

## TRANSITION

December 21, 1980

3:01 p.m.

The man looked about him, lost in a world of his own making, staring in horror as if he were waking from a dream to the nightmare of the reality around him. He felt panic and nausea rising as he stared at the blood covered wall in front of him, down at the spreading ocean of blood that fountained from the severed carotid artery of the old man who lay dying on the floor. He felt as if time had slowed for an unknown and interminable number of minutes, minutes which felt like hours stretching before and behind him. He knew that these few moments would echo in his mind forever, stretched far beyond the artificial constraints of time, rippling out into the future, reaching back into the past. Everything was dazzlingly clear to him, as if a bright light illuminated the dim porch where he stood, magnifying each and every detail. For a moment, it was as if God had touched him, as if he had stepped beyond the physical world to a place where the twists and turns of fate were decided by forces greater than those of the physical realm. As time began to return to its normal speed and the world came back into focus, he wondered if he were crazy and began to shake with emotion.

He looked down at the shovel he still held, his hands clenched tightly around its shaft. The old man's blood and skin, physical reminders of his mortality, clung to the weapon that its sharpened

head had become, a weapon that had now taken the life of another human being. An awesome sense of power and responsibility ebbed and flowed inside of his chest as he looked with utter horror at the sights around him. He realized anew with each breath he took, with each beat of his pounding heart, that he had caused this chaos, that he had created havoc out of an ordinary afternoon. Blood continued to shower upon him as the old man's life drained away, and he knew that this place of death would define his life from now until his own life's end.

Yet even as he stood in the wake of the old man's death throes, awash in a sea of blood, he felt a kind of peace descend upon him, almost a lightness of spirit. He glanced at the old man's body below him and thought, "Dying like any other person, any ordinary person, would die." He felt a strange kind of satisfaction at this realization of the human vulnerability of the man lying at his feet. Immediately, he felt a stab of guilt that he could even entertain such a notion, a thought so contrary to everything he had ever believed in his life. Somehow though, it seemed meaningful, as if he should know where the thought came from, how it connected the distant past to the horrific present. When the memory clicked into place, he dropped the shovel and clutched his head in his hands. He said sadly, "What have I become?"

The flow of adrenaline that had carried him through the last few moments abruptly shut down and he felt all of his strength

drain from his body, leaving him weak and unable to even stand. He sighed with resignation and sat down to wait for the inevitable arrival of the men who would arrest him and take him away to the cage that he knew awaited him.