

LIFE WITHOUT FATHER

By JULIA CAMERON

We are angry and horrified that you would resort to a cheap journalistic trick of sensationalism by printing the article on Sherman Skolnick. He has no basis for his accusations and, as we understand, he was laughed out of the National Transportation Safety Board meeting. He has no right whatsoever to fabricate wild theories concerning the crash of United Airlines 553.

Our mother, Dorothy Hunt, was neither murdered nor was the plane sabotaged. If you realized the agony and humiliation this filthy article put us through, you would have thought twice about publishing it. Our mother is dead and cannot defend herself. So have the respect and consideration to let her rest in peace.

LISA AND ST. JOHN HUNT
POTOMAC, MD.

(A letter to the editor published in the October 11th issue of ROLLING STONE.)

December 7th. It is a clear, cold afternoon and I am driving north out of Washington, looking for an address in Potomac, 11120 River Road, the home of E. Howard Hunt. Once outside the beltway, a white-collar ring around the city, the drive is pleasant. Suburban tracts give way rapidly to the bosomy hills, wooded ravines and creosote fences of Maryland hunt country. River Road, four busy lanes near the city, dwindles into two, becomes narrow and winding, pockmarked by the frequent washouts caused by the roughening terrain. FLOOD AREA, a sign warns at a point where heavy earth-moving equipment roots at the soil and bullies it into a ridge where the new road will run like a dorsal stripe.

Newspaper friends of mine, Watergate veterans, gave me some advice on getting this story. They said: Circle slowly. Don't let them know you're coming until the end.

I spot a hitchhiker who is 20 or so, the age of the Hunt kids. I stop to pick him up. His name is Peter Lowefeld and he doesn't know them. He says that no one in Potomac knows anyone else in Potomac and that that's the whole point of living there. "Privacy," he calls it. Yes, I think, or secrecy. (In Washington, the two are frequently confused. A CIA installation in Virginia marks its entrance land PRIVATE. They could have stamped the sign TOP

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SECRET for all that anyone is fooled.) And so, I drive Peter where he is going in Private Potomac, thinking—privately of course—that it is the perfect place for a CIA operative to live. Hunt does "something in government" the way his neighbors do "something for the World Bank." No one asks quite what. After all, that's his private business.

I figure I will pinpoint the house first. Coming over the crest of a hill, I spot three vultures in a holding pattern. Vultures are not really uncommon here—at least in the city proper where the zoo brings them to feed on dying eel in Rock Creek and they sometimes wheel in great smooth circles above National Cathedral—but I have never seen many of them in the country and so I drive glancing up at them, certain they must be crows.

I reach the Hunts. I turn in immediately, driving rapidly up a neglected lane with sumac and bamboo spilling against the windshield like jungle undergrowth. I brake just short of the house where two kids stand watching me. One is short and squat. He blinks nervously, the way you might under an interrogation lamp. A Hunt, I decide. The other kid is lanky, handsome in a raw-boned way, and has hair nearly to his waist. When I get out of the car, the one kid blinks and the other looks me up and down, grinning.

I say, "The Hunts live here? Either of you a Hunt?"

"Yeah, the Hunts live here—for a while anyhow," the lanky one says. "I'm St. John Hunt." The handshake is firm and preppy. The grin is not.

"I'm from ROLLING STONE. They want me to do a piece on you."

"Far out! This is about the letter Lisa and I wrote? Come on in and have some tea and we'll talk about it. We're just waiting for our drummer. This here is my friend Bill Brody—he plays bass. We've got a gig tomorrow night at my old prep school, hah, hah. . . ."

"How ya doing?" Bill, age 20, says.

"OK, but what about those vultures?"

"Oh, those," St. John says casually. "You get used to them."

From the outside, the Hunt home looks deceptively modest. It is a ranch home, painted one of those modern, gangrenous greens, with a garage attached. Saint—as his family and his friends tend to call him—leads me through the garage and into the kitchen, a large kitchen with an appliance island in the middle, the sort of American Dream kitchen they give away on game shows.

As he fills the kettle and organizes the cups, Saint says, "I used to think ROLLING STONE was OK, but that article on my mother was really fucked. That guy, what's his name, Skolnick? He's obviously out of his tree, a real

paranoid . . . we have enough hassles without reading that crap. If we decide to talk with you, will ROLLING STONE print what we say or will they fuck that up too?"

"We'll see."

"Well, we asked them to apologize and they left that part out of our letter when they printed it."

"Maybe I'm their apology."

"Maybe."

Saint scoops up a Siamese cat and leads the way to a living room cluttered by packing boxes. The room is large, with a fireplace at one end and a grand piano at the other. On the piano is a forest of family photos; on the mantel, a collection of gnomish pre-Colombian statuary. The carpet is beige and needs a good vacuuming (clumps of cat hair, pieces of packing straw and tracked-in leaves). Paintings hang at tipsy angles on the walls. A giant rubber plant dies leaf by leaf on the window bay.

Saint says that his sister Lisa, 22, is home somewhere but freaked out; that his sister Kevan, 21, is at Smith and won't be home until Sunday to pack her things; that their nine-year-old brother David lives in Florida with his godparents, the Manolo Artimes, as of a week ago; and that it is just plain luck that I found them there at all.

By the next weekend, orders would come from their father via their lawyer—"the finger of God approach," Saint calls it—that they must live somewhere else, because their home has been sold. Just where else, they have no idea yet. And that, Saint says, is why the house is a disaster area and Lisa is freaking out. And that, he adds, is one reason he may give the interview. "It would be worth it to me," he explains, "if people would learn from it that Watergate involves real people with real families. Nobody thinks about that when they write, do they? Not when it's so much easier to divide things into bad guys and good guys so nobody gets confused. Don't get me wrong. I'm not asking for sympathy. I'm just saying that as long as people can make Watergate a scapegoat, they can avoid going through their own changes. They can say to themselves, 'Well, at least I'm not E. Howard Hunt.'"

But it is easy to get confused just watching Saint talk. The afternoon light slanting through the window behind his head halos his profile. It is a handsome profile, classically proportioned, but it is also the profile of his father.

As the thought crosses my mind, a shadow sweeps across Saint's face, flickering for a moment around his eyes as he scans the room's disarray. It leaves as quickly as it came.

"Is that you?" I ask, pointing to a photo of a cute little boy on a pony.

"No, that's my brother David. I really miss him. When Mama died, he lost a

lot of security, but Lisa and I started spending a lot of time with him and he seemed to be gaining before the Florida thing. I mean, I think they could have given the kid more time than just a couple of hours. If we'd had a week or so, we could have gotten him used to the idea. You know, told him about Disney World and the palm trees and things. Instead, one afternoon, the lawyer and his godfather show up at the door and say, 'Pack your things. Plane's in an hour.' It seems Dad decided we were bringing him up in an atmosphere of drugs and sex. He gets these ideas. . . ."

E. Howard Hunt has been getting these ideas for years. As his 40-odd spy novels attest, he has a fertile imagination chock-full of ideas about drugs and sex. Then, too, according to Saint and Lisa, you have to take into account those ideas he gets with a little help from his friends—friends like William F. Buckley, their godfather and Kevan's. (Buckley himself refers to Hunt as a "very close friend.") "These ideas" range from a provincialism about drugs that is astonishing in a man who spent years spooking about South American revolutionary circles (try to imagine the scene around the campfire as Hunt—alias 'Eduardo'—declines the joint of Colombian proffered by a revolutionary comrade: "Me? Never touch the stuff. Why, that stuff's dangerous, causes . . .") to a sexual chauvinism that borders on the feudal. What, after all, is a man who writes of "deltas enticingly draped" to make of his son's monogamous relationship with his girlfriend?

"My father believes in the double standard," Saint says. "Men can do whatever they want. Women must be Ivory pure. He'd rather have me fucking secretaries than sleeping with Drew [Holmes, his steady girlfriend of two years] all this time. You see, he sees her as compromised. You know the old distinction between 'good' girls and 'nice' girls?"

Yes.

Lapsing into Watergatese, that language we've heard so much of lately, Saint complains that now that his father is in jail, "He's got unreliable sources feeding him faulty information leading to erroneous conclusions." The sources? "William F. and people like that, I think. He hears little bits and pieces about us and puzzles them together all wrong. His imagination gets the best of him, you see."

In another sense, E. Howard Hunt's imagination has always gotten the best of him. Lisa and Saint recall bitterly that their father's novels came before they did in his affections, that he spent his best energy and time fleshing out his current brainchild instead of being a real father to them, his flesh and blood

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children. "He wrote between four and eight hours a day during the week and all day every day on weekends. We were supposed to be quiet all the time he was working," Lisa will say. Saint tells the story from family folklore of the time he was asked as an eight-year-old what he wanted to be when he grew up: "I don't know what I do want to be," I said, "but I know I don't want to be a writer like my father because then I would never see my family." (Stella, the housekeeper, will tell me the same story later that evening.)

And not unlike a family wedded to the military life, the Hunts were very mobile: Three years in Mexico City (where Lisa was born); three in Washington, D.C. (where Kevan and St. John were born); four in Tokyo; four in Montevideo; one in Georgetown; one in Madrid and finally more than six in Potomac, Maryland.

Conversations with their father were mainly confined to the dinner table. "He tried to teach us about politics," Lisa will recall, "but it was always Mom saying, 'David, be quiet. Your father's talking.' You couldn't really call it conversation, could you?" Away from the dinner table, when their father wanted to convey something to the children, it was their mother bore the tidings. "Your father says he doesn't like you . . ." As Saint describes it, "There was very little positive reinforcement, mainly negative feedback. Communication was always rough and always through a third party."

Saint takes a strand of his two-and-a-half feet of hair and sights along it like a surveyor. "My father believes in the chain of command, you see, in a structured hierarchy with orders coming down from the top and being carried out by local minions. Looking at it that way, you can see that sending the lawyer out here to tell us about David, instead of telling us himself, is just the logical progression of a certain way of thinking. The house is another thing. I talked to him on the phone last week and he could have told me about it then—he must have known he planned to sell it then—but he didn't tell me and that was very deceitful of him. He has the habit of secrecy, you see."

A car has pulled in the driveway. Jim Lobell, 20, the missing drummer, has arrived. He comes in just as Lisa, the missing sister, grabs a sheepskin jacket and darts out, catching her foot on a packing box and pausing to glare at it as though it tripped her on purpose. She is knife-thin, sloe-eyed and lovely, but her eyes are red from crying and her face is tight as a fist. "Hey, Lisa," Jim asks. "Find anywhere to live yet?" But she is gone. Saint shakes himself the way you do to ward off a chill. He tells Jim, "Maybe. We'll talk about it later. Let's just practice, OK?" They loan me a sweater because the practice shed will be cold.

The others have gone ahead and he wants to explain that my being there will probably make them nervous. We stop under some trees halfway down the path to talk about it. I ask, "The music, it means a lot, then?"

"The music helps," he says, tucking my sweater closer against the wind. "The music was really what got me through. There have been so many changes in the past two years that I'm kind of numb. For a while, after Mom, I just shut down. I got so I couldn't feel anything. I couldn't express any emotion at all. The music got me through that. The music and Drew, my old lady. It's too cold for you, let's get inside."

"Inside" is the pigeon shed that used to be their playhouse. It is insulated

Lisa Hunt: "People give him [their father] distorted information about us.... I think he is in despair. He doesn't know we love him."

with egg cartons, decorated with tied-dyed sheets and has gunny sacks covering the windows. Jim adjusts his snare while Bill tunes his bass, a Gibson EB3. When we walk in, they freeze. Their faces say it all: ROLLING STONE may be one thing, but the generation gap is another. At 25, I'm just old enough to make them nervous. For their initial greeting they call me "ma'am."

They will have to decide that for themselves, Saint tells them. He, for one, has had enough of paranoia. More than enough. And he's had enough of the real thing as well—FBI agents spooking through the bushes; bugs in the family cars; telephones with a murmur like the Tell-Tale Heart—to hell with it, he's decided. With everything else coming down, losing David and the house, is there energy left for paranoia? (Silence.)

Of course there is. There's plenty of energy for paranoia even as the group tunes up. Bill keeps sneaking glances at me. I catch Jim staring over the top of his Zildjian cymbals. The vibes are very bad. The vibes are horrible. Now Saint is coming over to ask me to leave—no, to crouch next to me and whisper, "Don't look so worried. You're nice. I like you."

I like him too. Daybreak, as they call themselves, play rock & roll filtered through enough jazz that the pieces work with a shifting balance of power that keeps the ear very busy. They jam through a loose version of "El Stinger" which seems to relax everyone and then move into their own material which Saint writes. He has an ear for the odd rhyme and the brains not to overuse it. He keeps things just simple enough that the lyric has room to gain meaning.

Saint sings lead, way up high, very spooky and clear, working voice and guitar for and against each other the way you sand smooth wood to bring up the grain. On a long guitar break, he winds the sound so tight it sounds like bees swarming. Bill jokes, "I was getting a little nervous in there, Saint." He answers, "That's good. Keeps your blood running around."

Daybreak may be able to keep their blood running around, but keeping themselves fed is a little rougher. They make only half a living off the band, although for the better part of ten years each of them has been knocking around the Washington music scene, into a kind of music the Top 40 clubs wouldn't touch. In its current incarnation, Daybreak has been together a year, playing in dives like "The Godfather" and at college mixers to make ends meet. The band make 50 bucks per man, per night. They do not have an agent. Brody, the bass player who did two years with a jazz group, explains that beyond their own material, they get into Clapton, Stevie Wonder and some Jeff Beck.

The little shed is so cold that the small electric heater doesn't even put a dent in it, but practice goes until some-

one notices it's night. Walking back to the house, Saint stops on the path just to look at it. After a moment, he says, very quietly, "Maybe someday I'll have enough money to buy this place back. It's the only home we ever really had. What with my father's work, we were always moving, saying good-bye to friends we would never see again, going somewhere else and starting again." The house appears through the winter trees. Behind the lighted windows, Stella, the Argentine housekeeper, can be seen moving from room to room.

"Who's that?" I ask.

"That's the king's eyes and ears," Saint answers. He explains that when his father was a CIA operative in Montevideo, he himself was still in diapers and Stella McGoey was the governess who changed them. At his father's request, she came back to work for them when Dorothy Hunt died. A bad idea, Saint feels. (Later in the evening, Stella will tell me she can't see eye to eye with Saint and Lisa on anything.) A bad idea because it is Stella, Saint and Lisa believe, who fuels their father's imagination, reporting to him her disapproval of the way her "little charges have turned out." She may not see eye to eye with them, Saint says, but she does see eye to eye with their father and with their godfather, Buckley, "whom we don't know from Adam except to know that his politics are fucked." (Saint says he has never met his godfather. Lisa has met him twice.)

From the conversation I had with William F. Buckley over the Christmas holidays, it's easy to infer he may think the same of Saint's politics. Our conversation went like this:

Mr. Buckley, I understand from my editor you have some reservation about my doing a piece on the Hunt kids. Do you want to tell me about them?

"Yes. I do have reservations about your doing a piece. One of the kids has been in and out of an asylum for years. The other has had a nervous condition for ten years."

I knew about Lisa's breakdown, but what's this about Saint?

"He is a school drop-out." They seem stable enough to me, Mr. Buckley.

"Ask their doctors. They've studied them longer than you have."

If you'd give me a doctor's name I'd be glad to call and talk to them.

"I don't see why I should give you any information about my godchildren."

I know you're close to Kevan, but are you really close to Lisa and Saint?

"No, I'm not particularly close to them, but I am the executor of their estate and a very close friend of their father's and of their mother's before she died."

Well, sir. They seemed in really fine whack when I saw them.

"They're sick."

What do you mean?

"If they weren't sick they wouldn't be talking to the ROLLING STONE, would they? Why else would they do so except

to attract attention from the ROLLING STONE's constituency? I remind you they were angry at them barely two months ago."

Yes. But they gave the interview voluntarily. Perhaps they want to tell their side of the story.

"I think it's a low form of journalism—opportunism—to prey on the privation of two sick children. You wouldn't be interested in them unless their father were famous, would you?"

I think we're interested in them for themselves and for their father—both reasons. Do you have anything else that you want to say to me about it?

"No. I've said everything I had to say to you and to your editors. I leave it to your conscience."

Stella will be leaving in a week, but, Saint adds, the damage is done: David in Florida and the survival of the family as a unit is endangered. Once inside the house, Saint asks Stella to set me a place for dinner while he calls around to find Lisa. Stella does this, busily rattling dishes until Saint says, "Hello, Lisa?" Then the dish-rattling stops. It's suddenly very quiet in that kitchen as he says, "Look, I'm sorry we argued, but it's natural. No, Lisa, please don't cancel the house. I want to live with you . . . Lisa, we have got to stick together. Please come home . . ."

Once off the phone, he leads me out of the room ("Ears, ears," he whispers). This time, I'm the one who says, "Don't look so worried." But he is worried. The day before, Lisa found them a place to live and this afternoon when they fought, she called the realtor and canceled it. "We hardly ever fight," he explains, "I tried to tell her it's natural to fight sometimes. It's healthy to get things in the open. I pointed out that she fights with Gary, her old man, but Lisa's a Pisces and she takes everything very seriously." Just to show that he doesn't, Saint tries out a grin that fails completely. "Let's put on some music . . . Maybe I could build a fire . . . Drew's coming over later . . ." Shoving aside a packing box to get to the stereo, Saint talks more to himself than to me.

Darker thoughts are easy to come by this evening. Tomorrow will be the first anniversary of his mother's death. No end point has been set on David's living with his godparents, and talk of reuniting the family at Christmas involves money for air tickets which may not even be available. Christmas, in any case, cannot be spent caroling by a fire in this fireplace because by then it will be someone else's and they will be living somewhere else, although that somewhere else may not be the house Lisa found unless she can convince the realtor they are a better risk than her afternoon's cancellation would indicate. For that matter, what kind of risk are they? The lawyer pays the bills—from their father's book royalties, they believe—and they have no idea what kind of money there is or isn't. Lisa worries that they are running out, but then, Lisa always worries. He, Saint, doesn't like to worry. He likes to listen to music and he likes to build fires and he likes to have Drew come over and he likes to think that if he drinks enough hot tea with honey and lemon, the sore throat he has had for a week will not get too bad for the gig tomorrow night and so he remembers to drink more tea because he doesn't want to worry because . . .

When Lisa comes home, the first thing she does is hug her brother and tell him, "Don't worry, Sweetheart." The second thing she does is shake

her head at me. "So you're from ROLLING STONE? I was expecting some frizzy-haired guy in a Mr. Natural T-shirt and jeans, driving a jeep with joints trailing from both sides of his mouth." She pauses to laugh a husky, Lauren Bacall laugh. Her eyes are still very red. "Don't get me wrong," she adds. "I'm still furious, but Saint says you're OK. At least you didn't come slinking around. That always makes me paranoid."

"I almost did. It's the recommended method."

"I believe it. We don't get along too well with the Washington Post. You can't believe everything you read, you know." She laughs again, bitterly, stubbing out one Marlboro and lighting another immediately. "Those guys Woodward and Bernstein—I can't stand them. I think they're crass. Their attitude is I-don't-give-a-damn-what-you-feel-or-what-you-think-I'm-gonna-getta-story. It's the approach, the arrogance that gets me. I find myself very defensive. I find myself defending things I don't really want to. As far as giving an interview goes, it boils down to what Joni Mitchell says, 'Will you take me as I am?'"

Lisa Hunt is the firstborn child who took 72 hours to fight her way from the womb, nearly killing herself and her mother in the process. Twenty-one years later, it was she who buried that mother, taking over for her father who was too distraught to do anything but grieve. A year after that, it is she who does the house-hunting, the dealing with lawyers, realtors, all who must be dealt with. It is she who is too thin, too nervous and who smokes too much, chipping at her fingernail polish whenever she's not holding a cigarette, crossing her legs and uncrossing them, tucking them under herself, pretzeling them Indian style, stretching them straight out, crossing them, uncrossing them. . . . When the phone rings, she races for it like a whipper.

The way things are, Lisa Hunt is sometimes strained nearly to the breaking point. She knows that, she says, because she broke once before, when she was 16, and that single breakdown cost her two years out of her life. Now, she says, she is a perfectly normal specimen. She does not want to break again, but even to look at her—the impossible fragility of those wrists, the neck practically a flower stalk—is to wonder that she has any strength at all.

Says Gary Myers, her boyfriend of three years, "I worry about her not eating, screwing up her own body, which screws up her mind. I attribute that to confusion. She's got a good, strong set of nerves now. She's stronger than people think she is, but there's been no time for her to sit down and get it together. No peace, not even a plateau; things just haven't cooled off yet at all."

Jody Rosenblatt, a good girlfriend, adds, "She seems a little bit more nervous but a lot more certain of her own values. I think she's a strong person. She still exudes an enormous amount of love to those around her, and that takes a lot of strength—since her character is what we're really talking about."

But Lisa Hunt is worried. "When my mother died, David was the first to find out. One of his teachers just called him up and said, 'Your mom just died in a plane crash.' Just like that, can you believe it? He's the one that told the rest of us. That's too heavy. He's growing up too fast."

Worried about her sister Kevan: "Kevan really worshipped Father. You see, St. John and I had dyslexia [a

In his own words [Watergate] cost E. Howard Hunt "everything a man holds dear except my children." In some ways, it cost him them as well.

reading disability] and were never good in school which disappointed Father. Kevan was always his girl. He was a god to her. She never had the perspective on him we did. She is just beginning to admit that he was wrong. It's very hard on her. Her whole universe is cracking at the seams."

Worried about St. John: "He acts very cool and all, but he has lost the ability to act. He freezes underneath and what seems like nonchalance is really fear. He's a fatalist now. He keeps what Mother's death did to him. He keeps waiting for the next blow to fall. Sometimes, when I really need him, he's just not there. He's empty."

Worried about her father: "He's in there all alone. People give him distorted information about us and all his fears, his imagination, can just go crazy. I think he is in despair. He doesn't know we love him."

Worried about Gary: "He doesn't understand the changes that all of this puts me through. He doesn't understand I have to think about other people now, about the family. Also, I know that I've grown bitter since Mother died and that's not pleasant to find in anybody."

And Lisa worries about her own future. She quit school when their mother died in order to care for David and now, with David gone ("I got hysterical. I said, 'You can't take him away from me! You can't take him away from me.'"), there is time to think of her abandoned dream of being an actress. Bob Massey, a Washington actor, recalls Lisa Hunt as "an incredible actress." Since Watergate broke, the only limelight she has had is the glare of publicity, but now she is beginning to hope that she can return to the footlights instead. One intermediate step in that direction sent her sprawling only the week before. Eileen Ford, head of the prestigious Ford Agency, invited her to New York for a modeling interview. She used the last of her savings having a portfolio shot only to arrive for her appointment and see not Ford but an assistant who talked to her about as long as it took to say "Don't call us. We'll call you." No limelight that time.

Now, red-eyed from her fight with Saint, not quite pretty as a picture, she is chain-smoking her way through dinner. On the table where they were eating, there is a copy of the New York Times Watergate book propped against the fruit bowl. Saint leafs through the book until he finds the profile of his father. Then he reads aloud to me, "A girl who once spent a night in a Miami motel room with Hunt. . . ." He asks, "Why'd they have to write that? What are we supposed to think?" Lisa interrupts, "Read the rest of that sentence. All it says is 'complained that he kept her up all night talking about the girls in his novels.' In other words, they dragged out a sordid liaison to make a simple point. Is that right?"

Lisa is saying, "Saint, tomorrow let's you and I go to Mother's grave together. Maybe we'll feel better, closer or something." Saint says, "Sure. We can do that." When the doorbell rings

and a group of friends troop in, he adds, "I guess it's a good thing people are here tonight. We might be depressed tonight."

Saint's friend Bill Lewis doesn't see Saint as being depressed—exactly. The phrase he used to describe the change wrought by Watergate is "flattened out." As in: Watergate really leveled him. He is talking about what Saint called feeling "kind of numb." What Lisa calls "Saint's being frozen." Psychiatrists talk about the same thing. They call it "flatness of affect." They say it's common in cases of extreme depression.

Stuart Herr, who was captain of the football team at the prep school St. John attended, says, "Saint was really a good guy. He used to go around school in Indian outfits. I guess the family's part Indian. He was really a gentle person. When it [Watergate] broke I felt sorry, but St. John is a strong enough guy to get over it. . . . but maybe most Americans would hate him for his father being involved in that."

Saint says he had undergone psychiatric treatment only once, in 1967; but he wasn't alone. Himself, both parents and his sisters embarked on a short-lived family-therapy program.

This evening, people here or not, Saint and Lisa are both cases of extreme depression. We are sitting in the living room, in front of the fire Saint built, listening to the music Lisa chose, Joni Mitchell's *Blue*. A half-dozen friends have come over and now they sit among the litter of half-packed crates, trying to be cheerful or at least compassionate. One says, "Too bad you have to leave this nice house." To which Lisa says flatly, "Yes. It's my home. The only place I've ever been able to call home."

That topic disposed of, the friends move to politics. Curt Woolf, who looks like a stand-in for Jerry Garcia, announces, "You know all this about Watergate? Wouldn't you like to see Nixon in jail for life?" Lisa says, "I wouldn't." Saint says, "No, I wouldn't want to see that happen to anybody."

Then they talk about how much trouble it is living at home with your parents, what shits they are, what a drag it is having them around. Lisa takes a long drag on her eternal Marlboro, lets the smoke seep slowly out again and says, "You're goddamn lucky you've got parents, that's all." She stalks from the room leaving Curt Woolf looking very puzzled. He knows he hit a wrong note somewhere. "What's eating her?" he asks.

December 8th. Noon. On the first anniversary of Dorothy Hunt's death, the sky is dark and a bitter rain is falling. Two pink carnations sit in a green vase that some well-wisher has left on the door stoop of the home she shared with her family. Since no one is home to take them in, I set them inside the shelter of the outer door, thinking as I do that it is a silly gesture, that they will die soon enough up on that windy hillside grave. I tuck a note on

the garage door and drive into Potomac Village to buy cigarettes and something to fix all of us for lunch.

When I return, Lisa and Saint are in the kitchen, talking about their new house. Their father, in his plea before sentencing, called them "young and innocent victims." Listening to this conversation, to their incredible naivete, it is almost possible to hear the *clip, clip* of the shears as the lambs are fleeced.

"We'll need a phone. How much does a phone cost?"

"Oh, about \$50-a-month minimum."

"How many fireplaces?"

"It doesn't have any fireplaces."

"I thought we agreed that a fireplace was an absolute."

"I know we did, but—Saint!" Already, Lisa's voice holds the keen edge of desperation. She watches her brother's face with hypnotic fixedness as she tells him, "You know that bridge with the ivy that I told you about? The stone bridge? It's only a couple of blocks from the new house. We can go there. It can be our place, like the two trees. We'll still have a place to go. Really, we can go to the bridge instead. It will be just like the trees, you'll see, Saint. Really—"

"Lisa," Saint says gently. "We can always come back to the trees. We'll always come back, always." To me he adds, "It's like Strawberry Fields."

From the living-room windows, it is just possible to see the two trees they mean. They are tall old trees that stand together on the crest of a hill about a quarter-mile away. They do not belong to the Hunts, but then, unlike the house, they never did. "Have you read much Castaneda?" Saint asks me. "He talks about these places, powerful places, places where you go to get in touch with spirits." He does not need to add that on his mother's side of the family there is Sioux blood and that for Indians the spirits inhabiting sacred places may be the spirits of the dead.

There is packing to be done, equipment to be loaded, and flowers to be taken to a grave, but when Stella comes in brandishing her ticket home to Buenos Aires, we all think "ears" and retreat to the basement, to the room Hunt used for an office.

It is a macho room: rifles and hunting knives; swords, pistols and a snake-skin; a felt pennant from Brown, his alma mater, and, next to it, another, "Cuba Libre Volveremos." It is the room in which Hunt first learned of his wife's death. The room in which he and her children gathered to weep for her. "Many a time," Stella McGoey remembers, "he cried in that little office. He said, 'Poor Dorothy, poor Dorothy. I dragged everyone into this.'"

As children, Saint and Lisa say, they were not dragged in. Their mother told them their father worked in the foreign service and that was that. Only once they were older and began to question, did she say anything else. Then she said, "CIA," and again, that was that. Shortly before Watergate broke, Saint stumbled across his father's false identification papers and the now-famous red wig he had cadged from the FBI. When he asked his mother about it, she said only, "It is something he needs for his work. I can't tell you any more." But by then, Saint was old enough not only to question but to provide his own answers as well. Laughing with embarrassment, he says now, "When I found that stuff and Mama didn't know much about it, I thought, 'Holy shit. He's having an affair.'"

The affair, of course, was Watergate, and like most affairs, it was expensive. In his own words, it cost E. Howard Hunt "everything a man holds dear except my children." In some ways it

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cost him them as well. Stella McGoey says, "This is a political thing, but the children, they blame him."

But it is not quite so simple as that. Stella McGoey may be the king's eyes and ears, spooking through the halls of the home that was his castle, but eavesdrop as hard as she can she will not hear the conversations they hold in their hearts. Conversations like the one they are having now.

"My father is not really to blame for anything," Saint begins it. "Not personally . . . that was just the way his life happened and being that we were his kids, we were involved in it."

"You don't blame your father?" I ask. "You're not bitter?"

"Not really," Saint answers, but he adds, "Not any more."

"I am," Lisa says. "I am . . . if it [Watergate] had never happened, my mother would still be alive and we wouldn't be going through all this bullshit that we are now—"

"Or even if it had happened," Saint breaks in, "if she had just said she wasn't going to have anything to do with it, you know? Then she wouldn't have died. If she hadn't—"

"If she hadn't taken the plane," Lisa interrupts. "If she had never—if Father hadn't—I guess—talked her into it—she'd—I don't know."

They remember their mother as a warm, generous and emotional woman in contrast to their father. Many nights, while he wrote on his latest spy novel, they sat up talking with her by the living room fireplace, often until 2 or 3 AM. They talked openly to her about politics, drugs and sex—areas in which they differed sharply with their father. She seemed to understand their views and accept them, but she was also cast as the go-between, the middleman between her husband and their children.

Saint describes it this way: "It was really weird. It was like a triangle. Anything he wanted to tell us he would tell our mother and she would tell us and then we would talk to her and she would tell him. He wouldn't actually really relate to us on a one-to-one basis. But we would hope by now that he would talk to us, that he would realize that we're receptive, that the lines of communication are open. I mean, if this last flare-up with David hasn't closed them down, I guess nothing will. I wish we were closer."

The picture sketched is a Victorian one: the long-suffering wife of a demanding husband, a woman who sought solace in her children, taking them as confidantes, seeing eye to eye with them through a process of elevating them to adult status while sacrificing some of it herself. Lisa recalls her mother as her closest friend. Saint remembers she talked of buying a double bed for him and Drew to share in his room. (A plan Hunt nixed after her death.) But if her children and their friends counted themselves among Dorothy Hunt's friends, she herself could not count too many others. If your husband is a spy, casual friends are a luxury you can ill afford. Family was the bushel basket hiding the light of a warm, gay personality. Family snuffed the candle out, one, two, three!

The first thing Dorothy Hunt lost because of Watergate was her one outside diversion, a translator's job at the Spanish Embassy. Of this, Saint says bitterly, "It was so unnecessary, so unfair. Just because he went out and did some fucked thing like that—it seemed like she paid for every bumper, for every mistake he ever made . . . Her first mistake was getting married. She paid for that one her whole life."

Saint Hunt: "We would hope by now that he would talk to us, that he would realize that we're receptive, that the lines of communication are open."

The second thing Dorothy Hunt lost because of Watergate was her life. Of that, Lisa says, "When she was living in India, Mother had her fortune told by a wise man. He told her she would marry again. She did, to my father. That she would have ten children, four of which would survive. That's us. And that she would live to be 75. For the last year, I have been asking myself why two-thirds of that prophecy came true and the rest didn't."

The third thing Dorothy Hunt lost because of Watergate was her good name. While charred beyond recognition herself, the \$10,000 in her purse survived the fire as fresh and green as bibb lettuce. Food for thought, that money. Lush, green hush money, some people thought, and so Dorothy Hunt's reputation also went up in smoke.

One year to the day later, in the room where her husband cried, "Poor Dorothy," I rest my tea cup on a packing box and ask her children, "How much did your mother know? The whole case that's been built up against her is based on the idea of her as co-conspirator, co-spy."

"My mother had nothing to do with it," Lisa snaps.

"No," Saint corrects her. "She knew about it all along but disapproved totally."

"That's right," Lisa says. "She knew about it, but she didn't agree with it. She never had any real involvement other than twice she went to Montgomery Mall to meet—"

Drew interrupts, "Lisa, she went to a lot of other places. She went to the airport; she went—"

"Do you think that had to do with hush money?" I ask. Suddenly, we are all aware that Stella is standing at the top of the basement stairs.

"What is it, Stella?" Saint asks.

"Telephone?" she says.

He does not bother to go through the motions of answering. The phone at his elbow did not ring. When Stella has gone, he says, "Well, yeah. It had to do with money, but I don't know whether or not it was to silence my father. He said it was for the Cubans, to support their families. And for us, to support us. There was no one else to do it, you see. My father had to rely on somebody. And she being his wife—she couldn't turn her back on him. There was no one else to do it."

"Did you know what she was doing?" "Yeah. But she would never tell us a guy's name or what he looked like. She just would say she had to go make a delivery or a pickup or a phone call from a public phone so the call couldn't be traced. We were against her doing it, but she said there was no one else to do it. Certainly not us."

As they talk, it becomes clear that the money was not hush money to them. They are saying that for those involved in Watergate, it was all part of a bargain struck: "I'll do my part and if anything goes wrong, you do yours—care for my family." To suggest to them that their mother should not have ferried the money is to fail to understand the rules

of the game. To put it another way, Hunt asked his wife for a favor she could not refuse. Tell his children that she should have and they will agree but see it as a nicety. You don't complain that the woman tossing the life jacket throws like a girl. You don't refuse a favor when blood calls blood.

"Even a favor like blackmail?" Saint explains, "I think my father would have kept his mouth shut anyway, if the court hadn't blown the whistle. Blackmail? There was a whole lot of speculation, but he said he needed the money for the families and I believe him. He had been a spy all of his life. He was of the old school and he was going to keep his mouth shut. He knew if he was caught he was going to have to take the consequences."

"My father is a professional," Saint says. "A super-spy. But he never got caught before and that's why they hired him." And Lisa agrees. "Blackmail? What a bunch of crap!"

I ask them what they think of what their father did.

"Morally, it was totally fucked," Saint says.

"Totally fucked," Lisa agrees. But she adds, "My father is basically a good man, a super-patriot who served his country all his life and loves and respects the presidency. If they told him to do it, he did it. No questions asked . . . He believed that what he was doing was right, my father, and he believes it to this day. No matter what the law in this particular case said."

But there is a line to be drawn somewhere, isn't there? Isn't there a distinction to be made between spying on "enemies" and spying on an opponent in what was an allegedly above-board political process?

"Of course," Lisa says. "But we could never talk to him about it. We never talked about fine distinctions."

"And he had reasons," Saint says. ". . . he thought the Democratic party was getting funds from Cuba . . . which was getting funds from Russia or somewhere . . ."

What about breaking into Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office?

Lisa answers, "I think that was a little outrageous, but I wasn't really shocked. I always thought that kind of breaking in was going on back and forth between the political parties."

Saint?

"That's fucked, but that's politics and politics are fucked basically. Politicians, I think, have to have a sneaky aspect to them. I guess everybody does, but they're the ones with the heart to carry it out."

Lisa explains that their own politics are very confused, that they were raised in their father's beliefs and have had trouble sorting out fact from fiction, patriotism from patriarchy. She cites her own Nixon vote as an example: "Mama suggested I do it to show Dad I love him."

And now?

Now she has this dream: "There is a place I visited once in Syria. A place way, way out in the country. I'd like to

take David there to raise him. I'd like to get away."

"I don't even want to live in this country," Saint agrees. "But I'm very confused . . . I guess Watergate is the worst thing that ever happened to it . . . but Watergate, my father's involvement in it, had a lot less impact on me than Mom's dying."

"But it stemmed from Watergate," Drew says. "And it's in that that the bitterness lies."

"You have to think that her time was up," Saint says. "You have to think of it that way to keep from freaking out." He adds, "My father never dreamed he would get caught. The heroes in his books never got caught, so why should he? My father, for a time, was quite a lucky man. He was able to live out his fantasy life. That's something we'd all like to do, if we're honest about it. He never dreamed it would end like this."

"My mother is still very much alive to me. I just can't see her physically, that's all. I mean, she is ever as much with me as she was before, more in fact, but I just don't see her physically and that's what I miss. I miss actually seeing her there and when I have dreams and she's in the dreams, it's really far out. Because then I just really remember and I wake up and say, 'Wow. I saw my mother last night.'"

From upstairs comes the sound of voices and boots on a hardwood floor. The band has arrived to load equipment. That means Dorothy Hunt's children have just one more hour for taking flowers to her at her grave. They have one more day before Kevan will come home and give them hell for giving an interview, one more week for packing away their childhood. With all of this, there is only one more story for me to tell.

This evening, on the way to the band gig in Hagerstown, piloting his van through a night of sleet along roads grown dangerously slick, Saint will suddenly hit the horn, very hard and long.

"What is it?" I will ask, waiting for the crash.

He will answer me, "That guy I just passed? He had a sticker that said, HONK IF YOU THINK HE'S GUILTY."

By December 23rd, Lisa and St. John Hunt were settled into their newly rented house. Saint's girlfriend, Drew Holmes, shares the house with them as does Bill Brody, the bass player. The house is small and neat, filled with green plants and the good cheer that comes with organizing a house according to your own needs: music room downstairs; sitting room on the top floor where the light is best; books everywhere; music throughout the house.

On December 24th, Lisa Hunt flew to Miami hoping to spend the holidays with her little brother David—although no one had answered her letters or the telegram she sent to announce her arrival. For 24 hours she called the Artime household from the airport—still no answer and so, she flew home without seeing her brother and with no idea where he was or where her sister, Kevan, might be. Kevan had not answered her phone for a week either.

On January 1st Lisa and St. John Hunt read in the newspaper that their father was getting out of jail pending his appeal. The article mentioned that Hunt would be returning to his home in Potomac—the home that Lisa and Saint believed sold. Did that mean David was with him? Was Kevan? Lisa and Saint had no way of knowing, the locks on the doors had been changed and new locks added on the windows. Who lives there is anybody's guess.

