

# **Flowers for Algernon**

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DANIEL KEYES

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*For my mother  
And in memory of my father*

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Anyone who has common sense will remember that the bewilderments of the eyes are of two kinds, and arise from two causes, either from coming out of the light or from going into the light, which is true of the mind's eye, quite as much as of the bodily eye; and he who remembers this when he sees anyone whose vision is perplexed and weak, will not be too ready to laugh; he will first ask whether that soul of man has come out of the brighter life, and is unable to see because unaccustomed to the dark, or having turned from darkness to the day is dazzled by excess of light. And he will count the one happy in his condition and state of being, and he will pity the other; or, if he have a mind to laugh at the soul which comes from below into the light, there will be more reason in this than in the laugh which greets him who returns from above out of the light into the den.

—Plato, *The Republic*

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## progris riport 1 martch 3

Dr Strauss says I shoud rite down what I think and remembir and evrey thing that happins to me from now on. I dont no why but he says its importint so they will see if they can use me. I hope they use me becaus Miss Kinnian says mabye they can make me smart. I want to be smart. My name is Charlie Gordon I werk in Donners bakery where Mr Donner gives me 11 dollers a week and bred or cake if I want. I am 32 yeres old and next munth is my brithday. I tolld dr Strauss and perfesser Nemur I cant rite good but he says it dont matter he says I shud rite just like I talk and like I rite compushishens in Miss Kinnians class at the beekmin collidge center for retarted adults where I go to lern 3 times a week on my time off. Dr. Strauss says to rite a lot evrything I think and evrything that happins to me but I cant think anymor because I have nothing to rite so I will close for today... yrs truly Charlie Gordon.

## progris riport 2—martch 4

I had a test today. I think I faled it and I think mabye now they wont use me. What happind is I went Prof Nemurs office on my lunch time like they said and his secertery took me to a place that said psych dept on the door with a long hall and alot of littel rooms with onley a desk and chares. And a nice man was in one of the rooms and he had some wite cards with ink spilld all over them. He sed sit down Charlie and make yourself cunfortible and rilax. He had a wite coat like a docter but I dont thin he was no docter because he dint tell me to opin my mouth and say ah. All he had was those wite cards. His name is Burt. I fergot his last name because I dont remembir so good.

I dint know what he was gonna do and I was holding on tite to the chair like sometimes when I go to a dentist onley Burt aint no dentist neither but he kept telling me to rilax and that gets me skared because it always means its gonna hert.

So Burt sed Charlie what do you see on this card. I saw the spilld ink and I was very skared even tho I got my rabits foot in my pockit because when I was a kid I always faled tests in school and I spilld ink to.

I tolld Burt I saw ink spilld on a wite card. Burt said yes and he smild and that maid me feel good. He kept terning all the cards and I tolld him somebody spilld ink on all of them red and black. I thot that was a easy test but when I got up to go Burt stoppd me and said now sit down Charlie we are not thru yet. Theres more we got to do with these cards. I dint understand about it but I remembir Dr Strauss said do anything the testor telld me even if it dont make no sense because thats testing.

I dont remembir so good what Burt said but I remembir he wantid me to say what was in the ink. I dint see nothing in the ink but Burt sed there was picturs there. I coudnt see no picturs. I reely tryed to see. I holded the card up close and then far away. Then I said if I had my eye glassis I coud probaly see better I usully only ware my eyeglassis in the movies or to watch TV but I sed maybe they will help me see the picturs in the ink. I put them on and I said now let me see the card agan I bet I find it now.

I tryed hard but I still coudnt find the picturs I only saw the ink. I tolld Burt mabey I need new glassis. He rote somthing down on a paper and I got skared of faling the test. So I tolld him it was a very nice pictur of ink with pritty points all around the eges but he shaked his head so that wasnt it

neither. I asked him if other pepul saw things in the ink and he sed yes they imagen picturs in the inkblot. He tolld me the ink on the card was calld inkblot.

Burt is very nice and he talks slow like Miss Kinnian dose in her class where I go to lern reeding for slow adults. He explained me it was a *raw shok test*. He sed pepul see things in the ink. I said show me where. He dint show me he just kept saying *think* imagen theres something on the card. I tolld him I imaggen a inkblot. He shaked his head so that wasnt rite eather. He said what does it remind you of pretend its something. I clost my eyes for a long time to pretend and then I said I pretend a bottel of ink spilld all over a wite card. And thats when the point on his pencil broke and then we got up and went out.

I dont think I passd the *raw shok test*.

### 3d progris riport

**martch 5**—Dr Strauss and prof Nemur say it dont matter about the ink on the cards. I tolld them I dint spill the ink on them and I coudnt see anything in the ink. They said maybe they will still use me. I tolld Dr Strauss that Miss Kinnian never gave me tests like that only riting and reeding. He said Miss Kinnian tolld him I was her bestist pupil in the Beekman School for retarded adults and I tryed the hardist becaus I reely wantd to lern I wantid it more even then pepul who are smarter even then me.

Dr Strauss askd me how come you went to the Beekman School all by yourself Charlie. How did you find out about it. I said I dont remembir.

Prof Nemur said but why did you want to lern to reed and spell in the frist place. I tolld him becaus all my life I wantid to be smart and not dumb and my mom always tolld me to try and lern just like Miss Kinnian tells me but its very hard to be smart and even when I lern something in Miss Kinnians class at the school I ferget alot.

Dr Strauss rote some things on a peice of paper and prof Nemur talkd to me very sereus. He said you know Charlie we are not shure how this experamint will werk on pepul because we onley tried it up to now on animils. I said thats what Miss Kinnian tolld me but I dont even care if it herts or anything because Im strong and I will werk hard.

I want to get smart if they will let me. They said they got to get permissen from my familie but my uncle Herman who use to take care of me is ded and I dont rimember about my familie. I dint see my mother or father or my littel sister Norma for a long long long time. Mabye their ded to. Dr. Strauss askd me where they use to live. I think in brooklin. He sed they will see if mabye they can find them.

I hope I dont have to rite to much of these progris riports because it takes along time and I get to sleep very late and Im tired at werk in the morning. Gimpy hollered at me because I droppd a tray full of rolles I was carrying over to the oven. They got derty and he had to wipe them off before he put them in to bake. Gimpy hollers at me all the time when I do something rong, but he reely likes me because hes my frend. Boy if I get smart wont he be serprised.

### progris riport 4

**mar 6**—I had more crazy tests today in case they use me. That same place but a differnt littel testing room. The nice lady who give it to me tolld me the name and I askd her how do you spell it so I can put it down rite in my progis riport. THEMATIC APPERCEPTON TEST. I dont know the frist 2 werds but I

know what test means. You got to pass it or you get bad marks.

~~This test lookd easy because I could see the picturs. Only this time she dint want me to tell what I saw in the picturs. That mixd me up. I tolld her yesterday Burt said I shoud tell what I saw in the ink. She said that dont make a difrence because this test is something else. Now you got to make up story about the pepul in the picturs.~~

I said how can I tell storys about pepul I dont know. She said make beleeve but I tolld her thats lie. I never tell lies any more because when I was a kid I made lies and I always got hit. I got a pictur in my walet of me and Norma with Uncle Herman who got me the job to be janiter at Donners bakery before he dyed.

I said I could make storys about them because I livd with Uncle Herman along time but the lady dint want to hear about them. She said this test and the other one the *raw shok* was for getting persinality. I laffd. I tolld her how can you get that thing from cards that sombody spilld ink on and fotos of pepul you dont even no. She lookd angrey and took the picturs away. I dont care.

I gess I faled that test too.

Then I drew some picturs for her but I dont drawer so good. Later the other testor Burt in the wite coat came back his name is Burt Selden and he took me to a diferent place on the same 4th floor in the Beekman University that said PSYCHOLOGY LABORATORY on the door. Burt said psychology means minds and laboratory meens a place where they make spearamints. I thot he ment like where they made the chooing gum but now I think its puzzels and games because thats what we did.

I couldnt werk the puzzels so good because it was all broke and the peices couldnt fit in the holes. One game was a paper with lines in all derections and lots of boxes. On one side it said START and on the other end it said FINISH. He tolld me that game was *amazed* and I shoud take the pencil and go from where it said START to where it said finish withowt crossing over any of the lines.

I dint understand the amazed and we used up a lot of papers. Then Burt said look Ill show you something lets go to the spermental lab mabye youll get the idea. We went up to the 5 th floor to another room with lots of cages and animils they had monkys and some mouses. It had a funny smel like old garbidge. And there was other pepul in wite coats playing with the animils so I thot it was like a pet store but their wasnt no customers. Burt took a wite mouse out of the cage and showd him to me. Burt said thats Algernon and he can do this amazed very good. I tolld him you show me how he does that.

Well do you know he put Algernon in a box like a big tabel with alot of twists and terns like all kinds of walls and a START and a FINISH like the paper had. Only their was a skreen over the big tabel. And Burt took out his clock and lifted up a slidding door and said lets go Algernon and the mouse sniffd 2 or 3 times and startid to run. First he ran down one long row and then when he saw he couldnt go no more he came back where he startid from and he just stood there a minit wiggeling his wiskers. Then he went off in the other derection and startid to run again.

It was just like he was doing the same thing Burt wanted me to do with the lines on the paper. I wa laffing because I thot it was going to be a hard thing for a mouse to do. But then Algernon kept going all the way threw that thing all the rite ways till he came out where it said FINISH and he made a squeek. Burt says that means he was happy because he did the thing rite.

Boy I said thats a smart mouse. Burt said woud you like to race against Algernon. I said sure and he said he had a differnt kind of amaze made of wood with rows skratched in it and an elektrik stick like a pencil. And he could fix up Algernons amaze to be the same like that one so we could both be doing the same kind.

He moved all the bords around on Algernons tabel because they come apart and he could put them together in differnt ways. And then he put the skreen back on top so Algernon woudnt jump over any rows to get to the finish. Then he gave me the elektrik stick and showd me how to put it in between the



rows and I'm not supposed to lift it off the board just follow the little scratches until the pencil can't move any more or I get a little shock.

He took out his clock and he was trying to hide it. So I tried not to look at him and that made me very nervous.

When he said go I tried to go but I didn't know where to go. I didn't know the way to take. Then I heard Algernon squeaking from the box on the table and his feet scratching like he was running already. I started to go but I went in the wrong way and got stuck and a little shock in my fingers so I went back to the START but everytime I went a different way I got stuck and a shock. It didn't hurt or anything just made me jump a little and Burt said it was to show me I did the wrong thing. I was halfway on the board when I heard Algernon squeak like he was happy again and that means he won the race.

And the other ten times we did it over Algernon won every time because I couldn't find the right row to get to where it says FINISH. I didn't feel bad because I watched Algernon and I learned how to finish the maze even if it takes me a long time.

I didn't know mice were so smart.

## progris report 5 mar 6

They found my sister Norma who lives with my mother in Brooklyn and she gave permission for the operation. So they're going to use me. I'm so excited I can hardly write it down. But then Prof Nemur and Dr Strauss had an argument about it first. I was sitting in Prof Nemur's office when Dr Strauss and Burt Selden came in. Prof Nemur was worried about using me but Dr Strauss told him I looked like the best one they tested so far. Burt told him Miss Kinnian recommended me the best from all the people who she was teaching at the center for retarded adults. Where I go.

Dr Strauss said I had something that was very good. He said I had a good motor-variation. I never even knew I had that. I felt good when he said not everybody with an eye-Q of 68 had that thing like I had it. I don't know what it is or where I got it but he said Algernon had it too. Algernon's motor-variation is the cheese they put in his box. But it can't be only that because I didn't have no cheese this week.

Prof Nemur was worried about my eye-Q getting too high from mine that was too low and I would get sick from it. And Dr Strauss told Prof Nemur something I didn't understand so while they were talking I wrote down some of the words in my notebook for keeping my progress reports.

He said Harold that's Prof Nemur's first name I know Charlie is not what you had in mind as the first of your new breed of intelligent\*\* couldn't get the word\*\*\* superman. But most people of his low mental\*\* are hostile\*\* and uncooperative\*\* they are usually dull and apathetic\*\* and hard to reach. Charlie has a good nature and he's interested and eager to please.

Then Prof Nemur said remember he will be the first human being ever to have his intelligence increased by surgery. Dr Strauss said that's exactly what I meant. Where will we find another retarded adult with this tremendous motor-variation to learn. Look how well he has learned to read and write for his low mental age. A tremendous\*\* achievement\*\*

I didn't get all the words and they were talking too fast but it sounded like Dr Strauss and Burt were on my side and Prof Nemur wasn't.

Burt kept saying Alice Kinnian feels he has an overwhelming\*\* desire to learn. He actually begged to be used. And that's true because I wanted to be smart. Dr Strauss got up and walked around and said I say we use Charlie. And Burt nodded. Prof Nemur scratched his head and rubbed his nose with his thumb and said maybe your right. We will use Charlie. But we've got to make him understand that a lot of things can go wrong with the experiment.

When he said that I got so happy and exited I jumped up and shook his hand for being so good to me. I think he got skared when I did that.

He said Charlie we werked on this for a long time but only on animils like Algernon. We are sure thers no fisical danger for you but there are other things we cant tell until we try it. I want you to understand this mite fale and then nothing woud happen at all. Or it mite even sucseed temperary and leeve you werse off then you are now. Do you understand what that meens. If that happins we will have to send you bak to the Warren state home to live.

I said I dint care because I aint afraid of nothing. Im very strong and I always do good and beside I got my luky rabits foot and I never breakd a mirrir in my life. I droppd some dishis once but that dont count for bad luk.

Then Dr Strauss said Charlie even if this fales your making a grate contribyushun to sience. This experimint has been successful on lots of animils but its never bin tride on a humen beeing. You will be the first.

I told him thanks doc you wont be sorry for giving me my 2nd chanse like Miss Kinnian says. And meen it like I tolld them. After the operashun Im gonna try to be smart. Im gonna try awful hard.

## **progris riport 6th Mar 8**

Im skared. Lots of pepul who werk at the collidge and the pepul at the medicil school came to wish me luk. Burt the tester brot me some flowers he said they were from the pepul at the psych departmint. He wished me luk. I hope I have luk. I got my rabits foot and my luky penny and my horshoe. Dr Strauss said dont be so superstishus Charlie. This is sience. I dont no what sience is but they all keep saying its so mabye its something that helps you have good luk. Anyway Im keeping my rabits foot in one hand and my luky penny in the other hand with the hole in it. The penny I meen. I wish I coud take the horshoe with me to but its hevvy so Ill just leeve it in my jaket.

Joe Carp from the bakery brot me a chokilat cake from Mr Donner and the folks at the bakery and they hope I get better soon. At the bakery they think Im sick becaus thats what Prof Nemur said I shoud tell them and nothing about an operashun for getting smart. Thats a secrit until after in case it dont werk or something goes wrong.

Then Miss Kinnian came to see me and she brout me some magizenes to reed, and she lookd kind nervus and skared. She fixd up the flowres on my tabel and put evrything nice and neet not messd up like I made it. And she fixd the pilow under my hed. She likes me alot becaus I try very hard to lern evrything not like some of the pepul at the adult center who dont reely care. She wants me to get smart. I know.

Then Prof Nemur said I cant have any more visiters becaus I got to rest. I askd Prof Nemur if I cou beet Algernon in the race after the operashun and he sayd mabye. If the operashun werks good Ill sho that mouse I can be as smart as he is even smarter. Then Ill be abel to reed better and spell the werds good and know lots of things and be like other pepul. Boy that woud serprise everyone. If the operashun werks and I get smart mabye Ill be abel to find my mom and dad and sister and show them. Boy woud they be serprised to see me smart just like them and my sister.

Prof Nemur says if it werks good and its perminent they will make other pepul like me smart also. Mabye pepul all over the werld. And he said that meens Im doing somthing grate for sience and Ill be famus and my name will go down in the books. I dont care so much about beeing famus. I just want to be smart like other pepul so I can have lots of frends who like me.

They dint give me anything to eat today. I dont know what eating got to do with geting smart and

Im hungry. Prof Nemur took away my choklate cake. That Prof Nemur is a growch. Dr. Strauss says I can have it back after the operashun. You cant eat before a operashun. Not even cheese.

## PROGRESS REPORT 7 MARCH 11

The operashun dint hert. Dr. Strauss did it while I was sleeping. I dont know how because I dint see but there was bandiges on my eyes and my head for 3 days so I couldnt make no PROGRESS REPORT till today. The skinny nerse who wached me riting says I spelld progress rong and she tolld me how to spell it and REPORT to and MARCH. I got to remembir that. I have a very bad memary for speling. Anyway they took off the bandiges from my eyes today so I can make a PROGRESS REPORT now. But there is still some bandigis on my head.

I was skared when they came in and tolld me it was time to go for the operashun. They maid me ge out of the bed and on another bed that has weels on it and they rolld me out of the room and down the hall to the door that says sergery. Boy was I serprised that it was a big room with green walls and lots of docters sitting around up high all around the room waching the operashun. I dint no it was going to be like a show.

A man came up to the tabel all in wite and with a wite cloth on his face like in TV shows and rubbe glovs and he said rilax Charlie its me Dr Strauss. I said hi doc Im skared. He said theres nothing to be skared about Charlie he said youll just go to sleep. I said thats what Im skared about. He patted my head and then 2 other men waring wite masks too came and straped my arms and legs down so I couldnt move them and that maid me very skared and my stomack feeled tite like I was gone to make all over but I dint only wet a littel and I was gone to cry but they put a rubber thing on my face for m to breeth in and it smelld funny. All the time I herd Dr Strauss talking out loud about the operashun telling evrybody what he was gonna do. But I dint understand anything about it and I was thinking mabye after the operashun Ill be smart and Ill understand all the things hes talking about. So I breethed deep and then I gess I was very tired becase I went to sleep.

When I waked up I was back in my bed and it was very dark. I couldnt see nothing but I herd some talking. It was the nerse and Burt and I said whats the matter why dont you put on the lites and when are they gonna operate. And they laffed and Burt said Charlie its all over. And its dark because you g bandijis over your eyes.

Its a funny thing. They did it while I was sleeping.

Burt comes in to see me evry day to rite down all the things like my tempertur and my blod preshu and the other things about me. He says its on acount of the sientific methid. They got to keep reckerd about what happins so they can do it agen when they want to. Not to me but to the other pepul like me who aint smart.

Thats why I got to do these progis *progress reports*. Burt says its part of the esperimint and they will make fotastats of the rip *reports* to study them so they will know what is going on in my mind. I dont see how they will know what is going on in my mind by looking at these reports. I read them ov and over a lot of times to see what I rote and I dont no whats going on in my mind so how are they going to.

But anyway thats sience and I got to try to be smart like other pepul. Then when I am smart they will talk to me and I can sit with them and listen like Joe Carp and Frank and Gimpy do when they ta and have a discushen about important things. While their werking they start talking about things like about god or about the truble with all the mony the presedint is spending or about the ripublicans and demicrats. And they get all excited like their gonna have a fite so Mr Donner got to come in and tell

them to get back to baking or theyll all get canned union or no union. I want to talk about things like that.

If your smart you can have lots of frends to talk to and you never get lonley by yourself all the tim

Prof Nemur says its ok to tell about all the things that happin to me in the progress reports but he says I shoud rite more about what I feel and what I think and remembir about the past. I tolld him I dont know how to think or remembir and he said just try.

All the time the bandiges were on my eyes I tryed to think and remembir but nothing happined. I dont know what to think or remembir about. Maybe if I ask him he will tell me how I can think now that Im suppose to get smart. What do smart pepul think about or remembir. Fancy things I bet. I wis I new some fancy things alreedy.

**March 12**—I dont have to rite PROGRESS REPORT on top evry day just when I start a new batch after Prof Nemur takes the old ones away. I just have to put the date on top. That saves time. Its a good idea. I can sit up in bed and look out the window at the gras and trees outside. The skinney nerses name is Hilda and she is very good to me. She brings me things to eat and she fixes my bed and she says I was a very brave man to let them do things to my hed. She says she woud never let them do things to her branes for all the tea in china. I tolld her it wasnt for tea in china. It was to make me smart. And she said mabey they got no rite to make me smart because if god wantid me to be smart h would have made me born that way. And what about Adem and Eev and the sin with the tree of nowlege and eating the appel and the fall. And mabey Prof Nemur and Dr Strauss was tampiring with things they got no rite to tampir with.

She's very skinney and when she talks her face gets all red. She says mabey I better prey to god to ask him to forgiv what they done to me. I dint eat no appels or do nothing sinful. And now Im skared Mabey I shoudnt of let them oparate on my branes like she said if its agenst god. I dont want to make god angrey.

**March 13**—They changed my nerse today. This one is pritty. Her name is Lucille she showd me how to spell it for my progress report and she got yellow hair and blew eyes. I askd her where was Hilda and she said Hilda wasnt werking in that part of the hospitil no more. Only in the matirnity ward by the babys where it dont matter if she talks too much.

When I askd her about what was matirnity she said its about having babys but when I askd her how they have them she got red in the face just the same like Hilda and she said she got to take sombodys temperchure. Nobody ever tells me about the babys. Mabye if this thing werks and I get smart Ill find out.

Miss Kinnian came to see me today and she said Charlie you look wonderful. I tolld her I feel fine but I dont feel smart yet. I thot that when the operashun was over and they took the bandijis off my eyes Id be smart and no a lot of things so I coud read and talk about important things like evrybody else.

She said thats not the way it werks Charlie. It comes slowley and you have to werk very hard to ge smart.

I dint no that. If I got to werk hard anyway what did I have to have the operashun for. She said she wasnt sure but the operashun was to make it so that when I did werk hard to get smart it woud stick with me and not be like it was before when it dint stick so good.

Well I tolld her that made me kind of feel bad because I thot I was going to be smart rite away and coud go back to show the guys at the bakery how smart I am and talk with them about things and mabye even get to be an assistint baker. Then I was gone to try and find my mom and dad. They woud be serprised to see how smart I got because my mom always wanted me too be smart to. Mabey they

wouldnt send me away no more if they see how smart I am. I tolld Miss Kinnian I would try hard to be smart as hard as I can. She patted my hand and said I no you will. I have fayth in you Charlie.

## PROGRESS REPORT 8

**March 15**—Im out of the hospitil but not back at werk yet. Nothing is happining. I had lots of tests and differint kinds of races with Algernon. I hate that mouse. He always beets me. Prof Nemur says I got to play those games and I got to take those tests over and over agen.

Those amazes are stoopid. And those picturs are stoopid to. I like to drawer the picturs of a man and a woman but I wont make up lies about pepul.

And I cant do the puzzels good.

I get headakes from trying to think and remembir so much. Dr Strauss promised he was going to help me but he dont. He dont tell me what to think or when Ill get smart. He just makes me lay down on a couch and talk.

Miss Kinnian comes to see me at the collidge too. I tolld her nothing was happining. When am I going to get smart. She said you got to be pashent Charlie these things take time. It will happin so slowley you wont know its happening. She said Burt tolld her I was comming along fine.

I still think those races and those tests are stoopid and I think riting these progress reports are stoopid to.

**March 16**—I ate lunch with Burt at the collidge resturant. They got all kinds of good food and I dont have to pay for it neither. I like to sit and wach the collidge boys and girls. They fool around somtime but mostly they talk about all kinds of things just like the bakers do at Donners bakery. Burt says its about art and polatics and riligon. I dont know what those things are about but I know riligon is god. Mom use to tell me all about him and the things he done to make the werld. She said I shoud always love god and prey to him. I dont remembir how to prey to him but I think mom use to make me prey to him a lot when I was a kid that he shoud make me get better and not be sick. I dont rimember how I was sick. I think it was about me not being smart.

Anyway Burt says if the experimint werks Ill be able to understand all those things the studints are talking about and I said do you think Ill be smart like them and he laffed and said those kids arent so smart youll pass them as if their standing still.

He interduced me to alot of the studints and some of them look at me funny like I dont belong in a collidge. I almost forgot and started to tell them I was going to be very smart soon like them but Burt intruppted and he tolld them I was cleaning the psych department lab. Later he explained to me their mussent be any publisity. That meens its a seecrit.

I dont reely understand why I got to keep it a seecrit. Burt says its in case theirs a faleure Prof Nemur dont want everybody to laff espeshully the pepul from the Welberg foundashun who gave him the mony for the projekt. I said I dont care if pepul laff at me. Lots of pepul laff at me and their my frends and we have fun. Burt put his arm on my sholder and said its not you Nemurs worryd about. He dont want pepul to laff at him.

I dint think pepul would laff at Prof Nemur because hes a sientist in a collidge but Bert said no sientist is a grate man to his colleegs and his gradulate studints. Burt is a gradulate studint and he is a majer in *psychology* like the name on the door to the lab. I dint know they had majers in collidge. I thot it was onley in the army.

Anyway I hope I get smart soon because I want to lern everything there is in the werld like the

collidge boys know. All about art and politik and god.

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**March 17**—When I waked up this morning rite away I thot I was gone to be smart but Im not. Evry morning I think Im gone to be smart but nothing happins. Mabye the experimint dint werk. Maby I wont get smart and Ill have to go live at the Warren home. I hate the tests and I hate the amazeds and hate Algernon.

I never new before that I was dumber than a mouse. I dont feel like riting any more progress reports. I forget things and even when I rite them in my notbook sometimes I cant reed my own riting and its very hard. Miss Kinnian says have pashents but I feel sick and tired. And I get headakes all the time. I want to go back to werk in the bakery and not rite ~~progris~~ progress reports any more.

**March 20**—Im going back to werk at the bakery. Dr Strauss told Prof Nemur it was better I shoud go back to werk but I still cant tell anyone what the operashun was for and I have to come to the lab for hrs evry nite after werk for my tests and keep riting these dumb reports. They are going to pay me evry week like for a part time job because that was part of the arraingment when they got the mony from the Welberg foundashun. I still dont know what that Welberg thing is. Miss Kinnian explained me but I still dont get it. So if I dint get smart why are they paying me to rite these dumb things. If their gonna pay me Ill do it. But its very hard to rite.

Im glad Im going back to werk because I miss my job at the bakery and all my frends and all the fun we have.

Dr. Strauss says I shoud keep a notbook in my pockit for things I remembir. And I dont have to do the progress reports every day just when I think of somthing or somthing speshul happins. I told him nothing speshul ever happins to me and it dont look like this speshul experimint is going to happin neither. He says dont get discouriged Charlie because it takes a long time and it happins slow and you cant notise it rite away. He explained how it took a long time with Algernon before he got 3 times smarter then he was before.

Thats why Algernon beats me all the time in that amaze race because he had that operashun too. He a speshul mouse the 1st animil to stay smart so long after the operashun. I dint know he was a speshu mouse. That makes it diffrint. I coud probaly do that amazed faster then a reglar mouse. Maybe some day Ill beat Algernon. Boy woud that be somthing. Dr Strauss says that so far Algernon looks like he mite be smart permanint and he says thats a good sine becaus we both had the same kind of operashun.

**March 21**—We had a lot of fun at the bakery today. Joe Carp said hey look where Charlie had his operashun what did they do Charlie put some brains in. I was going to tell him about me getting smart but I remembered Prof Nemur said no. Then Frank Reilly said what did you do Charlie open a door the hard way. That made me laff. Their my frends and they really like me.

Their is a lot of werk to catch up. They dint have anyone to clean out the place because that was my job but they got a new boy Ernie to do the diliveries that I always done. Mr. Donner said he decided not to fire him for a while to give me a chanse to rest up and not werk so hard. I told him I was alrigh and I can make my diliveries and clean up like I always done but Mr. Donner says we will keep the boy.

I said so what am I gonna do. And Mr. Donner patted me on the shoulder and says Charlie how old are you. I told him 32 years going on 33 my next brithday. And how long you been here he said. I told him I dint know. He said you came here seventeen years ago. Your Uncle Herman god rest his sole was my best frend. He brout you in here and he askd me to let you werk here and look after you as be I coud. And when he died 2 years later and your mother had you comited to the Warren home I got them to releese you on outside werk placmint. Seventeen years its been Charlie and I want you to

know that the bakery business is not so good but like I always said you got a job here for the rest of your life. So don't worry about me bringing in somebody to take your place. You'll never have to go back to that Warren home.

I ain't worryd only what does he need Ernie for to deliver and work around here when I was always delivering the packages good. He says the boy needs the money Charlie so I'm going to keep him on as an apprentice to learn him to be a baker. You can be his assistant and help him out on deliveries when he needs it.

I never was an assistant before. Ernie is very smart but the other people in the bakery don't like him so much. They're all my good friends and we have lots of jokes and laughs here.

Some times somebody will say hey lookit Frank, or Joe or even Gimpy. He really pulled a Charlie Gordon that time. I don't know why they say it but they always laugh and I laugh too. This morning Gimpy is the head baker and he has a bad foot and he limps he used my name when he shouted at Ernie because Ernie lost a birthday cake. He said Ernie for god's sake you're trying to be a Charlie Gordon. I don't know why he said that. I never lost any packages.

I asked Mr Donner if I could learn to be an apprentice baker like Ernie. I told him I could learn it if he gave me a chance.

Mr Donner looked at me for a long time funny because I guess I don't talk so much most of the time. And Frank heard me and he laughed and laughed until Mr Donner told him to shut up and go tend to his oven. Then Mr Donner said to me there's lots of time for that Charlie. A baker's work is very important and very complicated and you shouldn't worry about things like that.

I wish I could tell him and all the other people about my real operation. I wish it would really work already so I could get smart like everybody else.

**March 24**—Prof Nemur and Dr Strauss came to my room tonight to see why I don't come in to the lab like I am supposed to. I told them I don't want to race with Algernon no more. Prof Nemur said I don't have to for a while but I should come in any way. He brought me a present only it wasn't a present but just for lend. He said it's a teaching machine that works like TV. It talks and makes pictures and I got to turn it on just before I go to sleep. I said your kidding. Why should I turn on a TV before I go to sleep. But Prof Nemur said if I want to get smart I got to do what he says. So I told him I didn't think I was going to get smart anyway.

Then Dr. Strauss came over and put his hand on my shoulder and said Charlie you don't know it yet but your getting smarter all the time. You won't notice it for a while like you don't notice how the hour hand on a clock moves. That's the way it is with the changes in you. They are happening so slow you can't tell. But we can follow it from the tests and the way you act and talk and your progress reports. He said Charlie you've got to have faith in us and in yourself. We can't be sure it will be permanent but we are confident that soon your going to be a very intelligent young man.

I said okay and Prof Nemur showed me how to work the TV that really wasn't a TV. I asked him what it did. First he looked sore again because I asked him to explain me and he said I should just do what he told me. But Dr Strauss said he should explain it to me because I was beginning to question authority. I don't know what that means but Prof Nemur looked like he was going to bite his lip off. Then he explained me very slow that the machine did lots of things to my mind. Somethings it did just before I fall asleep like teach me things when I'm very sleepy and a little while after I start to fall asleep I still hear the talk even if I don't see the pictures anymore. Other things is at night it's supposed to make me have dreams and remember things that happened a long time ago when I was a very little kid.

It's scary.

Oh yes I forgot. I asked Prof Nemur when I can go back to Miss Kinnian's class at the adult center and he said soon Miss Kinnian will come to the collage testing center to teach me special. I am glad

about that. I dint see her so much since the operashun but she is nice.

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**March 25**—That crazy TV kept me up all nite. How can I sleep with something yelling crazy things all night in my ears. And the nutty picturs. Wow. I dont know what it says when Im up so how am I going to know when Im sleeping. I asked Burt about it and he says its ok. He says my branes are lerning just before I got to sleep and that will help me when Miss Kinnian starts my lessons at the testing center. The testing center isnt a hospitol for animils like I thought before. Its a labortory for sience. I dont know what sience is exept Im helping it with this experimint.

Anyway I dont know about that TV I think its crazy. If you can get smart when your going to sleep why do pepul go to school. I dont think that thing will werk. I use to watch the late show and the late late show on TV all the time before I went to sleep and it never made me smart. Maybe only certin movies make you smart. Maybe like quizz shows.

**March 26**—How am I gonna work in the daytime if that thing keeps waking me up at nite. In the middel of the nite I woke up and I couldnt go back to sleep because it kept saying *remembir... remembir... remembir...* So I think I remembird something. I dont remembir exackly but it was about Miss Kinnian and the school where I lerned about reading. And how I went their.

A long time ago once I asked Joe Carp how he lerned to read and if I could lern to read to. He laffed like he always done when I say something funny and he says to me Charlie why waste your time they cant put any branes in where there aint none. But Fanny Birden herd me and she askd her cusin who is a collidge studint at Beekman and she told me about the adult center for retarded pepul at the Beekman collidge.

She rote the name down on a paper and Frank laffed and said dont go getting so eddicated that you wont talk to your old frends. I said dont worry I will always keep my old frends even if I can read and rite. He was laffing and Joe Carp was laffing but Gimpy came in and told them to get back to making rolls. They are all good frends to me.

After werk I walked over six blocks to the school and I was scared. I was so happy I was going to lern to read that I bougt a newspaper to take home with me and read after I lerned.

When I got their it was a big long hall with lots of pepul. I got scared of saying somthing wrong to somebody so I startid to go home. But I dont know why I terned around and went inside agen.

I wated until most everbody went away exept some pepul going over by a big timeclock like the one we have at the bakery and I asked the lady if I could lern to read and rite because I wanted to read all the things in the newspaper and I showed it to her. She was Miss Kinnian but I dint know it then. She said if you come back tomorow and rejister I will start to teach you how to read. But you got to understand it will take a long time maybe years to lern to read. I told her I dint know it took so long but I wantid to lern anyway because I made believe a lot of times. I meen I pretend to pepul I know how to read but it aint true and I wantid to lern.

She shaked my hand and said glad to meet you Mistre Gordon. I will be your teacher. My name is Miss Kinnian. So thats wear I went to lern and thats how I met Miss Kinnian.

Thinking and remembiring is hard and now I dont sleep so good any more. That TV is too loud.

**March 27**—Now that Im starting to have those dreams and remembiring Prof Nemur says I got to go to theripy sesions with Dr Strauss. He says theripy sesions is like when you feel bad you talk to make it better. I tolld him I dont feel bad and I do plenty of talking all day so why do I have to go to theripy but he got sore and says I got to go anyway.

What theripy is is that I got to lay down on a couch and Dr. Strauss sits in a chair near me and I tal about anything that comes into my head. For a long time I dint say nothing because I couldnt think of



nothing to say. Then I told him about the bakery and the things they do there. But its silly for me to go to his office and lay down on the couch to talk because I rite it down in the progress reports anyway and he could read it. So today I brout the progress report with me and I told him maybe he could just read it and I could take a nap on the couch. I was very tired because that TV kept me up all nite but he said no it dont work that way. I got to talk. So I talked but then I fell asleep on the couch anyway—right in the middle.

**March 28**—I got a headake. Its not from that TV this time. Dr Strauss showed me how to keep the TV turned low so now I can sleep. I dont hear a thing. And I still dont understand what it says. A few times I play it over in the morning to find out what I lerned before I fell asleep and while I was sleeping and I dont even know the words. Maybe its another langwidge or something. But most times it sounds american. But it talks too fast.

I askd Dr Strauss what good is it to get smart in my sleep if I want to be smart when Im awake. He says its the same thing and I have two minds. Theres the SUBCONSCIOUS *and the* CONSCIOUS (thats how you spell it) and one dont tell the other what its doing. They dont even talk to each other. Thats why I dream. And boy have I been having crazy dreams. Wow. Ever since that night TV The late late late late late movie show.

I forgot to ask Dr Strauss if it was only me or if everybody has two minds like that.

(I just looked up the word in the dicshunery Dr Strauss gave me. SUBCONSCIOUS. *adj. Of the nature of mental operations yet not present in consciousness; as, subconscious conflict of desires.* ) Theres more but I still dont know what it meens. This isnt a very good dicshunery for dumb people like me.

Anyway the headake is from the party. Joe Carp and Frank Reilly invited me to go with them after work to Hallorans Bar for some drinks. I dont like to drink wiskey but they said we will have lots of fun. I had a good time. We played games with me doing a dance on the top of the bar with a lampshade on my head and everyone laffing.

Then Joe Carp said I shoud show the girls how I mop out the toilet in the bakery and he got me a mop. I showed them and everyone laffed when I told them that Mr Donner said I was the best janiter and errand boy he ever had because I like my job and do it good and never come late or miss a day exept for my operashun.

I said Miss Kinnian always told me Charlie be proud of the work you do because you do your job good.

Everybody laffed and Frank said that Miss Kinnian must be some cracked up piece if she goes for Charlie and Joe said hey Charlie are you making out with her. I said I dint know what that meens. They gave me lots of drinks and Joe said Charlie is a card when hes potted. I think that means they like me. We have some good times but I cant wait to be smart like my best frends Joe Carp and Frank Reilly.

I dont remember how the party was over but they asked me to go around the corner to see if it was raining and when I came back there was no one their. Maybe they went to find me. I looked for them all over till it was late. But I got lost and I felt bad at myself for getting lost because I bet Algernon could go up and down those streets a hundrid times and not get lost like I did.

Then I dont remember so good but Mrs Flynn says a nice poleecman brought me back home.

That same nite I dreamed about my mother and father only I couldnt see her face it was all wite and she was blurry. I was crying because we were in a big departmint store and I was losst and I couldnt find them and I ran up and down the rows around all the big cownters in the store. Then a man came and took me in a big room with benches and gave me a lolypop and tolld me a big boy like me should cry because my mother and father woud come to find me.

Anyway thats the dream and I got a headake and a big lump on my head and black and blue marks

all over. Joe Carp says maybe I got rolled or the cop let me have it. I don't think policemen do things like that. But anyway I don't think I'll drink whiskey anymore.

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**March 29**—I beat Algernon. I didn't even know I beat him until Burt Selden told me. Then the second time I lost because I got so excited. But after that I beat him 8 more times. I must be getting smart to beat a smart mouse like Algernon. But I don't feel smarter.

I wanted to race some more but Burt said that's enough for one day. He let me hold Algernon for a minute. Algernon is a nice mouse. Soft like cotton. He blinks and when he opens his eyes their black and pink on the eyes.

I asked can I feed him because I felt bad to beat him and I wanted to be nice and make friends. Burt said no Algernon is a very special mouse with an operation like mine. He was the first of all the animals to stay smart so long and he said that Algernon is so smart he has to solve a problem with a lock that changes every time he goes in to eat so he has to learn something new to get his food. That made me sad because if he couldn't learn he wouldn't be able to eat and he would be hungry.

I don't think it's right to make you pass a test to eat. How would Burt like to have to pass a test every time he wants to eat. I think I'll be friends with Algernon.

That reminds me. Dr Strauss says I should write down all my dreams and the things I think so when I come to his office I can tell them. I told him I don't know how to think yet but he says he means more things like what I wrote about my mom and dad and about when I started school at Miss Kinnians or anything that happened before the operation is thinking and I wrote them in my progress report.

I didn't know I was thinking and remembering. Maybe that means something is happening to me. I don't feel different but I'm so excited I can't sleep.

Dr Strauss gave me some pink pills to make me sleep good. He says I got to get lots of sleep because that's when most of the changes happen in my brain. It must be true because Uncle Herman used to sleep in our house all the time when he was out of work on the old sofa in the parlor. He was fat and it was hard for him to get a job because he used to paint people's houses and he got very slow going up and down the ladder.

When I once told my mom I wanted to be a painter like Uncle Herman my sister Norma said yeah Charlie's going to be the artist of the family. And dad slapped her face and told her not to be so goddamned nasty to her brother. I don't know what an artist is but if Norma got slapped for saying it I guess it's not a nice thing. I always felt bad when Norma got slapped for being mean to me. When I get smart I'll go visit her.

**March 30**—Tonight after work Miss Kinnian came to the teaching room near the laboratory. She looked glad to see me but nervous. She looks younger than I remembered her. I told her I was trying very hard to be smart. She said I have confidence in you Charlie the way you struggled so much to read and write better than all the others. I know you can do it. At worst you will have it all for a little while and you're doing something for other retarded people.

We started to read a very hard book. I never read such a hard book before. It's called Robinson Crusoe about a man who gets marooned on a desert island. He's smart and figures out all kinds of things so he can have a house and food and he's a good swimmer. Only I feel sorry for him because he's all alone and he has no friends. But I think there must be somebody else on the island because there's a picture of him with his funny umbrella looking at footprints. I hope he gets a friend and not be so lonely.

**March 31**—Miss Kinnian teaches me how to spell better. She says look at a word and close your eyes and say it over and over again until you remember. I have lots of trouble with *through* that you say THREW and *enough* and *tough* that you don't say ENEW and TEW. You got to say ENUFF and TUFF. That's

how I use to rite it before I started to get smart. Im mixd up but Miss Kinnian says dont worry spelling is not suppose to make sence.

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## PROGRESS REPORT 9

**April 1**—Everbody in the bakery came to see me today where I started my new job working by the dough-mixer. It happined like this. Oliver who works on the mixer quit yesterday. I used to help him out before bringing the bags of flour over for him to put in the mixer. Anyway I dint know that I knew how to work the mixer. Its very hard and Oliver went to bakers school for one year before he could learn how to be an assistint baker.

But Joe Carp hes my friend he said Charlie why dont you take over Olivers job. Everybody on the floor came around and they were ~~laff~~ *laughing* and Frank Reilly said yes Charlie you been here long ~~enuff~~ *enough*. Go ahead. Gimpy aint around and he wont know you tryed it. I was scared because Gimpy is the head baker and he told me never to go near the mixer because I would get hurt. Everyone said do it exept Fannie Birden who said stop it why dont you leave the poor man alone.

Frank Reilly said shut up Fanny its April fools day and if Charlie works on the mixer he might fix good so we will all have the day off. I said I couldnt fix the mashine but I could work it because I been watching Oliver ever since I got back.

I worked the dough-mixer and everybody was surprised espeshully Frank Reilly. Fanny Birden got exited because she said it took Oliver 2 years to learn how to mix the dough right and he went to bakers school. Bernie Bate who helps on the mashine said I did it faster then Oliver did and better. Nobody laffed. When Gimpy came back and Fanny told him he got sore at me for working on the mixer.

But she said watch him and see how he does it. They were playing him for an April Fool joke and l foold them instead. Gimpy watched and I knew he was sore at me because he dont like when people dont do what he tells them just like Prof Nemur. But he saw how I worked the mixer and he skratched his head and said I see it but I dont believe it. Then he called Mr Donner and told me to work it again so Mr Donner could see it.

I was scared he was going to be angry and holler at me so after I was finished I said can I go back to my own job now. I got to sweep out the front of the bakery behind the counter. Mr Donner looked at me funny for a long time. Then he said this must be some kind of April fools joke you guys are playing on me. Whats the catch.

Gimpy said thats what I thought it was some kind of a gag. He limped all around the mashine and l said to Mr Donner I dont understand it either but Charlie knows how to handle it and I got to admit it he does a better job then Oliver.

Everybody was crowded around and talking about it and I got scared because they all looked at me funny and they were exited. Frank said I told you there is something peculier lately about Charlie. And Joe Carp says yeah I know what you mean. Mr Donner sent everybody back to work and he took me out to the front of the store with him.

He said Charlie I dont know how you done it but it looks like you finally learned something. I want you to be carefull and do the best you can do. You got yourself a new job with a 5 doller raise.

I said I dont want a new job because I like to clean up and sweep and deliver and do things for my friends but Mr Donner said never mind your friends I need you for this job. I dont think much of a man who dont want to advance.

I said whats advance mean. He scratched his head and looked at me over his glasses. Never mind

that Charlie. From now on you work that mixer. Thats advance.

~~So now instead of delivering packiges and washing out the toilets and dumping the garbage. Im the~~ new mixer. Thats advance. Tomorrow I will tell Miss Kinnian. I think she will be happy but I dont know why Frank and Joe are mad at me. I asked Fanny and she said never mind those fools. This is April Fools day and the joke backfired and made them the fools instead of you.

I asked Joe to tell me what was the joke that backfired and he said go jump in the lake. I guess they mad at me because I worked the mashine but they didnt get the day off like they thought. Does that mean Im getting smarter.

**April 3**—Finished Robinson Crusoe. I want to find out more about what happens to him but Miss Kinnian says thats all there is. WHY.

**April 4**—Miss Kinnian says Im learning fast. She read some of my progress reports and she looked at me kind of funny. She says Im a fine person and Ill show them all. I asked her why. She said never mind but I shouldnt feel bad if I find out that everybody isnt nice like I think. She said for a person who God gave so little to you did more than a lot of people with brains they never even used. I said that all my friends are smart people and their good. They like me and they never did anything that wasnt nice. Then she got something in her eye and she had to run out to the ladys room.

While I was sitting in the teaching room waiting for her I was wondering about how Miss Kinnian was a nice lady like my mother use to be. I think I remember my mother told me to be good and always be friendly to people. She said but always be careful because some people dont understand and they might think you are trying to make trouble.

That makes me remember when mom had to go away and they put me to stay in Mrs Leroy's house who lived next door. Mom went to the hospital. Dad said she wasnt sick or nothing but she went to the hospital to bring me back a baby sister or a brother. (I still dont know how they do that) I told them I want a baby brother to play with and I dont know why they got me a sister instead but she was nice like a doll. Only she cryd all the time.

I never hurt her or nothing.

They put her in a crib in their room and once I heard Dad say dont worry Charlie wouldnt harm her.

She was like a bundle all pink and screaming sometimes that I couldnt sleep. And when I went to sleep she woke me up in the nighttime. One time when they were in the kitchen and I was in my bed she was crying. I got up to pick her up and hold her to get quiet the way mom does. But then Mom came in yelling and took her away. And she slapped me so hard I fell on the bed.

Then she startid screaming. Dont you ever touch her again. Youll hurt her. Shes a baby. You got no business touching her. I dint know it then but I guess I know it now that she thought I was going to hurt the baby because I was too dumb to know what I was doing. Now that makes me feel bad because I would never of hurt the baby.

When I go to Dr Straus office I got to tell him about that.

**April 6**—Today, I learned, the *comma*, this is, a, comma (,) a period, with, a tail, Miss Kinnian, says its, important, because, it makes writing, better, she said, somebody, could lose, a lot, of money, if a comma, isnt in, the right, place, I got, some money, that I, saved from, my job, and what, the foundation, pays me, but not, much and, I dont, see how, a comma, keeps, you from, losing it,

But, she says, everybody, uses commas, so Ill, use them, too,,,

**April 7**—I used the comma wrong. Its *punctuation*. Miss Kinnian told me to look up long words in the dictionary to learn to spell them. I said whats the difference if you can read it anyway. She said its pa

of your education so from now on I'll look up all the words I'm not sure how to spell. It takes a long time to write that way but I think I'm remembering more and more.

Anyway that's how come I got the word *punctuation* right. It's that way in the dictionary. Miss Kinnian says a period is punctuation too, and there are lots of other marks to learn. I told her I thought she meant all the periods had to have tails and be called commas. But she said no.

She said; You, got. to-mix?them!up: She showd? me" how, to mix! them; up, and now! I can. mix (up all? kinds of punctuation—in, my. writing! There" are lots, of rules; to learn? but. I'm' get'ting them in my head:

One thing? I, like: about, Dear Miss Kinnian: (that's, the way? it goes; in a business, letter (if I ever go! into business?) is that, she: always; gives me' a reason" when—I ask. She"s a gen'ius! I wish? I cou'd be smart-like-her;

Punctuation, is? fun!

**April 8**—What a dope I am! I didn't even understand what she was talking about. I read the grammar book last night and it explains the whole thing. Then I saw it was the same way as Miss Kinnian was trying to tell me, but I didn't get it. I got up in the middle of the night and the whole thing straightened out in my mind.

Miss Kinnian said that the TV working, just before I fell asleep and during the night, helped out. She said I reached a *plateau*. That's like the flat top of a hill.

After I figured out how punctuation worked, I read over all my old progress reports from the beginning. Boy, did I have crazy spelling and punctuation! I told Miss Kinnian I ought to go over the pages and fix all the mistakes, but she said, "No, Charlie, Professor Nemur wants them just as they are. That's why he lets you keep them after they're photostated—to see your own progress. You're coming along fast, Charlie."

That made me feel good. After the lesson I went down and played with Algernon. We don't race any more.

**April 10**—I feel sick. Not like for a doctor, but inside my chest it feels empty, like getting punched and a heartburn at the same time.

I wasn't going to write about it, but I guess I got to, because it's important. Today was the first day I ever stayed home from work on purpose.

Last night Joe Carp and Frank Reilly invited me to a party. There were lots of girls and Gimpy was there and Ernie too. I remembered how sick I got last time I drank too much, so I told Joe I didn't want to drink anything. He gave me a plain coke instead. It tasted funny, but I thought it was just a bad taste in my mouth.

We had a lot of fun for a while.

"Dance with Ellen," Joe said. "She'll teach you the steps." Then he winked at her like he had something in his eye.

She said, "Why don't you leave him alone?"

He slapped me on the back. "This is Charlie Gordon, my buddy, my pal. He's no ordinary guy—he's been promoted to working on the dough-mixing machine. All I did was ask you to dance with him and give him a good time. What's wrong with that?"

He pushed me up close against her. So she danced with me. I fell three times and I couldn't understand why because no one else was dancing besides Ellen and me. And all the time I was tripping because somebody's foot was always sticking out.

They were all around in a circle watching and laughing at the way we were doing the steps. They laughed harder every time I fell, and I was laughing too because it was so funny. But the last time it

happened I didn't laugh. I picked myself up and Joe pushed me down again.

Then I saw the look on Joe's face and it gave me a funny feeling in my stomach.

"He's a scream," one of the girls said. Everybody was laughing.

"Oh, you were right, Frank," choked Ellen. "He's a one man side show." Then she said, "Here, Charlie, have a fruit." She gave me an apple, but when I bit into it, it was fake.

Then Frank started laughing and he said, "I told ya he'd eat it. C'n you imagine anyone dumb enough to eat wax fruit?"

Joe said, "I ain't laughed so much since we sent him around the corner to see if it was raining that night we ditched him at Halloran's."

Then I saw a picture that I remembered in my mind when I was a kid and the children in the block let me play with them, hide-and-go-seek and I was IT. After I counted up to ten over and over on my fingers I went to look for the others. I kept looking until it got cold and dark and I had to go home.

But I never found them and I never knew why.

What Frank said reminded me. That was the same thing that happened at Halloran's. And that was what Joe and the rest of them were doing. Laughing at me. And the kids playing hide-and-go-seek were playing tricks on me and they were laughing at me too.

The people at the party were a bunch of blurred faces all looking down and laughing at me.

"Look at him. His face is red."

"He's blushing. Charlie's blushing."

"Hey, Ellen, what'd you do to Charlie? I never saw him act like this before."

"Boy, Ellen sure got him worked up."

I didn't know what to do or where to turn. Her rubbing up against me made me feel funny. Everybody was laughing at me and all of a sudden I felt naked. I wanted to hide myself so they wouldn't see. I ran out of the apartment. It was a large apartment house with lots of halls and I couldn't find my way to the staircase. I forgot all about the elevator. Then, after, I found the stairs and ran out into the street and walked for a long time before I went to my room. I never knew before that Joe and Frank and the others liked to have me around just to make fun of me.

Now I know what they mean when they say "to pull a Charlie Gordon."

I'm ashamed.

And another thing. I dreamed about that girl Ellen dancing and rubbing up against me and when I woke up the sheets were wet and messy.

**April 13**—Still didn't go back to work at the bakery. I told Mrs. Flynn, my landlady, to call and tell Mr. Donner I'm sick. Mrs. Flynn looks at me lately like she's scared of me.

I think it's a good thing about finding out how everybody laughs at me. I thought about it a lot. It's because I'm so dumb and I don't even know when I'm doing something dumb. People think it's funny when a dumb person can't do things the same way they can.

Anyway, now I know I'm getting a little smarter every day. I know punctuation, and I can spell good. I like to look up all the hard words in the dictionary and I remember them. And I try to write these progress reports very careful but that's hard to do. I am reading a lot now, and Miss Kinnian says I read very fast. And I even understand a lot of the things I'm reading about, and they stay in my mind. There are times when I can close my eyes and think of a page and it all comes back like a picture.

But other things come into my head too. Sometimes I close my eyes and I see a clear picture. Like this morning just after I woke up, I was laying in bed with my eyes open. It was like a big hole opened up in the walls of my mind and I can just walk through. I think its far back... a long time ago when I first started working at Donner's Bakery. I see the street where the bakery is. Fuzzy at first and then i

gets patchy with some things so real they are right here now in front of me, and other things stay blurred, and I'm not sure....

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A little old man with a baby carriage made into a pushcart with a charcoal burner, and the smell of roasting chestnuts, and snow on the ground. A young fellow, skinny with wide eyes and a scared look on his face looking up at the store sign. What does it say? Blurred letters in a way that don't make sense. I know *now* that the sign says DONNER'S BAKERY, but looking back in my memory at the sign I can't read the words through his eyes. None of the signs make sense. I think that fellow with the scared look on his face is me.

Bright neon lights. Christmas trees and sidewalk peddlers. People bundled in coats with collars up and scarves around their necks. But he has no gloves. His hands are cold and he puts down a heavy bundle of brown paper bags. He's stopping to watch the little mechanical toys that the peddler winds up—the tumbling bear, the dog jumping, the seal spinning a ball on its nose. Tumbling, jumping, spinning. If he had all those toys for himself he would be the happiest person in the world.

He wants to ask the red-faced peddler, with his fingers sticking through the brown cotton gloves, if he can hold the tumbling bear for a minute, but he is afraid. He picks up the bundle of paper bags and puts it on his shoulder. He is skinny but he is strong from many years of hard work.

*“Charlie! Charlie!... fat head barley!”*

Children circle around him laughing and teasing him like little dogs snapping at his feet. Charlie smiles at them. He would like to put down his bundle and play games with them, but when he thinks about it the skin on his back twitches and he feels the way the older boys throw things at him.

Coming back to the bakery he sees some boys standing in the door of a dark hallway.

“Hey look, there's Charlie!”

“Hey, Charlie. What you got there? Want to shoot some craps?”

“C'mere. We won't hurtya.”

But there is something about the doorway—the dark hall, the laughing, that makes his skin twitch again. He tries to know what it is but all he can remember is their dirt and piss all over his clothes, and Uncle Herman shouting when he came home all covered with filth, and how Uncle Herman ran out with a hammer in his hand to find the boys who did that to him. Charlie backs away from the boys laughing in the hallway, drops the bundle. Picks it up again and runs the rest of the way to the bakery.

“What took you so long, Charlie?” shouts Gimpy from the doorway to the back of the bakery.

Charlie pushes through the swinging doors to the back of the bakery and sets down the bundle on one of the skids. He leans against the wall shoving his hands into his pockets. He wishes he had his spinner.

He likes it back here in the bakery where the floors are white with flour—whiter than the sooty walls and ceiling.

The thick soles of his own high shoes are crusted with white and there is white in the stitching and lace-eyes, and under his nails and in the cracked chapped skin of his hands.

He relaxes here—squatting against the wall—leaning back in a way that tilts his baseball cap with the *D* forward over his eyes. He likes the smell of flour, sweet dough, bread and cakes and rolls baking. The oven is crackling and makes him sleepy.

Sweet... warm... sleep Suddenly, falling, twisting, head hitting against the wall. Someone has kicked his legs out from under him.

That's all I can remember. I can see it all clearly, but I don't know why it happened. It's like when used to go to the movies. The first time I never understood because they went too fast but after I saw the picture three or four times I used to understand what they were saying. I've got to ask Dr. Strauss

about it.

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**April 14**—Dr. Strauss says the important thing is to keep recalling memories like the one I had yesterday and to write them down. Then when I come into his office we can talk about them.

Dr. Strauss is a psychiatrist and a neurosurgeon. I didn't know that. I thought he was just a plain doctor. But when I went to his office this morning, he told me about how important it is for me to learn about myself so that I can understand my problems. I said I didn't have any problems.

He laughed and then he got up from his chair and went to the window. "The more intelligent you become the more problems you'll have, Charlie. Your intellectual growth is going to outstrip your emotional growth. And I think you'll find that as you progress, there will be many things you'll want to talk to me about. I just want you to remember that this is the place for you to come when you need help."

I still don't know what it's all about, but he said even if I don't understand my dreams or memories or why I have them, some time in the future they're all going to connect up, and I'll learn more about myself. He said the important thing is to find out what those people in my memories are saying. It's all about me when I was a boy and I've got to remember what happened.

I never knew about these things before. It's like if I get intelligent enough I'll understand all the words in my mind, and I'll know about those boys standing in the hallway, and about my Uncle Herman and my parents. But what he means is then I'm going to feel bad about it all and I might get sick in my mind.

So I've got to come into his office twice a week now to talk about the things that bother me. We just sit there, and I talk, and Dr. Strauss listens. It's called therapy, and that means talking about things will make me feel better. I told him one of the things that bothers me is about women.

Like dancing with that girl Ellen got me all excited. So we talked about it and I got a funny feeling while I was talking, cold and sweaty, and a buzzing inside my head and I thought I was going to throw up. Maybe because I always thought it was dirty and bad to talk about that. But Dr. Strauss said what happened to me after the party was a wet dream, and it's a natural thing that happens to boys.

So even if I'm getting intelligent and learning a lot of new things, he thinks I'm still a boy about women. It's confusing, but I'm going to find out all about my life.

**April 15**—I'm reading a lot these days and almost everything is staying in my mind. Besides history and geography and arithmetic, Miss Kinnian says I should start learning foreign languages. Prof. Nemur gave me some more tapes to play while I sleep. I still don't know how the conscious and unconscious mind works, but Dr. Strauss says not to worry yet. He made me promise that when I start learning college subjects in a couple of weeks I won't read any books on psychology—that is, until he gives me permission. He says it will confuse me and make me think about psychological theories instead of about my own ideas and feelings. But it's okay to read novels. This week I read *The Great Gatsby*, *An American Tragedy*, and *Look Homeward, Angel*. I never knew about men and women doing things like that.

**April 16**—I feel a lot better today, but I'm still angry that all the time people were laughing and making fun of me.

When I become intelligent the way Prof. Nemur says, with much more than twice my I.Q. of 70, then maybe people will like me and be my friends.

I'm not sure what I.Q. is anyway. Prof. Nemur said it was something that measured how intelligent you were—like a scale in the drugstore weighs pounds. But Dr. Strauss had a big argument with him and said an I.Q. didn't *weigh* intelligence at all. He said an I.Q. showed how much intelligence you



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