

A MIND OF HIS OWN

by Joe Haldeman

“What we need is a technology of behavior... were it not for the unwarranted generalization that all control is wrong, we should deal with the social environment as simply as we deal with the nonsocial.”

—B.F. Skinner

Leonard Shays came back home to Tampa from the Lebanese conflict with a chestful of medals—which was no distinction—a slightly fractured mind, a medical discharge and two fairly efficient prosthetics, replacing his left foot and the right leg from the knee down.

The single-shot laser booby trap he had triggered on patrol in the slums of Beirut had been set to scan at chest level, to kill. But Leonard, canny with experience, had tossed in a microton grenade before entering the hovel, and the explosion jarred the mounting of the booby trap so that it scanned in a downward slant across the doorway. It was practically no pain at first, much pain later, and now just a feeling that his nonexistent toes were curled down in spastic paralysis. It made it hard to walk but the VA was giving him therapy. And he couldn't get a job, not even with his PhD in mathematics, but the VA was also giving him a small check on the first of every month.

“Morning, Dr. Shays.” His favorite therapist, Bennet, closed the bathroom door quietly. “Ready for the workout?”

“Am I ever? Ready to get out of this damn thing, though.” Bennet picked up Leonard gracelessly and pulled him out of the whirlpool bath. He set him on the Formica edge of a table and gave him a starchy towel.

He studied the stumps professionally. “How's the wife?”

“Don’t ask,” he said, scrubbing sweat from his hair. “We had a long talk Friday. Our contract comes up for renewal in ‘98. She; decided not to renew.”

Bennet turned off the motor and pulled the plug on the bath. “It’s her right,” he said. “Bitch.”

“It’s not the legs. Absence thereof. She explained that carefully, at some length. It’s not the legs at all.”

“Look, if you don’t wanna...”

“It’s not that I can’t get a job, and we had to move to Ybor City and she has to carry a gun to go shopping.”

Bennet grunted and straighten a stack of towels.

Leonard fumbled through his clothes and got a cigarette, lit it.

“Shouldn’t smoke those things in here.”

“Just leaving.” He draped a gray robe around his shoulders. “Help me with this thing, OK?”

Bennet helped him put on the robe and set him in a wheelchair. “Can’t smoke in Therapy, either.”

Leonard put the clothes on his lap and turned the chair a hundred and eighty degrees on one wheel, hypertrophied biceps bulging. “So let’s not go straight to Therapy. I need some fresh air.”

“You’ll stiffen up.”

He rolled to the door and opened it. “No, it’s warm. Plenty warm.”

They were the only people on the porch. Bennet took a cigarette and pointed it at one of the palm trees.

“You know how old that one is?”

“She said it was because of the *piano*.”

“Yeah, you shouldn’t of sold the piano.”

“Couldn’t work the pedals right.”

“Someday you—”

“I wasn’t going to sell it anyhow; I was going to trade even for classical guitar or lute if I could find somebody.”

“Yeah?”

“I went to all the skill-transfer agencies. Every one, here and St. Pete. Even one in Sarasota, specializes in music. Couldn’t find a guitar player who was any good. Not in Bach. If I can’t play Bach I’d rather just listen.”

“You coulda gotten one that was otherwise good. Learn Bach on your own.”

“Bennet, hell, that’d be years. I never learned that much new on the piano, either. Don’t have the facility.”

“You bought the piano in the first place?”

He nodded. “One of the first skill transfers in Florida. Old Gainesville conservatory man. He thought he was going to die and wanted one last fling. Paid him fifty grand, that was real money back in ‘90.”

“Still is.”

“They cured his cancer and a year later he committed suicide.” He threw his cigarette over the edge and watched it fall three stories.

“It’s exactly as old as I am. Fifty-one years, the gardener told me,” Bennet said. “I guess that’s pretty old for a tree.”

“Palm tree, anyhow.” Leonard lit another and they smoked in silence.

“I wouldn’t have sold it except my car went bad. Turbine blades crystallized while I was stuck in traffic. Had to get a new engine, new drive-train. Try to get around this town without a car.”

“It’s worth your life,” Bennet agreed.

Leonard snapped the new cigarette away. “Might as well get going.”

He was always tired after therapy but he always hobbled down to the gate and across to the little tavern, drank a beer standing up and walked back to the parking lot. He’d found that if he didn’t walk about a mile after therapy he would hardly be able to get out of bed the next morning, for the stiffness.

He went home and was surprised to find his wife there.

“Good afternoon, Scottie.” He walked in unsteadily, carrying two bags of groceries.

“Let me help.”

“No.” He set the groceries down on the dinette table and began to take out things to go into the refrigerator.

“Aren’t you going to ask me what the hell I’m doing here?”

He didn’t look at her. “No. I’m very calm today.” He took the frozen foods over first, elbowed the door open. “Therapy today.”

“Did it go well?”

“Besides, it’s as much your house as mine.”

“Until January. But I don’t feel that way.”

“It went pretty well.” He shuffled things around in the refrigerator to make room for a scrawny chicken, the only luxury he had purchased.

“You got the car fixed.”

“All it took was money.”

“Have you tried to sell the baby grand?”

“No.”

Carefully: “Does that mean you might buy back the talent some day?”

“With what?”

“Well, you—”

“I need the money to live on and the piano’s yours to sell or keep or bronze or whatever the hell you want to do with it.”

“You don’t like to have it around because—”

“*I don’t give a flying...* I don’t care whether it stays or goes. I kind of like it. It’s a fun thing to dust. It keeps the place from blowing away in a high wind. It has a certain—”

“Leonard!”

“Don’t shout.”

“It’s not mine; I bought it for you.”

“That’s right.”

“I *did*.”

“You did a lot of things for me. I’m grateful. Now.” He shut the refrigerator door and leaned on it, drumming fingers, looking at the wall. “I’ll ask. What the hell are you doing here?”

“I came back,” she said evenly, “to try to talk some sense into you.”

“Wonderful.”

“Henry Beaumont said you told him you were thinking of selling your mathematics, too.”

“That’s right. After the money goes. It’s not doing me any good.”

“You worked nine years for that degree. Long years, remember? I was with you most of them.”

“Five, to be accurate. Five years for the PhD. First a Bachelor’s—”

“If you sell your mathematics you lose it all the way back to grade school.”

“That’s true. Tell me something else old.”

“Don’t be difficult. Look at me.” He didn’t. “Daddy will—”

“That’s really old. I don’t want to hear it.”

“Still trying to be a hero. Your courage is an inspiration to us all.”

“Oh, for Christ’s sake.” He sat down at the kitchen table with his back to her. “You were the one who wanted out. Not me.”

“Len, if you could see yourself, what you’ve turned into…”

Any time somebody starts out a sentence with your name, Leonard thought, they’re trying to sell you something.

“Daddy said this morning that if you’d go to see Dr. Verden—”

“The imprint man he goes to.”

“The best overlay therapist in the state, Len.”

Early attempts at overlay therapy were called “personality imprinting.” The name had a bad connotation.

“The principle’s the same no matter how good he is.” He looked straight at her for the first time. “I may be a worthless self-pitying bastard, but I am me. I stay me.”

“That sounds pretty—”

“Pretty stupid from a man who’s just sold one slice of his brain and talks about selling another. Right?”

“Close.”

“Wrong. There’s a basic difference between skill transfer and overlay ther—”

“No, there isn’t, they’re exactly the—”

“*Because*,” almost shouting, “I can shed skills when and as I feel I no longer have use for them, where your *imprint* witch doctor just looks up in some God-damn book and finds a pers—”

“You’re wrong and you know it. Otherwise—”

“No, Scottie. You’ve let your father sell you Tranquility Base.”

“Daddy’s been seeing Dr. Verden for fifteen years!”

“*And see what it’s gotten him?*”

He wasn’t looking at her any longer but he could see the old familiar counting gesture. “Money. Prestige. Self-fulfillment—”

“And whose self is he fulfilling? Every time I see the old guy I expect him to be Sinbad the Sailor or Jack Kennedy or some God-damn thing. Fifty years ago they would have locked him up and thrown away the combination.”

“You act as if he’s—”

“He is! Certifiably.”

He heard the door open—“We’ll see about that!”—and slide shut and he reflected that that was one improvement over their house in Bel Aire. You can’t slam an electric door.

Leonard woke up stiff the next day in spite of his having exercised. He would have allowed himself an extra hour in bed, but today he despised the pathetic image of a naked, legless cripple lying there helplessly. He decided against the struggle of showering, taped the pads to his stumps, strapped on the prosthetics and pulled on a pair of baggy trousers.

It was intolerably muggy, so he threw economy aside and switched on the airco. While his coffee was heating, he unwrapped the latest *ASM Journal* and set it with a thick pad of paper and a pencil next to the chair that sat under the air-conditioning duct. The microwave cooker buzzed; he got his coffee and sat down with the first article.

The doorbell rang when he was on the second article and second cup of coffee. He almost didn't answer it. It was never good news. It rang again, insistently, so he got up and opened the door.

It was a small, bland-looking black man with a leather portfolio under his arm. *Salesman*, Leonard thought tiredly.

"Leonard Shays?" Leonard just looked at him.

"How do you do. I'm Dr. Felix Verden, you may—"

He pushed the button but Verden had a foot against the door jamb. The door slid halfway closed, then opened again.

"Mrs. Dorothy Scott Shays is your next of kin."

"Not any more, she isn't."

"I sympathize with your feelings, Dr. Shays, but legally she *is* still your closest relative. May I come in?"

"We have nothing to talk about."

He opened the portfolio. "I have a court order here authorizing me—"

Leonard teetered forward and grabbed a fistful of the man's shirt. A man in uniform stepped from where he'd been hidden, next to the wall beside the door, and showed Leonard his stunner wand.

"All right. Let me get my book."

Dr. Verden's office was comfortable and a few decades out of date. Pale oak paneling and furniture crafted of a similar wood, combined with blued steel and fake black leather. A slight hospital odor seeped in.

"You know the therapy will be much more effective if you cooperate."

"I don't want it to be effective. I'll go along with the court and surrender my body to you for treatment. Just my body. The rest is going to fight you all the way."

"You may wind up even worse than before."

“By your lights. Maybe better, by mine.”

He ignored that by rustling papers loudly. “You’re familiar with the process.”

“More familiar than I want to be. It’s like a skill transfer, but instead of subtracting or adding a certain ability, you work on a more basic level. Personality.”

“That’s correct. We excise or graft certain basic behavioral traits, give the patient a better set of responses to life problems.”

“A *different* set of responses.”

“All right.”

“It’s ghoulish.”

“No it isn’t. It’s just an accelerated growing-up process.”

“It’s playing God, making a man over in your own image. Or whatever image is stylish or popular recently.”

“You think I haven’t heard all this before, Leonard?”

“I’m sure you have. I’m sure you ignore it. You must be able to see that it’s different, being on the receiving end, rather than—”

“I’ve been on the receiving end, Leonard, you should know that. I had to go through a complete overlay before I could get licensed. I’m glad I did.”

“You’re a better person for it.”

“Of course.”

“That could be just part of the overlay, you know. They could have turned you into a slavering idiot and at the same time convinced you that it was an improvement”

“They wouldn’t be allowed to. Overlay therapy is even more closely monitored than skill transfer. And you should know how many controls there are on that.”

“You’re not going to convince me and I’m not going to convince you. Why don’t we just get on with it?”

“Excellent idea.” He stood. “Come this way.”

Dr. Verden led him into a small white room that smelled of antiseptic. It held a complicated-looking bed on wheels and a plain-featured young female nurse who stood up when they came in.

“Will you need help getting undressed?” Leonard said he didn’t and Dr. Verden dismissed the nurse and gave Leonard an open-backed smock, then left.

Verden and the nurse came back in a few minutes after Leonard had changed. He was sitting on the bed feeling very vulnerable, his prosthetics an articulated jumble on the floor. He was wondering again what had happened to his original foot and leg.

The nurse had a bright, pleasant voice. “Now please just lie down facing this way, Mr. Shays, on your stomach.”

“Dr. Shays,” Verden corrected her.

Leonard was going to say it didn’t matter, but then that didn’t matter either.

The woman offered him a glass of water and two pills and he wondered why she hadn’t done so while he was still upright. “There will be some pain, Dr. Shays,” she said, still with an encouraging smile.

“I know,” he said, not moving to take the pills.

“They won’t turn you into a zombi,” Dr. Verden said. “You’ll still be able to resist.”

“Not as well, I think.”

Verden snorted. “That’s right. Which only means you’ll go through the process a dozen times instead of two or three.”

“I know.”

“And if you could resist it perfectly, you could keep going back every other day for the rest of your life. Nobody ever has, though.”

Leonard made no comment, wriggled into a slightly more comfortable position.

“You have no idea the amount of discomfort you’re condemning yourself to.”

“Don’t threaten, Doctor; it’s unbecoming.”

Verden began to strap him in. “I’m not threatening,” he said mildly. “I’m counseling. I am your agent, after all, working in your own best—”

“That’s not what I got from the court order,” Leonard said. “Ouch! You don’t have to be so rough about it. I’m not going anywhere.”

“We have to make you perfectly stationary. Biometric reference points.”

Resisting personality overlay is not conceptually difficult. Every literate person knows the technique and most illiterates as well: first the best-selling novel, “Paindreamer,” then dozens of imitative efforts, described it; then a couple of sensational flix, and finally the afternoon cube saga, “Stay Out of My Mind!”

The person strapped on the table need not concern himself with the processes (inductive-surgical/molecular-biological/cybernetic) going on, any more than he has to think about the way his brain is working in order to attack a regular problem. Because when the therapist attempts to change some facet of the patient’s personality, the action manifests itself to the patient in terms of a dream-problem. More often, a nightmare.

The dream is very realistic and offers two or three alternatives to the dreamer. If he chooses the right one, his own will reinforces the aim of the therapist, and helps make permanent the desired cellular changes.

If he chooses the wrong alternative—the illogical or painful one—he is reinforcing his brain cells' tendency to revert to their original configuration, like a crumpled-up piece of paper struggling to be square again.

Sometimes the dreams have a metaphorical connection with the problem the therapist is attacking. More often they do not:

Leonard is sitting in the home of some good friends, a young couple who have just had their first child.

"It's just fantastic," says the young woman, handing Leonard a cold beer, "the way he's growing. You won't believe it."

Leonard sips the cold beer while the woman goes to get the child and the part of him aware that this is just a dream marvels at the solidity of the illusion.

"Here," she says, offering the baby to Leonard, laughing brightly. "He's such a rascal."

The baby is about a meter long but his head is no larger than Leonard's thumb.

"He's always doing that," says the husband from across the room. "He's a regular comedian. Squeeze his chest and watch what happens!"

Leonard squeezes the baby's chest and, sure enough, the head grows and the body shrinks until the baby is of normal proportions. He squeezes harder and the head swells larger and dangles over onto the shrunken torso, a giant embryo out of place.

The husband is laughing so hard that tears come to his eyes.

A line of worry creases the young woman's forehead. "Don't squeeze too hard—please Leonard, don't, you'll hurt—"

The baby's head explodes, red-dripping shot with gray and blue slime, all over Leonard's chest and lap.

"What did you go and do that for?"

Leonard has both his legs and they are clad in mottled green jungle fatigues. He is cautiously leading his squad down the Street of Redemption in Beirut, in the slums, in the steam bath of a summer afternoon. They crab down the rubble-strewn sidewalk, hugging the wall. Another squad, Lieutenant Shanker's, is across the street from them and slightly behind.

They come to number 43.

God, no.

"This is the place, Lieutenant," Leonard shouts across the street.

“Fine, Shays. You want to go in first? Or shall we take it from this angle?”

“If I... uh... if I go in first I’ll lose my leg.”

“Well hell,” says the lieutenant affably. “We don’t want that to happen. Hold on just a—”

“Never mind.” Leonard unsnaps a microton grenade from his harness and lofts it through the open door. Everybody flattens out for the explosion. Before the dust settles, Leonard steps through the door. With the corner of his eye he sees the dusty black bulk of the one-shot generator. A bright flash and singeing pain as he walks two steps on his shinbones and falls, pain fading.

Leonard is fishing from a row-boat at the mouth of the Crystal River, with one of his best friends, Norm Provoost, the game warden.

He threads a shrimp onto the hook and casts. Immediately he gets a strike, a light one; sets the hook and reels in the fish.

“What you got, Len?”

“Doesn’t feel like much.” He lifts it into the boat. It’s a speckled trout—a protected species—smaller than his hand, hooked harmlessly through the lip.

“Not big enough to keep,” says Norm, while Leonard disengages the hook. “They sure are pretty creatures.”

Leonard grasps the fish firmly above the tail and cracks its head against the side of the boat.

“For Chrissake, Shays!”

He shrugs. “We might need bait later.”

A large seminar room. Leonard’s favorite professor, Dr. Van Wyck, has just filled a third blackboard with equations and moves to a fourth, at his customary rapid pace.

On the first board he made an error in sign. On the second board this error caused a mistake in double integration, two integrands having been wrongly consolidated. The third board, therefore, is gibberish and the fourth is utter gibberish. Van Wyck slows down.

“Something’s screwy here,” he says, wiping a yellow streak of chalk dust across his forehead. He stares at the boards for several minutes. “Can anybody see what’s wrong?”

Negative murmur from the class. Their heads are bobbing, looking back and forth from their notes to the board, Leonard sits smirking.

“Mr. Shays, your Master’s thesis was on this topic. Can’t *you* see the error?”

Leonard shakes his head and smiles.

Leonard woke up awash with dull pain, mostly in the back of his skull and under the restraining straps. With great effort he tilted his head and saw that he was no longer strapped in; only fatigue was holding him down. Bright welts across his arms.

Vague troubling memories: equations, fishing, Beirut, small child... Leonard wondered whether he had resisted as strongly with his mind as he obviously had with his body. He didn't feel any different, only weak and hurting.

A nurse appeared with a small hypodermic.

"Wha?" His throat was too dry to talk. He swallowed, nothing.

"Hypnotic," she said.

"Ah." He tried to turn away, couldn't even find strength to lift his shoulder. She was holding him down with a light touch, swabbing a place on his arm with coldness. "You want to get well, don't you? It's only so the doctor can..." Sharp pricking and blackness.

He woke up feeling better the second time. Dr. Verden handed him a glass of water. He drank half of it greedily, paused to wonder if it was drugged, then drank the rest.

Refilling the glass: "That was quite a performance, Leonard."

"You know what I was dreaming?"

"We know what you remember having dreamed. You remember quite a lot, under hypnosis."

Leonard tried to sit up, felt faint, laid back down, "Did... am I still..."

Dr. Verden put down the pitcher, leafed through some pages on a clipboard. "Yes. You have essentially the same behavioral profile you had when you came in."

"Good."

He shrugged. "It's only a question of time. I think you were starting to respond to the therapy, toward the end. The State monitors recommended that I terminate before... actually, I had to agree with them. You aren't in very good shape, Leonard."

"I know. Asymmetrical."

"Bad jokes aside. It just means you'll have more sessions, of shorter duration. You'll be here longer. Unless you decide to cooperate."

Leonard looked at the ceiling. "Better get used to my being around."

Salad has just been served at a formal dinner and Leonard is eating it with the wrong fork. The young lady across from him notices this, and looks away quickly with a prim smile. Leonard replaces the fork and finishes the salad with his fingers.

Leonard and Scottie, newly married, are walking across the campus of the University of Florida, on a lovely spring day. She makes a sound between “Eek” and “Ack.”

“It’s just a snake, Scottie.”

“It’s *not* just a snake. It’s a *coral* snake.” And it is: red-touch-yella-bite-a-fella. “Leonard!”

“I won’t hurt it.” Leonard is chasing after it and with some difficulty picks it up by the tail. The snake loops around and begins to gnaw on Leonard’s wrist. Scottie screams while Leonard watches the slow pulse of poison, holding on stoically even though the snake is hurting him.

Leonard repeats the Beirut dream in almost every detail, but this time he tries not to look at the laser booby trap before setting it off.

“You’re weakening, Dr. Shays. Why don’t you just give in, cooperate?” Dr. Verden said this into the clipboard, a few pages thicker this time, and then favored his patient with a cool stare.

Leonard yawned elaborately. “It occurred to me this morning that I won’t have to resist indefinitely. Only until Scottie’s father gets tired of paying.”

Without hesitating: “He paid in advance, on contract.”

“You’re a good liar, Doctor. Facile.”

“And you’re a lousy patient, Doctor. But challenging.”

Scottie came in for a few minutes and stood at the other end of the bed while Leonard delivered a nonstop monologue, full of bitterness but surprisingly free of profanity, about her failure as a wife and as a human being. During her stay she said only “Hello, Leonard” and “Good-bye.”

The doctor did not come back in after Scottie left. Leonard sat and tried to think about the whole thing dispassionately.

If Scottie gave up on him, surely the old man would too. There was only a month to go before their marriage contract ran out. If Scottie let it lapse, he would probably be released immediately. He resolved to be even nastier to her if she visited again.

But could he last a month? Despite what Verden said, he had felt as much in control this session as he had before. And it seemed to have hurt less. Whether he could last another dozen sessions, though... well, he really had no way of telling.

Leonard never paid any attention to the soap operas and he made it a point of pride not to read bestsellers. He only had a sketchy, cocktail-party idea of what people thought went on in your head during overlay therapy. Supposedly, you resisted with your “will”—the term seeming to Leonard reasonably accurate but trivial—and a strong-willed person thus could defend his identity better than a weak person could. But there were limits, popular wisdom said, dark limits of stress that would break the

most obstinate.

In fiction, people often escaped therapy by refusing to come out of one of the induced dreams—a pleasant dream always coming around at just the right time—by some application of existential *machismo* that was never too well explained. Pure poppycock, of course. Leonard always knew what was going on during a scenario, and he could control its progress to a certain extent, but when the pivotal moment came he had to take some action (even inaction was a decision) and then the dream would fade, to be replaced by the next one. To decide to stay in one dream was as meaningful as making up your mind to stay on a moving escalator, by effort of will, after it had reached the top.

Physical escape out of the question, it looked to Leonard as if his only hope was to keep plugging away at it. The monitors kept Verden from exhausting Leonard or drugging him; such measures could only be taken in rehabilitating a felon or a “dangerously violent” patient. Ironically, Leonard had been against the idea of the monitors when Federal law had created them to enforce “mental civil rights.” It had seemed like a sop thrown to an hysterical electorate after “Paindreamer.” But maybe the government had been right, just this once.

Fake a cure? Impossible unless you were a consummate actor and a psychometrics expert. And Verden checked your behavioral profile under hypnosis.

For a few moments Leonard considered the possibility that Verden and Scottie were right, that he was actually coming loose from his moorings. He decided that, although it might be true, it was an unproductive angle of attack.

He supposed that a technician—maybe even Verden himself—might be bribed, but the money he had received for his piano was inaccessible and probably not enough anyhow.

Best to just stick it out.

Leonard is in an unfamiliar uniform, seated at a complicated console. He sits in front of a wall-sized backlit map of the world; North America and Europe covered with blue dots and Asia covered with red dots. Central to the console is a prominent keyhole, and a matching key dangles lightly on a chain around his neck. His left side is weighted down by a heavy pistol in a shoulder holster. A plate on the console winks every thirty seconds: NO GO. There is an identical console to his right, with another man identically accoutered, who is apparently quite absorbed in reading a book.

So they are the two men who will set in motion the vengeance of the Free World in case of enemy attack. Or adverse executive decision.

The plate blinks GO, in red, stroboscopically. A teletype behind them starts to chatter.

The other man takes his key and hesitates, looks at Leonard. Says a simple word.

Which is the wrong way to act? Leonard wonders. If he shoots the man, he saves half the world. If they both insert their keys, the enemies of democracy die. But maybe by the logic of the dream they are supposed to die.

Leonard takes the key from his neck and puts it in the hole, turns it counterclockwise. The other does the same. The plate stops flashing.

Leonard unholsters his pistol and shoots the other man in the chest, then in the head. Then, fading, he shoots himself, for good measure.

Then there are four dreams offering less and less clear-cut alternatives.

Finally, Leonard is sitting alone in front of a fireplace, reading a book. He reads twenty pages, about Toltec influence on Mayan sculpture, while nothing happens.

He decides not to read for a while and stares into the fire. Still nothing happens. He strips pages from the book and burns them. He burns the dust-jacket and the end boards. Nothing.

He sits down, unstraps one leg and throws it into the fire. The prosthetic foot follows. He watches them melt without burning.

After a couple of hours he falls asleep.

Dr. Verden did not come to him after this session was over. He woke up, the nurse gave him a hypnotic, he woke up again later. Then he spent a day leafing through magazines, watching the cube, wondering.

Was Verden trying to trick him in some way? Or did the ambiguity of the dreams mean that the therapy was succeeding? The nurse didn't know anything, or just wasn't talking.

As far as he could test himself, Leonard didn't feel any different. He was still full of rage at Scottie and Verden, still quite willing to sell his mathematics when money got low—and didn't regret having sold the piano—still felt that imprinting a person who was manifestly sane was a gross violation of privacy and civil rights.

Leonard has another session, of seven dreams. In the first three the result of his action is ambiguous. In the next two, it is trivial. In the sixth it is obscure. In the seventh, Leonard is a catatonic lying motionless, for a long time, in a hospital ward full of motionless catatonics.

This time Verden appeared without white smock or clipboard. Leonard was surprised that seeing him in a plain business suit, stripped of symbols of authority, should make such a difference. He decided that it was a conscious masquerade.

"The last two sessions have been very alarming," Verden said, rocking on his heels, hands behind his back.

"Boring, at any rate."

"I'll be frank with you." Leonard reflected that this was one of the least trust-inspiring phrases in the language. Surely the doctor knew that.

In trying to figure out why he'd said it, Leonard almost missed the frankness.

"What?"

"Please pay attention. This is very important. I said you are in grave danger of permanently harming your own mind."

"By resisting your efforts."

"By resisting therapy too... successfully, if you want to put it that way. It's a rare syndrome and I didn't recognize it, but one of the monitors—"

"He had a patient just like me, back in, '93."

"No. He recalled a journal article." Verden took a folded sheaf of paper out of an inside pocket, handed it to Leonard. "Read this and tell me it doesn't describe what's happening to you."

It looked very convincing, a 'stat of an article from the July 1997 number of *The American Journal of Behavior Modification Techniques*. The title of the article was "The Paranoid Looping Defense: a Cybernetic Analog." It was full of jargon, charts and the kind of vague mathematics that social scientists admire.

Leonard handed it back. "This and two hundred bucks will get you the services of a typesetter, Doctor. Nice try."

"You think..." He shook his head slowly, ran his finger along the paper's crease and returned it to his pocket. "Of course you think that I'm lying to you." He smiled. "That's consistent with the syndrome."

He took the paper out again and set it on the table next to Leonard's bed. "You may want to read this, if only for amusement." Leaving, standing theatrically in the door: "You may as well know that there will be an extra monitor for your therapy tomorrow. A representative of the Florida Medical Ethics Board. He will give me permission to accelerate your treatment with drugs."

"Then I'll try to be very cooperative tomorrow." He smiled at the doctor's back and then laughed. He had expected something like this. But he was surprised that Verden hadn't been more subtle.

"You can't kid a kidder," he said aloud, folding the paper into fourths, eighths, sixteenths. He tossed it into the bedpan and turned on the cube.

It was the first time he'd ever enjoyed watching a quiz show.

As Leonard goes under the anesthesia he is very happy. He has a plan.

He will cooperate with the doctor, choose all the right alternatives, allow himself to be cured. But only temporarily.

Once released, he will go to a skill-transfer agency and hock his mathematics. He will bring the money to Verden, who has his original personality on file—and *buy himself back!* Audacious!

He awaits the first dream situation with smug composure.

Leonard is going under the anesthesia, very happy because he has a plan. He will cooperate with the doctor, choose all the right alternatives and allow himself to be cured, but only temporarily. Once released he will hock his mathematics at a skill-transfer agency and bring the money to Verden, who has his original personality on file and *buy himself back!* Audaciously and with smug composure he awaits the first dream.

Happily going under because he has a plan to be cured temporarily and sell his mathematics to get money to *buy himself back* from Verden, Leonard waits to dream.

Happy under plan cure *himself* dream.