbate said; she promised me I could leave whenever I wanted.

So I agreed, and went home, and was immediately taken to McLean Hospital, 115 Mill Street, Belmont, Massachusetts (a suburb of Boston). This place still exists and is now affiliated with Harvard University. I emphasize here that I was not then, and have never been, mentally ill. No one ever told me that I had any mental illness, and no one ever treated me for any mental illness. It would not be shameful if I *had* been mentally ill, but I wasn't.

In those days, 50 years ago, a person could be put into a mental hospital with only the most cursory protections. This was not an uncommon practice among people of means, who could afford private hospitals and who wanted to get inconvenient relatives out of the way. It was especially easy if the victim was a minor, as I was. At that time even the most rudimentary protections were completely unavailable to a minor, who could be confined for years on his parents' mere request if they could find a hospital unethical enough to do this, which was not usually hard to do. As will be seen, McLean may not have been sufficiently unethical for my mother's requirements. She fixed that soon enough.

It was a novelty to be at McLean. It was like a hotel – I had a comfortable private room, we ate in a dining room, the facilities were pleasant enough, and it was possible to go into town. I had never lived away from home before, except briefly at a summer camp, and a sojourn away from home can be pleasant even when home is not a scene of conflict and threat and perceived oppression. So I settled in, and read books, and enjoyed my vacation – this also meant I was free from Collegiate School, which I loathed and where I was failing.

Young doctors came to see me from time to time, and they asked me what the problem was and why was I here, and I told them the same story I have just recounted, here and in the previous chapter. There was conflict at home, my mother was domineering, I had spent a night on the subway as a protest, and was given the chance to get away by coming here. No attempt was made to treat me – not with drugs, and not with talk therapy. I was left to enjoy my vacation from home, as planned. I could call a halt to this experiment whenever I wanted (or so I had been told), but I was in no hurry to do that. My stay at McLean was pleasant and strictly voluntary, except for one incident when my “privileges” were suddenly withdrawn.

- I have since learned by reading the discharge summary, obtained many years later, that “David’s privileges were cancelled because he has been insistance [sic] on calling a lawyer.” I guess I wanted to check whether I could rely on the assurances I had been given, and the hospital did not want to risk my finding out the truth. The penny should have dropped then, but it didn’t.

Then, a few weeks later, I was abruptly removed from McLean and transferred to New York Hospital, Westchester Division, 21 Bloomingdale Road, White Plains, New York. This was the former Bloomingdale Insane Asylum. As with schools, I was not consulted, just moved. I asked my mother why they had taken me out of McLean and I can hear her voice to this day telling me that McLean “was not stiff enough for you.” I assure the reader that I am quoting her *exactly*, as those were words I will never forget. Her answer is revealing – they wanted discipline and enforcement, rather than accommodation, to emerge from this experience. They wanted *something so stiff I could not resist it*. When McLean proved not to be suitable as an instrument of stiffness in my mother’s hands, she found a place that would be.

I was driven to the hospital in White Plains and entered Hall 1, which is what they called their Administration Suite. I was shown into the office of a Dr. Hamilton, who was the director of the “Men’s Side” – the hospital was rigidly segregated by sex. I spoke with him for a while and did not like him a bit. I also did not like what he told me of the place. So at the conclusion of the interview I told him that, as the agreement was that I could leave at any time, I was going to leave. Hamilton shot back in his swivel chair and physically blocked the door. He asked me in a sneering voice “Just where do you think you’re going?” I repeated that I was free to leave and I was leaving. Hamilton said I was not free to leave, and summoned a large orderly to take me away. I was a prisoner.

It is worth emphasizing at this point that I was a prisoner because of my parents’ *deliberate and cynical deceit*. My father, passive though he was, was equally to blame with my mother here. I don’t know whether Abbate was in on the plot at the beginning; I’m inclined to believe she was, as she must have known the legal situation and was in my parents’ confidence, but I have no evidence. I only agreed to go to McLean because I

was promised I could leave if I wanted to. I would *never* have agreed to go there under any other conditions. My parents exploited my trust in their word to trick me into involuntary and limitless confinement. “But I was like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; and I knew not that they had devised devices against me.” Jeremiah 11:18. I never trusted them again. But it was too late.

There was no hearing. I had no right or opportunity to challenge my confinement. I was, like the later prisoners at Guantánamo Bay, in a place beyond the law. I was being held indefinitely, with no charge, with no statement of reasons, entirely subject to the will of my adversaries and captors and their paid servants, with no promise of ever being released, no criteria I could meet to prove my captivity was unjustified and no forum in which to do it, with no ally or advocate, and no access to law or any other authority. Try to imagine the despair this caused me at the age of 15. Even my clients who are condemned murderers have access to habeas corpus – even the prisoners at Guantánamo now have habeas corpus. At 15, I had nothing.

After I had been inside for a little while I wrote to Al Rosenberg, husband of my cousin Judy Rosenberg, *née* Rubinstein (see Chapter 2). He was the only lawyer I knew, and I asked him what rights I had. I had heard that some people got hearings – could I get one somehow? I was confident that no impartial hearing officer could possibly conclude that I was mentally ill and required involuntary confinement. Al was no help – he just wrote back that I should trust my parents. I later learned that hearings, for example in commitment proceedings, were only for adults – a minor in those days had no right to any such thing.

I was brought by a guard to Hall 7. This was the hall structure in the Men’s Side at this institution.

Hall 1:	Administration.
Hall 2:	Open ward. People on Hall 2 could come and go at will. It was mostly used for alcoholics who checked themselves in, like my friend Bill S., or for rich men like Dr. B. who liked living in this sheltered environment. All the other halls were locked.
Hall 3:	For long-term residents. Hall 3 (or 6) was a step up from the admissions wards. People spent their whole lives on these halls.
Hall 4:	“Non-violent” admissions.
Hall 5:	Geriatric. Senile dementia (as Alzheimer’s Disease was then called).
Hall 6:	Like Hall 3.
Hall 7:	“Violent” admissions. I was admitted there even though there was no suggestion of violence on my part – this may have been part of a “shock

and awe” strategy on the hospital’s part, or a way for Hamilton to show my parents how “stiff” they were going to be with me.

Hall 8: “Violent.” This was for people who really were mad, although people were also sent there for punishment (like administrative segregation in a prison, usually called *the hole*).

I spent time on each of these halls (except Hall 2) over the next year and a half. I will describe them in detail in due course. First, though, I want to reiterate that not only was I not mentally ill, the staff of this supposed hospital *didn’t even believe* I was mentally ill. They knew what my parents were using their facility for – there were lots of people in this place in the same position. My parents were paying them \$1000 a month. I went onto the Internet to see what that would be in today’s dollars. According to [www.westegg.com/inflation](http://www.westegg.com/inflation), what cost \$1000 in 1960 would cost \$7163.46 in 2009. Call it \$7200 in 2010 dollars. That comes to more than \$86,000 for one year’s use of their facility as a private prison. The whole project undoubtedly cost them well over \$150,000 in today’s money.

Why am I so sure my parents did it for politics and the hospital did it for the money? One reason I’m so sure is that if *either* my parents *or* the hospital had *really* thought I was ill, they would have tried to cure me. After all, it was a hospital, and my father was a doctor. Psychiatrists in 1959 were not in the least shy about drugging their patients, or giving them electric shock treatments or even lobotomies. Powerful drugs were widely administered several times day, by force if required and sometimes in staggering and stupefying doses, to most of my fellow prisoners, many of whom actually were mentally ill. Long courses of electric shock treatment were given liberally, often for punishment (talk about unethical). And earnest attempts were made to treat people with talk therapy.

But none of these treatments was *ever* applied to me. I never took a pill or a shot in my whole time there (about 15 months inside). I never had shock treatment, even after escaping, for which shock was usually an inescapable punishment. And while I was visited by doctors from time to time, either young residents or Dr. McKinley, who was in charge of my “case,” these meetings were perfunctory and entirely *pro forma* – no attempt was ever made to explore psychological issues.

I conclude therefore that *either* the doctors themselves did not really think I was ill, *or* if they did then my parents prevented them from treating me (for example with shock), which would have meant that *they* did not think I was ill. It has to be one or the other – there is no other medical explanation for keeping someone confined in a hospital against his will for more than a year without even *attempting* to treat him for anything.

Also not even the doctors who occasionally came around to talk to me ever told me I was ill. A lot of my friends there had a different experience – their doctors told them

constantly how sick they were, and gave them elaborate progress reports on whether they had gotten “better” or “worse.” If you could convince the doctors you were “getting better,” that was the way out. I didn’t have that way out – I couldn’t get better because I was not sick.

Since writing this I have had the chance to review my entire hospital file. I found nothing there to change my view. It is a chaotic and sometimes barely literate mishmash of psychiatric jargon, arrogant misjudgments, uncritical reports of interviews with my parents, factual errors, and poorly understood observations. They *did* have diagnoses, I learned from the file, although no one ever mentioned anything about any of them to me. In fact they had so many diagnoses it is impossible to take any of them seriously. I am reported as being schizophrenic, catatonic, psychotic, passive-aggressive, manic-depressive, narcissistic, sado-masochistic, obsessive-compulsive, paranoid, and psychopathic. Plus I had “impulse-disorder,” “oral-sadistic fixation,” and was effeminate. For good measure they threw in *dementia praecox*, which means *prematurely demented*. They also noted in passing that my father, whom they met a few times, was a compulsive neurotic and a “schizoid type,” and my Uncle Roy, whom they had never met at all except when he delivered me to their front door, was an “ambulatory schizophrenic.”

I may have been a tad narcissistic. I was definitely depressed, and I would even go so far as to admit to being a bit mixed-up, although not beyond the normal range for adolescence. But psychotic? No. Catatonic? Not a bit of it. Paranoid? After being abruptly arrested and confined in a violent psych ward without explanation or appeal, I would have to have been crazy *not* be suspicious of my captors. They based their “diagnosis” of schizophrenia on this note in the file: “Thinking and perception are quite unusual and represent an underlying schizophrenic process.” My thinking and perception are still quite unusual, but of course do not and never have represented anything of the kind. Did I really have thirteen mental illnesses at the same time? Of course not. It was all quite ridiculous; only its cruelty keeps it from being laughable.

I said there was no *medical* explanation for confining a person in a mental hospital without at least *trying* to cure him of *something*. But there is an obvious explanation that isn’t medical – it is a convenient way to keep a political prisoner without having to go through the inconvenience of a trial. As everyone knows by now, this method was practiced extensively with dissidents in the former Soviet Union. I believe that is what happened to me. The file reflects this – amid all the Freudian nonsense there is constant commentary about how, for example, I “need correction” or am “responding to firm treatment.” I asked McKinley once, aged 16, after I had been imprisoned for nearly a year, just why I was there. His reply, which so seared my soul that I can hear his words in his voice at this moment, and which I quote *exactly*, was “You’re here to learn to do as you’re told and shut up about it.” That was the purpose of my imprisonment, by their own admission. The point was not to treat any supposed illness – it was to break my

resistance and make me docile, obedient and silent. That was what I thought at the time, and nothing in the intervening 50 years, including a thorough review of the “medical” file, has changed my view in the least.

Now would be a good time to describe my life as a prisoner, and the conditions on each of the halls. Hall 7 was quite a shock. There were people there who were really bonkers, something I had never encountered before. Hall 7 opened (through a locked door, of course) onto a corridor, in which there was a nursing station. Another corridor had bedrooms, and I had one of these. The bedroom doors had windows set in them, and locked from the outside only. This corridor led to a dayroom, with sofas and tables and a television. There was a dormitory-style bathroom and shower with open stalls. Another corridor, through another locked door, led to a kind of dormitory used to house the more agitated prisoners, and those being punished. This area also had special rooms with padded walls, and rooms where people would be strapped down and confined in tubs with canvas covers on them. I was of course never put in these rooms, although I was sometimes put into the punishment wing. But I saw them used a lot, and peered through the windows at my friends inside. Some of these people really did need padded rooms and soothing baths.

Some people (like me for example) seemed quite normal. I think for example of Dov B., who looked just like Frank Sinatra (I think he was in for drugs), or Willem van S., a mild and gentle but morose Dutchman (and who would not be morose under those conditions?). Bart B. was another – he was in exactly my position. He was about my age and from a wealthy family. He had exasperated his father, who locked him up. There was no pretense that he was mentally ill, and he was never given medication or shock treatments either. He was just serving an indeterminate sentence, like me. Bruce G. was even younger – he seemed a bit nervous, but who would not be, cast alone into Hall 7 at the age of 14?

Others appeared placid but to have a screw or two loose. Mark S. was in this category. He had a number of compulsive mannerisms – maybe even a touch of autism? – and was the local chess champion. His first words on meeting me were to challenge me to a game of chess – I amazed him and the whole hall by beating him. He demanded a rematch, which I was canny enough not to give him – I knew it was a fluke, and that I was no chess champion, and preferred to be mysteriously undefeated rather than become just another of Mark’s chess victims. Mr. M. may have had a screw loose or maybe not – he was a rich man in his 60s, and outraged by his imprisonment. Tommy T., about 17, from a hugely wealthy family, had been lobotomized and would occasionally fly into rages.

And then there were the real crazies. Mr. K., in his 80s, constantly muttered swear words. Bobby H. chased butterflies that were not there. Paul V. would masturbate under unsuitable conditions. And so on. It was certainly a slice of life for a boy from the Upper East Side. *The Catcher in the Rye* was nothing like this.



In due course I was sent down to Hall 3, where I spent long months doing nothing but sit around and smoke and read books, serving time. There were two long corridors with bedrooms, with a nurses' station and a dayroom at the intersection. It was quite comfortable, for a prison. There was no school – my parents were serious enough about bringing me to heel that they stopped my schooling completely and indefinitely. There was Occupational Therapy (called O.T.), which I went to because it was something to do. You could do ceramics, for example – I made a ceramic head with its tongue stuck out in a gesture of disrespect.

They had a print shop, which I really enjoyed. In O.T. I learned the now almost completely lost art of letterpress printing – putting the leaden type piece by piece, backwards, into a composing stick held in the left hand, filling out the line with tiny shims of copper and brass, filling out the page with leading and printer's flowers, assembling the composed type on a special table called a stone, locking it into a form with geared quoins, putting the frame into a press operated by foot-pedals and positioning it on the press-bed with little pins, inking the press and then printing an edition. I could probably still do it if I needed to. I chose as my text to learn on a poem from *Fleurs de Mal*, by the French poet of despair Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). That must have told them something. Every so often, on a routine basis, all prisoners were taken to something called “hydrotherapy” and hosed down with jets of water. The purpose of this was never revealed.

There was a sort of clubhouse where we would be taken (always *taken*, of course – never on our own) to waste our time *there* rather than on the Hall. It had ping-pong tables and old magazines. There was a dentist, and optometrist, and other specialists in case of need. There was a library cart which came around, and I think (I'm not sure about this) we were allowed to order books from the White Plains Public Library. We were allowed to smoke (even minors), and I ordered a carton of cigarettes a week, which was enough. I don't remember the food, served in dining halls to which we were marched by beefy orderlies, but it was probably OK. I know we were shepherded onto the grounds from time to time, because Bart B., an athlete in high school, made it over the fence from there (he was soon recaptured). Every few months there was a tightly controlled dance with the women's side – this was the only contact we ever had with women except our families and the nurses. I fell in love with a girl I met there – the only girl I had seen in months – and wrote romantic poems about her, but was not allowed to communicate with her. My incoming mail was probably not censored, but I am sure mail was read on the way out as stamps were contraband. There was a television – I watched the Kennedy-Nixon debate on Hall 3.

I made lots of friends in the hospital. There was Mel M., who had a slight suicide problem and was actually benefiting from talk therapy. There was a John C., a journalist from a Kentucky newspaper, a very funny and sophisticated guy. Nothing seemed to be

wrong with him mentally. We spent a lot of time together – one advantage of this place was that I got to know a lot of interesting older people who would never have had time for me on the outside. Bill S., the alcoholic from Hall 2, would come to hang out with John – being on an open ward he was allowed to come and go at will – and I spent time with him also. I have mentioned Dr. B., a very learned man and a Sanskrit scholar. I also met someone on Hall 7 who knew (or said he knew) Jean Shepherd, the radio storyteller (see Chapter 5). Chuck K., from Hall 3, who had the largest penis I ever saw, had been locked up by his rich wife. And I read a lot, as I always had.

My parents came to see me from time to time. At first I would not see them, because of my outrage at their deceit and betrayal. But later I did see them, to try to persuade them to release me. They said it was all in the hands of the doctors, which I did not believe even then and certainly do not believe now. They could have released me in a minute. But they were quite pitiless and lied to me with perfectly straight faces.

Some of the nursing staff were nice people and sympathetic to those in my circumstance. They certainly knew the difference between people who were mentally ill and people who weren't, and with access to our records knew who was in for what. I remember the kindness of nurses like Mr. Mirback (Hall 7), Mr. Cumberbatch (Hall 8) and Mrs. Ransom (Hall 3). Of course these nurses were completely (and appropriately) subservient to the doctors, so they could not be trusted. Indeed, no one on the staff could be trusted – as in any prison, the staff works for the enemy. But some of them were kind to us, as were some of the orderlies like Mr. McHugh and Mr. Callan, from Ireland, and Mr. Deerfield, the enforcer, as wide as he was tall. If they wanted someone large to be overpowered, which happened from time to time, they sent for Deerfield.

Others were not so kind – I remember especially the brusqueness of Miss Law, the nursing supervisor. In a year and a half I never heard a kind or comforting word from *any* doctor except for one young intern who was cycling through psychiatric training. The others were tough jailers who did not pretend, with me anyway, that they were anything else. They were a disgrace to the medical profession even by the primitive standards of 1960-61. Note that except on first mention I have never called Hamilton or McKinley (or Abbate) by the title *doctor* – they do not deserve it.

One night on Hall 3 I was busted to Hall 8. I had idly burned the cellophane from an empty cigarette package in an ashtray. This was a serious enough offense to have Miss Law come into my room the middle of the night, with Deerfield, snap on the light, and say “you’re coming with us.” That’s all she said – it was like being arrested at night by the secret police. I spent some punishment time in Hall 8, which was like Hall 7 and laid out the same way, only worse and with crazier people. On Halls 7 and 8 we could not have matches, and had to have orderlies or nurses light our cigarettes. For extra punishment I was put in the dormitory wing. After a few weeks I was transferred to Hall 6, which was laid out like Hall 3. One afternoon I was even put on Hall 5, the senile

department, just to park me somewhere while the orderly who was escorting me had to do something else.

After a long time I was allowed furloughs – visits home from the hospital. I suppose the idea was to test whether I was docile yet. Of course I was very docile on these furloughs – I knew where the power was, and that if I crossed my mother she would throw me back into Hall 8 in a heartbeat. However, on one of these furloughs I found my mother's pocketbook, took all the money I could find there, and beat it to the bus station. The longest ticket I could afford was to somewhere in Delaware, where I got off. I hitchhiked to Silver Spring, Maryland, a suburb of Washington DC., made it through Washington somehow to Falls Church, Virginia, a suburb on the other side of town, and started hitchhiking south. I wasn't sure where I was going or what I would do at the age of 16, but I certainly wanted out.

Hitchhiking in Falls Church, I was picked up by an unmarked police car and brought to the city jail. They asked me who I was – in Virginia I was outside the alarm zone and they were not looking for me. I considered what to do. If I told them who I was they would return me to my parents; if I didn't they might eventually let me go. But I decided to tell, gambling that when my parents saw how desperate their policy of imprisonment had made me, they would relent. This had been Gandhi's policy in India – if you appeal to the humanity in your oppressor sometimes you can reach him.

But there was no way to appeal to the humanity in my mother, or my father either for that matter. They sent my Uncle Roy to Virginia to pick me up, and he drove me directly back to the hospital. We did not even stop in New York. I was put back onto Hall 7, and quite a bit later transferred to Hall 4. Even after all these years my memory for the sequence of halls is pretty good.

Anyway I now saw that no kind of appeal to compassion would ever work, and I had to try something else. It was about this time that McKinley told me I was in there to learn to do what I was told and to shut up about it. So I resolved to *appear* to give them what they wanted. I was deferential. I pretended to agree with everything they said. When my parents came to visit I would always kiss my mother goodbye, even though it turned my stomach to do this and fills me with disgust even now to remember, but I always arranged to do it where it could be observed and recorded by a nurse – I wouldn't want to waste a gesture like that, or kiss my mother of all people without benefiting from it directly.

This approach was successful, although it was always a conscious deception on my part. I was again allowed furloughs, and I always gave them at least the appearance that they had got what they wanted – a docile, obedient, affectionate son. It revolted me to do this but I had no choice, because I knew, and they knew I knew, that they could have me back on Hall 8 with a phone call. I was completely in their power, and they controlled me

through fear. But at the same time I controlled them through guile, and my 18th birthday was approaching, at which point I would have some legal rights. I believed, I'm sure correctly, once I had a right to a hearing I would not be committed as insane.

Sometime in the summer of 1961, after about 15 months of imprisonment and several months of being Uncle Tom, I was released. A new and more private apartment was created for me at the top floor of the house on 70th Street (see Chapter 3B.6). I was put back in school, but at Walden rather than Collegiate (see Chapter 9). I still had to go back on the train every week or so to meet with McKinley. I did this all through the 11th grade, fuming of course but concealing it. I never discussed anything of consequence with him, and never allowed him to know what I really thought or felt. I don't think he cared what I thought or felt anyway. My parents were his clients, not me. My father was so grateful for what he had done for them, for making me so apparently docile, that he gave him a brass clock as a present. It disgusted me to learn this.

Finally the day of my 18th birthday came, on September 15, 1962. I called McKinley and told him I was now 18, and that I was not going to come to see him that week or ever again. Knowing he could not force me, he did not argue. And that was the end of that.

Well, not quite the end, of course, because of the damage this experience had done to me. I was now a year behind in school. I had a gap to explain on college applications and for years afterward. My first choices for a profession, diplomacy and politics, were forever closed to me, as were a lot of others.<sup>1</sup> I was branded as a mental patient – people would always think, if they knew about this episode, that where there was smoke there was fire, and that I had to have been a *little* bit crazy, anyway, to have been locked up in the loony bin for so long. In writing this memoir I have had to include this chapter, which will mean coming out of the closet about this ancient outrage to all who read it. I am hesitant about this and may restrict the distribution of the memoir accordingly. Reader, please believe me when I say that not only was there no fire, there was no smoke either, just cruelty, deception, manipulation and betrayal by people who should have been my protectors and fiduciaries, in the dishonorable service of obsession and unworthy goals. *Someone* was crazy here, but it wasn't me.

As a souvenir of this experience I retain a permanent kernel of bitterness which years of Buddhist practice have softened but nothing will ever erase. Any possibility of reconciliation with my parents became impossible. I developed a distrust and contempt for psychiatry and shrinkery of all sorts that will last me the rest of my life.<sup>2</sup> My politics became more hard-nosed than ever, after having had an intensive lab course in the abuse

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<sup>1</sup> It did get me out of the draft, though – see Chapter 12.B.

<sup>2</sup> Actually this is probably a good thing, unless I should some day actually develop a *genuine* mental illness, which seems pretty unlikely at this point but you never know.

of power by the strong to oppress the weak. My lifelong and perhaps not entirely wholesome tendency to analyze human relationships by their power dynamics rather than their surface forms was reinforced. My normal sexual development was interrupted by being sequestered from women (or girls, as they were then called) during the critical ages 15 to 17. My imprisonment inspired me to become a lawyer, so I could help people on the wrong end of an unequal power dynamic, a career that turned out to be quite unsuitable (see Chapters 15 and 27B). And finally, and most important, this episode reinforced and cemented the need, based in my childhood experience, to value independence and personal autonomy above all other goals, and to insist on it before anything else, a life strategy which has kept me more isolated than I should be and left me, in my 60s, with more autonomy than is good for me. I was headed there anyway, but I might have gotten over it. After this formative experience of domination and betrayal, I would never drop my guard again. Thanks, Mom.

After I turned 18 my mother did not try to dominate me as she had done before. They knew the jig was up, I think, because their main weapon, the threat of sending me back to prison in their absolute discretion, had become much more difficult legally when I came of age. There was nothing more they could do to me now, that they had any taste for, and I think their appetite for trying had dried up.

I stayed out of their way as much as I possibly could. Although to eat I did still have to participate in the ritual family dinner, I sometimes skipped this and ate out, for example at Donohue's, a bar around the corner. Once I was 18 and could not be busted for it, I allowed my parents to know that I would never forgive them for what they had done to me, that I was gone as far as they were concerned, and that they could forget about any love or trust from me ever. I regret now that I allowed my relationship with my parents to become fossilized in confrontation and resentment, but by the time I could see even a little beyond it they were dead.

Years later, in the 1970s, after my father died, I challenged my mother about this episode and asked her to defend her conduct. She could not do it. I asked her why she had sent me to all those psychologists. She told me how worried they had been about me as a child, and then (cunning lawyer that I was) I produced the 1949 psychologists' report saying I was a happy, healthy, well-adjusted little boy. She didn't know I had that letter, and didn't know how to respond to that either. She said she recognized that I would never forgive her and I confirmed that. Perhaps I should have had pity on my old sick mother, but I didn't – she never had any for me.



Tailpiece: Prometheus Bound  
Greek amphoriskos, circa 530 BCE