The Meateaters

FICTION

CHUCK REDMAN

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CHAPTER ONE

Oh, God. Thank God. Probably her first coherent thoughts. She had finally traversed that indefinable transition between half-sleep and consciousness. She could be said to be awake now. Her sense of relief, silent acknowledgement of heaven, seemed natural. After all, just a few moments before . . . had been just a dream. Just a dream, after all. What was it now? . . . She concentrated. Oh, yes, this was it, this was the dream: she had had a fair-sized part in her high school class play, but she had neglected to learn her lines. She was at the point of having her make-up applied backstage with only a few minutes until curtain time, still asking herself why she hadn't spent time learning her lines . . . a real "butterfly" situation . . . vague images of pulleys and ropes all over the place, ladders, catwalks. . . . Lise, her best friend, was there, preparing to go on, but she also seemed, at the very best, unsure of her lines. . . . That was all she could remember, so apparently she woke up before the dreaded moment of decision, before the cue-line she wouldn't have known if she had heard it. The old paranoia. But thank God it was just a dream.

Immediately, however, part of her sense of waking relief was darkened by her next thought, for it suddenly came to her that this was the day. The pageant activities were to begin. A lot of "butterflies" and the old fear of stagefright would be her constant chaperones for the next week. She knew it couldn't be as bad as the dream, though. At least, she knew she wouldn't neglect to learn her lines. . . .

But what was that other dream, the big one? What was it now? . . . There had, in fact, been another dream, much longer, sometime an hour or two before the class play dream. She concentrated again, trying to redefine the events in her mind, and then it came rushing back to her. In this other dream, she was in a large football stadium packed with an enormous, roaring crowd. The stadium was like Nebraska's Memorial Stadium, only the predominant color was gray, not red. She was part of a slow procession across the field and was being carried Cleopatra-style on a sort of lounge chair borne by four football lettermen in blazers. The cheering of the crowd was obviously for her, and above the constant roar could be heard the jovial,

energetic voice of a public address announcer describing her achievements to the people in the stands. The only words of the public announcement which stuck in her mind, however, for the rest had slipped away, were the words "chosen Queen."

The procession stopped when it reached one side of midfield, and her chair and bearers had now become a wooden platform, and she was standing near one edge. Her eyes wandered briefly among the faces in the crowd but came to rest suddenly upon the face of a man in a thin gray overcoat, a strangely motionless figure amid the heaving sea of cheering fans. His eyes stared fixedly back at hers. As she gazed at him, he rose from his seat and lifted and stretched his arms out from his sides. He then lowered his outstretched arms in an expansive gesture to the crowd, and the crowd responded to him by settling in their seats and subduing completely within a moment or two. In watching this remarkable act, she was surprised to see, however, that his manner was not calm and self-assured but that, even in quieting the huge, theretofore uncontrollable crowd, he exhibited extreme agitation, manifested in the trembling of his arms, his body, the spasmodic working of the muscles in his face, and the frightened look in his staring eyes. After hushing the enormous crowd, he began to descend from his place in the stands. The crowd did not part for him, nor did the people offer their hands to assist him on his way down. Instead, he was forced to make his way slowly and painfully, carefully stepping between bodies and legs, apologetically borrowing shoulders to balance himself, awkwardly stumbling down from one row to the next. His bearing remained agitated and his face full of fear.

When he reached, at long last, ground level at the edge of the field, he resumed his troubled stare into her captive eyes and slowly approached her platform. He stopped at the point directly below where she stood and once again stretched out his arms, this time toward her in a manner indicating his desire to lift her down from the platform. She was now completely oblivious to the crowd and to the others in her procession; she was conscious only of him, his nearness to her, his trembling, and his frightened eyes. In the next instant, before she knew it, she had allowed him to lift her down by the waist. Then, when she stood on the ground with him, he enveloped her in his trembling arms and

kissed her with lips quivering as though from the cold. The silent crowd seemed far away, and she felt little embarrassment in the passion with which she responded. She knew and felt only that the moment was one of profound empathy and kindness and . . . love.

And, perhaps for the best, she now reflected, that moment was the end of the dream, at least as far as she could struggle to remember. She wished so much, in the dim early morning light of her bedroom, that she could relive and prolong that moment in all its depth. She thought for a second of the song "Who Will Buy" in the movie Oliver. Why is it, she thought, that the feelings felt in dreams sometimes seem stronger than in real life? Maybe, though, the emotions in dreams are deeper in one sense but not as deep in another. It's like being high smoking in someone's apartment. When you're high, things seem more intense. Like a murder mystery. Like a--I don't know--revelation or something. Yet, the experiences of being high are less real--or less fully, somehow--than everyday things. Yes, the best part of being high is when you finally come down all the way. Anyway, it's like with grass--emotions in real life must be nicer and more real in some way than in dreams, even if dreams seem stronger. . . . Still, she couldn't stop thinking about how wonderful that moment had been in her dream, the moment of their kiss on the silent field, and how much she wanted to feel it all again.

Her bedroom door crept open noiselessly.

"Gail, dear, . . . it's seven o'clock." The sound of her mother's voice broke the icy stillness that had formed through the night and overlay the surface of the placid morning.

"I know."

CHAPTER TWO

As sunlight gradually filtered into her room, Gail moved about with ghostlike silence between bedroom and bathroom. Her blue eyes were too busy, and her mind too preoccupied, to notice that one of the pennants on the bulletin board above her bed had become partially unfastened. It was the "Cave of the Winds" pennant, and it hung now, pointing downward, by only a single thumbtack. It's dangling nose covered up one of her purple

county fair ribbons.

It was doubtful as well that her pretty mouth found occasion, as she dressed, to frown at the dust that had accumulated on her bookshelves and on the novels, mysteries, and World Book Encyclopedia that lined them.

Certainly she had no time or interest this morning in blowing the dust off her Minolta camera case as it rested on the far corner of her dresser.

Even less reason did she have this morning to go prying open the second drawer below her bookcase and sifting through the antique letters and photographs that she had collected over the years. Such an idea was the farthest thing from her mind at the moment.

And even if she had thought about it, she probably wouldn't have taken the time to go into the drawer of her bedstand just so she could count her treasures, like the old free-swim passes she had received for teaching Red Cross swimming in tenth grade. No. Some other time maybe.

She had no time to spare, even to peek into the bottom drawer beneath her desk so as to verify the safe condition of her certificate of membership on the Buffalo County 4-H Meat Identification Team, or her badge as co-chairman of the old Peppy Pals 4-H Club, or even her snapshot of her brother Stan when he received a trophy in the 1973 Live Market Hog Show and Carcass Contest.

Strangely enough, despite her disinterest in any of these long-time possessions, as she hurried to get ready this morning Gail halted, not once but twice, to read silently and word for word a small newspaper clipping that had lain on her dresser only since Tuesday of that week:

Kearney, Neb.: The 1978 Nebraska Beef Queen will be crowned during pageant ceremonies to be held in Kearney Wednesday, October 5. Fifteen girls from across Nebraska will be candidates for the crown. Gail Shreve, 20, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Shreve, will represent Kearney in the Pageant. Pageant festivities will be held at the Holiday Inn.

CHAPTER THREE

"Interstate 80 weather for Saturday and the rest of the weekend: Fair to partly cloudy on Saturday, with highs in the 50's to low 60' s. . . .

"It's 9 o'clock in Kearney, and we now join the World Broadcasting System. . . . This is Aaron Shanner in New York for World News. The hour's lead story: Arabs on alert along Israeli borders. The Associated Press reports that following yesterday's shelling between Palestinians and Israelis along the Lebanese-Israeli border, the military forces of Egypt, Syria, and the Palestinians have been placed on alert along Israel's borders on this, the fourth anniversary of the inception of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Reportedly, the Arabs are guarding against the chance of Israel turning the tables on them for their surprise attack of 1973, when Arab forces launched a sudden, all-out attack upon Israel on Yom Kippur, the Jewish day of fasting and atonement. . . ."

Gail rode quietly in the front seat, pondering alternately the meaning of the news on the radio, the sun-tinged early morning outlines of the businesses and trees along south Second Avenue, and the events awaiting her in the week ahead. The news aroused some fairly old questions in her, like why does everyone always pick on the Jews. She had never really understood this, and she thought back to the events they had studied last spring in History 102, World War II and how the Jews were killed by the Germans. And in high school, in American History, the teacher had shown them a film called The Twisted Cross. Walter Cronkite was the narrator: the film was in black and white; and it was, as she remembered it, actual film of the war and the concentration camps. In black and white, there were trains loaded with people being taken to the concentration camps.

In Sunday school she remembered, rather vaguely, learning that the Jews were the forefathers of the Christians, and Jesus Christ was born a Jew. Weren't the Jews sort of to Christianity--she speculated to herself, reaching into her brain to pull out names implanted there in History 101 and 102--what, I don't know, Leonardo DaVinci was to Einstein or somebody? Naturally, the ethnic inversion in this comparison escaped her. Gail simply pondered her own mind as to

why the world, Arabs or whoever, hated the Jews instead of the opposite.

Gail couldn't remember ever meeting any Jews, at least any that she knew were Jews. But she had seen and heard a lot about them, especially in movies and television. All in the Family, for instance, had a lot about them. And what's-his-name in Oliver. Hushed rumors circulated sometimes that certain people in Kearney were Jews. But she never knew how much truth there was to that. The image of a man with a long beard and It was all very vague The image melted away as she peered out the car window.

Although Gail's awareness of South Second Avenue as it passed by at this particular time was casual and although she saw the street more as a place to put chain restaurants than anything else, somewhere in her soul lay the significance of this wide boulevard street which ran like a diameter the entire width of Kearney, straight north and south. For somewhere deep in her nature resided a certain security that is born from growing up in the Great Plains, in a city where streets run straight and true, east and west, avenues true north and south, and getting lost or turned around is next to impossible. But her sense of directional and special security was so ancient in her as to be almost congenital, and she would probably never be aware of it except to the extent of an occasional reflection that Kearney is the way the world should be.

Thus Gail sat riding quietly in the front seat as her father drove, his left hand now lightly cupping the turn indicator in preparation for signalling a left turn into the Interstate. He wore a red sweater over his light green shirt, brown, straight-legged pants, and black pull-on work boots. On the seat between him and Gail, Mr. Shreve had placed a red felt cowboy hat with a white capital "N" on the front. Gail's mother sat in the back seat, quietly watching the scenery out the left-hand side. She wore a red turtleneck with her gray suit. On her lap lay a half-knitted winter scarf with knitting needles imbedded into its thickness, its warmth. Into its very heart.

Time passed by in the car, her mother dozing and her father cruising the smooth Interstate with a steadiness that was wonderful to watch. They could sit for long periods in complete silence, not a word of con-

versation passing between them. The familiar scenery between Kearney and Grand Island flowed by outside Gail's window as though it were her own personal movie screen. Now and then she involuntarily glanced sideways at the people in the slower-moving cars that they passed. Or she contemplated the gray heads of diehard Nebraska fans in the back seats of cars overtaking them on the left.

But mostly it was the music. It was the music on the radio that filled her head and commanded her thoughts. The music on the radio rendered poetic both the Realist landscape paintings gliding by her window and the Impressionist paintings of the coming week's events that passed before her mind's eye. As the station wagon ducked under the overpass at the Shelton interchange, she was feeling amazed at all the good songs the Kearney station was playing. Then came a commercial, and then, emerging softly from the sound-shadows of the dashboard radio was a musical introduction that Gail knew. Anticipating the voice she knew would follow, a gradual chill went up her spine. But it spread out suddenly to her shoulders as full and powerful thrill of feeling when the song "People" came, so that her body became taut, rigid, and she stared in pensive concentration out at the moving landscape, with its tall-grass pasture, so wonderfully flat, and cattle grazing there at random, just over the wooden-posted, barbed-wire fence skirting the shoulder of "people who need people . . . are the luckiest people," for a brief moment Gail's eyes were captured by the right side-view mirror just outside her window, for in it she observed her chin, neck, and shoulder, and unless she slouched down, that was all she could see of herself "in the world" except a field of broken stalks left behind by the corn harvest moved into view, and the neatly plowed rows and furrows were easily discernible, running perpendicular to the highway, so that each of the hundreds of rows flashed as it came even with Gail for a fraction of a second "where children, needing other children, and yet letting our grown-up pride hide all the need inside" and beyond all this hides the Platte River, but the trees give it away, huddled in relatively dense growth, like a long skinny woods winding its way through the grassland wherever the river decides to go and escape, "acting more like children than children," but the twisted cottonwoods, poplars, elms, Russian olives, weeping willows, all "lovers . . . are very special people . . . they're the

luckiest people in the world . . . with one person, one very special person . . . a feeling" of blue sky above the trees, some streaks of clouds in the early morning horizon and "deep in your soul, says you were half now you're whole . . . no more hunger or thirst," the sun finally having inched its way up above the windshield, so that it no longer forced her to squint in observing the leaves, those that remained, some still green, others brown or red, and she could "but first be a person who needs people . . . people who need people . . . are the luckiest people in the world."

Part of the song repeated. Then it was over. She relaxed her shoulders, as well as her stare. She let herself shift in her seat. After a moment her eyes again sought to stray and roam the countryside and inquired at a farmhouse some distance off the Interstate. Glimpses, through the row of almost-bare poplars fronting the farmhouse, of a big brown dog on a chain struck her curiously. Chaining him seemed unnecessary, she thought, especially out in the country where there was no traffic, assuming he wouldn't wander as far as the Interstate. Reflexively, the sight of the chained farm dog sent her thoughts hurtling back to an earlier time, to a childhood memory about which there remained in her certain unexpunged measures of both guilt and ambivalence.

CHAPTER FOUR

She had been, at the time, eight or so; her recall lacked the ability to pinpoint the age exactly. It was a Saturday morning in the . . . fall. It must have been fall, because of the crisp air and sunshine and the ubiquitous dead leaves, fallen telltale in the yard and on the sidewalk. She had risen before eight, her heart pounding with excitement. She had slipped on some brown pants and tennis shoes and pulled on her Kearney State sweatshirt, which made her feel warm and strong. This morning, an otherwise calm, lazy Saturday, was the predetermined time for carrying out a dangerous mission of mercy, one she had planned, in terms of details, the night before, but had actually been considering in the abstract for several weeks. The mission would take her over the backyard fence into Mrs. Parkonin's backyard. And there, by means of stealth and fast work, she would let Nicky, the little black Scottie,

off his chain before anyone else was up in either house. It would be the first time that the little dog could run free; he was constantly chained up in the backyard, and Gail just couldn't stand it--it was so mean to keep him that way all the time, she felt. Gail proceeded upon her mission without hesitation. She couldn't afford to delay. She went out the back door and into the backyard, climbed over the west fence, and crept over to Nicky, who was straining on his chain to reach her. He wouldn't hold still and was rattling his chain, so she first unhooked the leash from the chain. She held him then by his leash as he struggled to get away, and only after several attempts was she able to get the leash disconnected from his collar. He dashed off in the direction of the street and out of sight. She felt like a criminal as she sneaked back into her own yard.

Her mother came in the front door and into the kitchen as she was sitting down to breakfast. Gail had hoped to swallow a reasonable breakfast in spite of the lump she felt in her throat and her stomach, in a fraud of normal appetite. Her father, sitting with his back to the kitchen window and its streams of sunlight, was engrossed in the farm news section of the Omaha World-Herald. He held the outspread paper in the air before him to read columns of market figures near the bottom of the page. Mr. Shreve had already eaten.

Her mother went back into the hallway, and Gail heard her hanging up her coat in the hall closet.

"I . . . I saw Mrs. Pankonin out in front," Mrs. Shreve began as she came back into the kitchen, "looking for Nicky. She says somebody let him off his chain last night, and he ran away. She's afraid he'll get run over in the street. . . . Gail, I think you could help Mrs. Pankonin look for Nicky this morning."

Gail's heart jumped when her mother pronounced her name, in the awful belief that she had been found out. Finding herself still unsuspected, though, she assented to her mother's suggestion in a barely audible voice. Her watery eyes were downcast and blinking in an effort to keep from bursting into tears.

An hour or more of looking and calling for Nicky had gone by when one of the boys

from across the street showed up on Mrs. Pankonin's front step with the dog squirming in his arms. Mrs. Pankonin rushed over to take Nicky, giving him a mock-scolding in her rough, grating voice. It was obvious, however, that she was so relieved that she didn't know what to do. Gail's sense of relief was probably equal to Mrs. Pankonin's at that particular moment, and Gail knew what to do: she cried.

Within moments, Nicky was yapping from his mandatory vigil in the backyard, securely chained once again. And Gail could hear the faint echo of Nicky's yapping in her head as the image of the big brown dog chained in the farmyard disappeared behind a passing clump of trees.

Gail looked over at her father, and recognized the misty, drowsy quality about his eyes.

"How are you doing, Dad? Are you getting sleepy?"

"Oh, a little bit."

"You want me to drive?"

"If you want to. We're about fifty miles from Lincoln. If you want to drive the rest of the way . . ."

"O.K."

Bill Shreve pulled over onto the shoulder, and he and Gail switched places.

"Were you getting sleepy, dear?" Phyllis Shreve had been roused from her nap in the back seat.

"Yup. Gail's gonna drive on into Lincoln." He yawned. "Now . . . you know where to meet everyone when we get to the stadium?"

"Yes. Mom has all the instructions."

"And then they're gonna take all you girls back to Kearney on a bus?"

"Yep."

"Well, that'll be a bus full of giggling gurdies, I can bet."

"Yes, it's gonna be fun. I just hope that the girls are friendly and everything."

"Oh, I'm sure they'll be nice girls, just your type of girls," her mother said.

Gail put her left-turn signal on and, waiting for a break in the eastbound traffic, pulled back onto the highway. Her father put his head back so he could nap. In the cradle of the back seat, her mother would return to sleep almost instantly.

The Kearney station had faded out beneath a symphony of static, so Gail turned to one of the big Omaha stations.

"It's 10:33, and now it's time for the mid-morning market reports. Here's Julie: Good morning. On the live cattle market in Omaha, 10,000 head today. Steers fifty cents lower at 44 1/2. Bulls steady at 43. Heifers, two lows at 41. At Sioux City, steers and heifers ahead at 42 1/2. On the live hog market in Omaha with 5,000 head, 260 to 280 pound hogs 39 to 40 dollars. 230 to 240 pound hogs, 37 to 38 1/2 dollars. Chicago Board of Trade: corn, up 1; soybeans steady; wheat is up 4"

"Ugh." Gail glanced in her rearview mirror and moved into the left lane to pass a car. She looked in her rearview mirror again and a huge truck was coming down upon her as though it were intent on running her over. The truck continued to close in on her until it was tailgating within feet, more than filling up Gail's rearview mirror. Gail boiled with anger, pushed on the gas to finish passing the slower car, and got over to the right lane. An instant later, the semi roared past like a behind-schedule freight train, just missing the left rear of the Shreve's station wagon by a narrow couple of feet. At this point, the hill bottomed out, and then the highway ascended again. As the hill steepened, Gail saw the right rear of the truck grow closer and closer, and in a few seconds the station wagon had pulled even. Gail saw now that it was a cattle truck. Through the metal-slat spaces on the side of the truck she could make out the dark forms, heavy snouts, and puzzled brows of the occupants.

"Son of a bitch," Gail said softly when even with the cab, hoping, really, that the truckdriver could see and read her lips. She was glad her parents were asleep.

Gail heard from the radio the sounds of the beginning of the new beautiful Jennifer

Warnes song. "I'm Dreaming" the song was titled.

"Oh, God. Not now," she whispered. In a split second and permitting no hesitation, her right hand darted out and, just like that, turned the radio off.

Berry Kent Mackay
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CHAPTER FIVE

Red was everywhere. An hour and a half before kickoff on the west side of the stadium and the crowd was pouring in already. A sea of red hats alone, not to mention sweaters, blazers, jackets. Gail felt somewhat self-conscious not wearing any red. As the other girls began arriving with their parents, she was glad to see that most of them wore no red and, like herself, were fairly dressed up. She stood with her parents and watched Mrs. Glenn, the pageant director whom she knew from Kearney, greeting the girls and their parents as they arrived at the pre-arranged gathering place just outside the stadium fence. Mrs. Glenn handed out Nebraska-Colorado tickets to each girl and each set of parents. The other girls looked nice, but Gail was willing to wait for one of them to come over and say hello, or for Mrs. Glenn to introduce one of them to her. Then she saw a familiar face.

"Hi, Rhonda!"

"Hi, Gail."

"Did you get your tickets?"

"Yeah. Gail, this is my mother and my father."

"Hi. And this is my mom and dad over here. Mom and Dad, this is Rhonda Froelich

and Mr. and Mrs. Froelich. Rhonda's representing Grand Island, but we know each other at Kearney State. We're in the same dorm together."

"Yeah, good old Centennial Towers."

"Well, that's nice. Now you girls will each have someone that you know in the pageant," Phyllis Shreve commented.

"Whereabouts are you folks from?" Rhonda's father was inquiring.

"Oh, we're from Kearney," William Shreve said. "We farm just up north of Kearney."

"Well, I farm over by Wood River. That ain't too far from where you folks live."

"Yup. Practically neighbors."

"Say, you been gettin' much in the way of price over at the P.V.?"

The two farmers drifted off into a conversation concerning the recent harvest and low grain prices; their wives discussed what the girls would be wearing during the pageant and its constituent functions. The two girls talked casually, nonchalantly. Rhonda had some uncertainty to share. It made Gail feel better to know that she wasn't alone in that regard.

"Oh, gol . . . I'm getting kinda nervous. Are you?"

"Yeah," Gail admitted. "I'm having all these bad dreams and everything . . . I get butterflies--you know"

"Yeah, I hate the butterflies. It feels like the first time when I went to Camp Sheldon, and when I got there I just had . . . butterflies all over the place."

"I'm mostly just nervous about something bad happening on stage--not whether I win or not. . . . Does it matter to you very much about winning?"

"Huh-uh. I'm like you; I just want everything to go all right."

As they talked, several flies met each other, buzzing around Gail's arms and waist, doing an unacceptable imitation of the small group of birds soaring in circles high over-

head. The flies were sluggish in the cool fall air, the temperature hovering as listlessly as they around 50 degrees. Neither temperature nor flies seemed able to rise any higher. Gail watched and felt a little sorry for the flies in their old age and weariness, in their stiff arthritic attempts to do what they had done so easily in younger, warmer days.

Gail, Rhonda, and their parents began moving, with the rest of their group and with the crowd in general, toward the arched openings leading up into the stadium. Their progress was slow, but eventually they found their seats in the lofty 20-yard line section reserved for their group. The girls sat in two rows of bleachers, and the parents and pageant officials occupied five or six rows just above them. They seemed to be situated in more or less an alumni section of the stadium. The game, like all other Nebraska games of recent years, was a sellout.

Gail and Rhonda sat next to each other, squished in the middle of the girl's two rows. In a matter of minutes, the girls were all well-acquainted, inevitably so.

"He's cute." A football program, opened to the pages where the players' pictures appeared, was being passed around.

"Oh, he's gorgeous!"

"Shhhhh."

"Don't you think each Beef Queen contestant should get a date with the player of her choice out of this program?"

"Or at least with the Kearney State player of her choice." It was Gail's voice.

"Yeah, we have plenty of good-looking jocks at KSC," Rhonda's voice added.

"Go - Big - Red! Go - Big - Red! Go - Big - Red! Go - Big . . ."

"Come on, let's get fired up out there. What's the matter with Osborne; can't he get the team fired up like he's s'posed to?"

"Block, dammit!"

"Let's go, Huskers!"

"We - Want - A - Touchdown! We - Want -

A - Touchdown! We . . ."

"Prograaaaaams . . . Prograaaaaams . . .
Official prograaaaams: one dollar . . ."

"Sorley, the ball-carrier . . . Tackle
by Young . . . Second and seven . . ."

"Give it to Isaiah!"

"Pam is majoring in elementary education. She doesn't know for sure if she wants to teach or not . . ."

"No . . . I bought the new Bee Gees album . . ."

"Get your Seven-up . . . Right here, Seven-up . . ."

"Well, Chris was very active in 4-H. In fact, her market steer won a championship at the county fair last year. She also got a Top Showman award from the Livestock Club. This year, she entered a skirt in the Style Revue and won a purple ribbon for Creative Clothing . . ."

"Hey! . . . Hey, hey! . . ."

"All right!"

"Whoooooooooh!"

"Touchdown, Nebraska . . . I. M. Hipp on the carry . . . The kick is good. The score: Colorado 15, Nebraska 10 . . ."

"Yeah, but Gail, how are you gonna finish your education major if you start taking all those other things? . . . Ooh, lookit, she dropped her baton. Is this game televised?"

"I don't think so. . . . See, I just can't see not taking anything but ed. courses. I'd feel like I'm wasting my time. I still want to take a lot more psych, and some anthro, and some philosophy, and stuff like that."

"Yeah, but how are you gonna have enough hours in education to graduate in time?"

"I don't know. I could take some summer classes. I might as well. It's not that I love studying. It's just that I feel sort of guilty if I'm not taking all the liberal arts stuff. See, college is supposed to make you a well-rounded person. That was my impres-

sion of college before I started. Isn't that what you thought?"

"I don't know. It's weird, but I can't remember what I thought college was gonna be like back when I was in high school."

"Yeah, I know. But see, I want to make it the best experience I can. I want to make every class count. God, it's gone by so fast . . ."

"Yeah, I can't believe we're juniors already, and the semester is half over. . . . Shit, I have two papers to do."

"All right! . . . Good grab!"

"Pass complete to Craig . . . Second and two."

"Go - Big - Red! Go - Big - Red! Go - Big . . ."

"Donnell the ball-carrier . . . First and ten Nebraska."

"We - Want - A - Touchdown! We - Want - A - Touchdown!"

"Come on, Huskers! . . . All the way!"

"All right! . . . Whoooh!"

"Whoooh! . . . Whoooh!"

"Touchdown Nebraska. Hipp on the carry. Todd's kick is good. The score: Nebraska 26, Colorado 15."

"Prograaaaaaaaaams . . . Official Nebraska prograaaaaams."

"I'd like to use the ladies' room before we . . ."

Descending from the stands after the game and penetrating on winding ramps through to the stadium's underside, Gail was confronted by an image totally unexpected and difficult to comprehend: A steady shower of litter fell from the stands as far as she could see, and the ground below was strewn with papers, popcorn, peanut shells, and, to an eerie degree, plastic paper-cup lids, which were constantly falling through the air like crisp autumn leaves.

(To be continued in the next issue)