

## Chapter Twenty-Four

*Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.*

*- Jesus -*

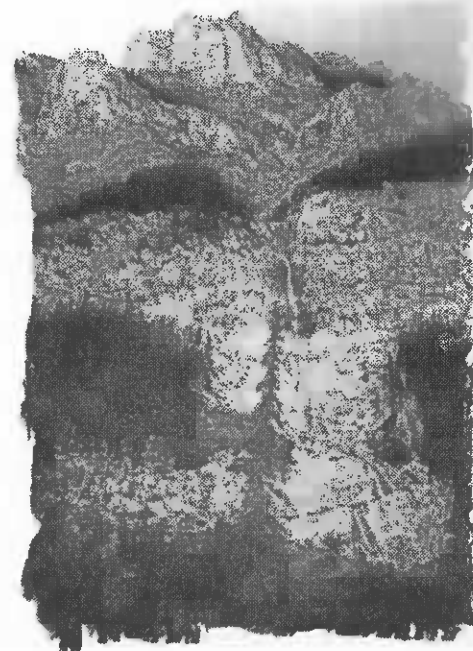
I had an extra key hidden in the van and I thought about taking off with the van when no one was looking but that could turn ugly. When I got back to the dealership, there was a RCMP cop waiting for me. The bastard ran my drivers license and started asking me a bunch of questions about how I was going to pay for the repair. I told him that my mother was wiring the money and that everything would work out. He then demanded my car keys so I could not drive off without paying. I was really pissed that the dealership had called the cops.

I got my camera out of the van and started taking pictures of the dealership and the manager. I kept telling them they were going to be in my next book and this seemed to really piss them off. The manager demanded the film back from the camera and I told him that I would not give it to him. He threatened to call the cops again and I told him to go ahead and do it. I was a tourist in Canada and I was taking pictures, so what. Things were getting ugly. Finally the money came through and I gratefully hit the road again.

I was finally in Alberta. The country was becoming more mountainous and the weather was drying out. The van was running well and the new bakes were working well. For what I paid for them, they should have been gold plated. We were coming into the mountains of western Canada. We turned north on Highway 93, at the Icefields Parkway, and headed north. We stopped at Lake Louise, which was a beautiful bluish color, and took some pictures.

The scenery was stunning. Every curve on the Icefields Parkway revealed a new mountain panorama. Lucy and I hiked way up onto the British Columbian icefield. The problem with

hiking onto the glaciers was the crevasses. They are huge cracks in the ice that can be hundreds of feet deep. They can be hard to see and if you fall in one it is virtually impossible to get out. What usually happens is that people die from hypothermia because of the cold water. The rangers had put up a sign warning of the danger and pointing out that the last four rescue attempts ended in failure.



**Waterfall on Icefields Parkway**

I found a state campground in Banff. It was a nice campground but it cost twenty-five bucks a night. Banff is a real tourist town and it is highly favored by the Japanese. They even had signs in Japanese in the stores. Everything in Banff was bear-proofed. They had these fancy trash cans and dumpsters that were engineered to keep out hungry grizzly bears. There were signs all over town warning about elk and bears. It seemed a bit excessive to me.

I stayed in Banff a few days to see the sights. There were a lot of waterfalls in the area and I would hike deep into the canyons to see them. The water was spectacularly clear and often one could see trout hovering behind the rocks.

I tried to find a place to sell books but no one would work with me. I sold a few to fellow campers or people I met on the trail. I sold ten books to the bookstore at a really fancy hotel and the guy gave me a check written on a CIBC (Canadian Imperial

Bank of Commerce) account. This is a huge Canadian bank so I figured there would be no problem.

I took the check into the bank and asked to have it cashed and they would not do it. I showed them a copy of my book and the check was from a bookstore. It did not take a rocket scientist to fire out why I had a check from a bookstore. They would not cash it! I told them to call the bookstore owner or do whatever they had to get my check cashed and they would not do it. I told them I would pay a fee or show ID or do whatever was necessarily to get the thing cashed, and they still would not do it. I went out and got my camera and started taking pictures of the pricks at the bank and they got all excited about security and threatened to call the cops. I kept yelling that they were all going to end up in my next book and I guess they did. After the debacle at the CIBC bank, I walked across the street to a money exchange and they cashed the check for a \$2.50 fee. I could never figure out why the bank was so mean.

I tried to keep my campsite all neat and tidy to keep the bears out but one night I forgot and left the cooler sitting out on the picnic table. About two a.m., I saw a park ranger drive by my camp real slow. I did not pay much attention as I thought everything was cool. About half an hour later, the RCMP shows up and hits his lights. The whole camp lit up like daytime. I get out of the van to see what is going on. The guy busts me for being a bear hazard because I left my cooler out. I apologized and put the offending cooler back in the van and the guy left after giving me a written warning. I kept the ticket for a souvenir. That morning when I checked out I left several cans of cat food open and hidden in the woods for the forest creatures to eat.

*Why son, you are a salesman!  
You could sell Nickels for a dime.  
- Some old lady At Cedar Key -*

We stopped at Moraine Lake and of course I threw Lucy in. The elevation was 6300 feet. It was the highest body of water she

had ever been thrown in. We were in the Arctic watershed where water flows north towards the North Pole.

We drove on to Jasper. The drive between Banff and Jasper is one of the most spectacular drives in North America. Every curve in the road brings a new mountain vista. There were seven huge glaciers visible from the highway. Once while hiking up one of the glaciers, it made this weird creaking sound which could be heard for miles in the still mountain air.

I picked up a couple of girls hitchhiking into town for supplies and I took them to the IGA grocery store. It turned out to be a fateful stop. I went in to the store to get some dog food for Lucy and she made friends with the employees. I told the manager that I would give her a free book if she would let me set up my card table in front of the store. She said that would be fine and I set up and began selling books right away. The IGA was within walking distance of a stop on the TransCanadian railroad. There were a lot of English people on the train and they loved dogs. They would buy books and then go inside and buy Lucy treats. It was a great racket. The view from the parking lot of the IGA was stunning.

I liked Jasper right away and figured I would stick around for awhile. At first I stayed in the campground. They had free firewood and I made a fire almost every night. The place was pretty tightly run and I could see that I could not stay there for free and I did not feel like paying twenty-six dollars a night for the privilege of sleeping in my van.

I started driving around trying to find a place where I could camp for free and no one could find me. The Canadian west is not as open as the America west. In the states there is a lot of federal land and no one cares if you camp out there or not. In Canada they had all these no trespassing signs or no camping signs all over the place.

It took me a few days but I finally found a place up a fire road that was way out in the Canadian wilderness. It was seventeen

miles from the pavement to the camp. The last four miles were pretty hairy. I had to ford a small river and then climb a one lane rock ledge with a thousand foot drop. I never met another car on the narrow part but it always worried me. If I met a car up there one of us would have to back down. It was a very steep road and at night it was pretty scary. I just hugged the wall and drove really slow. About a mile past the rock was a small dirt road that had been bulldozed into the side of a steep mountain canyon. There was a level camp spot near the top of the canyon and it could not be seen from the road. The road dead-ended a quarter of a mile up so there should be no traffic. It was a perfect place to bushwhack camp and it cost nothing.

*The greatest coincidence of all  
would be if there were no coincidences.*

The new camp had a spectacular view of Pyramid Mountain. I had a view of several large lakes and the TransCanadian railroad rumbled on a thousand feet below camp. I set up my camping stuff and made a huge fire.

I had forgotten to fill the canteens before I found camp and it was getting dark. I had crossed a small river a ways back so I decided to go back for water. After I pulled out of camp I realized that I was going the wrong way and tried to turn around on the narrow fire road. In doing so I ran the back wheels off the side of the road and got stuck. The van high centered and I was stuck for the night if no one showed up. It was my fifty-third birthday. I sat up late listening to Art Bell interview some guy who said he had lowered a microphone into hell and made a recording of what was going on down there. It was a very strange recording. After that he had another guest who was a psychologist who only practiced with the children of aliens. No one came by during the night and it did not look like anyone would be coming any time soon.

*Oh Lord Why hast thou forgotten me?  
- The Last words of Jesus Christ, Bible -*

When the sun came up I looked over the situation. I could back the van out but that would put me farther off the road. There was a steep incline and if I got too far down it would be a major deal to get the thing out. My tow chain was not that long. However once I got the van off its high center perch it looked like I could get a running start back onto the gravel fire road. Otherwise I could sit and wait all day or walk ten miles to the black top.

I backed Delores off the hump I had been stuck on and got out to survey the situation. There was a huge hump separating the field I was in and the road. There were rocks and soft ground everywhere and it was a tricky deal. I found a likely looking path and revved up the van. I popped her in low and floored the thing. I had about seventy-five feet to get up to speed before my path would be obstructed by rocks and shrubs. It was a bumpy ride and it scared the hell out of Lucy but I got Delores back on the fire road with only a few scratches. It would have cost a fortune to get the thing towed out. It was a long, weird, strange, birthday.

I met a lot of the locals in Jasper. I went out to play hockey with them a few nights. In the summer they played in tennis shoes on hard pavement. It was amazing to see how hard those kids could slap a hockey puck. There was one kid from Newfoundland who could stand a hundred feet back and nail the thing into the net every time with incredible speed.

*A psychotic thinks that two plus two equals nine;  
a neurotic knows perfectly well that two plus two equals four,  
he just can't stand it.*

The Newfies were all wild. They were the friendliest, hardest drinking people I have ever met. They bragged about how after the 9-11 attacks all the Newfies went out to the airports at Gander Newfoundland and picked up all the stranded Americans and took them to their homes. They were especially proud of the fact that they usually got the Americans drunk and that they did not ask for any money.

Meanwhile I kept selling books at the IGA. I was running low on books. I had started out with the van stuffed with the things but I had been selling steady all summer. I had left three cases in Florida with Glanzer Press and I figured that I better get some sent to Canada. The cheapest way was to mail them. The Athabasca Hotel was the main drop off point for DHL. They said I could use the hotel as a mailing address and I called Joy Glanzer to have the books mailed to the Athabasca. If only it were that simple.

## Chapter Twenty-Five



I had my Mom send Joy Glanzer \$1500 from the GOBA money I had stashed to buy the paper for the next printing. I figured a week or two for the mail and by the time I sold the last three cases I would have the new edition out.

I decided to take Lucy backpacking in the Rockies. Somehow I chose the Skyline Trail after talking to several of the locals. It went up into the heart of the Canadian Rockies and the views were incredible. I put a lot of thought into the trip as I did not want to end up as another dead American from Florida who died in the mountains.

*What are the last four words of a Redneck?  
- Hey, Y'all, watch this -*

I spent three days at Windy Camp, as I had come to call my new camp site. It was in a mountain valley and the wind would come barreling down the canyon. The weather was getting colder and some days even with a big fire going it was too cold to sit outside for very long. At night mountain goats would often browse on



**Road to Windy Camp**

the hill sides within view of camp. The only night sounds were the rumbling of the TransCanadian railroad a thousand feet below.

It was mating season for the elk and they were always around. They are huge peaceful slow-moving creatures for the most part. The bulls weigh well over one thousand pounds and they often held up traffic. One morning we saw an Arctic fox and six coyotes on the drive into Jasper.



**View from Windy Camp**

I spent three days getting my gear ready for the big backpacking trip. The plan was to hike the Skyline Trail from Maline Lake down to the TransCanadian and then hitchhike to the van. It was a distance of about seventy miles and I figured I could make it in a week to ten days. I packed a lot of dry light food like macaroni and rice. There would be plenty of water on the way with melting snow and small mountain streams. I had a heavy pack and I was out of shape so I figured that I would take plenty of food and walk short distances.

*If it needs fetching or guarding I will call you.  
- Me to Lucy after a long day on the road -*

I had enough food to layover for a day or two if the weather got bad or I got sick or tired. I left the van sitting in a small lot near where the Skyline Trail hit the road. I left a note on the windscreen saying where I was and when I expected to be back. I figured if I got hurt I would at least have someone looking for me a week or so.

I was reading John Krakauer's, "Into Thin Air," which is about the Everest expedition in which nine people died in a storm after hiking too high up the mountain and not being able to make it down. I figured it would be a great book to read in the mountains but it was a little scary. I did not want to end up like the guy in that book.

I hitchhiked up the trail head and started out. The trail started out in a deep pine forest and quickly climbed. I could see the big mountains ahead of me as the trail climbed ever higher. I hiked about three hours and stopped for the night at a beautiful high altitude mountain lake.

There were beavers swimming around and elk were grazing in the surrounding meadow. There was no snow where I was but I could see snow up on the peaks above camp. It was a lot colder than it was in Jasper and Jasper is not all that warm to begin with. The temperature the first morning dropped down to the upper twenties and it was forecast to get colder. I slept in most of my clothes that night.

The next morning there was frost all over the ground and a light coating of ice on the shore of the lake. I decided to layover in camp for a day and see how the weather would turn out. It was late October and there was no telling how cold it could get at high altitude. Lucy and I hiked way up one of the numerous side canyons. I found a dead wolf way up in one of the canyons and kept the jawbone as a souvenir. I still have it.

The next two days we pushed on towards the mountains. The weather was getting constantly colder especially at night.

After four days we were up near timberline. There was a bivouac camp there near a small icy stream right on the trail.

A German mountaineer guy came into camp that afternoon. It was the first person I had seen during the whole trip. He did not have a stove and I did so we agreed to split a hot supper of miscellaneous campers potluck stew. The guy's name was Helmut and he was from Cologne, Germany. He had come from the direction I was going and we got to talking about trail conditions. He said that there was a lot of snow up in the high country and I was nuts to go up there. He said that I did not have the proper equipment and that I could get stuck up there in the snow.

There was a lot of deadfall around and we got a huge fire going. The fire was great but once you got ten feet away it was cold, like down into the teens, and the wind chill was getting near zero. We sat around the fire with the little stove going.

I kept throwing lots of wood on the fire and after about an hour there was this tremendous explosion. Large logs were hurled out of the fire pit. Lucy ran off and the fire was virtually out. The stove had exploded. I had put it too close to the fire and the gas tank had exploded. Nobody was hurt and Lucy was okay. There was no fire; it was too cold for a fire to start. I felt pretty stupid sitting there with this experienced German mountaineer and blowing up my stove. The explosion also splattered our supper all over the camp. Lucy ran around eating what was left off the ground.



#### *Author Interlude*

*In the Middle Ages people whose relatives were going to be burned at the stake would pay extra to the executioners so that wet wood would be used to incinerate the victim. The theory being that suffocation is better than incineration. It never fails to amaze me how mean one human can be to another.  
- Your humble narrator -*

Helmet thought it was all very funny and he is probably sitting around some coffee shop in Cologne telling stories about the crazy American who was up in the Canadian Rockies with a thirty-five dollar Wal-Mart tent and how he blew up his camp stove.

There was plenty of food left. I had chocolate and lots of peanut butter. I had been using the stove in the tent at night, and without it, cold prevailed.

Lucy would not stay outside the tent which she usually does. I zipped her little yellow ass into the sleeping bag with me and spent the coldest night I personally have ever spent in a tent. I kept Lucy in the sleeping bag most of the night. She was not bad but I can honestly say I have had sleeping partners who were more entertaining and less hairy.

Cold comes from below and my air mattress was shot. I was not in any physical danger that night unless it snowed or the mattress got wet. Then it could make the local paper: 'Florida Tourist Found Frozen', read all about it.

It was a long cold night and I was as glad to see the sunrise as I ever was. The German guy had taken off and Lucy and I were alone in camp. I waited for the sun to warm things up a bit before heading back. I was disappointed to not finish the hike over the pass but it was just too damn cold. I figured I would take my time and walk back to Maline Lake. It was all downhill and would be an easy hike. There was still plenty of food left and as I descended it would get warmer and the air thicker. I stopped at my old camp near the dead wolf. It was a good camp with a great view of the lake. The next day we hit the Maline Lake parking lot about noon. We had been out for six days. I was hot to get back to the van and into Windy Camp where the rest of the gear was.

*What is considered the best Tabloid press headline ever written?*

**HEADLESS MAN FOUND IN TOPLESS BAR**

*- University of Colorado Journalism School -*

By road it was less than ten kilometers to the van and for some reason I could not get a ride. I guess I looked a little rough from being in the woods for so long but I had all my backpacking gear and we were in a Provincial park. Hours went by and dozens of cars passed us by. I tried tying Lucy to the gear so people would see her and at least stop for the dog. I did not want to spend another night in the tent beside Maline Lake. I sat Lucy on my lap and had her wave her paw like she was hitching. I still could not get a ride. I got out my big camp knife and held it to her throat when cars passed by.

Finally about a half and hour before full dark I got a ride to the van. It was some single girl who had been out hiking on her day off. She drove me right to the van and I peeled off my untouched 'send help after ten days' note and started Delores up. It felt weird to be driving again after so long on foot.

I met this cute girl who worked at the IGA. She kept saying how much she wanted to go to Florida for the winter and that was where I was headed when I left Jasper. The plan was to head west into British Columbia and then down the west coast of the US retracing my old bicycle route from the first book. I figured a cute little IGA girl would be a fun companion on the long ride back. I would always flirt with her when I went into the store and on the night of the Lunar Eclipse she agreed to go out with me.

We went up to the Jasper Park Lodge. I have never seen a hotel with a better view. There were three separate mountain ranges visible from the hotel. They had a grand piano in the main lodge and there was some chick playing the harp. It was a pretty classy deal for me and Lucy. By now I just smelled like smoke. I was so cold up in windy camp that I always had a huge fire going and with the constantly changing mountain winds I was always in the smoke.

I sold a few books to people dressed much better than I was dressed. It was eight dollars for a scotch and I was not likely to hang out long.

The eclipse was incredible. The clouds cleared and the moon was a nearly full yellow color shimmering in the clear cold mountain air. The shadow of the earth passed over the Canadian moon and I snuggled with the bimchette. How much more romantic could it be? About midnight she wanted to go back into to Jasper to have a drink and meet her girlfriend when she got off work. It is only about six kilometers from the Jasper Park Lodge to the town of Jasper.

We headed back into town and had a couple of drinks with her friend the bartender. By now I am getting a little hammered and when they want to drive up to the hostel near the Jasper Tramway I say fine if one of them drives.

So we headed up to the hostel and go inside. It is a lively group of young people from all over Europe and Canada. There were very few Americans. I ended up talking to this little cutie from Amsterdam and almost got her cell phone number when the girls announced that it was time to go. They were really insistent and I was feeling no pain so I headed out to the van. The bartender chick drove. Lucy and I were in the back of the van. I could tell the chick was going too fast down the mountain but there was not much I could do from the back; and people who live in the mountains get used to handling a car at speed. It only gets tough in bad weather.

It was in Jasper that the cops hit us. They blocked off the street in front of the car. The RCMP was everywhere. Apparently the bartender chick had done some horrible thing to someone's bed in the hostel. It was never really explained. They hauled her out of the driver's seat and the bitch kept yelling that I was driving. I was a bit out of it but it was pretty obvious to me and the cops that I was not driving. They busted the bartender chick for DUI and my cute little Debra Winger look-alike is led away in handcuffs for something or other.

The RCMP asks me where I am camping and I tell them. They think that it is pretty cool that some American is camped way

up in the Pyramid Mountains so late in the year. They tell me to stay put until sunrise and they will not bother me. At this point in the evening that sounded like a hell of a plan and I crashed in the back of the van. Day break brought a double extra large coffee and the end of Jasper, Alberta. I never heard from the bimchette again even though she had my cell phone number.

*Of all the Gin Joints  
in all the towns in all the world,  
she walks into mine  
- Humphrey Bogart in Casablanca -*

It was only about twenty kilometers from Maline Lake to Windy Camp. When I got there I could immediately tell something was wrong. My gear was scattered around camp, the cooler was lying on its side and it had huge teeth marks on one of the corners. Lucy's food cans were scattered about and there were huge teeth marks that encompassed both sides of the cooler! It had to be some kind of large carnivore, whether a bear, wolf, or coyote. Of course, being high up in the Canadian Rockies, I wanted to imagine that the camp was ransacked by a grizzly bear, but much like most things you remember, they are not as large or romantic as one would remember.

Whatever, the camp was fine. I had lost a few tins of food and the place was trashed, but you are talking to a camper who collects Bear Attraction tickets for a hobby.

The van was a real luxury camp spot after sleeping in the tent at high altitude in the cold. After a while I got so I could wake up on auto pilot, sit up, start the motor and then curl back under the covers - kind of like sex with the Ex.

I was now officially out of books. I was always trading them for whatever, like free drinks or pussy, but now they were gone. I ransacked the van and found six in various stages of decomposition, as we all will be someday. I went to the Athabasca Hotel to see if my two cases had arrived, but no. I figured they

would be in any day, which in terms of dumb thoughts is right up there with victory in the war on drugs.

I took Lucy hiking most every day. There were hundreds of incredible day hikes. We toured all the big waterfalls and a lot of the lakes. The scenery was incredible. We could hike up to the glaciers and see fresh water icebergs floating around. One morning we saw one fall off, or calve. It made a weird grinding, creaking sound that was very low.

After one of my day trips, the van started to smell bad. I figured that I got something on the undercarriage that was making it smell. The smell got worse. After a few days they would not let me come in the campground any more to shower because the van smelled so bad. It even smelled when it was turned off. Then the battery started getting weak. One morning it would not start at all and I went for a very long hike hoping that as the day warmed up it would start. I was up at Windy Camp and I knew that it might be several days or a week before anyone came by.

Luckily the beast started when I got back, but just barely. When I looked under the hood I saw nasty yellow smoke drifting out of the battery. So this was the cause of the horrible smell; after driving so many miles, the battery had run out of water and was smoking down to the plates. I got one of the RV's to give me a jump and headed into Jasper for a new battery. The local NAPA had a good one on sale and I talked them into helping me to install the new battery. It had been a weird experience to have the thing smell like that. I had never seen a battery fail like that.

## Chapter Twenty-Six

*What do you call someone who buys a lottery ticket??*

*....Sucker*

It was late October. The weather was getting really cold. The locals all had these 120 volt electric plugs hanging out from the front of their cars. The deal was that it got so cold that the engine needed an electric heater to keep it warm enough to start. Otherwise the oil would turn to oatmeal and the thing would not turn over.

I went to the Athabasca Hotel every day expecting my two cases of books but they never arrived and, worse yet, there was a Customs strike.

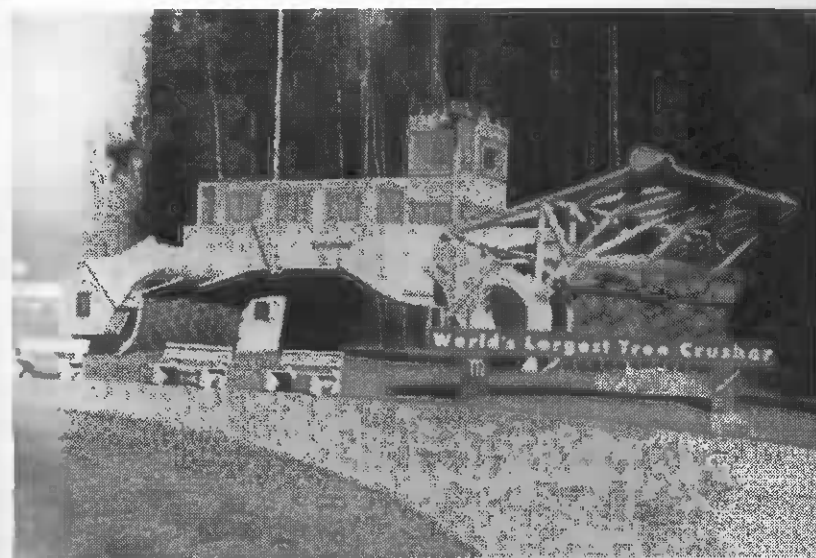
I decided to go and see the sights. I headed north on Route 40 out of Jasper. The road followed the front range of the Canadian Rockies and the views were tremendous. It started to snow as we crossed the Muskeg River just outside of Grande Cache. We spent a cold night in the van riding out the snowstorm. It was one hundred and eight kilometers to the next town which was Grande Prairie.

On the way to Grande Prairie we stopped to rescue a cement truck driver who had wrecked. He had slammed on the brakes to miss a moose and flipped the thing. It totaled



the truck but the driver was okay. I called for help on my cell phone and soon had the guy safe and out of the cold.

I ended up in McKenzie. It was timber country and home to the "World's Largest Tree Crusher." I found a fun little tavern where dogs were allowed and I hung around there for a few days.



**The Le Tourneau G175 Tree Crusher  
McKenzie, British Columbia**

I kept calling the Athabasca Hotel hoping the books would come in but they never did. I called Glanzer Press back in Newberry, Florida to see if they knew what was going on. They said that the lady who was supposed to mail the books went on leave for eleven days and that no one had bothered to mail them. This kind of pissed me off as I had paid a huge printing bill to Glanzer Press and they were holding fifteen hundred dollars of my GOBA money for the next printing. I was having visions of being snowed in for the winter.

I met one of the local welfare floozies at the bar and stayed at her apartment for a while. I never had sex with one of those