

Chapter 1 - Waiting On Jack

Parking was always tough on football game-days near the U.C. Berkeley Campus, and especially for the “Big Games” between CAL and Stanford. On this particular day, Memorial Football Stadium, nestled in the base of Strawberry Canyon (no strawberries grew there that I ever saw), was packed with crowds decked out, not with their CAL Bears sweatshirts and gold and yellow scarves, but suited and skirted. This river of people streamed from their cars, crammed into the residential neighborhoods. From the other direction, shaggy haired young men and blossoming girls, walked from nearby dorms and other communal houses, packing the wooded slopes of Cheapskate Hill. They threw blankets down on the steeply inclined dirt, and in the clumps of scraggly grasses overlooking the stadium bowl. Some of the braver ones climbed up and perched in the branches of the bent Monterey Pines, hanging across the road from the last rows of the nose-bleed stadium bleacher benches.

A few clouds rose up from behind the ridges of the canyon, intermittently blocking out the warm sunlight illuminating the scene. When the wind blew towards the hills, the tree-perchers heard the famous New England cadence of the man who was leading the country forward, boldly. Today was not a “Big Game”; today John F. Kennedy was in town.

The President, his brown hair tugged by the swirling gusts, quipped about his first visits to this very same stadium as a younger man for the famous football games, and how he and his East Coast buddies had gotten none too friendly a reception from their West Coast rivals. Then quickly becoming serious, he spoke

about the state of the world on that Spring day: focusing on the break between China and the USSR, and how the cold war could soon be at an end. And winding it up with a list of all the famous people, who had graduated from the University of California at Berkeley; and what grand contributions they had made to this world.

My red-haired mother, with her swollen ankles propped up on her King sized bed just two miles away from that stadium, up Euclid Avenue, desperately wanted to be in those stands; but two and a half weeks late in giving birth to the baby stretching and filling her abdomen, she was trapped at home. The Campanile bells rang as she twisted the knob on the portable radio, trying to tune-in the campus station carrying the speech. The baby she was carrying was the second biracial child she had conceived with her Negro husband Sam, who had left earlier that morning for work with a perfunctory peck on the cheek. She had been so grateful when he'd adopted her red-headed son Larry, who didn't have a real father. Her adopted Negro & Japanese son, Joji, was down the street at Cragmont school with Larry in the elementary wing, and blonde headed little Lee, her first biracial (natural) son, played at the Kindergarten. Three boys! Her Negro & Korean daughter was arriving by boat soon to join her Rainbow family—a girl at last!

As she lay back, giving up making out the speech clearly, she closed her eyes and imagined Jack, as referred to the president, hearing from an aide that the amazing family she had created, was just a few minutes away; and how Jack then commanded his entourage to make a brief detour on the way to the airport, to arrive at 1030 Cragmont Avenue. How he would stride purposefully up past the young ivy and Juniper landscaping onto her new front deck; and how he would tell

the aide to step aside as he himself knocked firmly on the door. Just then the baby turned inside my mother, compressing her bladder unbearably. She rolled over and hefted her body into a sitting position: the first step in yet another trip to the bathroom. That little baby was me. I knew I would have to come out eventually, but things felt fine just as they were.