AH, LIFE! AH, SEX! AH, HEROISM!
AH, FRAZETTA! — THE REAL AMERICAN ARTIST
HOW TO GET EVEN: A SPECIAL SECTION ON REVENGE

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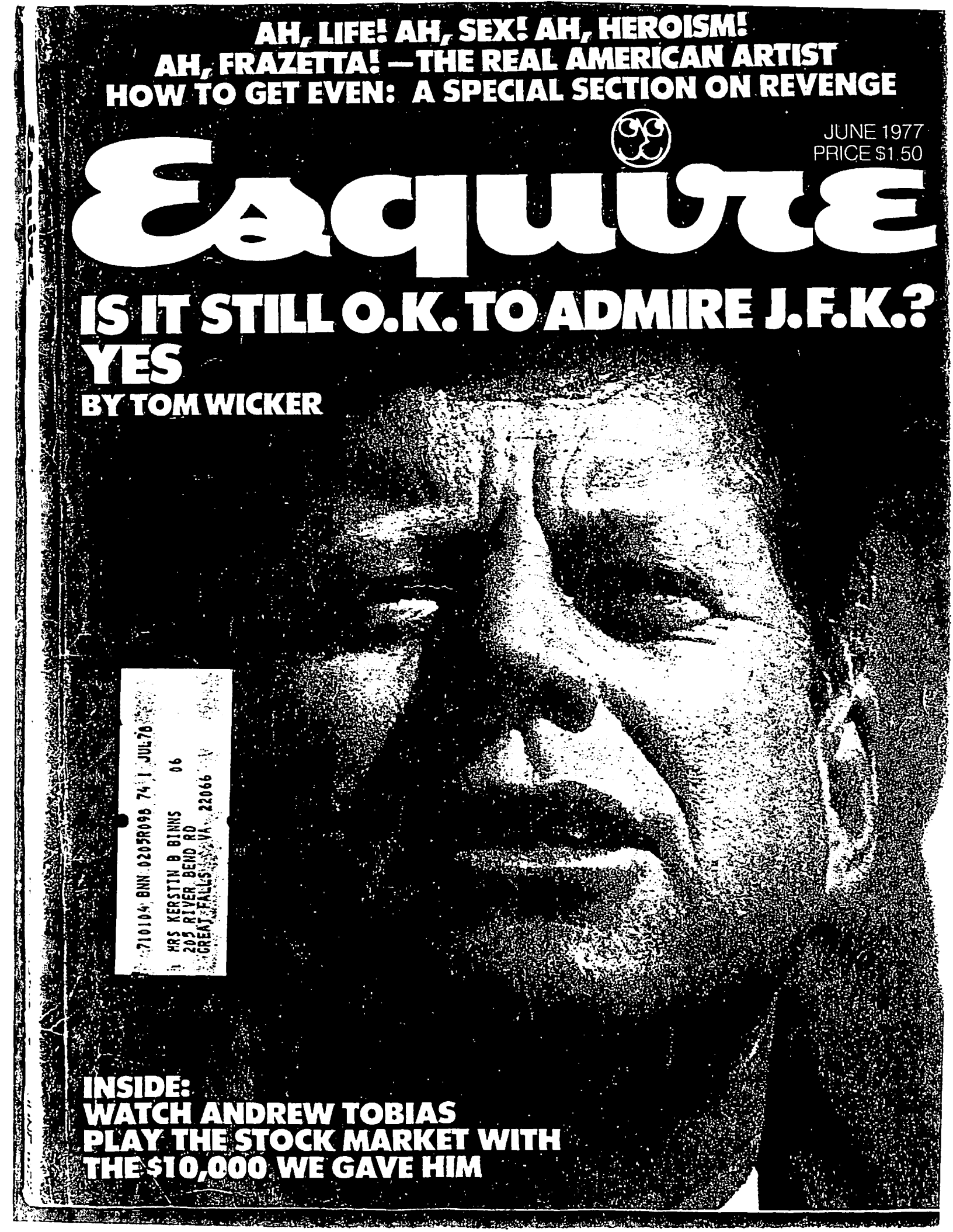
Esquire

IS IT STILL O.K. TO ADMIRE J.F.K.?
YES
BY TOM WICKER



INSIDE:
WATCH ANDREW TOBIAS
PLAY THE STOCK MARKET WITH
THE $10,000 WE GAVE HIM

Don't Get Mad, Get Even

Revenge isn't the most respectable preoccupation around and most vengeful people are careful to disguise their feelings. The best-known exception to the rule was old Joe Kennedy, who used to say, "Don't get mad, get even." Still, in public, nobody admits holding a grudge or harboring feelings of resentment—it doesn't look good. We know better. Each of us is at least a closet avenger. We asked seven well-known writers if they'd care to come out of the closet. On this and the next five pages, they do

The Sweet Grapes of Wrath

by Dan Greenburg

Fine vengeance, like fine wine, takes years to ripen.

My tale of revenge begins about twelve years ago. The scene is the elegant Four Seasons restaurant in Manhattan. I am seated at a table with half a dozen members of New York's snobbish food establishment, including the rotund and celebrated gourmet cook and cookbook writer James Beard.

At the time of which I speak, The Four Seasons is owned by Restaurant Associates, I am an advertising copywriter, and R.A. is one of my accounts. I have been brought to this noon gathering by the then president of R.A., Joseph Baum, one of the world's great restaurateurs, who has created scores of spectacular eateries, including Windows on the World, The Forum of the XII Caesars, and The Four Seasons itself.

The occasion of this high-powered get-together is that these six haute-cuisine mavens are here to vote on which sauce will be served with the sole offered on The Four Seasons menu. Grim-faced, tuxedoed captains bring us eight consecutive dishes of the identical sole accompanied by infinitesimally different sauces. All six food snobs take one bite of each dish and make appropriate food-snobby comments that have little meaning to a neophyte like me. Although I have no love for fish, I inhale eight entire servings, being at the time ravenous and poor and willing to ingest any gourmet meal I get for free, regardless of content.

By the end of the eighth dish, I am the only one at the table who has not made momentous critical pronouncements on the food. Joe Baum turns to me and asks my opinion of what I've tasted. I decide I'm not knowledgeable enough to say anything intelligent and opt for the role of buffoon: "Well, Joe," I say, flicking ashes off an imaginary Groucho Marx cigar, "I think you've got a hell of a restaurant here, but you oughta vary the menu more."

This poignant attempt at humor is greeted by deafening silence. Then, seeing a chance to have a little fun at my expense, James Beard begins to taunt me about the paucity of my food knowledge. Space limitations forbid a recitation of all the things he thinks to taunt me about or the level of my innocence—suffice it to say I felt in those days that a *chèvre* might just possibly be an automobile. (It's *not* an automobile, it's a goat cheese—you knew that, of course, didn't you?)

I remember thinking to myself, as prickly sweat soaked through my shirt, "Someday I'll get you for this, Beard—I don't know how and I don't know when, but someday, somehow, I'm going to make you pay for what you're doing to me."

We now dissolve to a scene about a year later. I have left advertising to become a free-lance writer. Joe Baum and I have gotten to be good friends. I am in the

Dan Greenburg's most recent books are Something's There: My Adventures in the Occult and Scoring.

Dan Greenburg, exacting the price of food snobbery from gourmet cook and cookbook writer James Beard.

Photographed by Arky & Barrett

. can arrange a tie for M'sieu," he's singing, "and a shirt. It can be arranged." I see him still at the front door of Laurent, hand on throat. He's undressing himself, made absentminded and shameless by greed. That fat twenty-plate *addition*, lost. And, as I walk east on Fifty-sixth, I'm Bismarck. I'm Wellington and Moltke and Guderian. Never mind Sarajevo; I know why the great wars of Europe had to be. ⊞

The Case of the Vengeful Twins

by Merrill Pollack

It was the time of the first Vietnam moratorium and S.N.C.C., of crime and violence in the streets, of the emerging anger of the blacks and a growing uneasiness among liberals that somewhere along the way they had lost their sense of mission. It was a time when the professional communicators were trying new things, not so much out of a conviction that the old formulas were no longer working as out of a restlessness inside themselves, a need for ego boosters.

In this mood, an assistant managing editor of *Time* magazine got it into his head that it would be exciting to assign fine artists to do the cover paintings for his magazine, and he called my brother Reginald on the long-distance telephone.

The phone conversation went blah and blah . . . *Time* magazine . . . blah . . . admired your work for many years . . . blah blah . . . this idea that fine artists like you (blah) can serve themselves and society—and the magazine, too—by doing cover paintings . . . blah, blah, blah. . . .

Reaction: incredulity. The artist in his California studio thinks at first this is a joke and his only question is which of his friends is putting him on. But the long-distance pitch continues and after a while the sense of incredulity changes to curiosity and, finally, to acceptance of the new fantasy/truth of the time.

The artist thinks: *Time* magazine has a big circulation, three or four million copies a week. What an extraordinary showplace for one of my paintings. A painting of mine on *Time* will be good for my reputation. It will be seen by lots of people. It sounds crazy, the whole idea sounds crazy, but I can beat those maniacs at their own game. I'll give them a cover painting that will suit their needs, and it will also be a *good* painting, a real painting.

"I'm not sure I can do it," says the artist with convincing modesty (he knows, of course, that he can do anything he sets his mind to, artistically), "but I'll be interested in considering it. What's the subject?"

The deal almost falls apart then and there. They want Reginald Pollack, fine artist, humanist, poetically inclined anti-Vietnam war peace *(Continued on page 122)*

Merrill Pollack and his wife left Manhattan three years ago to publish books and raise cattle in West Virginia.

Vengeance on $5 a Day

by Susan Braudy

Once, when I was an adolescent, I ran away from home to punish my parents—but I never left our house. Let me explain. Everything spoken in the kitchen of our small brick house in North Philadelphia could be heard in the basement below. But, as in most middle-class homes, few *important* things were actually spoken. (For years I wondered if the pause before my mother answered my question about God related to her other pause after my question about Tampax.)

One Sunday afternoon, my schoolteacher mother was marking her students' papers and drinking tea at the kitchen table and my father was reading his newspaper, wetting his thumb to turn the pages. It was time for the fight. "I want to go to the Sorbonne this summer like Sandy. I've saved up for three years."

In fact, while my girl friend Sandy was riding along

Susan Braudy, sitting it out in the cellar.

the Champs-Elysées on a motorcycle clutching a Princeton sophomore, I had been waiting tables in a hot delicatessen that smelled of pickles and old salad. For three summers I'd spent my salary and tips on subways only—working up a hefty savings account of a thousand dollars. But my parents wouldn't allow me to buy myself a ticket to France. I was enraged: after all, it was my money. They were in my way; I had to get around them. I'd already screamed at them, cried at them, even locked myself in the bathroom for a full day. That day in the kitchen I was frustrated, stumped. "It'll help my College Board scores," I said, sullenly. They said nothing.

I read my parents' answer in their frowns. They feared their child would perish if they couldn't watch over her. They never stated their fear. And I never told them of Sandy's tales of *(Continued on page 130)*

Susan Braudy is an editor and writer at Ms. magazine and author of the book Between Marriage and Divorce.

The Case of the Vengeful Twins

(Continued from page 105) marcher, participant, with other artists, in an antiwar coalition, occasional user of pot and sympathizer with hippies and yippies and most youthful rebels, to do a cover portrait of the chief of police of Los Angeles.

"Are you kidding?" he cries.

"Not at all," replies the big man from *Time*, in self-assured accents.

So the phone conversation rambles on and the editor is very persuasive about wanting to bring real art to the mass audience, and Reginald Pollack surely is good enough to do this kind of thing. And besides, the money is good. Twenty-five hundred dollars for a cover painting and all expenses paid, including a trip to New York to deliver the finished work.

The artist tunes out his inner voices that are muttering reservations and skepticism; his natural suspicions are lulled by the promise of decent money for about two weeks of work and a mass-audience showplace for one of his paintings. In one week, more people would see his painting than ever saw the work of, say, Cézanne during his entire lifetime.

"I'll give it a try," he says with that convincing modesty, thinking: "I'll knock 'em flat."

He telephoned me when he was about to come east to deliver the painting. Actually, he had done two. "I'll show the guys at *Time* both pictures; they'll pick one and that'll be that. And then we'll have a couple of days of fun before I return to California. Right?"

His ebullience was tempting, but his sense of trust was terrifying. I had worked in the magazine business for nearly fifteen years before going on to book publishing. I knew too much about magazine art directors and how they worked.

"It'll be marvelous to see you," I said. "I'll meet you at the airport."

"Groovy," he said.

"Oy," I thought as I hung up.

It was a nice reunion at the airport. I hadn't seen Reginald for more than a year and our meeting was high-spirited and noisy. A lot of people looked at us carrying on and then looked again, because you don't often see middle-age male twins who look as much alike as we do. We looked very much alike when we were little and then less so as we grew into manhood. But in the last few years, our looks and gestures and even the quality of our voices came together again, so much so that we were a source of confusion to a lot of people. It was an old story for me to be approached in New York by a total stranger calling me Reggie, and in California Reggie had his share of total strangers rushing up and calling him Merrill. Once, in Paris, I nearly got into a fight at a sidewalk café with a man who refused to believe me when I insisted I was Merrill Pollack.

The point is, we look startlingly alike. Reginald is a bit bigger than I. His hairline starts higher; his hair is longer. We both wear glasses. We both smoke pipes out of the same sides of our mouths. His clothing tends to be uninhibited (should an artist from California wear a business suit?), while mine veers toward the acceptable conservative uniform of a New York professional man. But these are superficial differences. People at the airport stared. We ignored them and swaggered outside, feeling like Romulus and Remus.

In his expensive room at the all-expenses-paid hotel, Reginald showed me his paintings of the police chief. One of them was a multiple portrait—different aspects of the man's face going from left to right, somewhat like a momentarily revealed poker hand. The other portrait was more conventional. There stood a man in the center of the canvas. In the turbulent background were suggestions of monsters and demons, hoods and goons, evil and good symbols of all the problems besetting a modern police chief of a major modern American city. There was also a figure of a policeman in the upper left corner: a lonely man in a hostile doorway, society's only bulwark against random and organized crime. He looked noble, and scared, too.

"Good paintings," I said, after studying them.

Reginald looked at me quizzically, knowing I was holding back. "I know they're good," he replied. "That's not the question."

I decided to stop stalling. "They're fascinating portraits, Reg. Very revealing. You're aware, I'm sure, that the chief doesn't look much like a policeman."

"But that adds up, when you think about it. It would take a guy who's good at concealing himself to know how to catch crooks."

"Of course. I hadn't thought of that."

"That's all I thought of, once I'd met him. He's a very complex man, very skillful at hiding himself. I had to work hard talking to him to get finally at his soul. But I think I've showed what this guy is all about."

"You did. He's scary."

"That's what it is to be a top cop. He's not our kind of guy. But all that aside—what do you think?"

"Well . . . neither one looks like the typical *Time* magazine portrait. But that's why they went to you, wasn't it? I mean, they wanted real art, didn't they?"

We realized that all of a sudden we were both sounding defensive. There was either nothing more to say or a great deal to explore. We went out to dinner to find out.

We took a taxi to a Chinese restaurant on upper Broadway. "Can I put this on my expense account?" Reg asked.

It took me a few moments to realize that he wasn't being funny. In a crazy way the question revealed how very different our professional lives had been for some twenty years. I had always worked for companies or corporations as an editor and writer. Reginald had never been on a payroll anywhere. He only knew by hearsay how the business world worked.

"Reginald," I said expansively, "not only can you charge this taxi but Time-Life is going to take us *both* to dinner."

"How will I explain it to them?"

"Imagination is everything. They'll never know. That's the true beauty of the expense account."

"I've been keeping records of what I spend," he said. "Seventy-five cents for breakfast; a dollar to park my car in Los Angeles. . . ."

"Reggie," I said, "you're a dream. At dinner I shall explain the mysteries of the expense account, and you'll discover how it is possible for some people to buy yachts on what they save in lunch money."

Reginald was impressed. For that matter, I was, too. I had never before seen so clearly how art and commerce could come together in such perfect union.

We spent several hours at dinner, savoring such delicacies as ten ingredient soup and moo goo gai pan and having intense conversation about the mysteries and labyrinthine ways of the magazine world. During dinner, I gave Reg a cram course in expense-account rhetoric. I told many anecdotes about magazine art directors I had known over the years. I confessed I was anxious about the paintings and how *Time* might react to them. ("Is the magazine world ready for a Reginald Pollack painting?") I warned Reginald that editors in general had a great need to feel they were participating in any given project. "Hell, man, if you don't let them do *something*, you destroy their sense of function. They have to get their fingers in the pie. Put it this way: I know how to edit a manuscript, but could you tell me how an artist goes about revising a painting?" He had an answer for that one: "You can make minor changes, but after a certain point the integrity of the painting is destroyed. Then you either give it up totally, or you hack it through and come up with a different thing."

And so it went. By the end of the evening, I had passed along to my twin brother (people stared as we crossed the lobby of the Americana at midnight) the essence of all I had learned of the magazine business. Perhaps I had revealed too much, but I wanted him to know what he was up against and what he had gotten himself into. I wished him good luck and we split.

Over the next five days, things went to pieces in slow motion. I walked into an unexpected crisis at my office. One of our authors was having hysterics because his book was about to go to press and his editor was on vacation and he had had some second and third and tenth and fifteenth thoughts on how he had handled certain sections of his book, and he needed some constant and calming editorial hand-holding as we reviewed the whole manuscript. Hysteria threatened constantly. And uptown, somewhere in the bowels of Time Inc.,

there was trouble, too. *Time* quickly rejected the multiple portrait of the police chief; it was too far-out. The other painting had distinct possibilities. Would Mr. Pollack consider making a few changes here and there? Nothing major, you understand. Get a few more cops into the background, move a few things around. The painting was very good, very close to what they wanted; they were sure it would work out in the end.

During the next couple of nights, Reg and I usually met sometime toward midnight and walked and talked for a few hours to calm ourselves down from the Sturm und Drang of the day. I solved my problem eventually by sending my nervous author to the printing plant in Vermont where his book was on press, so he could check his corrections right in the composing room (shades of *The Front Page*!). And Brother Reginald had been given an office at *Time* in which he made cutouts and silhouettes and overlays and was busy trying to redesign the background of the portrait to the point where it would satisfy *Time*. He was baffled by what was happening to him; each time he gave the boys what they asked for, they came up with new suggestions. It was becoming hideously clear that Reginald was going to reach the point where he would not make any more changes long before the editors of the magazine would run out of ideas to improve the painting. He ate compulsively on his expense account and had trouble sleeping. I bled for him and congratulated myself on working in the relative sanity of the book business.

By the end of the third day, Reginald reached the point beyond which he would not go. The painting is finished, he told *Time*; I've taken it as far as I can. I can't do any more with it. Apparently they were very nice, very encouraging. They told him not to worry; they were sure everything would be fine, and they would give him a definite answer the next day.

They didn't. Those things happen. The man in charge got caught up in something or other. He was unavailable, his secretary said. He was very sorry, but he couldn't do anything about the painting until the next morning when he would definitely have a decision.

"What's it mean?" Reginald asked me. "Is he lying?"

"Maybe, maybe not. That kind of thing happens to me all the time—I promise a writer a decision by a certain day, then something else blows up and I have to take care of it immediately."

But both of us knew by then that the thing was going to end badly. All we wanted was the coup de grace so we could go on to other things. That night, Reginald and I stayed up very late, talking, drinking drinks that seemed to have lost their alcoholic powers; we visited another artist and listened to *his* troubles for a while. It was one more lap around the racetrack; the horse was getting tired.

At ten-fifteen the next morning, I telephoned Reginald. "What did they say?"

He was breathing hard. "They said I should call back at eleven."

"Bastards! Hang in, baby."

At eleven-fifteen, I called Reginald again. "What?"

"Nothing," he croaked. "I'm to call back at twelve. I'm dying."

"Don't die. Talk to you later."

And at a little after noon, I called again.

"Now it's, 'Call back at one o'clock,' " Reginald reported. "They're stalling me."

"Fuck them. Look, friend, why don't you let me take you to lunch? I know a nice French restaurant on East Fifty-fifth Street. Good food, good bar . . ."

"You're on. We'll put it on *my* expense account," he said grimly.

We met at twelve-thirty at a pleasant little place I've gone to for at least a dozen years. I arrived first and was seated. When Reginald arrived, the captain and the waiters went temporarily mad.

"*Ici, mon jumeau*," I cried, exhausting virtually all of my French vocabulary. But Reginald had lived in France for more than a dozen years and spoke the language fluently. One by one, the waiters stopped at my table to regard the astonishing sight of Monsieur Pollack's twin, and Reg engaged each one

in animated discourse. The atmosphere was warm and friendly. We relaxed a bit.

And at one o'clock Reginald went to the telephone to make his call. When he returned to the table, he looked bemused.

"Well?"

"I finally spoke to my man. He wants me to come in to talk to him."

"What's the deal?"

"No good. It's all over."

"Then why does he want to talk to you?"

"He wants to explain. It was a funny conversation. He said to me, 'I'm afraid the word isn't good.' So I said, 'Gee, I'm sorry.' And he said, 'Can you come in to see me at one-thirty?' And I asked him, 'What for? What's to talk about?' But he insisted on seeing me."

"Are you going?"

"I guess so. He said something about future work."

"You're out of your mind! What time is the appointment?"

"He said one-thirty. I told him I was at lunch and that I'd come by when I was finished. That it was an important lunch and I wouldn't be there soon."

"Good show."

And so we devoted ourselves to good cocktails, good food and good wine, and we talked philosophically of cabbages and kings and art and life, pausing now and then to toast one another and in that way restore our collective wounded ego. Somewhere over coffee and brandy, when our spirits had reached a stage of overreacting gaiety, Reginald looked at his watch and said, musingly, "Hey, wouldn't it be funny if *you* kept that appointment?"

We laughed delightedly. Other diners in the restaurant looked at us.

"I go as your agent?"

"No! You go as me."

The idea was insanely entertaining. We played with it. Overgrown wise guys. Clowns. The Pollack twins, their own best audience. We laughed too loudly (hysteria?) and explored the possibilities.

"Let's see; I'd have to comb my hair straight back the way you do, instead of parting it. And we'd have to swap overcoats, because that crazy coat of yours is something he'd surely remember. And our eyeglasses aren't the same shape, so we'd have to swap those, too. Let's see."

We exchanged glasses and peered at each other, giggling like idiots.

"I can't see more than two feet," I complained. "I'll bump into walls and things."

"How much do you have to see? You'll go by color. I'll clue you in."

I lighted my pipe. Reginald stopped me. "Uh, uh. That'll give it away. I haven't smoked anything all week."

"So I don't smoke."

We left the restaurant in disguise: My hair was combed straight back; I wore Reginald's glasses and saw the world in soft focus; I wore his duffle coat. I practiced walking like Reginald, shoulders way back, chest out—almost a swagger. We walked down Sixth Avenue to the Time-Life Building, elaborating on our game, adding detail upon detail ("How do I find your guy? What's he look like? What's his name? Where's the secretary in relation to his office? How have you been with him? Casual? Forward? A mixture of both?"). It reminded me of how we used to entertain one another when we were boys, daring one another to perform impossible feats, pretending seriousness of intent right up to the last possible moment.

We arrived at the Time-Life Building and our game went on. We shook hands formally in the lobby, like two soldiers about to go into battle, and Reginald, watching me closely, waiting for me to break out of the game, wished me Godspeed. I squared my shoulders and swaggered off to the elevators.

The elevator came and in I went, humming a small tune, putting myself inside Reginald's head. And up we went, to the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh floor. Oh, ho, I thought. Reg won't believe I've gone this far. I'll turn right around when the elevator stops and that'll be the end of it.

But it wasn't. When the elevator stopped upstairs I left it and decided to check out Reginald's directions. ("There's a corridor at each side of the vestibule. You look for the one that has a portrait of President Kennedy with lots of green in it at the end and walk toward that.") The world seen through Reg's eyeglasses was soft-focus fuzziness. I saw a splash of green and headed toward it. He had said to count down five or six offices until I came to one that contained a papier-mâché bust of John Kenneth Galbraith. At office number six, I saw a greyish-brownish structure, a thing that wasn't a lamp or an umbrella stand. It had to be John Kenneth. In I went. It was a receptionist's office. No secretary. The man Reginald had been seeing, Henry Anatole Grunwald, now the managing editor of *Time*, used the inner office.

So, forward I went and peered in. It was a large office and there was a man seated at a desk in the far corner. I tapped lightly on the doorjamb.

And in the very few seconds between that act and the man's response to it, I panicked, suddenly went into a state of total clarity and asked myself: *What the hell am I doing? I'm crazy! I can't possibly get away with this idiocy.*

The man at the desk heard my knock, looked up.

"Ah," he said, rising. "Mister Pollack."

Pollack. That was my name. I calmed down a little. The editor rose and came around his desk. "I'm so glad you were able to come," he said. "An unhappy situation . . ."

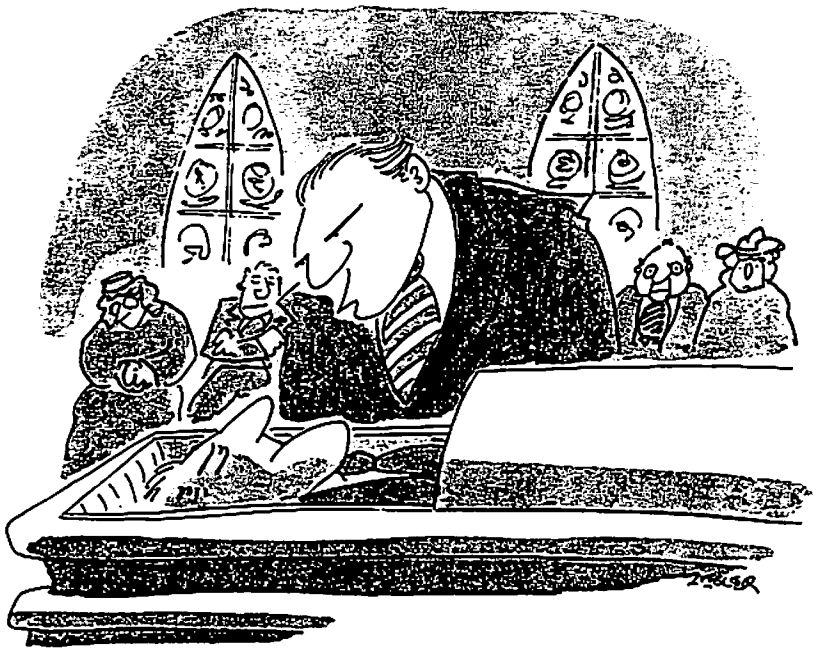
He shook my hand and kept talking, gesturing toward the portrait of the police chief that had been placed on a couch. "It's a very good painting, but we have very specific needs for our covers . . ."

He had noticed nothing out of the ordinary. The world was still in its customary orbit. I suppressed a giggle, warned myself to be serious, and listened.

". . . difference between formal painting and mass-magazine illustration . . . both have their place . . . situation with you isn't unusual . . . we go through this with lots of painters . . . keep revising until they understand what we need . . ."

"I see. Then you're not serious at all about wanting serious painting. You want serious painters to do conventional magazine covers."

"No. No. No. No. No. It's not that at all." Blah, blah. I sat down in a chair facing his desk and smiled tolerantly, Reggie-style, and let him talk, looking now and then at the painting. A paint-



"Give me back my hedge clippers."

er's ego, his faith in his own work, is never extinguished.

"That's a very good painting, all other consideration aside," I said.

"Oh, it is, it is. Marvelous. But . . ." Blah, blah. Splut.

"Well, look," I said. "I understand your position. I'm sorry I didn't understand it better before I got into this thing. I should have trusted my own instincts more."

"No, no. We are serious about wanting better art . . ."

"Yes, I understand. On mass-audience terms, not artistic ones . . ."

It couldn't go anywhere. As Reginald Pollack, badly used artist, I felt angry. But we would never understand each other, really.

He was saying something about its not being a total loss; surely I could use the painting . . .

"How?" I asked. "Who would want it?"

"The chief might want to buy it."

"Are you kidding?"

"You can show it in your next exhibit."

I just smiled at him.

Time to change the subject. He got going on where I wanted the painting sent.

"There are two paintings," I reminded him.

"Didn't you take the other one back to your hotel?"

"No. It's here."

He looked surprised and concerned. "Where?"

"I don't know where you keep things." I waved vaguely. "It's around here somewhere. Please find it, and send both paintings to my studio. Fully insured, of course."

He made a note.

"Now, about the payments. Of course, we'll take care of all your expenses."

"That goes without saying."

"And did anyone explain how we handle things if the assignment doesn't work out?"

"No."

"Well, we think it's fair to pay half the agreed upon fee. That's our practice."

Suddenly, I was not thinking as Reginald the artist, but as myself, a book editor who had negotiated many contracts.

"Oh, no. That won't do at all," I said firmly. "Full fee. Twenty-five hundred, as agreed in advance. There was never any discussion of a partial payment."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear, oh, dear . . . but someone should have gone into this. You see, if we don't use the painting, then in effect we're paying for nothing. On that basis we consider it more than fair to settle for half."

"The painting is real, whether you use it or not. Perhaps if you kept it, it would seem more real."

"I see your point, but that's not the point at all." He seemed genuinely distressed. Perhaps artists weren't supposed to be businesslike.

"I don't think I understand your problem," I went on. "If *Time* is in financial straits, I'm sure we can . . ."

"No, no!" He suddenly looked as if he didn't like me anymore.

"Good. I'm glad that *Time* is prosperous and able to pay its bills. The point is, I didn't give you half a painting, or half my time, or half my talent. You came to me, you'll recall; I did not solicit this assignment. I had misgivings about it, but you reassured me, persuaded me that it was *my* vision, *my* particular iconography you wanted. At your behest I dropped everything for about two weeks to do this commission for you. So it's for all these reasons, and a good many others that we need not go into, that I insist on receiving full payment from you."

My speech seemed to have impressed Henry Anatole Grunwald. He made a note, murmuring, "Oh, dear, oh, dear. We'll have to discuss this among ourselves . . . most unusual . . ."

"I think you'd better go into the whole matter again, carefully. I'm very firm on this point."

"Yes, I can see that," Grunwald said unhappily. (Reg eventually received the full fee.) He rose and came around his desk once more. We shook hands and moved toward the door. I felt a giggle starting deep inside myself but suppressed it. We paused for a moment before the couch to look one last time at the painting.

"Fascinating portrait, very good painting. Too bad it didn't work out."

"That's the way it goes," I said philosophically.

The editor still had something on his mind. He struggled with it and finally said, "I hope this disappointment won't . . . er, sour you . . . preclude the possibility of your doing something else for us some other time."

"I don't understand."

"I mean, perhaps later on, if we can come up with a subject more aligned with . . . I mean, more consistent with your kind of work, perhaps we might approach you, ask you to try another cover for us."

At first I thought he was putting me on, but his expression was very serious. That giggle was still tickling my insides, but I kept it firmly under control.

"Another cover. Yes. I'll tell you something. These last four, five days have been many things, but they have not been dull. Another painting? I'll tell you something else; this experience has been extremely interesting, very educational. I've learned a great deal from it. Yes. Why don't you just try me? Give me a call sometime."

And then we shook hands for the last time and I went past the papier-mâché bust of John Kenneth Galbraith and walked away from the portrait of John F. Kennedy. The grin inside me surfaced. I found the elevators and shook from suppressed laughter as I rode down; a few people riding with me glanced at me curiously.

Down. Out of the elevator. Into the lobby, quivering with all that laughter contained within me. (So madmen walk the streets, giggling to themselves; they are mad, we think; but we do not know what makes them laugh.) I circled the vast lobby of the Time-Life Building, and finally found my twin brother lurking outside a revolving door. He shot right in and hurried to me.

"You did it?"

I nodded, grinning, shaking with all my stifled hilarity.

"You saw Henry Anatole Grunwald?"

I nodded, feeling like Harpo in a Marx Brothers movie.

An expression akin to awe came over Reginald's face. "You did it. You really went through with it."

I nodded once again, grinning, grinning.

"How did it go?"

"Like a dream. Like a breeze. He never doubted for an instant that it wasn't you."

And we broke up in the lobby. We went sailing away in a gale of laughter, embraced one another and laughed uncontrollably, hugged each other and jumped up and down, like a pair of chimpanzees, hooting and howling and gibbering delightedly.

People stared at the idiot twins.

"Let's get away from here," I finally said. "We'll get arrested for making a disturbance."

We ran out of the lobby, went down Sixth Avenue. "Tell me, tell me everything," Reginald begged. "Everything that happened. What you said, what he said. Oh, my God. I don't believe it. You really pulled it off! Wow!"

We found a lunch-counter restaurant in Radio City and sat in a booth. I gave Reginald a playback, everything I could remember. He had never listened so raptly to anything I'd ever told him in the past.

When I reached the conversation about the two paintings and told how I had imperiously instructed *Time* to find the second one and ship both to the studio, Reginald interrupted: "I have it in my hotel room. I brought it back the first day."

Wild laughter.

"Honest? I didn't know. I really didn't know. I just took a guess."

Wilder laughter. Reginald nearly slid off his chair.

"They'll go crazy upstairs looking for it. They'll tear the place apart, Reg. It's like a missing manuscript. They'll go crazy until they find it."

"We won't let up."

Finally, all the recapitulation was done. The crazy story told. We were both exhausted from our laughter, breathing deeply. Reginald reached across the table and shook my hand, saying, "I'm dumbfounded with admiration; I didn't think you'd go through with it."

"Neither did I. We're both crazy, you know."

"It goes without saying."

"Listen, I have to get back to my office. How will I ever explain this four-hour lunch to my secretary?"

"Tell her what you did. She'll admire you more than ever."

"Tell her? Tell her what we did?"

"Of course, brother mine. We're going to tell the whole bloody world. I'll spread the story up and down the West

Coast, and I'll count on you to tell it on the East Coast. I'll write to a couple of friends in Paris and London, and in no time at all the whole world will know. And eventually it has to get back to Grunwald. Somebody who knows him will hear about it, and they'll get in touch and put it to him: 'Eh, 'Enry, is it true those wise-ass Pollack twins put you on?' And he'll say, 'What's the matter? You crazy? There ain't any twins.' But his friend will assure him there *are* two look-alike Pollacks, one of them a painter, one of them a book publisher, and then—and *then* old Henry will get shaky and indignant. And he'll remind his pal that even if there are Pollack twins it wouldn't work, it couldn't have happened, because he's a visual guy, right? He's a trained editor, an art connoisseur, trained in noticing details. And after all, he'd seen a great deal of me over the last four or five days; he knew me pretty well; he knew my mannerisms, my facial expressions, my voice quality. No, no, even if the Pollack twins exist and look very much alike, they couldn't pull one like that on him. Impossible.

"But then, of course, he gets uneasy," Reginald continued. "Could it have happened? He checks around; maybe he even puts one of his trained reporters on it. He finds out that there is a Pollack twin, working downtown in New York. You and I look amazingly alike. So he broods, but he can't be sure. So one day he finds a pretext to call me up, and he says, 'Hey, there's this goofy story going around. What about it?' And I tell him I don't know what he's talking about. He's crazy."

"Wonderful!" I cried. "And if someone from *Time* checks it out with me, I deny any possibility of such a stunt. I tell them, 'Are you crazy? I've got a serious, responsible job in the publishing business. Do you think I'd risk my reputation, my career, pulling off a maniac stunt like that?' I just deny everything, indignantly."

"It never happened," Reginald suggested.

"Exactly. It couldn't have happened. Too preposterous. Grown men, middle-age men, just don't behave that way."

"You're right."

We had time for one last drink at the airport before Reg's plane took off. We agreed it had been an extraordinary week for both of us.

"There was something else going, too," Reginald said thoughtfully. "I'm trying to figure it out. Part of it has to do with our being twins, of course (we couldn't have done it otherwise), but there's this thing in both of us that makes us want to spit in the eye of authority. Up the establishment. That kind of thing.

"From a pragmatic view, I got clobbered this week, took a beating. But then we found a way to pay them back, to hell with the consequences."

"And you go back to California with a story that transforms a professional defeat into a joke. Not bad."

"It could have been worse." ⊞

Vengeance on $5 a Day

(Continued from page 105) drinking *vin ordinaire* at outdoor cafés under Paris skies.

My father sighed. "What about next summer?"

My mother shrugged. "Don't spoil Sunday."

But they were spoiling my life. My summers were meant for better things than delicatessen kitchens. I had to strike back. "I'll run away," I shouted suddenly. My mother looked up. She sounded tired: "Don't forget to write." So I grabbed my coat, stomped down the basement stairs and slammed the outside door. But I didn't leave. I crawled into the alcove behind the boiler and leaned against a pipe. Then I heard my mother's voice from upstairs in the kitchen, "She won't go far. She's not the type." Voyeurism. Hiding down here I might learn how they talk to each other when I'm not around. Most important, I'd get back at them and savor their suffering over my "runaway." I was in total control.

For hours I sat on my coat and listened to my parents upstairs in the kitchen. In the beginning, I laughed to myself with glee.

Clump. My mother shuts the refrigerator. "Dear, where are the kids?" My father answers, "Well, your *son* is playing softball." Of course nobody mentions me, but I know better. A half hour later, the door slams. My brother Leonard runs past my hiding place in the basement and up into the kitchen. "What's going on?" he shouts. "Nothing," my father says. You liar, I say silently. You're worried about me. I've disappeared.

"Aah, wait a minute," my father says to my brother. "Your sister out there?" "Nope." My brother is too self-involved to feel the growing tension. He runs past me again and is gone, outside. "He hasn't seen her," my father remarks after a bit. My mother sounds frightened. "She'll be back." It's working. My foot has fallen asleep, but I don't shake it. I await the next scene.

After another hour, my mother is logical. "She isn't the type to run away." I am furious. I'll show them. Not the type. When the phone rings, she answers and speaks too fast. "Hello, Sandy. Have you seen Susan today?"

After three hours of torment, they surrender. My father announces: "We upset her. Maybe she should go to France. We're too cautious. I'll drive around the block to look for her. You wait here." When he returns and suggests calling the police, I put on my coat and walk up the basement stairs. "Where the hell have you been?" My father sounds giddy. "Paris, France," I say. "Keep this up and you'll never get to France," my mother says, but she is not frowning. I don't answer. I know better. It's only a matter of time and tactics. ⊞