different. Like swimming, somehow. Here I can just let myself sink down in it and let it shut out everything else!” She sank back, breathing hard as though she had been running.

“Jenny, you can't bury yourself with Joe! It isn’t right, it isn’t natural!”

“I don’t want to talk about it any more, Jack. How about some music?” With a forced smile, she stood up and crossed the room to a walnut console. “Radio, or records?”

“Doesn’t matter.” Jack watched her limber body as she knelt to open the false speaker, drew out an album, and straightened gracefully, her head bent over the phonograph. He walked to her quickly. “Jenny,” he whispered, sliding an arm around her waist. Her knuckles whitened against the record she held. “Marry me, Jenny. I’ll make you happy. Joe never would have, even if the accident hadn’t happened. He never was good enough for you.”

She snatched herself away from him as his lips moved against her hair. Her dark eyes burned through him with a strange wildness. “Not good enough!” she spat savagely through tight-clenched teeth. “Not good enough! And I suppose you are!”

He took a step backward, gazing as though hypnotized at her bloodless face slashed by long searing eyes. “I know it hasn’t been very long, Jenny, but I’ve always wanted you.” His tone was like the whining of a child trying to justify a poor report card to its father. “Joe was too old for you, too—”

“Get out of here! Get out!” Her body was taut, her breath short and rasping.

“Jenny—”

The record she still clutched snapped in the fierceness of her grasp. “I said, get out!” She stood for a moment looking at him as though the force of her stabbing, hating eyes would make him disappear. Then the pieces of the broken record dropped to the floor on either side of her, and she walked slowly out of the room. Motionless, Jack stared at the rinsed black semicircles that blotted the towered carpet, listening dully to the quick uneven clicking of her heels on the stairs.

In a Coffee House

William Backemeyer

“Pull up a chair,” Jim said, grinning broadly.

“Thanks, I will.”

“D’ya like capuccino?”

“No,” I said, “too much whipped cream and froth and stuff. Do they make it pretty good here?”

“Yeah, this place is authentic.”

I had just met Jim. Our mutual friend had introduced us, then had seen a long-lost pal in the far corner and had dashed off, leaving Jim and me confronted.
"You a student here?"
I confessed that I was. "Just starting on my Master's. How far along are you?"
"Aw, I'm not really a student," he drawled, throwing an incredibly long leg over the corner of the tiny table. Beside his chair stood a battered old briefcase which overflowed with papers. "I take a couple of courses for kicks, but I'm not really a student."
"You must work, then."
"Naw... not really," said Jim, cocking his head to one side and squinting at me through one eye.
The waitress came and I ordered some espresso. Then I noticed the open book Jim had in front of him.
"What are you reading?"
"Conrad... The Secret Agent... it's putrid!"
That seemed to pretty well close that subject.
"Well, if you don't work, or study, what do you do?" I asked.
"I spread Anarchy."
"You do what?"
"I spread Anarchy. Say, I've got some papers here you should read," and he rummaged through the briefcase without removing his leg from the table.
"Sure thing," I said, "that's just what I've been looking for."
I took the papers he handed me. They were entitled Annihilation. As I glanced over them, he leaned back and sipped the last of his cappuccino. I decided to push him a little further. What the hell, I thought, Anarchists ought to be able to take straight questions.
"Then what do you live on, Jim?"
He grinned.
"Well, it's this way," he said. "I was in the army. But I didn't like it. Not at all! So I decided not to talk to anybody. You know—a boycott. Damn, but that bugged them. They tried everything, but I wouldn't talk."
He stopped to light his cigarette leisurely.
"Well, after six months of this, they gave me a medical discharge—with a pension! So I live off my pension."
I burst out laughing and Jim chuckled to himself.
"Say, that's great," I said. "You spread Anarchy on government funds, eh?"
His leg toppled to the floor. He scowled at me. Then he reached into his case again.
"Man, you'd better read this pamphlet, too. Don't worry, they're all free. But I've really got to be going now... it's been great," he said, as he gave my shoulder a jovial slap and mustered a parting smile.
I watched him move slowly toward the door, the briefcase swinging heavily at his side.
different. Like swimming, somehow. Here I can just let myself sink down in it and let it shut out everything else!” She sank back, breathing hard as though she had been running.

“Jenny, you can’t bury yourself with Joe! It isn’t right, it isn’t natural!”

“I don’t want to talk about it any more, Jack. How about some music?” With a forced smile, she stood up and crossed the room to a walnut console. “Radio, or records?”

“Doesn’t matter.” Jack watched her limber body as she knelt to open the false speaker, drew out an album, and straightened gracefully, her head bent over the phonograph. He walked to her quickly. “Jenny,” he whispered, sliding an arm around her waist. Her knuckles whitened against the record she held. “Marry me, Jenny. I’ll make you happy. Joe never would have, even if the accident hadn’t happened. He never was good enough for you.”

She snatched herself away from him as his lips moved against her hair. Her dark eyes burned through him with a strange wildness. “Not good enough!” she spat savagely through tight-clenched teeth. “Not good enough! And I suppose you are!”

He took a step backward, gazing as though hypnotized at her bloodless face slashed by long searing eyes. “I know it hasn’t been very long, Jenny, but I’ve always wanted you.” His tone was like the whining of a child trying to justify a poor report card to its father. “Joe was too old for you, too—”

“Get out of here! Get out!” Her body was taut, her breath short and rasping.

“Jenny—”

The record she still clutched snapped in the fierceness of her grasp. “I said, get out!” She stood for a moment looking at him as though the force of her stabbing, hating eyes would make him disappear. Then the pieces of the broken record dropped to the floor on either side of her, and she walked slowly out of the room. Motionless, Jack stared at the ringed black semicircles that blotted the flowered carpet, listening dully to the quick uneven clicking of her heels on the stairs.

In a Coffee House
William Backemeyer

“Pull up a chair,” Jim said, grinning broadly.

“Thanks, I will.”

“D’ya like cappuccino?”

“No,” I said, “too much whipped cream and froth and stuff. Do they make it pretty good here?”

“Yeah, this place is authentic.”

I had just met Jim. Our mutual friend had introduced us, then had seen a long-lost pal in the far corner and had dashed off, leaving Jim and me confronted.