



— THE — TRINITY

DAVID LABOUNTY

— author of *The Perfect Revolution* —

“LaBounty has a knack for taking his readers deep inside the heads of his characters where the concepts of Good and Evil fade unsettlingly to the background, replaced by Fear and Desire. That’s not always a pleasant place to be, but it is always fascinating.”

— Russell Lutz, *Iota Cycle*

THE TRINITY

by David LaBounty

THE TRINITY
Kindle Edition

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~~Remember the young man standing in the large picture window. Remember the young man staring~~ out at the damp early dawn suburban street, studying the uniform box-like houses he has known all his life that vary only in aluminum siding and landscaping.

He is waiting for a plain white sedan with U.S. government plates. He is waiting for a sedan driven by his recruiter, who will take him to the processing center twenty miles away in downtown Detroit.

His house is nearly silent. His mother is sleeping in the main bedroom after coming home late from a date the night before. His father is in the basement, the flat sound of the television traveling up the staircase. His father moved to the basement years ago, when he and Chris's mother stopped liking each other, and the television is left on continuously to kill the sounds of loneliness. Chris never was quite sure why his father never left or why his parents never divorced. Perhaps economics, perhaps laziness.

His father turned into a hermit—home from work and straight to the basement—every day, without a deviation.

His mother: reliving her youth, hardly home, never eating with Chris nor studying a report card two or three years. She dates, often and with great variety, and the men sometimes leave the house when Chris leaves for school.

Chris isn't sure if anyone will bother to see him off. He sighs with indifference. He lights a cigarette and waits, thinking about himself.

Eighteen and blond, pink-skinned, bespectacled, vaguely overweight and definitely out of shape (the result of beer and a steady stream of fast food) and a virgin, an aspect of his life that grieves him to no end. He has never had a girlfriend, nor has he even kissed a girl, an aspect of his life that grieves him even more.

No one among his few friends claims virginity.

Chris strays from the subject of girls altogether.

He has faith that the Navy will change things. He has faith that the Navy will change him, and reconstruct the details of his life.

A car arrives in the driveway, an older, rusty two-door Chevrolet driven by his brother, four years his senior.

As his brother leaves his car, beer cans roll into the driveway and into the street. His brother walks clumsily into the house. Once inside, Chris detects his brother's residential odors—beer and marijuana. Chris looks at his watch and notes that his brother has come home one hour before his job as a warehouseman starts.

His brother is startled by Chris's presence in the living room at such an early hour.

"What the fuck you doin' up?"

"I leave today."

"For the Navy?"

"Yep."

"Do Mom and Dad know?"

Chris shrugs his shoulders.

"No shit, the fuckin' Navy." And his brother ambles out of the small living room and into the hallway. It will be an eternity before Chris sees him again.

The twilight gives way to daylight and another cigarette disappears before the recruiter pulls up in front of Chris's house. Chris walks out without taking a last look inside. He closes the door to his house and a lot of other things.

The recruiter, a Petty Officer Arnold, was a factor in Chris's decision to join the Navy. Arnold is a young man, thirty still several birthdays away, but he appears worldly and wise to someone as sheltered as Chris.

For Chris, there were few choices upon graduation from high school. College? No. His sub-par grade-point average saw to the fact that a four-year university wouldn't be interested. Community college? No. That meant living at home, and Chris wanted anything but that. A job? No. No job he could get at his age would pay enough for him to get his own place, own a car, et cetera, and that too meant living at home, and he didn't want to wind up like his brother.

That left Chris with four choices: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines.

The Army? No. He didn't want to fight in a trench if World War III started. The Air Force? No. It seemed too technical and just not fun. The Marines? No way. Chris lacked the certain masochistic machismo the Marines seemed to attract and require.

The Navy held the greatest lure for Chris: the travel. He had never left Michigan in his life, save a short trip to Chicago when he was small and his parents still operated the household as a family. The recruiter enchanted him with tales of stops in Australia, Japan, Italy and Hong Kong. Additionally, Petty Officer Arnold seemed the most relaxed, his shirt somewhat untucked and his face round and soft, in contrast to the Marine recruiters, sitting at attention in their desks, belt buckles glaring, faces stern and serious.

Petty Officer Arnold maybe spent a little more time with Chris than was necessary, realizing how impressionable and inexperienced Chris was.

Arnold had many, many tattoos. He tried to collect one from each port of call.

His favorite, a red and green dragon, impressed Chris the most.

"I got this one here in Singapore; I was drunk as a skunk. This Chinaman give it to me. The man was damn near blind, but it came out pretty good, though."

Arnold told Chris about the women he had met during his travels.

"Do you like blondes with big tits?"

Chris said sure, of course.

"Then, my friend, make sure you get to Australia. Them women down there just love American sailors. Their men don't treat women right. Hell, they got eight women to every man down there. I guess they can do what they want. Anyway, an Australian gal will screw you all night and make breakfast for you in the morning. Good luck finding that anywhere in this country. Hell, these days women want you to make *them* breakfast."

"Do sailors ever marry Australian women?" Chris asked, his mind in the middle of a fantasy with a beautiful Australian woman attached to his arm.

"I don't know. Why the hell would you care about that?"

Chris shrugged his shoulders and remained silent.

"Sailors do marry a lot of Orientals, though."

And Arnold told him of the debauchery in Asia, especially in the Philippines, with its inexpensive call girls and even less expensive beer.

"I had me two girls, a real good buzz, a little Flip to drive me around and a hotel for the night, and I didn't even spend twenty bucks."

Chris has never felt especially patriotic, having only a thumbnail knowledge of current events. He likes President Reagan for no real reason, knows that the Russians are evil, and the world he lives in is under the constant threat of communists and nuclear war.

"My friend, our job is the most important in the world," Arnold told him during one of his frequent

visits before signing up. “If it wasn’t for our military, them commie-pinko-faggot-hippies would run the world. And they’re trying. Look at Nicaragua; we shouldn’t have let that happen. If it weren’t for those damn democrats in Congress, Reagan would have sent us in there, cleaned that place up. Anyway, we keep the world at peace and keep America free. Be proud of that uniform when you finally put it on.”

On the way to the processing station, Arnold gives Chris some final advice.

“Do exactly as you’re told, keep to yourself, and you’ll be fine. Basic is easy. There’ll be every type of fellow you can imagine—old and young, rich and poor, black and white, some real smart and some really dumb, and hell, anymore, gay and straight.”

Chris hasn’t given much thought to boot camp, just life afterwards, the places he’ll see, and the life he’ll lead.

In Eastern Scotland, somewhere between Aberdeen and Dundee and just a few miles from the North Sea, lies a small U.S. naval base, a listening post, hidden in a valley surrounded by low and smooth green hills and pastures full of many sheep and tidy farmhouses made of stone.

The base contains just over five hundred Americans, mostly sailors and their families. If one were to travel more than thirty miles from the base, a Scottish person would not know there was an American base just outside the village of Lutherkirk.

The base is an old Royal Air Force installation, built just after the British were brought into World War II. Some of the original hangars remain, and they have been converted into tennis courts, a gymnasium, a galley and the base commissary. The base is still officially referred to as RAF Lutherkirk, and a token RAF Major is the lone British serviceman assigned to the base. He is given the title of Base Commander, but he is only a liaison with the British government, the local community and local law enforcement.

Father Alexander Crowley arrives at the base late in the summer. He is the new Catholic chaplain and it is his first duty station. He was given the rank of lieutenant after a brief period of Navy Chaplain Corps training in Newport, Rhode Island. Already past forty, he is rather old for the rank; his dark red hair is graying throughout, and the pale skin around his bluish eyes is starting to wrinkle. He is thin in the arms, legs and shoulders, but, due to his recent development of a love of wine, his khaki uniform is taut across his stomach and snug around his waist.

He had been removed from his duties after many years as a parish priest in Houston's Fifth Ward for homilies that had nothing to do with religion. He had taken to telling his parishioners about the evil of the Jewish-controlled banking system and the erosion of American culture by too many immigrants and minorities. His parish was mostly African-American, and they became irritated. After many complaints and warnings over several years, the diocese recommended a transfer to another parish, even another diocese, or even resignation. The hierarchy of the Houston diocese sensed Crowley had become bored and frustrated with parish life in the inner city.

But he wasn't bored, he was angry. Faithlessness, bitterness, indifference and a smug and perverted intellectualism had eroded his once youthful and fervent love of Jesus and the Church.

He was born the youngest of seven kids, five girls and two boys all about two years apart, and raised in a small town in Northern Minnesota. His sole brother was the oldest sibling and he had left for work in Minneapolis by the time Alexander was four, leaving Alexander essentially the only boy in a house full of women.

His father was the town's high school history teacher and football coach. His father was a large and outspoken man with broad shoulders, large hands, and an even larger head with a Marine Corps style haircut. He was very masculine and a contrast to his devoutly Catholic and thin and timid wife. He was privately atheist, despite going with the family to Mass every Sunday.

Alex's mother was a homemaker of the most obedient kind, surreptitiously devoted to her husband but more devoted to her church. Rosary beads, crucifixes, and images of Mary and Jesus could be found throughout the house, and she was constantly seen kneeling, especially after a confrontation with her husband, who had despised her by the time Alex was born. But he would never leave her despite the malaise that crept into their marriage; he had too much comfort in his lifestyle, being a big man in a small town. His peers assumed his family life was perfect.

Alex took after his mother much more than he did his father throughout his childhood.

He was born prematurely, was tiny as an infant and child and had many grave childhood illnesses: mumps at three, measles at five, a near-fatal flu at seven, and chicken pox at eight. With each illness

his mother would pray constantly and convince the local priest to come and pray over him. After each recovery, his mother would tell Alex that God had saved him, and that He had set a special purpose for his life. Because of all the religious imagery his mother surrounded him with, young Alexander Crowley saw his childhood as some sort of an amazing divine drama. He thought of himself as a knight of God, battling disease and pestilence and evil in the world. He developed an early love for Mass and Sunday school, and would join his mother in prayer at home whenever the mood struck her. He read scripture often, especially the canonical Gospels. He was fascinated by the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the walking on the water, the temptation in the wilderness, the cross being carried to Calvary, the brutal crucifixion and the miraculous resurrection. But he was more interested in the Catholic rites than he was scripture; he had a fascination with the sacraments and the lifestyle of the parish priest.

Because of his frailty and his interest in religion, Alex had his mother's undivided attention. She loved him but ignored her daughters and husband.

His father, sensing and fearing an effeminate nature in the boy, tried pushing sports and hunting and fishing and martial arts training on Alex. He wasn't interested. He would remain small until he reached college, and he possessed no athletic ability whatsoever. In fact, his father was embarrassed when he watched Alex try to play with other boys. Alex felt hunting was barbaric and fishing very boring. Martial arts was tolerable, as it gave him time alone with his father, time his father never normally provided. But he much preferred spending time indoors with his mother, reading the Bible or almost anything non-fiction or church related, and going to Mass and different church functions. His childhood ran the full gamut of Catholicism; he took all the catechism classes he could and was an altar boy throughout junior and senior high school. The Roman Catholic population in his town was small, and no parochial school existed. Alex would have preferred a parochial school to the public high school where he was taunted and left friendless, despite his father's imposing and respectful presence.

Early in Alex's senior year of high school, his father died of a heart attack while coaching a football game. As his father fell on the field, Alex and his mother, who were sitting in the stands, didn't bother to run to him. They sat peacefully and watched as paramedics ran to his side. They didn't bother to rise until the ambulance drove him away. This cinched Alex's future (and his desire since childhood): he would become a priest with his mother's strong approval. The vows of celibacy would be no problem, as he had no interest in girls or sex, and felt guilty when any sinful thought crossed his mind. His heart was a bit lighter when his father passed away; he had been wishing for years to be rid of him. He felt a small amount of shame at the glee he experienced upon his father's demise, and he prayed at length to absolve himself. It was to no avail. The selfish joy he felt upon his father's death would be his first insight into his innately cruel and selfish nature.

He completed his undergraduate degree in theology at Bemidji State and attended seminary at a small Catholic university in southern Minnesota. He was ordained in the tearful presence of his mother and in the indifferent presence of his siblings.

His first work as a clergyman was as a roving assistant priest for rural parishes in North Dakota, saying several Masses from town to town on Saturdays and Sundays, as none of the parishes had enough people to support a fulltime priest.

After three years in North Dakota, Houston became available. He welcomed the opportunity to leave the Midwest and he welcomed the challenge of serving in the inner city. He rekindled his childhood fantasy life. He pictured himself as a knight of God, as a sort of divine superhero to rid Houston's Fifth Ward of poverty, drug abuse, rampant crime and faithlessness. He failed miserably.

Shortly after his arrival in Houston, Father Crowley's mother developed breast cancer. It spread quickly to her lymphatic system and into her lungs. She passed away within six months, without giving Alex a chance to come home and say goodbye.

Alex was devastated. He was angry with God and angrier still with his remaining family.

He blamed his sisters and brother for their mother's quick demise. He felt that if they had been more attentive in his absence and had taken better care of her, she would have lived, or at the very least, the cancer would have been spotted sooner. Only two sisters actually remained in the hometown, and they had husbands and children of their own. They weren't particularly close to the mother, especially after being reared in the shadow of her beloved Alex.

Father Crowley returned for the last time to Minnesota to deal with his mother's funeral and all the other family business that comes with the death of a last remaining parent. Things were tense between him and his siblings, especially since Alex was named executor of the will, even though he was the youngest child. There wasn't much in the way of finances to settle. The house was sold at a bargain just to unload it, and the monies were equally divided between Alex and his brother and two sisters.

After the family business had been settled, Alex returned to Houston and remained solely in Texas for the next several years, communicating with his family only cordially on holidays and after a few years not at all. They never shared his religious zeal, and they felt he looked down upon them. He was fairly self-absorbed as a young priest, and despite the implied forgiving nature of a clergyman, he held a grudge against his family and vowed he would never return to Minnesota, not even in the event of another family member's death.

Despite his pride, Father Crowley felt adrift and empty without a family to come home to.

His faith began to ebb as he neared the age of forty when he realized that after years of frustration he was a lousy priest.

From his days of assistant priest to head of his own church, he had inspired no one. His Masses were listless and eventually sparse; only the devout would remain, staring hopefully from the pews.

He couldn't speak well; he stuttered and rambled and the eyes in the pews stared everywhere but at him. He prayed and prayed in the early going, praying for the gift of an able tongue, but God didn't intervene. Crowley blamed his parishioners for his poor preaching skills. He felt they were too dimwitted to understand him, and after a time, he blamed their ignorance on their race. If they weren't black, he thought, then maybe his preaching would be more effective and their attention would be more rapt.

He had very little patience for confessions; the paltry sins of the pious irritated him, and the confessed debauchery of the casual believers sickened and sometimes excited him. Weddings and the required pre-counseling he considered a waste of time; he had seen more divorces than marriages, and after a time, he didn't wish to see his parishioners procreate.

And then came the visions.

At first, he saw them as white specks of twinkling light that came only at night as he tried to pray for an able tongue and to be removed from the parish that had become so loathsome. The specks of twinkling white light appeared behind his eyelids and on the ceiling. He thought the lights shrouded small faces, but he couldn't be sure.

He was afraid the lights were demonic, but he was sure they were angels, angels sent to guide him through this difficult period of his life. They began to appear more frequently as he became more disgruntled with his parish, and eventually he could see them throughout the ceiling of his chapel, though they were sneering at the congregation. He took it as a sign from a god, but from which god, he

couldn't be sure. He took the visions as a signal that it was time to turn his attention somewhere else. ~~The zeal he had once had for the Church was gone forever. He became interested in the origin of his~~ visions, and visited New Age bookshops after exhausting his own library on the subject of angels and apparitions. He decided he was again special, just as he felt special as a child when the angels and God had saved him from all those awful illnesses.

He had been a fan of history since his boyhood days in Minnesota, partially due to his father's role as the high school history teacher. He developed a fascination with World War II after it became apparent to him in Houston that he had missed his true calling and that he wasn't cut from a priest's cloth. He had a special interest in the spectacular rise of Hitler and the Third Reich. Something, somehow, made sense to him. He read *Mein Kampf* in a relatively brief period, hiding the book in the rectory in case someone should stumble upon it. He began to understand Hitler's notion of the superiority of the white race—his frustrations in his own church made that apparent. And the struggle Hitler described stirred something in his soul; he could identify with the isolation Hitler felt as a young man as a struggling artist in a hostile Vienna. Crowley felt he was a struggling priest in a hostile church, hostile because of the ethnicity of the congregation.

He felt the world would be a better place if Hitler had been successful, and as he became more infatuated with Hitler, he thought of Jesus less and less and eventually stopped personal prayer—a very large part of a clergyman's life—altogether.

He began performing his Masses by rote, mumbling the prayers and offering communion robotically, without passion. After a time, his homilies rarely mentioned the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, and they rarely referred to scripture. He had also stopped reading the Bible altogether, devoting his readings to anything germane to the separation of the races.

He even tried to find a local white supremacist group in the Houston area. He found a few, but the simplistic, amateurish meetings in far-western suburban Houston basements bored him; he wanted something more spiritual, more fulfilling. He began exploring Hitler's interest in Norse mythology and the occult, and slowly, after the passage of years, he discovered a whole new set of gods to replace the one he had discarded. He was sure the twinkling lights were angels sent from the gods of the north—the same gods revered by Hitler and the Nazis.

With all the social ills in America, the crime and poverty in his part of Houston, problems he blamed on the inferiority of the blacks in his neighborhood, he assumed Christianity and its apparent ineffectiveness and pacifist nature had failed America. He decided covertly and solitarily to join the ranks of another side. He read the ancient *Poetic Edda*, the definitive book of Norse mythology, and he tried to become intimate with all of its deities, male and female: Thor, Njord, Frigg, Freya, Freyr, Tyr, Heimdall, Bakur, Loki, and especially Odin, the supreme Norse god and the focus of all of Crowley's new devotion. He made the leap from Christianity, and Crowley adopted his own brand of religion and supremacist beliefs, molded to contour his feelings.

After many complaints stretching the span of two years, the Houston diocese censured Crowley. He was given two options: resign or accept service in the military, which was in dire need of priests. More than a decade of priesthood and an advanced degree in theology left him unsuitable for other employment. The world offered him no other options; he couldn't go home again. The thought of the military excited him; he craved structure, and if he had to perform Mass, he might as well do it where he would find fewer of those minorities that irritated him so much. He chose the Navy, hoping to influence a young Caucasian sailor or two with his new theology, and the travel opportunities seemed better. He was thrilled when he was ultimately assigned to a small base in Scotland, with Europe lying at his doorstep, the ancient home of his newly beloved Norse gods a short flight away.

Dear Wife,

This is strange I know, but today I start to find you. Right now I'm on a plane to Orlando from Detroit, I'm on my way to boot camp for the Navy and then communications school in Pensacola. After that I hope to get a ship out of San Diego maybe, tour the Pacific. I may find you there. I don't care what you look like, as long as you're not my mother. I'll explain when I can, maybe you will meet her, maybe you won't. I'm eighteen now, I like music, rock mainly, some new wave but I don't know how to dance, in fact I've never danced. I didn't go to prom or anything like that. I don't think I'm ugly, but I can never talk to girls and I don't want a lot of girlfriends. I did at one time, but now I want someone I can feel loved by (corny I know, but I want you to know how I feel about everything).

Anyway I am very nervous, I'm not in shape at all and I know I'll have to run and do push-ups and all that. I want to be in shape, I want to look good for you. I smoke, I think because my father does. I don't have a lot of friends, just two really, we didn't really do much. We drank, getting my older brother to buy beer for us so we could drink in parks on weekends, or our houses when our parents were away. I'll miss them, one is going to college, and the other one is working the same after-school job he had in high school. I had to get away somehow, and the Navy is my way. I could never meet you at home. More later.

Love,
Christopher Fairbanks

Chris arrives in Orlando for basic training bearing nothing save the clothes he left his house (black t-shirt, white jeans, unlaced high top sneakers), a pack of cigarettes held dearly in his hand, and his nylon Velcro wallet, containing only his driver's license and his life savings of forty-three dollars.

He arrives at the Orlando airport late in the evening, and is directed to a white government van that carries him and a few other arrivals from around the country fifteen miles to Recruit Training Command Orlando. Boot camp.

Outside the airport, the thrill of seeing palm trees for the first time excites him, and already he is starting to feel like a man of the world.

The first night is rough, as he is shoved into a chair behind a long table with several other tired and out of place young men. They receive a few items such as toothpaste, a toothbrush, razors, soap, and a pocket-sized New Testament edition of the Gideon Bible, a book that Chris is very unfamiliar with. He can't ever recall seeing a Bible at home.

Chris is formed into a company of eighty or so recruits. For the first short night, they are handed sheets and a blanket and shown their barracks, a long narrow room with rows of twenty bunk beds on either side. The first night is basically sleepless, Chris and the others sleeping in the clothes they arrived in.

They are awoken well before dawn that first morning by their company commander, a tan, thin and dark-haired man in a khaki uniform just past thirty, but he seems so very old to Chris. He throws an empty aluminum trashcan down the middle of the barracks.

He yells, "Get the fuck up, recruits! On your feet now!" Chris is nervous. They are sent outside and clumsily marched to the galley for breakfast. They are given five minutes to eat mass-produced scrambled eggs and potatoes. After breakfast, they are sent to the barbershop. Chris's semi-long feathered blond hair is completely shorn. It will be several days before he has the courage to look in a mirror or even directly at his reflection.

The eight weeks of basic training proves as Chris imagined, push-ups and running, marching and yelling. Most of the recruits are his age, but some are in their twenties and a few are even in their thirties. They come from every region of the country and from every race. Chris finds the variety fascinating and disturbing. There were no minorities in his school, and he feels nervous around the black recruits, who seem to form a loose clique.

Chris struggles with the training at times. In the first week, running proves to be nauseating. The standard number of push-ups for punishment (everyone gets punishment) is twenty-five, and Chris's arms initially shake at a count of ten. Making the bed (or rack, as it is called) and folding and stowing his gear also prove troublesome; Chris has never been particularly meticulous. Not to mention shaving. All recruits are given ten minutes to shit, shower and shave every morning upon reveille, even if they have no facial hair. Chris is still hairless, with only sporadic acne decorating his face. Because of his complexion, he cuts himself badly while shaving. The multiple scars make his face look like a roadmap. Out of discipline, the company commander periodically yells at Chris during inspection, making him shave again, telling him his shave isn't close enough and that he had better shave again. Chris returns to the bathroom (the head, it is called) and shaves and bleeds some more.

Despite the large number of people living in such a small area, Chris remains friendless, talking with others only a little in the evenings when the atmosphere is more relaxed. He has not settled into any sort of friendship or circle of friends, as the rest of his company has. Bonds are made based upon many things, Chris notices. The boys from the South tend to cluster together, as do the few fundamentalist Christians who pray and read the Bible in a quiet corner of the barracks. Friendship

are also based on age, tastes in music, and again, race.

In the evening, they are allowed time to polish boots and belt buckles, iron shirts, smoke cigarettes and write and read letters. Incoming mail is passed out nightly, when one recruit is designated to pass out letters from friends and family. Chris is tense during this time; everyone receives mail except for him. The fact that no one seems to love or care enough to write to him makes him feel hollow and melancholy. He is extremely envious of the joy he witnesses on the faces of the other recruits as they read and discuss their letters, especially letters from girlfriends.

Chris creates a fictitious girlfriend for discussions, as girls appear to be the most prevalent and common topic throughout the barracks. Everyone seems to have a girl back home, waiting and writing and sending pictures.

Except for Chris.

He even writes separate letters on a few occasions to his mother and father, but there is no reply throughout his entire basic training. He writes letters anyway, but spends more time than most smoking cigarettes, sitting on the balcony outside the barracks, staring at the palm trees swaying in the gentle and humid Florida breeze.

Chris finishes boot camp ten pounds lighter, his face and neck stained red from the Florida sun. There is a graduation ceremony of sorts, and some parents make the trip, surprising a few of the recruits by arriving unexpectedly. Chris doesn't bother to scan the crowd; only his mother came to his high school graduation, and she was jittery then, as if she was in a hurry for the ceremony to be over. He shares his proud moment with no one. He dons for the first time the dress white polyester uniform with the wide-bottom pants and the black kerchief around his neck.

Still, he is proud of his accomplishment. His company did not remain intact throughout basic training; some recruits got sent back a few weeks, some quit, and some the Navy wisely decided to part ways with. Not everyone can finish boot camp. Chris does.

September 18, 198

Dear Wife,

If we're married than I am going to assume you want children. I want kids. I want them to be happy, and I want them to feel like they're not alone. If you meet my parents you will understand why this is important to me. My parents have a weird set-up I guess, they really should be divorced, but my Mom won't. My Dad doesn't care, he is kind of lazy and doesn't like things to change, and he wants to keep living in our house in Michigan. I live just outside of Detroit. My mom used to say she didn't want to be divorced because it was against God's word, but she hasn't gone to church since I was a little kid, so I don't know, maybe she is lazy too. Maybe now that I'm gone she may change. I'm the youngest kid, I have an older brother, he's twenty-two and a partier and a stoner and he still lives at home. I had to get away. Boot camp was okay, I'm done. I leave tomorrow for Pensacola where I will go to communications school. Maybe I will meet you there. I don't know if I'm ready, but I feel like it will be better if there is someone else out there that can love me. I will be very embarrassed if anyone sees this.

Love,
Chris

~~Father Crowley chooses to live off base as opposed to the Bachelor Officer Quarters the base provides. He is given a fairly generous housing allowance to offset the cost, and after a few days being in Scotland, he finds a large, furnished and airy stone farmhouse a few miles outside the base. The house has all the privacy he craves, a long driveway off a main road, the house hidden by ancient wide and leafy oak trees and an old stone moss covered fence.~~

In the back is a short, unattended garden, and beyond that, smooth rolling green hills that seem to carry on infinitely like a photograph one might expect to see on a postcard.

He decides this is better than a ship.

He purchases a 1975 Austin Allegro, a small, blue two-door car, and he quickly learns to drive on the opposite side of the road, shifting with his left hand.

His troubles in Houston and Minnesota seem very far removed from this tranquil and fresh setting.

However, he is still a priest, and that is his job for the Navy. His office is in the base chapel. Both the Protestant service and the Roman Catholic Mass are performed in this bland, American looking one-story brown brick building with a large glass door and no windows.

His office is next to the Protestant chaplain's, a man full of contempt for the Roman Catholic Church and for Crowley by association. He is older, gray wavy hair parted to the side, red faced and overweight. He has served in the Navy for twenty years and possesses the rank of Commander. As the senior chaplain, he is also Crowley's supervisor. Crowley will learn to avoid him.

He is only required to perform two Masses per weekend, due to the small number of church attendees on the base, in contrast to the four Masses he had to perform in Houston for the much larger parish. The rest of the time is set aside for counseling and standing in various base ceremonies.

He will have ample free time, more than a normal sailor.

He establishes a routine after a few weeks: Monday through Friday, he sits in his office from eight until two as the odd sailor or spouse may wander in, seeking advice on some subject or another that the priest should have some expertise in. Crowley always feigns interest in the problems of others, but he always thinks their situations silly and their lives pathetic. He feels nauseated but superior when a black or Hispanic sailor or family member wanders in. For them, he shows even more interest, subconsciously not trying to betray his true emotions.

Mass is at five in the afternoon on Saturday and again on Sunday at nine in the morning. That's it.

He goes for drives in the late afternoons and Saturday mornings, strictly in civilian clothes, driving far and often, exploring that part of Scotland—the cities of Aberdeen and Dundee and the villages in between—dotting the North Sea coastline. He is searching for bookstores that may have supremacist literature, stopping in pubs, drinking beer for basically the first time in his life, trying to get a feel for the locals, their political opinions, and their thoughts on race. He finds them provincial, mostly farmers or shop workers or pensioners of one sort or another, fanatical about soccer and hating the English (especially Margaret Thatcher) and when he is close enough to the base, hating the arrogant young Americans and their hi-fi stereos and their cars. He finds the people in that part of the country are basically poor, and the young sailors have more money than their Scottish counterparts.

He is unable to root out any white supremacist sentiment anywhere. There are few minorities in the country, maybe a few Pakistanis in Dundee, a small Jewish population in the larger cities, but none elsewhere.

He is frustrated at first, frustrated with his inability to find compatriots, and he is almost willing to resign himself to spending his three-year tour of duty in self-study and contemplation. He does find books on Norse mythology and books about the Nazis. He wants to read all he can about his true go

and the figures from history that he admires most.

~~And this is how his first months pass, a cacophony of drink and loneliness and private worship~~
the gods of the north. He stands outside often, when he can, while at the chapel and elsewhere, and looks straight up into the sky. He is looking for Valhalla and signs from Odin, his favorite and dearest of the ancient gods, the god of all things he admires most: god of poetry, god of love and god of war.

He is ready for war, and he badly wants fellow soldiers in this holy war of races he intends to wage even if it is only a few.

The village of Lutherkirk is small, one main street with a small store, a chemist shop, a post office, a bank, a garage, a bakery and four pubs. High Street is flanked by three roads that contain mostly simple homes, many multiple-unit dwellings with small gardens and no front yards, with the front doors opening right onto the sidewalk.

Crowley enters the main pub in Lutherkirk early on a Friday evening just as the darkness becomes complete. The pub occupies the first floor of a simple hotel. It is dark, the air is stale, and cigarette smoke shrouds everything. When he enters a pub he typically sits at the bar, but this time, noticing two young men from the base at a table, he decides to join them.

The fact that they are American is obvious. One is wearing a flannel shirt and cowboy boots; the other is wearing a college sweatshirt. The Scottish dress is quite different from that, slightly more formal. Both young men are fair-haired, and the one in the sweatshirt is quite overweight, probably borderline on the Navy's acceptable standards of personal weight. His chest is loose and flabby; he has a double chin and still a few freckles on his cheeks. The one in the flannel shirt is so thin that he appears almost feminine. His shoulders slouch forward and he is wearing tight blue jeans in the fashion of a country music star, with a belt and large belt buckle and a pack of cigarettes in his front pocket.

Again, Crowley sees the white twinkling lights hovering below the ceiling, and he feels the gods are leading him to the two young men. He hasn't seen the lights since he was in Houston, and the initial sight of them makes him nervous and excited. Despite his priesthood training, despite his wayward beliefs, the sight of the apparently supernatural is still disconcerting and intense.

The two sailors, both lowly seamen, recognize Crowley; they know him to be a chaplain—and more notably, an officer. Officers and enlisted don't typically interact. In fact, fraternization between the two military castes is forbidden.

"Good evening, gentlemen," Crowley says with an enthusiasm unusual to him as he takes a seat at the table with the two young sailors, both with nearly empty pint glasses in front of them.

They nod. "Hello, sir." They sit more erectly.

Crowley notices their tenseness. Their discomfort makes him feel smug, secure, powerful.

"Relax, fellows," says Crowley, scanning the pub, making sure there are no other Americans. There aren't. "I'm not here to lecture you about drinking or try to get you to come to church. I'm out for a pint, myself. Even priests need to have a drink now and then."

And Crowley looks more relaxed, like a person who belongs in a pub. Wearing a tartan tam that he purchased in a shop in Dundee, a dark blue wool sweater on top of a white collared shirt and khaki trousers, he looks almost Scottish.

"What are you boys drinking? Lager?"

They nod in affirmation, glad someone is buying them beer, as their funds are running low and payday is a good week away.

Crowley walks to the bar and comes back clutching three pint glasses, dripping beer as he deposits the glasses on the table.

The priest produces a pack of cigarettes and offers one to each of the young sailors. The heavier one, Brad Hinckley, is shocked. He was raised around a Catholic grandmother, and the sight of a priest smoking and drinking surprises him. He also thinks it's cool. All three light their cigarettes and exhale simultaneously.

"So, how long you boys been here, been in this country?" Crowley asks.

Hinckley has been in Scotland six months. The other sailor, Lee Rodgers, just a bit longer. Crowley

asks them if they like being there. They both hate it. They hate the weather, which is continually cold and damp, and they hate the people with the stupid accents. The Scottish people are referred to as “blokes” by the Americans, a term that the Scots find offensive. The two refer to everything Scottish as “bloke.”

“This bloke money is too big for your wallet.”

“The bloke beer is horrible,” they both claim while quickly drinking their pints.

“The bloke music is weird. No good country stations on the radio,” says Rodgers. He hails from southern Missouri, just outside of Cape Girardeau.

“The bloke T.V. only has four channels, with weird shows and sheep herding contests, and cricket is the most boring sport I ever saw and soccer is stupid and I can’t see any football,” says Hinckley who constantly recalls the glory of watching college football in his native Nebraska. Nothing else in his life matters as much.

Crowley sees potential in these two young men. They are slightly bitter for no good reason.

“Will I ever see either of you in church?” Crowley asks.

They both lie and say yes.

“Better yet, screw church—come to my house, I insist. A sort of Bible study, free food and beer. How’s that?”

It is the week preceding Christmas and a priest is usually absorbed in church related duties, but not Crowley. There are things he can do, Masses to prepare, homilies to write, but he is not interested. He will wing it for his Christmas Eve Mass, as he does all Masses. Maybe he’ll put up a box for canned goods for the poor. Which poor? The poor on base or the poor Scots? He does not know. Maybe (and most probably) he will throw the cans away.

Yet he may keep them for himself, he decides, as the three unusual friends leave the pub and pile into Crowley’s Austin and drive the few miles to the priest’s farmhouse.

The priest’s cupboards, small refrigerator, and liquor cabinet are stocked for an occasion such as this. He knew it would only be a matter of time before he found some potential recruits; he just didn’t expect them to be American. He felt the choice was made by the gods, and he wasn’t going to tempt fate and contradict them. He feels their presence in his cold sitting room and looks for the white light as he shovels coal into his fireplace and strikes a match.

Hinckley and Rodgers stand around awkwardly, staring at the walls in the dimly lit room. Father Crowley has decorated it with abstract paintings and tapestries, and on the mantel stands a small and simple swastika made out of black iron on an iron pedestal.

Hinckley and Rodgers nudge each other as they both see it at the same time. Both are shocked, and despite the history lessons to which neither paid much attention, neither of them is offended.

Crowley feels trepidation as their gazes linger above the mantel. He studies their faces in the priestly way, looking for signs of emotion, but each face remains blank. They continue to look about the room.

“Sit down, sit down.” Crowley points to a dusty couch with greasy upholstery that came as part of the furnishings. He wanders off to the kitchen and retrieves three cans of beer, British cans, tall, taller than an American can of beer.

“So, tell me,” Crowley says, “where are you two from?”

Nebraska, Missouri.

“Really? What part?”

“Jus’ outside of Cape Girardeau.”

“All over, but I guess you could say Grand Island because I was born there.”

And it is true; Hinckley had a vagabond childhood spread across the eastern part of Nebraska. He had been born out of wedlock. His mother went from town to town, relative to relative, boyfriend to boyfriend, working mainly as a waitress, sometimes as a bartender. Grand Island to Lincoln to Omaha to West Point, back to Omaha to Norfolk, back to Grand Island and Omaha again.

Depending on the nature of her current relationship, Hinckley's mother would drop him off at his parents' house to live, a house in a less desirable part of Omaha that used to be more desirable. He would live with them for months at a time and would attend school there, and in the school, he would be a definite minority, a fact that disturbed his bigoted grandfather to no end.

"Niggers," his grandfather would say, "have ruined this town, have ruined this neighborhood. They all sit around and do nothing except kill each other over drugs and wait for welfare checks. They don't work, and when they do, they're lazy. I ain't never met a good one yet. Shit, when I was growing up before that god-damned Martin Luther King showed up, they all worked, did as they was told. But now, hell... I ain't met a decent one yet."

His grandparents had long paid for the house they lived in and couldn't afford to move. Due to emphysema, his grandfather couldn't work. He had been drawing disability and later on Social Security, and those monthly checks could only go so far. He sat in the living room of their one-bedroom bungalow watching the sidewalk decay and the parade of longtime neighbors move and pass away. He didn't venture out much. He had to keep an oxygen tank by his side, so he watched a lot of television. The back of the set against the picture window in the living room, so he could look outside and watch the television at the same time. He felt he had to keep an eye on his property.

Brad dreaded and feared school. He felt isolated because of his color, felt the fear of the blacks because of his grandfather. Brad would rush home and watch television with his grandfather and only do a cursory amount of homework. On Saturdays in the autumn, their attention turned to college football. They would watch the Nebraska games with a rabid passion; nothing else in the world mattered, and they would spend the preceding week in anticipation of the upcoming game.

Sundays, his grandmother would drag the adolescent Hinckley to Mass, to a church over the Missouri River in Council Bluffs. He would sit stone-faced and inattentive, his thoughts anywhere but on the Mass in front of him. The words of the homily would not reach beyond his ears, and the concepts of Jesus and God and love never meant anything to him.

Ultimately, his mother would leave her boyfriend or get left by a boyfriend and she would come back to Omaha and stay with her parents for a while, until school let out, and then it was off to Wahoo or Norfolk or wherever there was a place to stay and a job to be had.

Hinckley's father was nonexistent; his mother was just eighteen when he was born. His father had been in the Navy and had gone off to Vietnam and died in a gunboat on a river in the Mekong Delta. He left Nebraska not knowing his young girlfriend was pregnant, and no one knew for sure if he even knew. His parents ignored Brad's mother. Pentecostals of the severest kind, they secretly felt their son died because of his sin, for lying with Brad's mother out of wedlock, and they thought of her as a harlot, as that whore of Babylon responsible for the fall of their son.

After struggling to finish high school in Omaha, Brad had thought of nothing except joining the Navy, a conscious decision to identify with his father. He flew with glee on a plane to Chicago for boot camp at Great Lakes. He was disappointed upon his arrival. He expected to be entering an all-Caucasian world but was almost frightened by the number of minorities: blacks, Mexicans from Texas and California, Puerto Ricans from New York and New Jersey, and even three Asians who really didn't bother him, but he thought of the gooks in Vietnam that had killed his father. He recalled pictures of his father, thin, athletic and handsome, bearing little resemblance to himself.

He didn't excel the way he expected to; the sedentary life in front of the television and a propensity for constantly snacking made him overweight despite his tender years, and he couldn't keep up with the demands of the physical training. He threw up during the first morning run. He struggled to complete twenty-five push-ups, and this weakness made him a target of the company commanders and the butt of jokes amongst his fellow recruits. He hated to be laughed at by anybody, especially by the blacks. So he sucked it up and ran through the pain and nausea, completed the required push-ups and sit-ups by sheer will, and by the end of boot camp he was a model recruit. No one would laugh at him again. He was still pudgy, and this disappointed him. After boot camp, he was sent to storekeeping school on the other side of Great Lakes. It was a short six-week course on how to be a naval supply clerk. He made sure to finish at the top of his class, and then it was on to RAF Lutherkirk, Scotland. *There won't be many niggers there*, he thought.

He made one friend shortly after his arrival in Scotland, Seaman Rodgers. Neither one worked in the communications buildings on the base, so they were sort of outcasts. Rodgers was a disbursing clerk and worked in the base personnel office, passing out and preparing paychecks. Rodgers had joined the Navy out of anger; his longtime girlfriend all the way from junior high school broke up with him at the senior prom, where it was revealed she was pregnant. He knew it wasn't his because she told him she was saving herself for marriage. His outlook on life changed instantly. He stopped being the happy-go-lucky guy his friends and family had come to know. Rodgers had no specific plan upon leaving high school, just to work on his father's farm and get married to his sweetheart Jane, but Jane broke his heart and he had to get away. So on the Monday after graduation, he drove the thirty miles into Cape Girardeau to find the Navy recruiter. "Sign me up," he proclaimed upon walking into the recruiter's office. No one tried to talk him out of anything. They quickly processed him and sent him the next day to St. Louis for a physical, and he was immediately put on a bus for Great Lakes. His parents didn't know until he telephoned them from the bus station, telling them that his truck was in front of a parking meter in downtown Cape Girardeau and that he had left it unlocked with the keys in the ignition. His mother cried and his father called him a damn fool and asked who was going to work the farm with him this summer and said when he saw him again, he wouldn't be too big for a beating. Rodgers apologized, but he couldn't risk the chance of seeing Jane around with anybody else. His mother understood but wished he hadn't done something so extreme. His father called him a sissy.

Rodgers knew he made a tragic mistake when he arrived at Great Lakes and he was formed into a company and yelled at. He felt like a pig being shoved into a crowded, dirty pen. After the first night he became very homesick. By the end of the first week, he was miserable. He was less than a marginally good recruit and was forced to repeat two weeks. He longed to be outside, listening to his music, working the farm from sunrise to way past dark, watching the dust fly behind the trucks driving along the dirt road in front of his house.

He had never been around minorities before, but he didn't like them. No one offended him or bothered him, but he and his friends in school identified with the Confederates. He even flew a Confederate flag from the back window of his truck. It fit with his image of tobacco chewing and country music listening. He felt he should hate blacks; he was a reb'.

Disbursing school was in Biloxi. Rodgers was glad to be in the South, though it still wasn't as enjoyable. His rate was mostly female, and none were attractive. Many were minorities, and he felt very out of place. He couldn't wait to get out of the Navy and be back home. When duty stations were assigned, he hoped for and expected a ship; there would be no women, and he would at least get some travel. But his number came up for shore duty, RAF Lutherkirk. He looked on the globe and saw how far north Scotland lay and he started to shiver and curse.

Rodgers and Hinckley arrived in Scotland within a few weeks of one another. They quickly became friends, drinking buddies mainly. Neither worked in the communications department, the mission of the base. Both worked in the support side and therefore had few coworkers and were sort of looked down upon by the other sailors who worked with security clearances inside windowless buildings. They mainly worked Monday through Friday, while the rest of the base worked rotating around-the-clock shifts. They found themselves in the base club every night, drinking, Rodgers talking to Hinckley about country music, and Hinckley trying to relate every conversation to Nebraska football.

Becoming bored with the club, they had taken to wandering outside the base to drink in the pubs. At least there, they were isolated because of their nationality, not because of their job.

So this is how they came to arrive at the pub on the first floor of the Lutherkirk Hotel and to be met by Father Crowley and to find themselves drinking with a priest late on a Friday evening and early into Saturday morning.

Their gazes return to the swastika, and Hinckley has an understanding of what it represents. He has seen many late night war movies with his grandfather and listened to him speak reverently of German order and ingenuity.

“They make the best damn cars and the best damn beer,” he would say while draining a can of beer that is inexpensive and domestic.

Rodgers, despite high school history and being alive in the twentieth century, really doesn't have a clue. The swastika is recognizable, but it is just a symbol in a world full of symbols, like the blue oval on the grill of his Ford truck, the Dingo branded into the heels of his boots, or the Columbia on the boxes of his country cassettes.

Crowley smiles that nervous and disarming smile he learned in seminary for dealing with confrontation, even though he is not about to be confronted.

“Hitler wasn't all bad,” he says abruptly. “He just tried too hard.”

Rodgers nods and sips his beer. Hinckley looks puzzled.

“I know he is thought of as a monster, but that's not true. His was a beautiful soul, and if you know the right history, you will understand. He strived for beauty. He strived to bring calm to a chaotic world.”

“What about the Holocaust?” Hinckley asks. “All them Jews getting exterminated?”

“Lies, mostly lies. They were put into colonies to take care of themselves, and they couldn't take care of themselves without preying upon the good German people. They destroyed themselves. You and me, and people like us, we are the foundation and keepers of this world. We make it go round.”

Rodgers nods and sips his beer, humming a tune and recalling the leanings of some of his father's friends, talking bad about the niggers in the north, being on welfare and hard working men like the niggers having to pay for them.

“You both appear to be intelligent men,” Crowley says to be flattering but not truthful. “Name me a country in this world that is civil and prosperous that isn't ruled by white people.”

Hinckley searches his brain and finds nothing. Rodgers nods and sips his beer. He doesn't know too many countries.

“Exactly!” Crowley exclaims triumphantly. “You can't and you never will because they are inferior, the blacks, the Jews, the Asians.”

“You see, people like us, Caucasians, we are chosen. We are special. I don't want to confuse you but we are descendants of supermen, probably from Atlantis. We need to take back what is ours and restore peace and harmony to this wretched world.”

“Aren't you, you know, a priest? Don't you believe in God and stuff?” Hinckley asks.

“Not the God you’re thinking of, not anymore. You and me, we were deceived. The whole of Christianity was a plot conceived by the Jews. Notice how they are the ‘chosen ones’ in the Bible. That was their way of holding sway over those vagabond tribes, and even they were surprised at how quickly it spread. Notice how all religions are scrutinized by Christianity except Judaism? Christianity was started by Jews. As for me being a priest, well, it’s a job. I don’t know how to do anything else. Except change the world. Another beer?”

Crowley quickly drains his and Hinckley does the same. Rodgers has long since finished his. In his alcoholic stupor, Crowley’s words are sinking into his brain.

Crowley returns with three more tins. “I hope I can trust you guys, you know, to keep the conversation amongst us. By the way, did either of you grow up around black people?”

Rodgers shakes his head. Hinckley nods.

“Did you like them?”

They both shake their head.

“Did they make you feel uncomfortable?”

They both nod.

Crowley beams. He silently thanks the spirits that led him to these two young men. “They shouldn’t live among you and you shouldn’t live among them.”

“So what can a fella do?” Rodgers asks, breaking his silence.

“Change the world.”

“How?”

“Separate the races. White among white and black among black and yellow among yellow. Never shall they coexist... nor want to coexist.”

“It’ll never happen. Not in your lifetime, not in mine. The niggers are everywhere, and there are even Mexicans moving into Nebraska,” Hinckley says.

“It will happen, but it will take effort,” says Crowley. “A war effort.”

“Well, shit,” says Rodgers. “I ain’t fighting no war passing out paychecks. Sign me up.”

“It’s not that easy,” says Crowley gravely. “You first need to earn my trust. If I take you in, and you join me and the armies back in the States and around the world, how do I know you won’t betray me, you know, to the Navy?”

“We’ll swear,” says Hinckley, “on a Bible or something.”

“That won’t do.” Crowley desperately wants compatriots but is rightfully cautious of two so immature and obtuse. He had hoped to find more cerebral partners, but the gods apparently don’t have that in their plans.

“Come back tomorrow, and I will find a way to test your word. If successful, we will start straight away.”

Crowley calls a cab for the two young men, to take them the five miles back to base. They finish another beer and smoke another cigarette while they wait for the taxi.

After they leave, Crowley is so excited that he nearly has an erection, a sensation he hasn’t felt since Houston. Even then, it was seldom, only occurring when he heard debauched confessions during that awkward moment when a child would sit on his lap and squirm, shame reddening his face to a crimson hue.

He has a plan of attack. He has formulated this plan since Houston, but the opportunity to carry it out never arose there. The opportunity has now presented itself to him in Scotland, in the Navy, as he had hoped it would.

The previous week, just before the Saturday Mass, a young black couple, a sailor and his wife, had

entered his office.

The sailor himself was slight and very dark, dark skinned of a hue Crowley would expect to find only in Africa. The girl was very pregnant and very light-skinned; so light-skinned that Crowley decided she was of a mixed race origin.

Crowley was disgusted at the thought of her mixed ancestry, just another example of the race intermingling. Just another example of the dilution of the white race.

He was polite to the couple. They asked him to baptize their child when it was born.

"I'd be delighted," he said. "Please, tell me, where do you live? I would like to check up on you from time to time, and see how you're doing, with the child and with each other. I long for the time when priests made house calls. I think the world, the parishes, were better places."

"We live in Lutherkirk, right in the village," the young sailor replied. "I guess you could come and visit, though the place may be messy."

"You should see mine," said Father Crowley, knowing that would never happen.

As the young couple left his office to take their place in the pews, Crowley called them back.

He placed his hand on the lower abdomen of the mother-to-be and blessed the unborn child.

In his mind, he said a curse.

~~A chartered bus takes Chris and a small number of recent graduates to Pensacola and the various "A" schools on three different bases in that city.~~

He was paid just before leaving boot camp and allowed to cash his first check, about eight hundred dollars, more money than he has ever seen. He has no idea how to save it or spend it.

It is his first trip in public with his uniform on. He is wearing the white uniform with a short-sleeved shirt, white pants, patent leather shoes and the typical sailor's hat, known as a Dixie cup. As he is an E-1, the lowest possible rank, he has no stripes on his sleeves and no service ribbons on his chest. He is a swath of solid white, not unlike an ice cream man. His shaved blond hair is just starting to grow back; too short to lie down, it stands straight up out of his pink scalp.

Still, despite the blandness of his uniform, he feels special. He feels official. He wears the uniform of an organization, and he feels like a part of something solid, like a family or a fraternity. He doesn't feel quite as alone.

Even though his destination is not glamorous, Chris is traveling, going somewhere, to yet another place he has never been.

The trip is about seven hours, a large chunk of it on I-75, the same interstate that runs through the heart of metropolitan Detroit. The scenery is uninspiring, flat and lush and green, but Chris spends every moment staring out the window, trying to take in all he can, noting the names of different cities he passes through, exit signs pointing the way to Ocala, Gainesville, Tallahassee.

Just outside of Orlando, the bus driver stops to let them buy beer and cigarettes to take on the bus. Florida's drinking age is eighteen, and Chris is quite content staring out the window, sipping beer and nearly chain smoking. He is starting to feel more like a man as he becomes giddily intoxicated.

It is eight in the evening when he arrives in Pensacola, at the smallest of the three bases there that hosts an "A" school. The alcohol has worn off, and he is feeling the ill effects: tiredness, headache and thirst. He is sent to one of the barracks, a three-story brick structure with two wings that looks more like an apartment building or dormitory than what he expected; there is even a small courtyard with benches and planted flowers. There are young men and a few young women wandering around. The evening is warm, and the relaxed atmosphere is in direct contrast to the more intense one Chris left boot camp.

He is checked into the barracks, thrust keys and linen and is given directions to his room and told to be at morning muster downstairs at 0700.

His room is on the top floor of the building, down a long, dark hallway.

He nervously opens the door, not sure who or what he will find inside.

The room is small, not much larger than his bedroom at home. There are four beds in a row, and the room is divided by two desks, back-to-back in the middle. There are four closets built into the walls.

Three faces stare at Chris in disgust and discouragement. The room just got more crowded. Books and clothes and magazines are stacked upon the fourth bed, Chris's bed.

Grudgingly, the three other sailors remove the items from the bed. Chris is allowed to deposit his linen and seabag and start unpacking. He introduces himself clumsily, offering handshakes that are received coolly by the other three. They appear to be more seasoned; their hair is longer and they are wearing civilian clothes, which is permissible after a month at the school.

One asks Chris where he is from, one asks Chris for a cigarette, and the other asks to borrow some money. Chris obliges all three. They warm up to him gradually, because of his gentle and compliant nature. Chris learns they are all southern, one from Alabama, one from Tennessee, and one from northern Florida. They have been at the school for nearly three months and are almost done. They are

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