



TAMING THE BEAST

"A valuable book
which gives
additional insights
into the criminal
mind of Charles
Manson."

—VINCENT BUGLIOSI,
author of
Helter Skelter

CHARLES MANSON'S LIFE BEHIND BARS

Former prison counselor **EDWARD GEORGE** with
DARY MATERA, coauthor of *Are You Lonesome Tonight?*

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EDWARD GEORGE
WITH
DARY MATERA



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The conversations throughout the book, including my conversations with Charles Manson, have been reconstructed from my recollection and, in some instances, from notes made immediately after those conversations.

—Ed George

INTRODUCTION

SELECTED EXCERPTS FROM Charles Manson's statement to the California court that convicted him on seven counts of murder conspiracy in the first degree and sentenced him to death in 1970:

* * *

"These children that came at you with knives, they are your children. You taught them. I didn't teach them. I just tried to help them stand up. Most of the people at the ranch that you call the Family were just people that you did not want, people that were alongside the road, that their parents had kicked out or they did not want to go to Juvenile Hall, so I did the best I could and I took them up on my garbage dump and I told them this: that in love there is no wrong.

"... It is not my responsibility. It is your responsibility. It is the responsibility you have toward your own children who you are neglecting, and then you want to put the blame on me again and again and again.... You eat meat with your teeth and you kill things that are better than you are, and in the same respect you say how bad and even killers that your children are. You make your children who they are. I am just a reflection of every one of you.

"... I have nothing against none of you. I can't judge any of you. But I think it is high time that you all started looking at yourselves and judging the lie that you live in. I sit and I watch you from nowhere, and I have nothing in my mind, no malice against you and no ribbons for you.... You are just doing what you are doing for the money, for a little bit of attention from someone. I can't dislike you but I will say this to you. You haven't got long before you are all going to kill yourselves because you are crazy. And you can't project it back at me....

"You can say that it's me that cannot communicate, and you can say that it's me that don't have any understanding, and you can say that when I am dead your world will be better, and you can look me up in your penitentiary and you can forget about me. But I'm only what lives inside of you, each and every one of you. These children ... you only give them your frustration. You only give them your anger. You only give them the bad part of you rather than give them the good part of you. You should all turn around and face your children and start following them and listening to them.

"... If I could get angry at you I would try to kill every one of you. If that's guilt, I accept it. The children, everything they have done, they done for love of their brother....

"I may have implied on several occasions to several different people that I may have been Jesus Christ, but I haven't decided yet what I am or who I am. I am whoever you make me, but what you want is a fiend. You want a sadistic fiend because that is what you are.

"... My father is the jail house. My father is your system.... I have ate out of your garbage cans and stay out of jail. I have wore your second-hand clothes. I have given everything I have away. Everything! I have accepted things and given them away the next second. I have done my best to go along in your world and now you want to kill me, and I look at you and I look how incompetent you are, and then I say to myself, You want to kill me? Ha, I'm already dead! Have been all my life!' I've lived in your tomb that you built.

"I did seven years for a thirty-seven-dollar check. I did twelve years because I didn't have any parents, and how many other sons do you think you have in there? You have many sons in there, many many sons in there, most of them are black and they are angry....

"Sometimes I think about giving it to you. Sometimes I'm thinking about just jumping on you and

let you shoot me. Sometimes I think it would be easier than sitting here and facing you in the contempt that you have for yourself, the hate that you have for yourself. It's only the anger you reflect at me, the anger that you have got for you.... If I could I would jerk this microphone out and beat your brains out with it because that is what you deserve! That is what you deserve.

"... I live in my world, and I am my own king in my world, whether it be a garbage dump or in the desert or wherever it be. I am my own human being. You may restrain my body and you may tear my guts out, do anything you wish, but I am still me and you can't take that. You can kill the ego. You can kill the pride. You can kill the want, the desire of a human being. You can lock him in a cell and you can knock his teeth out and smash his brain, but you cannot kill the soul.

"... I don't care what you believe. I know what I am. You care what I think of you? Do you care what my opinion is? No, I hardly think so. I don't think that any of you care about anything other than yourselves....

"You made me a monster and I have to live with that the rest of my life because I cannot fight this case. If I could fight this case and I could present this case, I would take that monster back and would take that fear back. Then you could find something else to put your fear on, because it's all your fear. You look for something to project it on and you pick a little old scroungy nobody who eats out of a garbage can, that nobody wants, that was kicked out of the penitentiary, that has been dragged through every hellhole you can think of, and you drag him up and put him into a courtroom. You expect to break me? Impossible! You broke me years ago. You killed me years ago!"

CHARLES MANSON ARRIVED at San Quentin in June 1971 shackled in heavy chains and basking in the glow of a frenzied media. As he trudged across the garden plaza on his way to the prison's notorious death row, an officer whispered a remark that would be repeated often that morning.

"Look at him! He's such a little motherfucker!"

The world's most famous "little motherfucker" had just been convicted of multiple counts of first-degree homicide for orchestrating the infamous Tate-LaBianca murders, a two-night slaying spree that left eight people dead and shocked the world in 1969.

Manson remained on death row at San Quentin until capital punishment was overturned by the Supreme Court thirteen months later. The ruling automatically reduced his sentence to life (with parole)—and created a massive headache for the American corrections system. If society didn't have the stomach to execute a man who appeared to be evil incarnate, then what the hell were we supposed to do with him? It's a question that's never been sufficiently answered.

To get rid of him, San Quentin officials quickly transferred Manson to the California Medical Facility (CMF), Vacaville, for a psychiatric evaluation. Found to be mentally stable, he was sent to Folsom State Prison, a hellhole that even a prison-scarred sewer rat like Manson found to be repugnant. Instead of the relative tranquillity of a federal prison, Manson now had to survive among vicious gangs like the Aryan Brotherhood, the Black Guerrilla Family, the Mexican Mafia, and assorted other friendly groups. Some members of these organizations itched to create a name for themselves by "offing" the world's most famous felon.

For the next three years, Folsom and CMF played Ping-Pong with the demon-eyed cult leader, bouncing him back and forth between the facilities. Folsom's medical staff claimed he was a star-raving lunatic who belonged in a straitjacket at CMF. CMF's doctors insisted that he was not psychotic, never had been, and should reside unencumbered at Folsom. The one thing everyone agreed on was that nobody wanted the little bastard under their roof. Even locked in a cell under heavy guard, Charlie Manson was one scary dude.

Manson, true to his master-manipulator, antiestablishment form, created most of the dilemmas for himself. He could play crazy or sane. Wherever he was at the moment, he'd play the opposite role.

In June 1975, Folsom officials found a way to expand the circle. Complaining that the Manson clan was camped outside the prison, harassing the staff and making everyone miserable, they appealed to the mercy of Bob Rees, San Quentin's warden. Rees, figuring that his savage inferno couldn't be any worse with Manson around, decided to help his fellow jailers. Rees's act of compassion brought Charles Manson to San Quentin six weeks prior to my own reluctant arrival. When I got there, I was promptly placed in charge of the lockdown unit—the ominous section that housed prisoners so crazy and violent they couldn't even coexist in a society made up of their criminal peers. Manson, naturally, was housed in my unit. That made him my responsibility.

Along with Charlie came his bizarre group of fanatical followers. Led by his chief lieutenant on the outside, Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, the persistent mob had assaulted Folsom and CMF officials with daily calls begging for scraps of news about their beloved leader. They also demanded mail and visitation privileges. As with everything else dealing with Manson, Warden Rees dumped Squeaky and gang into my lap. "I don't want to be bothered by those freaks," he growled. "You handle it. And for God's sake, make the right decisions!" Wonderful. I was now the chief ringleader of the entire

Manson circus.

The irony was that I never wanted to be at San Quentin in the first place. I'd previously served as program administrator for the Sierra Conservation Center, a minimum-security facility in Jamestown, California, that was designed to give nonviolent prisoners a chance to work in the forestry service. The gentlemen cons spent their days building hiking trails, battling floods and forest fires, searching for lost children, and for the most part, enjoying the great outdoors. Set in the rolling, oak-studded hills on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, it was an idyllic place to work and live.

Naturally, I took the transfer to San Quentin hard. That was going from one extreme to the other, from paradise to hell. San Quentin was a rancid rathole festering with violent, high-security felons. At the time of my assignment, the facility was a virtual chamber of horrors. A deadly riot had broken out four years before, resulting in the savage murder of three guards and two prisoners, along with the sadistic torture and mutilation of three additional correctional officers. After numerous delays, the inmates responsible were finally going to be tried, an event that brought the violent nightmare back to life in everyone's mind. The place appeared on the verge of blowing out of control.

The thought of working there depressed me. I furiously fought the transfer, all to no avail. A new team of top administrators was being assembled to try and keep the lid on the place, and I'd been handpicked to join them. The higher-ups apparently figured that my unique background as a former seminary student turned navy fighter pilot would come in handy. They felt that it gave me both the compassion and the authority San Quentin needed.

I'd barely settled in for my first full day on the job when the insanity began. A chipper voice greeted me on the phone. "Have you met Charlie?" Squeaky asked.

"No, I haven't."

She appeared shocked that I hadn't rushed right over to his cell for an autograph. For the next twenty minutes, Squeaky proceeded to extol Manson's mythical charms. "Can I visit him?" she finally asked, getting to the point. Her birdlike voice hungered for an immediate answer. I knew that Manson's previous prison administrators had refused to let him meet with any known Family members. The officials were afraid that Manson would use the visits to pump up his followers and send them out on horrible new missions. Those were my sentiments, exactly.

After years of legal fights, appeals, and bitter frustration, Squeaky came at me with a new tactic. "Charlie wants to marry me. I demand to see him!"

"Does Charlie really want to marry you?" I asked, aware that such a request must originate with the inmate.

"Ask him," she squeaked, quickly changing the subject. "What about Charlie's cell? What does it look like? How is it furnished? Does he have enough underwear, socks, linens? Does he see the sun? Does he have some earth to grow things? Books to read? A guitar to play?"

Squeaky asked question after question, hanging on my every answer. I sensed that any speck of information about him was sacred to her. Before I could wring her from the phone, she made me promise that I'd visit Charlie the next day.

I was so nonchalant about it that I didn't remember my promise until late the following afternoon. Behind the cells in the high-security Adjustment Center was a dank, narrow utility alley. There was a small barred opening in the back wall of each unit approximately eighteen inches square. This allowed staffers to converse with an inmate without the other prisoners' seeing them. The opening, at eye level, was secured with a steel door and was kept locked when not in use. During my rounds, I normally remained in the well-lit areas in front of the cells, casually chatting with the men behind the bars. That afternoon, I maneuvered through the old pipes, ripped-out wiring, and rusted ventilations

ducts that cluttered the grimy alley and made my way toward the rear of the cell that housed Squeaky's idol.

Before reaching it, I heard a clank inside a metal drainpipe that ran the length of the alley. The sound gave me a chill. I knew that inmates transfer weapons to other prisoners by tying them to homemade fishing lines and flushing them down their toilets. Was that a knife or a zip gun I heard traveling the inmate highway? A knife or zip gun that would one day be aimed at me?

I approached Charles Manson's cell, quietly unlocked the steel viewing door, and took my first glimpse at the most feared man in the world. I instantly recoiled. There he was, hunched on his bunk like an ugly troll from a child's nightmare. His fingernails were long and stained yellow from nicotine. His stringy black hair was draped around a chalky, almost inhuman face. The faint outline of a swastika scarred his forehead. He was thin, small, not physically threatening in any way, but boy was he creepy.

Turning slowly, the demon looked up at me. Our eyes locked. I felt my blood run cold as Manson studied me like a predator, twisting the tip of his goatee between his thumb and his index finger. Suddenly, a demonic snarl formed on his face. I backed away, totally spooked by his appearance. I tried to catch myself and overcome my fear. Hell, I was no stranger to prisons or crazed prisoners. I spent half my life surrounded by the most vicious criminals one can imagine. Before that, I'd landed propeller-driven fighter planes on bouncing aircraft carriers at sea. Nothing could be scarier than that. Or so I thought. Why, I asked myself, was this goofy pip-squeak affecting me so?

Gathering my nerve, I eased toward the door, found my voice, and introduced myself. "Hi. I'm Bill George."

Manson stared for a moment, then responded in an austere, almost grandiose manner. "Do you know who I am?" I nodded. We looked at each other for what seemed like forever. I studied his eyes. They were every bit as hypnotic and frightening as I'd been warned. Whatever depraved energy burned inside this man was very real.

"Lynette Fromme called," I began, breaking the tension. "She said that you want to marry her. Do you?"

Charlie slowly turned away. His gaze traveled to a picture of a crucifix that hung from his cell wall. After studying it for a few seconds, he responded in an eerie whisper. "Imagine me coming down from the cross to get married in front of myself." His eyes turned back toward me, his face bathed in a devilish glow. I felt myself weakening again.

"Charlie," I coughed, forcing away the dread. "I don't have time for any bullshit. Do you or don't you want to marry her?"

In a flash, Charlie sprang from his bunk and was suddenly standing inches away from the door. He pressed his face against the bars of the tiny aperture and began to speak with a savage intensity that was foreign to me. I stood riveted in place, paralyzed by some unknown force, soaking in the moment. His language was strangely exotic, gushing forth with great emotional energy. Time stood still as he lectured me about everything from his "fraudulent" conviction, to racism, to world pollution. His words were like a whip lashing at my conscience, making me feel that I was personally responsible for everything that was wrong with the world.

He poured it on, painting a horrific portrait of environmental corruption and the criminal neglect of children, which he blamed on the entire human race. I felt my intellectual side feasting on the stimulating thoughts and hungering for more. His twisted logic and garbled half-truths somehow began making sense.

"I live not by your laws, but by my laws, the laws of the Great One of whom I am and of whom a

of us are a part,” he seethed. “I am the one, the one who can save the world. The one who gave his life so that you could live. I am holding him for you, but you try to destroy me, yet you are really destroying yourselves. You fool! Can’t you see that I am you and that I am your reflection? I am your child, your creation. If you kill me, you kill yourself.”

It wasn’t so much his words, but the power, the energy, the charged charisma that emanated from his grubby little being. I began to understand why his troubled followers literally worshiped the man, why they would do anything, good or horrendously evil, to please him.

“The world is rotting,” he continued with escalating intensity. “Can’t you see it? Open your eyes! Pollution is all around you. Money is raping the earth, destroying the trees, polluting the air and water. Your children are choking and dying under your money noses. Your children cry for help, but you don’t hear them. You ignore them and they come to me. The children you ignore, I will keep. Someday they will rise up and kill you to save the world.”

After a pause, Manson cried out with resounding fervor: “I have a mission that makes my life worth something! You have sold your planet and your children. I have come to buy them with your blood!” With that, he darted from the door and retreated to his bunk.

I staggered down the alley, my head spinning from everything I’d just heard. It wasn’t until I was halfway down the hall that my senses returned. Thank God this man was locked in a cell, I thought. Thank God I could walk away from his hypnotic influence. What must it have been like for those who followed him when he was free, the impressionable young women who barely had any thoughts of their own? They were the perfect empty vessels, and Charlie had filled them with the most beguiling poison.

How could those disfranchised little girls from broken, dysfunctional families have fought it? I was a prison-hardened ex-cop and ex-navy fighter pilot trainee who had studied for five years to become a secular Sulpician Catholic priest, with additional Jesuit studies at the University of San Francisco. My head was clear, my will strong, my cynicism sharp, and my faith unbending. And yet, because of my open mind, I had temporarily fallen under this criminal’s spell. No wonder his followers had chosen to spend the best years of their lives camped around the entrance of a dank, foreboding prison, waiting for a sound, a glimpse, a fleeting thought to drift down from their imprisoned guru. I knew then that they would never leave. Squeaky’s calls would never let up, and the letters that poured in from troubled souls around the world would continue to arrive as long as Manson was alive.

From that moment on, I was hooked on Charlie and his Family. Not as a follower, but as a professor studying a strange, mystifying phenomenon. For the next eight years, I would be Charlie Manson’s jailer, protector, and counselor. I would oversee the security and treatment of this strange elfin man on a daily basis. I would control his life. In a way, he would also control mine.

The next day, while making my rounds, I stopped in front of Charlie’s cell. This was a different approach, a more public and casual visit. Charlie, a master of the moment, sensed that this wasn’t the time for a serious discourse on the meaning of life. His demeanor completely changed. He was less agitated, his voice was quiet and restrained, and his speech was clear and to the point.

“Do you know who I am?” he asked again.

“Of course.”

“No. I mean, do you know about me? Who I really am?”

“No. I know why you’re here, but I don’t know much about you.”

Charlie skittered to his bunk, grabbed a book, and stuck it through the cell bars. It was *Helter Skelter*, former L.A. prosecutor Vincent Bugliosi’s best-seller about the sensational Manson trial.

“Take it. There’s lots of lies in it, but it tells about me,” Charlie insisted. I thumbed through the

pages, then handed it back.

“Thanks, but I’ll get my own copy.”

I was surprised that Manson was promoting that particular book. It painted a horrendous picture of him, at least from a sane person’s perspective. Then again, maybe Charlie reveled in the demon possessed, murderer-controller, modern-day Adolf Hitler image Bugliosi presented. It’s difficult to fathom what feeds a felon’s self-image. Whatever Charlie’s reasoning, he would have to be more careful about his literary boastings in his current surroundings. There’s a strange, harsh, and totally inexplicable morality that exists among prisoners. While many ruthless and sadistic behaviors are accepted, even celebrated, others, like child molestation and crimes against women, are generally condemned. Manson’s offenses didn’t fall squarely into the banned categories, but he was still considered to be weird and sick. Like the “chomos” (child molesters) and rapists, he needed protection. He’d never admitted it, but he was aware of it. Manson was one of the best I’d ever seen at manipulating the system to keep himself out of danger.

I bought *Helter Skelter* that weekend and read it again with renewed interest. The horror of what Manson and his followers had done terrified me. The savagery and lurid detail surrounding the murders was staggering. I couldn’t shake the eerie images of drugged, homicidal zombies invading Hollywood and cutting up eight socialites—including *Petticoat Junction* actress Sharon Tate’s unborn baby. In a particularly gruesome touch, Charlie’s depraved crew used their victims’ blood to write cryptic messages like “Pigs” and “Helter Skelter” on the walls.

Although Charlie himself had not participated in the first set of murders, he went out the second night and personally selected supermarket magnate Leno LaBianca and his wife, Rosemary, to be his clan’s next victims, breaking into their home and tying them up. Once they were so secured, he left and ordered his followers to do the dirty work.

I again wondered why Charlie would want me to read such a disgusting depiction of his madness. Was he bragging, or was it merely an attempt to fill me with fear? I was sure it was both. The cunning little bastard believed that fear motivated everyone. What better way to instill fear than with the book?

My initial experiences with Charlie made me recall an article I’d recently read about Dr. Albert Speer, Hitler’s chief architect. Speer described his first impression of Hitler, catching one of his speeches in a “dirty, ill-lit beer hall” in Munich. Until then, Speer had viewed Hitler as nothing more than a “vulgar, rabble-rousing fanatic in a comic-opera Brownshirt uniform.” That changed as Dr. Speer listened.

“Hitler started to speak earnestly, persuasively, almost shyly,” Dr. Speer recalled. “His manner was completely sincere, more like a dedicated professor delivering a lecture than a screaming demagogue. Within a few minutes, he had the entire audience in his grip, and by no means were everyone there his supporters. Soon, his low-pitch manner disappeared, his voice rose to a hypnotic pitch, and there was a palpable aura of tension and excitement in the hall, a crackling emotional voltage.... His dynamic presence filled the room. His voice swelled, his eyes transfixed the audience. It wasn’t so much what he said, I hardly remembered afterwards, but the mood he cast over the entire hall; it had an almost orgiastic quality.”

This was exactly the way I reacted to Manson. I was thankful that the cult leader had been caught and cut down when he was, because, like Hitler, he would have done a hell of a lot more damage had he remained free.

Part of me wanted to stay away from this man, to keep my distance and treat him like any other prisoner. Another part sucked me in, drew me to him like a heroin addict to a needle. I’d abstain for

few days; then I couldn't stand it anymore and would have to go to his cell for my next "fix."

One afternoon, this feeling was so overpowering that I was moved to pull Charlie from his car and bring him to my office for a chat. Charlie sensed it was time for another royal performance and obliged. Like Dr. Speer, I sat in rapt attention as he put on his latest show, this time giving me a rousing rendition of his life story. He began by conjuring primitive images of serpents and other animals and weaving them into spectacular metaphors. He spoke for an hour about the horrors of his life, how he'd walked out of prison the previous time with good intentions, then encountered his female followers and started his "Family." He described in detail how he used LSD to turn them on and made love to each one. He expressed an amazement at the emergence of his own persuasive powers, discovering for the first time that people would follow him and that he could control them.

He continued by reciting a chapter from what I can only describe as Manson's personal book of Anti-Proverbs, a stream-of-consciousness series of loosely connected nuggets of disturbed, life-guiding thought.

"What do you know about fear? To save people from what they do to themselves, it would take a greater fear than the earth has ever seen. A fear only I can unleash! Fear is nothing more than awareness. Awareness is love. Absolute fear is absolute awareness. Give in to your fear and it will cease to exist. All you are left with is the awareness. And that awareness is love.

"See, all is love? There is nothing that's not love. Confusion is love in another form. But what really is love? Love is a word we used for God. But even that's misguided. What we mean by love in that form is intelligence. The understanding of things that are beyond you. Beyond you, but not beyond me. Because I can see. I understand. That's what you people can't accept in your paycheck whore worlds. It blows your mind to confront the truth that I've been enlightened, and the rest of you haven't.

"I've been charged with waking up the world. But why should I? I tried that before and look what you did to me? The people, they're not worth the trouble! Humanity as a whole isn't worth shit. You could search the earth before you could find five honest adults. A few individuals out there understand and touch life, but the rest are spineless predators trying to get over on someone else to justify their own existence. The ego gets so big they don't realize their dick's gone soft.

"So why should I care anymore, even with my knowledge? The people don't care enough about themselves to listen! No one wants to do it themselves, man. They all want to follow a leader who tells them what to do. Believe me, I know that trip. If there's anything I know, it's that. Everybody wants to be saved, but they won't take the first step necessary to rescue their damned souls. They're out there in their little churches waiting for Jesus to come back and save them from the doom and gloom of their meager existence. But Jesus already came! He left his message two thousand years ago. Wasn't that enough? Hell no! Greedy paycheck whores want him to come back. They missed him the last time, so they plead, 'Please come back during my time.' That's crazy, man! You know what I tell these people? How many fucking times do you want him to come back? Every time he comes back you turn on him like rabid rats and give him nothing but shit—just like you've turned on me! He came back in Germany during the 1930s and people are still bitching about that. The Iron Cross replaced the wooden one. Millions of people died trying to put order in the world, and when the forces of greed and evil rebelled, the truth was lied about and covered up.

"What if he don't come back at all anymore? What if he sees what you did to me and says, 'Fuck you all. You don't deserve it.' Humans need gods. God don't need humans. That leaves us on our own, man. All we have is our mind. But that's all we need! The mind is everything. It's Christ, Buddha, the devil, it's God himself. It's where the music plays and the passion simmers. It pumps the energy of

life up from the heart.

~~“People say I’m bad. I’m evil. I’m a beast. But what do they know about good, bad, and evil? They know nothing! There’s no good or bad in my world, just ‘is.’ It doesn’t make a difference what I’ve done, what I want, my hopes. Good or bad has nothing to do with it. A wolf jumps on a precious baby squirrel and swallows it down while the mother watches in horror. What could be more horrible than that, watching a mangy wolf eat your child? But is the wolf bad? Is the wolf a monster? No! The wolf’s only doing what nature has programmed it to do. Nature put it on the earth and said it has to eat to survive. Baby squirrels are on the menu. Even the mama squirrel eventually comes to understand this. The only ones who don’t are humans. People don’t understand the order of nature. All they know is how to screw it up. A dog wags its tail and plays fetch because humans give it food and water. But take away the humans and their handouts, and those sweet little puppies will turn into snarling beasts tearing apart rabbits and cats and small children and eating their bloody carcasses to survive. And those are our beloved pets that share our homes and beds. What makes us think that we’re any different? This innate human arrogance is why I’m in a cage and the animals are in cages in zoos and all of you are on the outside blighting the planet.~~

“Humans are worse than dogs because it wouldn’t even have to come to survival. If people knew they couldn’t die, if they couldn’t be punished for anything they ever did, what do you think would happen? Absolute evil. Strip away the concept of retribution, bring down the walls of fear, and the true evil nature inside humans will gush forth. To keep control, we are schooled, taught and programmed against our own natures by the fear instilled in us by grown-ups and authority figures. And it’s all a lie! We are warned not to lie, that it’s bad to lie, but the people who are telling us that are lying to us all the time! You see, doing good, that’s easy. Being good is a breeze, man. Just stand in line and do what everybody else is doing. Doing evil, that takes effort, work, and creativity. The hardest part is afterward, when you have to step back and deal with the rewards. And one of the most important rewards is that you can never truly understand good until you’ve done evil. That enlightenment will lead to a perfect universe within oneself and a balance between good and evil.

“You may be free in what your tiny, schoolbook minds know as freedom, but you tell me who’s free. Are you more free than me? I’m a hundred different things. I’m a glass of water, a rock, a grain of sand, a guitar, a rattlesnake, a young girl, an eagle, a cactus in the desert sun. I can be all of that, but you can be nothing but the one simpleton human that you are. You have no thoughts of your own, just what others have programmed in you.

“I confess! I’m not human! People have cried that derisively, tried to sear me with that stinging brand, but they’re too lost to know how right they are. I am beyond human. I am everything and everybody! Because of this, you think I’m insane. You tag me as crazy. But it’s you who are crazy. You don’t have the intellect to understand an entity that is a cobra, a wolf, a scorpion, or sometimes nothing at all. I’m just a reflection of what you are thinking at any given time. Yet, you can’t see the beauty there. You can’t see the power. You think I’m insane because I’m angry about the lies of this world, the greed, the lust for money, the rape of the earth, the pollution, the mass confusion, and the relentless inbreeding of fools with no intelligence whatsoever.

“Even locked in here, I can see what’s out there better than you! Selfishness! The whole world is awash in a black plague of selfishness. Everybody spends their every waking second chasing after what’s best for them and them alone. They’re all lost! A total lost cause! How long can I scream that this is the true insanity? How long can my followers keep screaming the truth? Our very existence lies in the air, trees, water, and animals. Ignore this, and we all die. Not just me. You’ve condemned me to death in your corrupt courtrooms, but I’m not going out alone. You’re all sentenced to die with me.

And even while you're dying, you continue to reach out with your shriveled fingers to grab little green pieces of paper with dead people's pictures on them.

"When the end comes, and chaos rules, and the ordered world you've created crumbles to dust, you won't know how to survive. You're weak. You've depended upon your own corrupt universe instead of the natural order. You're, chasing your tail, and it will lead you into a black hole worse than anything you've accused me of.

"So what do you do? Instead of listening, you hang it all on me, Charles Manson. You want me to fight all your fears and die all your deaths. You're trying to kill me over and over, but I won't die. You tried to march me into that gas chamber with the preacher on each side and the pigs in front and back but you couldn't do it. My power was too strong. You couldn't extinguish the light! And you know why? Because deep inside every one of you, you know I'm right. You have the proof. An ex-convict comes out of jail, and all your children, the children of your doctors, lawyers, Harvard grads, they come flocking to me for the answers. To me! Not you who raised them, but to me, a man with no formal education. And I told them to go away, not to follow me. I told them to go home and ask their moms and dads. And you know what they said. They begged, 'Please, Charlie, don't send me away.' My mother and father won't let me come back. They hate me. They don't understand. Only you understand. Please, Charlie, let me stay.' So I let them stay. And people say that terrible thing resulted. Whose fault was that? Mine? You can't hang that on me. You can't even hang your hate and revulsion on me. How do you feel about the murders? That's all that matters. Not what anyone did, but how the rest of you feel about what your children did. It happened in your world, not mine. Nothing like that ever happened among my people. Strange how that was lost on everybody. It's like the prison. Terrible, savage men in here, did brutal things on the outside. But what they all did combined wouldn't equal what would happen if you opened these bars and left them to themselves for a few hours. The blood and savagery against each other would be unspeakable. It wasn't like that in the desert. My children lived in perfect harmony. Do you think I would have tolerated any bullshit like that among the kids? We weren't about murder! We were about fucking and blow jobs and eating pussy and playing music and getting high and doing our thing and having sex all day and night. It was your world that wouldn't leave us alone. It was your world where the sickness and madness existed.

"What is murder anyway? There's no murder in a holy war. That was a holy war. Everything's a holy war. You don't draw a line and say killing these people in Germany and Vietnam is okay, but killing these people in Hollywood isn't. That's the height of hypocrisy.

"How can you pretend to know me and my motivations when you don't even know yourself? Our brains are like spaceships from another planet that the best scientists in the world can't figure out. It's ten thousand light-years beyond mortal comprehension. There are five computer chips to grow on a fingernail and ten fibers just to let you take a shit and a hundred million satellites to move through space around. It's operated by flies, snakes, beetles, mice, and cockroaches. Yet, take the brain of a human and put it in a maggot's head and it will go crazy. It will convulse and die from the horror of human thought.

"After all this, all this hate, greed, madness, violence, and murder festering inside you, your children still turn to me for deliverance. And let me tell you something. By the time you asshole wake up and find your father God, I'll be too old and beaten down to piss on you to put out the fire that is destroying your souls. So wake up. The only chance this planet has is to unite as one world under the last person. I am the last person. You will do what I say or there will be nothing!"

My head was spinning so wildly that it took me a while to realize that he'd finished. Actually, he hadn't. Charlie capped the glorious oratory with what I would come to experience as a typical

incongruity. After going on about his supernatural force and mystical abilities, specifically about his powers to persuade and control—powers that were obvious to me from the moment we met—I suddenly remembered where he was and whom he was talking to. Backpedaling, he tacked on a total conflicting epilogue, repeating his standard cop-out for the Tate-LaBianca murders. He blamed his followers for what they did and professed to have no influence over them whatsoever.

Inconsistencies aside, it was a spellbinding performance, one of his best. After he finished, I fought the urge to stand and applaud.

* * *

It took about a month for Squeaky and her cohort, Sandra Good, to make their most defiant stand at the prison gates. “They’re demanding to visit Charlie,” the gate officer radioed. “I told them they can’t because they haven’t been approved. Now they say they’re not leaving until they talk to you.”

“I’ll be right down,” I said, eager to meet the two main Manson groupies after having jostled with them on the phone for weeks. As with everything involving Charlie, the meeting was a trip. The pair, original Family members and Manson favorites who had not taken part in either set of murders, were standing together like Technicolor monks draped in full-length hooded robes. Squeaky’s was red, Sandra’s blue. I knew the colors stood for something—everything with Charlie stood for something. (I later learned that he had dubbed Lynette “Red” and given her the task of saving the great redwood forests. “Blue” Sandra was responsible for the air and the water.)

From the moment I laid eyes on Squeaky, I wanted to reach into her soul, push some inner reset button, and get her back on track. How could this soft, frilly creature worship a cretin like Manson? That she had once fallen under his spell was understandable. He had found her right after a bitter falling-out with her father. Charlie took her in when she was lost and alone. But why hang on now? They had been separated for more than five years. He was trapped in a wretched prison, and would be forever. What was the point?

I studied the pair up close. Lynette and Sandra were the stereotypical girls next door. Squeaky was cute, freckle-faced, with chestnut eyes and fiery auburn hair. Sandra was softer, more feminine. Her blue eyes matched her robe, and her striking sandy hair was the kind of mane most women would kill for. Both were attractive women with definite sex appeal. Neither wore a trace of makeup, which gave them an innocence that belied the truth.

As they spoke, I could sense their darker sides emerge, slowly at first, then with a cascading force. Squeaky started right in with her veiled threats, implying that unpleasant things would befall me if anything bad happened to Charlie. I brushed that aside, explaining for the umpteenth time that it was extremely doubtful that she would be approved to visit or write Charlie if she maintained that attitude. Seeing them now, I knew the decision would hold. It was obvious that the pair were programmed to do anything Charlie wanted.

“Mr. George, don’t you know your life depends on it?” Squeaky said, her birdlike voice eerily conflicting with the menacing message.

“Are you threatening me?”

She did a quick soft-shoe. “What I meant was, if Charlie isn’t allowed to be free, we’re all going to die. He’s the only one who can save us from the destruction, save the earth, the air, and the water. When that’s gone, we’re all going to die!”

Nice rebound. Charlie had taught her well. It didn’t serve her purpose to infuriate me. Like it or not, I was the only conduit to her master. And I’d treated her with a measure of respect, better than most. Shrewd as she was, she shared another trait with Charlie that didn’t serve her, or his, but

interest. Although neither was foreign to lies, they could both be painfully honest, usually at the wrong time.

“Would you help Charlie escape?” I asked.

“Yes!” she answered, as if the question were more about her loyalty than her desire to break the law.

“There you have it,” I sighed. “How can you expect me to approve a visit or a letter when you admit you’d help him escape?”

“But we need him, Mr. George. We all have to help him.”

Putting aside her threats, I was impressed with Squeaky’s spunk. She was ruthless and daring, and had an air of sophistication and mystery about her. Staring at this lonely young lady, some basic instinct flickered inside me. I felt envious of her commitment to Manson. I imagined myself wooing her away from him, straightening out her head, and returning her home to her parents a changed, remorseful woman. To accomplish that, I didn’t know if I should take her in my arms and give her a hug, or slap her across the face and scream some sense into her. I even contemplated dragging her, kicking and screaming to the psychiatric ward and pumping a few thousand volts of electricity into her messed-up brain. I dreamed about helping her escape a decade-long nightmare, but it was only a seminary student’s fantasy. There was nothing I, or anyone else, could really do. Short of a biblical miracle, the only person who could free her was Charlie himself, and even if he tried, she probably wouldn’t accept it.

Tossing the young ladies a bone, I set up an interview at a later date to be held in the records office of the administration building. I had a few more questions I wanted answered before I filed my final ruling on their visitation request. I also needed the time to determine if either had a criminal record. I knew they weren’t felons. If they were, the point would have been moot. Convicted felons aren’t allowed to visit prisoners. On the other hand, I suspected that the girls might have picked up a misdemeanor or two along the way. Sure enough, they had, but their official offenses seemed mild in comparison with some of their cohorts’. Squeaky had been arrested during the Manson trial and charged with conspiracy to spike a witness’s hamburger with LSD to prevent her from testifying. She was given a ninety-day sentence. Police also had questions about what part, if any, Squeaky might have played in the murders of a couple of Manson hangers-on in Stockton. However, she was never charged in connection with those crimes.

Sandra Good’s major post-Helter Skelter blemish was being friends with a group that tried to rob a gun shop. The motive was to arm themselves for an attempt to storm Folsom prison and free Charlie. Good was not arrested when the culprits were rounded up. She was later charged, and convicted, giving a lift to a Manson supporter who had escaped prison. The helpful ride cost her a few months in jail. The most disturbing thing I had read about Sandra’s life was the mention in *Helter Skelter* of the mysterious demise of her husband, a onetime Family member named Joel Pugh. On December 1, 1969—the same day the main players in the Tate-LaBianca murders were arrested—Pugh was found dead in a London hotel room. Although his throat had been slashed twice, both wrists cut, and no notes found, the London authorities ruled it a drug-induced suicide. The question in everybody’s mind was: had Pugh run all the way to London to escape the coming Manson Family Armageddon? And if so, had Manson dispatched an assassin halfway around the world to go after him? Bruce Davis, a Manson Family hatchet man and convicted murderer, had been in London earlier that year. English authorities were uncertain whether he was there the day Pugh died. Wherever he was, Davis didn’t resurface in California until February 1970.

As with Charlie, my fascination with these dangerous women overruled my good sense. I should

have run them off and barred them from coming on the prison grounds. Instead, I stretched out the investigation and promised to reconsider the possibility of a future visit or letter. I was flirting with disaster, toying with frayed personalities and damaged souls. Yet, my innate hunger to learn more about the criminal mind, about people like Charlie, Squeaky, and Sandra, pushed me into the abyss.

I recalled some poems I had read in the seminary about the desire of man to soar beyond the ever moving arches of experience that forever drifted farther away, chasing the unknown, seeking something just beyond the next mountain range. Maybe I could make a difference. Maybe one day with my help, Charlie would stop performing like a circus freak, put on a suit and tie, cut his hair, and promise to join the human race. Maybe Squeaky and Sandra would find some decent men, get married, have babies, and direct their energy toward more positive causes. Maybe I was the one who was crazy.

Whatever my motives, I was determined to closely observe this man and his disciples, if for no other reason than to see where it took me.

That night, something I'd read kept tearing at my mind. I checked my personal files and found it. It was Squeaky's assessment of the Tate-LaBianca murders. "Stone souls, prowling the neighborhoods, out on the town, looking for a bloodbath. Five or six people get murdered and everybody panics. So what's the big deal? People die every day." Hooded or not, this was one sick child. I memorized the quote to keep it in mind whenever I found myself succumbing to her relentless pleadings.

The twin terrors arrived on schedule seven days later. They were draped, as usual, in their colorful robes. I escorted them inside the compound and watched as they followed without hesitation. There were plenty of men inside those gates eager to ravage them on the spot, rape them repeatedly. Most sane women would be terrified by the mere thought of entering such a place. Not Squeaky and Sandra. Totally consumed with their mission, the strange pair readily marched inside this craven environment. Their only concern was getting closer to their master. Their only fear was being prevented from doing so.

A guard ushered them to a conference room normally used for parole board hearings. The mahogany walls, high-backed leather chairs, and polished table offered the formal atmosphere of a court hearing. Squeaky and Sandra seated themselves and waited for the questions. Sitting back in my chair, I plopped Manson's thick file on the table, then got down to business.

"Why don't you just tell us what you want?"

Squeaky, as usual, did all the talking. "We want to visit Charlie."

"You requested visitation rights at every institution Charlie's been in. They all turned you down. Why should we be different? Has anything changed?"

"You don't understand. Charlie is our life. He has the answers that will save the world. It's dying, can't you see that? He can save it. He can save you and me. Look around you. The air is dirty. The water is polluted. The trees are being cut down to build beautiful homes for the rich. The earth is being raped and scarred by tractors and bulldozers. Money and greed are killing the earth. We must stop before it's too late!... See our robes? We're nuns waiting for our lord to be set free. The only thing we can do before he comes off the cross is clean up his earth for him. Our robes symbolize a new era. We must protect the air, water, and land. My robe is red with the blood I've vowed to shed to save our lord's precious environment...."

Squeaky went on like that for more than an hour. I couldn't help noticing how her words and phrases and the rhythm of her language matched Charlie's. Some of his oddest statements came out of her mouth in the same exact sequence. I could sense that the concepts she parroted were beyond her comprehension. They reached levels of philosophy that would make a college professor woozy.

“Lynette,” I interrupted. “Did you come here to lecture us or to discuss visiting Charlie?”

“Both!” she snapped, once again exhibiting her stark honesty.

“Well, I only have time for one.”

“You better listen to us, Mr. George,” she threatened, her eyes suddenly on fire. “Your life depends on it.”

“Damn it, Lynette, you can’t keep going around talking like that. That’s it. No visits. The meeting’s over. It’s time to go.”

As we stood, I heard a soft, cold, emotionless voice break the silence.

“Can we write?” Squeaky asked.

“No. I’m sorry.”

Once again, I’d let my heart overrule my head. I wanted to give these women every opportunity to present themselves in a manner that would enable them to see Manson, if only for a few minutes, but they couldn’t even pretend to suppress their violent rhetoric or emotions.

Both Squeaky and Sandra were now fighting for control. Their faces twisted and contorted with a warning of an explosive anger born out of a catastrophic disappointment. Then, as quickly as it built, it dissipated. “You are our only hope,” Squeaky pleaded. “The others have all turned us down. They wouldn’t listen, even to save their own lives.”

She continued her pleas as I escorted her out of the office. “Charlie went to prison for us. We are responsible. When we were arrested, he came to us. He gave up the freedom that he loved so much because he wanted us to be free. Now he’s in a tomb, suffering. His blood is being sucked from his lips and no one listens. Listen to him,” she whispered, as if she were telling me some great truth so specific she couldn’t say it out loud. “He is ever changing. He has majesty that will blind you. He is everything you are not. He can help you.”

As we were coming down the stairs, Associate Warden Ted Rinker, ¹ a stiff, hard-line guard turned no-nonsense administrator, burst through the door. “What the hell is going on here?” he demanded. “Who are these people?” I knew exactly what he was thinking. Because of their strange outfits, Rinker figured we’d slipped some of the inmates’ wives or girlfriends into the conference room for some hanky-panky.

“They’re two of the Manson Family women, the ones who have been picketing the front gate,” I answered matter-of-factly. “We were interviewing them to determine whether they should be allowed to visit Charlie.” For a few seconds, Rinker searched our faces and theirs, wondering if I could come up with a great dodge.

“Well, you’ve been in here long enough. I want you both back in the unit where you belong,” he growled, never missing an opportunity to pull rank and bully. It was Sunday. I had specifically scheduled the meeting on the weekend to avoid Rinker, San Quentin’s annoying assistant principal.

“Doesn’t that jerk ever go home?” I muttered when he was out of range. “Get a life, Rinker.”

Outside, I watched as Lynette and Sandra glumly walked away, their dreams once again shattered. I would never see Lynette again. Her date with infamy was fast approaching. But she would continue to call and write.

Relentlessly.

A MONTH AFTER arriving at San Quentin, I bumped into Warden Rees at the prison snack bar, which was actually a neat little cafe outside the prison walls overlooking San Francisco Bay. Our conversation naturally turned to Manson. "How's he doing?" Rees inquired.

"Not bad. He's still in the Adjustment Center, max security."

"Behaving himself?"

"Pretty much. Everybody caters to the little bastard. It's like we have this celebrity over there. He's a weird guy, hard to figure," I said.

"Have you thought about reducing custody?" I was surprised that Rees posed the question. That was something that I'd been toying with in my own mind.

"We're seeing him next week in classification," I explained. "If he comes across okay, the committee might lower his custody and give him a try in B section. He's ready for a shot. I think he'll do okay."

"That sounds good," the warden responded. "He's been locked up at max custody for what, five years now?"

"Yeah, nobody wants to take a chance."

Well, maybe you should."

"Lynette got to you, didn't she," I said, smiling.

"Yeah," Rees confirmed. "She's an aggressive little bitch."

"Hey, I've been there." I laughed. "She bugged you about getting him out in the sun, giving him a guitar, and a place to grow some flowers, right?" The warden's smile confirmed that he was familiar with the rap. "Hey, I thought I was supposed to handle all her calls," I jokingly protested.

"You are," he grunted. "She's still your responsibility. She just lucked out and got through to me."

"Seriously, Bob," I continued. "He's been a good inmate so far. He deserves a break. I'll get him psyched. If Dr. Sutton thinks he looks okay. I'll give him the shot."

Taking the cue, I transferred Charlie to the more populated and less restrictive B section after an exhaustive investigation of the inmates who would be housed around him. The trustees gave me an inside scoop on the mood of the cons, while the correctional sergeants relayed the feelings of the guards. We determined that no one was likely to try and whack him or carve out a piece of his neck for a souvenir.

Charlie had kept his nose clean and earned the right to escape his suffocating twenty-four-hour lockdown. In B section, he'd be able to catch a ray or two of sunshine out in the yard with the other inmates. Remembering Squeaky's request, I noted that there was a small plot of dirt by the hospital morgue against the west wall. Charlie could plant some seeds, stroke his guitar, and serenade the flowers to his heart's content.

The Adjustment Center classification committee approved the transfer and reduced his custody from maximum to close supervision. After his first week, the prison psychiatrist informed me that Charlie had settled in and was behaving himself.

The same couldn't be said for Squeaky. In one of her calls, she announced that she was holding me personally responsible for Charlie's well-being. I explained that all of the prisoners were my responsibility. They were there to serve their time, not to be beaten, tortured, raped, or abused in any way. Charlie was no different from the rest in that respect. He was, of course, unique in virtually every

other category. I found it ironic that the man who preached living free in the wilderness, and castigated those wedded to money and possessions, had more “stuff” than any other prisoner. Charlie’s fans and Family sent him multiples of every item on the approved property list—sweaters, shirts, socks, underwear, books, magazines, television sets, radios, even an acoustic guitar. (He had to check the instrument in and out with the guards, and could only play it during designated times.)

One day, a beautifully crocheted vest arrived through the mail. It was decorated with the most brilliant display of intricate, multicolored scenes I’d ever seen. It was cut like one of those leather biker vests, only the embroidery was truly a masterpiece. Studying it closer, I was amazed to see that it was an artful history of the Manson Family. There were scenes of sex and murder, and images of snakes, spiders, wounded bodies, swastikas, and black-magic symbols harmoniously balanced with clusters of flowers, birds, butterflies, dancing children, musical notes, and natural panoramas. The garment, custom-made by Squeaky and friends, reflected long hours of meticulous, painstaking work. Elaborate and delicately woven, it clashed severely with the ugly, drab monotony of the prison.

Vests were not approved items. Because it was such a work of art, I made an exception, slipping it to Charlie under the loophole that allowed handmade cardigan sweaters. Charlie played it cool when I presented it to him. That was smart. Veteran cons like Charlie know better than to become attached to anything in prison, especially something unusual or special. I could tell, however, that he cherished it.

Two days later, a sergeant strolled into my office with some startling news.

“You know that vest you gave the little motherfucker?”

“Yeah?”

“Everyone’s got it now.”

“What?”

“Just what I said. It’s all over the tier.”

I bolted from my office and immediately began to investigate. I couldn’t believe Charlie, even a homicidal creep like Charlie, could do such a thing. Turned out that it was another example of Manson’s keen survival instincts. A few of the bigger, meaner inmates became jealous and tried to take it from him. Charlie, as weak and helpless physically as he was strong mentally, saw where the wind was heading. A violent confrontation was inevitable. To save face, he decided, King Solomon style, to cut up the vest and bestow it upon everybody. It was a brilliant move. He not only ingratiated himself with inmates longing for a keepsake from the famous cult leader, he frustrated the thugs who wanted it.

Despite the logic of the action, I was still upset that he had destroyed so precious a gift just to save his butt. When I told Lynette, she let out an emotional wail. “Why did he do it?” she asked in a horrified tone. “Doesn’t he understand what that meant to us? How much love we put into that? That was our souls, the souls of the people devoted to him.” It was the first and only time in my decades-long association with her that Squeaky questioned the actions of her master.

“I have no idea, Lynn,” I ducked, praying that the incident would be the catalyst to help her break away. “You’ll have to ask Charlie that.” There was a long pause, followed by some rare sobbing. Then the phone went dead. That was really unusual. Squeaky was never one to cut short a conversation with someone close to her prince.

Charlie saved his butt all right, but he nearly lost his most faithful follower in the process. Nearly. When I told Charlie how devastated Lynette was, he immediately put pen to paper. His explanation was short, and rather well stated. “It will always live in my mind, where no one can destroy it or take it away from me.” That was it. He said nothing more. I sensed that because the gift was so special, I indulged her brief defiance, but only to a point.

The next time she called, she was her old Squeaky self, as devoted to her sinister master as ever. She never mentioned the vest again. Yet, as the weeks passed, I sensed something different about Squeaky, an unraveling of her already loosely knit psyche. There was a tension and desperation building inside her that was unnerving. Her desire to visit Charlie grew into an obsession that consumed what little remained of her outside life. It seemed as if she had a burning question she needed answered, and approval for something big she was planning. That, or she desperately needed to confirm or challenge some order she had already received. Whatever the reason, Squeaky was coming unglued.

Her threats increased so much that a public advocates attorney in San Francisco, whom Squeaky and Sandra had been consulting in their efforts to obtain visiting privileges with Manson at San Quentin, went to the police. They had begun writing to and appearing at the attorney's home.

When he felt their implied threats were becoming dangerous to his welfare, he reported the strange behavior. According to deputy chief William Keayes, the two women were interviewed at the Hall of Justice by police investigators and admonished that legal action could be taken against them.

On Tuesday, September 2, Associate Warden Rinker held a routine staff meeting. The chats were highlighted by each program administrator giving a progress report on his unit's operation. When it was my turn, I suppressed my concerns about Squeaky and addressed the issue of how Manson was handling his newfound freedom. Although everybody in the prison was talking about it, the transfer was news to Rinker—bad news. The wrinkles on his forehead deepened and his eyebrows darted upward in shock.

“Are you sure he won't get killed over there?”

“I checked it out before I made the move,” I countered. “There's no reason to worry. He's working as the first-tier tender, so he's screened off except for some outside exercise. And we only exercise him with those who aren't a threat. It's working great.”

Rinker glared at me. “How do you know there's no threat?”

“I had my staff question and investigate all the inmates housed in B section. He's safe. Even Pin Cushion says he'll be safe.”

“Pin Cushion? That's a joke,” Rinker sneered, attempting to solicit a laugh. “Do the rest of you think Manson is safe in B section?”

Rinker's yes-man, a lower-ranking associate warden, shook his head, supporting his superior. Rinker then turned to his buddy, the head of the prison security squad. Before the man could second his boss's opinion, I cut in.

“Wait a minute. He's there already. He's been there over a week. This isn't speculation. It's past history. He's hasn't had a single problem. Besides, he's no dummy. He knows how to survive.”

“Does Manson have enemies in B section?” Rinker asked the security chief.

The officer cleared his voice and glanced around the room for support before answering. “Yes, I think he has enemies there.”

“That's bullshit and you know it,” I argued. “I checked with Smokey Thompson, your squad sergeant, long before I moved Manson. He cleared it.” I turned back to Rinker. “Our unit classification committee agreed and endorsed the move. Dr. Sutton wrote a report stating that it would benefit—”

“I think you better move him back to the AC,” Rinker interrupted.

“What—?” I began before cutting off my protest. I knew it was no use. Once Rinker started in that direction, he couldn't be budged. I decided to let it rest, then appeal the decision to Warden Rees.

The following day, Wednesday, September 3, 1975, Squeaky phoned me with an urgent message for Charlie. She was happy and upbeat, as if she had finally come to grips with the issue that had been

tormenting her. “Tell Charlie I’ve found a way to save the redwoods!”

“Okay. Sounds good.”

After that, however, her mood quickly darkened. She began rambling in a menacing tone. “Look George, you’ve kept us apart long enough. We’ve tried to reason with you, but you’re too stupid to see that you’re killing yourself. Time is running out. There will be blood running in the streets. The people killing the planet will pay with their lives!” Squeaky’s voice grew harsh and shrill. She spoke of murder and mass mayhem, and evoked scores of bloody images. Her tenses shifted oddly as she ranted. “The dagger was raised. Death was at hand. Nothing could stop it, only Charlie, who was in prison for something he didn’t do. We are responsible for him being there and we must pay the price.” She began to cry, softly at first, then building to the point of hysteria. The tears fed a new round of razor’s-edge doom and gloom.

Then, for a brief moment, she hushed. “I’ve sent you a book,” she said. “It’s about Charlie. *They Killed the Day They Murdered Christ*. I want you to read it.”

“I can’t accept a book from you,” I explained. “It’s against the rules.”

That infuriated her, unleashing more verbal abuse. She raved about the children rising up against their parents, killing them and taking vengeance on those destroying the earth, water, and air. “Blood will wash down on the streets. People will die!” I couldn’t stand it anymore. She had pushed my tolerance to the limit. I hung up.

The next day, before ending my shift, I paid Charlie a visit in his cell. His eyes sparkled with the prospect of outside news.

“I just talked to Lynette.” At the mention of her name, Charlie cracked his sinister, dirty-old-man grin, as if some depraved erotic flashback from the past had flooded his demented little brain. Charlie liked to make love to his women “in the dirt,” as he said, especially white, creamy, upper-middle-class girls like Squeaky. It was part initiation, part debasement to subjugate them to his will, and a large part pure perversion. “She asked me to tell you she found a way to save the redwoods.” Charlie jumped from his bunk and started rubbing his hands together like a witch over a cauldron. I sensed that I’d just delivered some secret message that only Charlie and Squeaky understood. Never one to back away from a pending disaster, I pushed on. “She acted real crazy on the phone. She threatened me and everybody else, talking just like you about blood flowing in the streets, children rising up. She sounds more like you every day.” My words jabbed him like a sharp stick. His face contorted with rage.

“Don’t you know who I am, man?” he roared. “You should be on your knees, begging for your life. I hold it in the palm of my hand. I could have you killed anytime!” He rambled on for another three minutes before I cut him off. I found this dark, ugly side to be his least entertaining facet, and could only stand so much.

“Stop the bullshit!” I interrupted. “I don’t have time for this.”

As I walked away, I was more convinced than ever that something was up. Charlie had never threatened me like that before. For some reason, he wanted me to know that he had resources on the outside, that he still had power over life and death. Ominous as it sounded, I didn’t take the threat seriously. Sure, Charlie continued to have tremendous control over his robotic minions, and they’d kill for him in a heartbeat. I knew that because I read his mail. I just didn’t think Charlie would turn on me. I was the guy protecting his back and taking care of him in a hostile environment. I was also a gullible ex-seminary student who showed him more compassion, however undeserved, than anyone else had, or probably ever would. Now I was suspicious that Squeaky and Charlie had some plan afoot.

Twenty-four hours later, Squeaky shocked the world. At the Capitol Mall in Sacramento, Manso

number-one follower Squeaky “make love to her in the dirt” Fromme, cast off her goofy robe, dressed herself in a slightly less goofy full-length fire red gown with a matching turban (so much for subtlety) and went to see the President of the United States. Her winning smile and cute freckled face excused her rudeness as she pushed forward through the throng, inching ever closer to the most powerful man in the world. She worked her way past spectators and grim-faced Secret Service agents until she was mere arm’s length from Gerald Ford. This was it, Squeaky’s chance to join her master in heinous historical glory. Through her shocking action, she would propel Charlie back into the limelight and establish his evil power like never before. Carving up a bunch of Hollywood types was one thing. Taking out the President of the United States was something entirely different.

As Ford leaned forward to shake her hand, Squeaky pulled out a massive .45 caliber automatic and shouted, “The country is a mess! This man is not your president!” She lunged toward Ford, aimed his gut like Jack Ruby plugging Lee Harvey Oswald, and squeezed the trigger at point-blank range. Click. The weapon didn’t fire.

One can imagine Squeaky’s agony as a half dozen Secret Service agents swarmed her small body and knocked her to the ground. “It didn’t go off,” she wailed as the agents dragged her away. “Can you believe it? It didn’t go off.” Although she’d loaded the clip with four deadly rounds and popped the magazine securely into place, she’d forgotten to slide the critical starter bullet directly into the chamber. Without the fifth slug, the only way the big gun could have fired was by snapping back the entire upper chamber and spring-loading it the hard way, a process that’s difficult for many men, much less a one-hundred-pound woman. Familiar with weapons from her heavily armed, desert-rat days, Squeaky’s baffling oversight can only be explained by fate. Ford’s number just wasn’t up.

One of the agents, Larry Buendorf, came away from the fracas with a cut on the web of skin between his thumb and forefinger, indicating that the determined Squeaky had pulled the trigger at least one more time during the struggle, slamming the hammer down on the alert Buendorf’s hand.

If any doubt remained as to Squeaky’s true intentions, best pal Sandra Good immediately appeared to dispell them. Squeaky, Good proclaimed, was only the beginning. “We’re going to start assassinating presidents, vice presidents, and major executives of companies. I’m warning the people they better stop polluting or they’re going to die.”

Ultimate failure aside, Squeaky did take her place in history as the first woman ever to try to assassinate an American president.

Personally, Squeaky’s attempt came at the worst possible time for me. Despite Associate Warden Rinker’s unbending order, I’d yet to move Charlie back to his old, suffocating, high-security home. My plan was to run it by Warden Rees first. Now all hell had broken loose. Rinker led a team of FBI and Secret Service agents to the Adjustment Center to interrogate Charlie. The hotheaded Rinker flew into a rage when he discovered Manson wasn’t there. He gathered a squad of security goons, charged over to B section, and banged on the locked door. “I’m taking Manson out of here, and don’t anybody try to stop me!” he bellowed, intoxicated by his authority. The prison SWAT team, known as “gooners,” marched through the halls, stormed Manson’s cell, swung the door open, and ordered him out.

“What for?” Charlie asked, unaware of what had happened in Sacramento. A pair of officers rushed into the cell, grabbed Manson, and threw him violently against the screen just outside his unit, pinning him against it.

“When I say move, asshole, you better move!” a gooner shouted. Charlie was searched, cuffed, and dragged out of B section. Swept down the corridors in a mad rush, his route took him past Rinker, man he was, surprisingly, meeting for the first time.

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