



35th ANNIVERSARY EDITION

GOD'S SMUGGLER

"Tension builds page by page in this remarkable true document . . .
more thrilling than a spy story with its numerous near escapes and
mounting climaxes of danger."

—LOS ANGELES TIMES

BROTHER ANDREW
WITH JOHN & ELIZABETH SHERRILL

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PROLOGUE:

THE SMUGGLER IN OUR LIVING ROOM

The slender, thirty-something fellow was sitting in our living room as we peppered him with questions for the book we were writing, when our eight-year-old daughter, Liz, burst through the front door from the school bus. It was a crucial moment in the interviews—the episode of meeting Petroff in Sofia—but whenever Liz or one of her brothers came home, that took priority with the man known as “Brother Andrew.”

“Liz!” he cried out as he did every afternoon when she returned from school. “How did the spelling class go?”

Roaring with laughter at his own question, Andrew insisted on stopping the book session for his daily walk with his young friend. To this Dutchman, *spelling* as a school subject was a never-failing source of amusement. If you can speak Dutch, he explained to the kids, you can spell it; words are written just as they sound. Why English spelling should be so difficult seemed to him a strange perversity.

Liz agreed with him heartily on this—and on everything else. All three of our kids were crazy about him, and Andrew, missing his own children, spent every minute he could with them.

At the end of their walk, Andrew returned to the interrupted interview—reluctantly, it seemed to us. He had always been puzzled by our interest in a book project.

“I can’t imagine why you’d want to write about me,” he had said when we first proposed it. “Who would be interested? I’m the son of a village blacksmith, never even graduated from high school. I’m just an ordinary person.”

That, of course, was exactly the appeal of his story. How, indeed, had God been able to use a fellow with a bad back, a limited education, no sponsorship and no funds, to do things that well-connected, well-endowed people said were impossible? For us and other ordinary people, that was what made Brother Andrew’s adventures so intriguing.

It is hard to believe that thirty-five years have passed since the interviews were completed and *God’s Smuggler* was published. Harder still to believe that ten million copies, in thirty-five languages, are in print today.

“And that’s not the whole picture,” Andrew told us on a visit to our home in the spring of 2001. “Hundreds of thousands of copies have been printed unofficially by Christians in poor countries all over the world, then given away to encourage others.” Andrew glanced at us a bit guiltily. “I’m afraid I gave the permissions for them to do this. Was I acting illegally?”

Yes, but we were glad he had done it. And we think God was glad, too.

John and Elizabeth Sherrill
Chappaqua, New York

1

SMOKE AND BREAD CRUSTS

From the time I first put on wooden shoes—*klompen* we call them in Holland—I dreamed of derring-do. I was a spy behind the lines, I was a lone scout in enemy territory, I crept beneath barbed wire while tracer bullets scorched the air about me.

Of course we didn't have any real enemies in my hometown of Witte—not when I was very small—so we made enemies out of each other. We kids used our *klompen* to fight with: any boy who got himself hit with a wooden shoe just hadn't reached his own fast enough. I remember the day I broke a shoe over my enemy-friend Kees's head. What horrified us both wasn't the enormous bump on his forehead but the ruined shoe. Kees and I forgot our war long enough to try repairing it. But this is a skill gained only with time, and that night my hard-working blacksmith father had to turn cobbler as well. Already that day Papa had got up at five to water and weed the garden that helped to feed his six children. Then he had pedaled four miles on his bicycle to his smithing job in Alkmaar. And now he had

to spend the evening gouging a little trough across the top of the wooden shoe, pulling a wire through the trough, nailing the wire down on both sides, and repeating the process at the heel so that I could have some shoes to wear to school.

“ANDREW, YOU MUST BE MORE CAREFUL!” said my father in his loud voice. Papa was deaf and shouted rather than spoke. I understood him perfectly: he didn’t mean careful of bones and blood, but of hard-earned possessions.

There was one family in particular that acted as the enemy in many of my boyish fantasies. This was the Family Whetstra.

Why I should have picked on the Whetstras I do not know, except that they were the first in our village to begin talking about war with Germany—and this was not a popular subject in Witte. Also they were strongly evangelical Christians. Their God-bless-you’s and Lord-willing’s seemed sickeningly tame to a secret agent of my stature. So in my mind they were the enemy.

I remember once passing Mrs. Whetstra’s kitchen window just as she was putting cookies into the oven of her woodburning stove. Leaning against the front of the house was a new pane of window glass, and it gave me an idea. Here would be my chance to see if the ever-smiling Whetstras could get as mad as other Dutchmen. I picked up the piece of glass and moved ever so stealthily through the lines to the back of enemy headquarters. The Whetstras, like everyone in the village, had a ladder leading to their thatched roof. Off came my *klompen*, and up I went. Silently I placed the pane of glass on the chimney. Then I crept back down the ladder and across the street to post myself out of sight behind a fish-peddler’s cart.

Sure enough the smoke backed down the chimney. It filled the kitchen and began to curl out the open window. Mrs. Whetstra ran into her kitchen with a scream, jerked open the oven door and fanned the smoke with her apron. Mr. Whetstra raced outside and looked up at his chimney. If I had expected a stream of rich Dutch prose I was disappointed, but the expression on his face as he climbed the ladder was entirely of-this-earth, and I chalked up for myself a tremendous victory against overwhelming odds.

Another favorite enemy was my older brother Ben. Typical of older brothers, Ben was a master swapper. His corner of our common loft-bedroom above the main floor of our house was splendid with

things that had once belonged to me or the other children; somehow we could never recall what we had received in exchange. His chief treasure was a piggy bank that had once been our sister Maartje's. In it Ben kept the pennies that he earned doing errands for the burgo-master or tending garden for Miss Meekle, our schoolmistress. Events in Germany were now in the news more than ever, and in my fantasies Ben became an enormously wealthy German munitions maker. One day while he was out earning more pennies, I took his bank down from its shelf, slid a knife into the opening, and turned the pig upside down. After about fifteen minutes of narrow escapes from the brown-shirted guards patrolling his estate, I had collected nearly a guilder from the enemy.

That part was easy. Much harder was the question of what to do with my spoils. A guilder was worth twenty-five cents—a fortune for a child in our little town. To have arrived in the sweetshop with that much money would certainly have caused questions.

I had it! What if I said I had found it! The next day, at school, I went up to the teacher and held out my hand. “Look what I found, Miss Meekle.”

Miss Meekle blew her breath out slowly. “My, Andrew! What a lot of money for a little boy!”

“Can I keep it?”

“You don’t know who it belongs to?”

Even under torture, they would never wring the truth from me. “No, ma’am. I found it in the street.”

“Then you must take it to the police, Andy. They will tell you what to do.”

The police! Here was something I hadn’t counted on. That afternoon in fear and trembling I took the money into the very bastion of law and rectitude. If our little town hall had really been Gestapo headquarters, I couldn’t have been more terrified. It seemed to me that stolen money must give off a telltale gleam. But apparently my story was believed, because the police chief wrote my name on an envelope, put the money inside, and told me that if no one claimed it within a year, it was mine.

And so, a year later, I made that trip to the sweetshop. Ben had never missed the pennies. That spoiled the game; instead of the

flavor of sabotage behind the lines, the candy had the flat taste of common theft.

As much as anything, I think my dreams of thrilling action, my endless fantasies, were a means of escaping from my mother's radio. Mama was a semi-invalid. A bad heart forced her to spend a large part of each day sitting in a chair, where her consolation was the radio. But she kept the dial at one spot only: the gospel station from Amsterdam. Sometimes it was hymn-singing, sometimes it was preaching; always—to my ears—it was dull.

Not to Mama. Religion was her life. We were poor, even by Witte standards; our house was the smallest in the village. But to our door came an unending stream of beggars, itinerant preachers, gypsies, who knew that they would be welcome at Mama's table. The cheese that night would be sliced thinner, the soup stretched with water, but a guest would never be turned away.

Thriftiness was as important in Mama's religion as hospitality. At four I could peel potatoes without a centimeter's waste. At seven the potatoes passed to my little brother Cornelius while I graduated to the heady responsibility of shining shoes. These were not our everyday *klompen*: these were our leather shoes for Sunday, and it was an economic disaster if a pair failed to last fifteen years. Mama said they must shine so the preacher would have to shade his eyes.

Because Mama could not lift heavy loads, Ben did the laundry each week. The clothes had to be hauled in and out of the tub, but the actual washing was done by pumping a wooden handle that worked a set of paddles. This technological marvel was the pride of the household. We would take turns spelling Ben at the handle, pushing the heavy stick blade back and forth until our arms ached.

The only member of the family who did no work was the oldest child, Bastian. Two years older than Ben and six years older than I, Bas never learned to do any of the things other people did. He spent the day standing under an elm tree on the dike road, watching the village go by. Witte was proud of its elms in this tree-poor country: one for every house, their branches meeting to form a green archway over the road. For some reason, Bas never stood beneath our tree. His post was under the third one down, and there he stood all day long, until one of us led him home for supper.

Next to Mama, I think I loved Bas more than anyone on earth. As the villagers passed his elm tree they would call to him to get his shy and wonderful smile in response. “Ah, Bas!” Over the years he heard this phrase so often that at last he began to repeat it, the only words he ever learned.

But though Bas could not talk or even dress himself, he had a strange and remarkable talent. In our tiny sitting room, as in most Dutch parlors in the 1930s, was a small pump organ. Papa was the only one in the family who could read music, and so in the evenings he would sit on the little bench, pumping the foot pedals and picking out tunes from an ancient hymnbook while the rest of us sang.

All except Bas. The minute the music started, Bas would drop down and crawl beneath the keyboard, where he would crouch out of the way of Papa’s feet and press himself to the baseboard of the organ. Of course Papa’s playing was rough and full of mistakes, not only because he could not hear the music, but also because the years of wielding a hammer on an anvil had left his fingers thick and stiff. Some nights he seemed to hit almost as many wrong notes as right ones.

To Bas it never mattered. He would press against the vibrating wood with rapture on his face. Where he was, of course, he could not see which keys were played or which knobs Papa pulled. But all at once Bas would stand up and gently push against Papa’s shoulder.

“Ah, Bas. Ah, Bas,” he would say.

And Papa would get up, and Bas would take his place at the bench. He always fussed a little with the hymnal as he had seen Papa do, turning the pages and usually managing to get the whole book upside down. Then, squinting at the page like Papa, he began to play. From beginning to end he would play the songs Papa had played that night. But not as Papa played them—hesitantly, clumsily, full of discords. Bas played them perfectly, without a mistake, with such surpassing beauty that people would stop in the street outside to listen. On summer nights when our door was open, a little crowd would gather outside the house, many of them with tears streaming down their faces. For when Bas played, it was as though an angel sat at the organ.

The big event in our week, of course, was church. Witte is in the polder land of Holland—land that generations of Dutchmen have reclaimed from the sea—and like all villages in the polders is built along a dike. It has only one street, the road leading north and south on top of the dike. The houses are virtual islands, each built on its mound of earth and connected to the road with a tiny bridge spanning the drainage canal. And at either end of town, on the highest, most imposing mounds of all, are the two churches.

There is still a lot of feeling in Holland between Catholics and Protestants, a carryover from the days of the Spanish occupation. During the week the village fishmonger will talk pleasantly with the village ironmonger, but on Sundays the fishmonger will walk with his family northward to the Roman church while the ironmonger will walk with his family southward to the Protestant church, and as they pass on the street neither will acknowledge the other with so much as a nod.

Our family was fiercely proud of its Protestant traditions. My father was glad, I think, that our house happened to be in the northern end of town, because this gave him the entire length of the village in which to demonstrate that we were headed in the right direction.

Because of Papa's deafness, we always sat in the very first pew at church. The pew was too short for the entire family to sit together, and I would manage to lag behind, letting Mama and Papa and the other children go in first. Then I would have to walk back toward the rear of the church to "find a seat." The seat I found was usually far beyond the church door. In the winter I skated down the frozen canals on my wooden *klompen*. In the summer I sat so still in the fields that wild crows would sit on my shoulders and peck gently at my ears.

With a kind of instinct, I knew precisely when the church service would be over and would slip into a corner of the church vestibule just as the first sufferers emerged. I stood near the preacher—who never once missed my presence—and listened for the comments of the congregation about his sermon. Thus I picked up his text, his theme, sometimes even the gist of a story.

This ploy was terribly important, because without it I could not have carried off the most important phase of my weekly adventure. It is the custom in Holland to gather in private homes after church. Three ingredients are always present. Coffee, cigar smoke, and a

point-by-point discussion of the sermon. The men in our village could afford these long black cigars only once a week. Each Sunday as their wives brewed strong black coffee, they brought them out and lit up with great ceremony. To this day whenever I catch the smell of coffee and cigar smoke, my heart beats faster; it is an odor associated with fear and excitement: could I once again fool my parents into thinking that I had been to church?

“It seems to me that the preacher used Luke 3:16 just last month,” I would say, knowing full well that he had not, but getting across in this way the fact that I knew the text.

Or: “Wasn’t that a good story about politicians?” playing out a scrap of conversation I had overheard. “I should think the burgo-master would be mad.”

The technique was immensely successful. I blush to think how seldom I attended church as a child. I blush even more when I remember that my trusting, simple-hearted family never suspected.

BY 1939 THE WHOLE COUNTRY SAW what the Whetstras had seen all along: the Germans were intent on a pattern of conquest that included Holland. In our house we scarcely thought about it. Bas was sick; the doctor called it tuberculosis. Mama and Papa moved onto a mattress in the sitting room. For months Bas lay in their tiny bedroom, coughing, coughing, his flesh shrinking until only bones and skin lay on the bed. His suffering was more dreadful than that of a normal person, because he could not tell us how he felt.

I remember one day just after my eleventh birthday creeping into the sickroom while Mama was busy in the kitchen. Entering that room was strictly forbidden, for the disease was contagious. But that was what I wanted. If Bas was going to die, then I wanted to die too. I threw myself down on top of him and kissed him again and again on the mouth. In July, 1939, Bas died, while I stayed healthy as ever, and I felt that God had betrayed me twice.

Two months later, in September, our government called for a general mobilization. For once, Mama allowed her radio to be used for news. We turned the volume as high as it would go, but still Papa could not hear. So my little sister Geltje stationed herself at the set and shouted salient pieces of information to him.

“ALL RESERVE UNITS ARE ACTIVATED, PAPA.”

“ALL PRIVATE CARS ARE COMMANDEERED.”

By nightfall the traffic jam had begun, the endless traffic jam that was to be the characteristic feature of the months before invasion. Every automobile in Holland was on the road. There seemed to be just as many going north as there were going south. No one knew where he was supposed to be, but he was getting there as fast as he could. Day after day, wearing my baggy trousers and loose blouse, I stood under the tree where Bas used to stand and watched. Nobody talked much.

Only Mr. Whetstra seemed to find the courage to put into words what we all knew. I could not understand why I was being drawn toward the Whetstras at this time, but frequently I found myself walking past that kitchen window.

“Good afternoon, Andrew.”

“Good afternoon, Mrs. Whetstra.”

“Out on an errand for your mother? You’d better have a cookie for energy.” She picked up a plate of cookies and brought them to the window.

Mr. Whetstra looked up from the kitchen table. “Is that little Andrew? Out to see the mobilization firsthand?”

“Yes, sir.” For some reason I put my cookie behind my back.

“Andrew, you must say prayers for your country every night. We are about to go through a very hard time.”

“Yes, sir.”

“What good can men with popguns do against planes and tanks?”

“Yes, sir.”

“They’ll be here, Andrew, with their steel helmets and their goose-step and their hate, and all we will have is our prayers.” Mr. Whetstra came over to the window and leaned across the sill. “Will you pray, Andrew? Pray for the courage to do all we can, and then having done all, to stand. Will you do that, Andrew?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Good boy.” Mr. Whetstra drew his head back into the room. “Now get along on your errand.”

But as I turned and started down the street, Mr. Whetstra called after me. “You can eat the cookie. Oh, I know, sometimes that old stove of ours smokes something awful. But it’s worked fine ever since I got my new window in.”

THAT NIGHT, LYING ON MY BED in the loft, I got to thinking about Mr. Whetstra. So he'd known all along. But he hadn't told my father, as every other grown-up in town would have done. I wondered why. I also wondered about his wanting me to pray. What good would that do! God never listened. If the Germans really did come, I planned to do a lot worse to them than pray. I fell asleep dreaming of the feats of daring I would work single-handed against the invader.

BY APRIL, WITTE WAS CROWDED with refugees from the polder land to the east of us. Holland was bombing its own dikes, deliberately flooding land wrested inch by inch from the sea over the centuries, to slow down the German army. Every house except ours, which was too small, held a homeless family from the flooded land, and Mama's soup pot simmered night and day.

But of course the Germans did not come by land. The first planes flew over Witte the night of May 10, 1940. We spent the night in the sitting room, huddled together, not sleeping. All the next day we saw planes and heard the explosions as they bombed the small military airfield four kilometers away. It was my twelfth birthday, but neither I nor anyone else remembered.

Then the Germans bombed Rotterdam. The radio announcer from Hilversum, to whom we had listened since mobilization, wept as he read the release. Rotterdam was gone. In one hour a city had disappeared from the earth. This was the blitzkrieg, the new warfare. The next day Holland surrendered.

A few days later a fat little German lieutenant arrived in Witte in a squad car and set himself up in the burgomaster's house. The handful of soldiers who accompanied him were mostly older men: Witte was not important enough to rate crack troops.

And for a while I really did act out my fantasies of resistance. Many was the night I crept barefoot down the ladder from the loft as two o'clock struck on the town clock. I knew that my mother heard me, because the regular rhythm of her breathing halted as I passed their room. But she never stopped me. Nor did she ask the next morning what had happened to our precious highly rationed sugar. Everyone in the village was amused when the lieutenant's staff car began to give him trouble. His sparks were fouled. His engine stalled. Some said there was sugar in the lieutenant's gas tank; others thought it was unlikely.

Food ran out in the towns before it did in farming villages like ours, and this fact too I used in my child's war against the enemy. One hot day that first summer, I loaded a basket with cabbages and tomatoes and walked the four miles to Alkmaar. A store there still had a supply of prewar fireworks, and I knew the proprietor wanted vegetables.

I pressed my advantage as far as I could and filled my basket with the firecrackers, placing over them the flowers I had brought along for the purpose. The proprietor stood looking at me in silence. Then, with sudden resolution, he reached under the counter and brought up a large cherry bomb.

"I have no more food."

"You'd better get home before the curfew."

That night back in Witte the floorboards of the loft creaked again, and again Mama held her breath. I slipped out, barefoot, into the night. A patrol of four foot soldiers was moving northward up the street toward our house, playing their torches on each of the buildings as they passed. I moved out of the doorway and flattened myself against the side of the house as the marching boots drew closer. The minute the soldiers had passed I sped across the little bridge between our house and the dike road and ran south to the burgomaster's house. It would have been a simple matter to fire the mammoth cherry bomb in the lieutenant's doorway while the patrol was at the other end of the village. But I wanted more adventure than that. I was the fastest runner in the village, and I thought it would be fun to have these old men in their heavy boots run after me. I don't suppose any of them was over fifty, but to my young eyes they seemed ancient.

So I waited until the patrol began its tour back down the street. Just before they got to headquarters, I lit the fuse and ran.

"*Halt!*" A torchbeam picked me up, and I heard a rifle bolt being drawn. I hadn't counted on guns! I zigged and zagged as I ran up the street. Then the cherry bomb exploded, and for a fraction of a moment the soldier's attention was diverted. I darted across the first bridge I could find, raced through a garden, and flung myself down among the cabbage heads. For nearly an hour they hunted for me, shouting gruff syllables to one another in German, until at last they gave up.

Elated by this success, I began discharging volleys in broad daylight. One day I stepped from hiding straight into the arms of a

soldier. To run was to admit guilt. Yet in my hands was strong circumstantial evidence: in my left hand were firecrackers, in my right, matches.

“Du! Komm mal her!”

My hands clenched around the firecrackers. I did not dare stuff them in my coat pocket; that would surely be the first place he would look.

“Hast du einen Fuerwerkskoerper explodiert?”

“Fuerwerks? Oh no, sir!”

I grabbed the two edges of my coat with my clenched hands and held it wide for him to search. The soldier went over me from my wide trousers to my cap. When he turned away in disgust, the firecrackers in my hand were drenched with perspiration.

BUT AS THE OCCUPATION DRAGGED ON, even I tired of my games. In villages near ours hostages were being lined up and shot and houses burned to the ground, as the real resistance hardened and took shape. Jokes against the Germans ceased to be funny.

All over Holland were the *onderduikers* (literally the under-divers), men and boys in hiding to escape deportation to the forced labor camps in Germany. Ben, sixteen when the war began, dived under a farm near Ermelo the first month, and for five years we had no news of him.

Possession of a radio was made a crime against the new regime. We hid Mama’s instrument in a crawl space under the sloping roof, and one by one we would crouch there to listen for the Dutch language broadcasts from England. Later, when the Dutch railroad struck, we would even squeeze railroad workers into that tiny hole, and of course there were always Jews to be hidden for a night on their way to the coast.

As the Germans grew desperate for manpower, Witte’s tiny occupation force was withdrawn. Then came the dreaded *razzia*. Trucks would suddenly speed into the villages, at any hour of the day or night, sealing the dike roads at both ends, while squads of soldiers searched every house for able-bodied men. Before I was fourteen I was joining the flight of men and boys into the polders at the first sign of a German uniform. We would run across the fields, crouching low, leaping the canals, making for the swamp

beyond the railroad. The railway dike was too high to climb—we would surely be seen—so we would dive into the broad canal that flowed beneath the railroad bridge, to crawl out soaked—panting and shivering. By the end of the war even little Cornelius and Papa, deaf as he was, were joining the race to the swamp.

Between the *razzias*, life was a somber struggle for mere existence. All electricity was reserved for the Germans. With nothing to power the pumps, the rainwater lay deep and stagnant over the polders. In our homes we used oil lamps, making the oil ourselves from cabbage seeds. There was no coal, so Witte cut down its elms. The tree under which Bas had stood was cut the second winter.

But the chief enemy, worse even than the cold and the soldiers, was hunger. We were constantly, naggingly, endlessly hungry. All crops were commandeered for the front as soon as they were picked. My father tended his garden as carefully as ever, but it was the Germans who reaped most of the harvest. For years our family of six lived on rations for two.

At first we were able to add to this allowance by digging the tulip bulbs from our garden and eating them like potatoes. Then even the tulips ran out. Mama would pretend to eat, but many nights I saw her divide her tiny portion among the other plates. Her only consolation was that Bas had not lived to see this time. He never could have understood the ache in his stomach, the dark fireplace, the treeless street.

At last the day came when Mama could not get out of bed. If liberation did not come soon, we knew she would die.

And then in the spring of 1945 the Germans left and the Canadians took their place. People stood in the street weeping for joy. But I was not with them. I was running every step of the five miles to the Canadian encampment, where I was able to beg a small sackful of breadcrusts.

Bread! Quite literally the bread of life!

I brought it home to my family with shouts of “Food! Food! Food!” As Mama gnawed the dry crusts, tears of gratefulness to God rolled down the deep lines in her cheeks.

The war was over.

2 THE YELLOW STRAW HAT

One afternoon in the summer of 1945, several months after liberation, I came into the house and was met by my little sister, Geltje, with the news that my father wanted to see me.

“He’s in the garden,” she said.

I walked through the dark kitchen and out into the cabbage patch, blinking my eyes against the bright sunlight. Papa, hoe in hand, *klompen* on his feet, was bent over his cabbages working the little weeds out with patient tenderness. I circled so as to stand in front of him and shouted, “YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, PAPA?”

Papa straightened up slowly. “YOU’RE SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD, ANDREW.” I knew instantly what direction the conversation was going to take.

“YES SIR.”

“WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE!”

I wished his voice didn’t have to be so loud. And mine in answering him. “I DON’T KNOW, PAPA.”

Now Papa was going to ask me why I didn't like smithing. He did. Then he was going to ask why I had not stuck with machine fitting—a trade I had tried to learn during the occupation. He did that, too. I knew that all Witte could hear both his questions and the vague and evasive answers with which I tried to satisfy him.

“IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO CHOOSE A TRADE, ANDREW. BY FALL I WANT YOUR DECISION.”

My father leaned back over his hoe, and I knew the conversation was over. I had then perhaps two months to decide on my life's work. Oh, I knew what I wanted all right: to find somehow a life that broke out of the mold. To find adventure. To get away from Witte, from the mental set that was constantly looking backward.

But I also knew that my prospects were not very good. The Germans had come when I was in the sixth grade and taken over the school building, and that was the end of my formal education.

The only thing I could do well was run. That afternoon I took off across the polders, barefoot, running mile after mile along the little footpaths used by the farmers. After five miles I was just getting warmed up. I ran through the town where I had bought the firecrackers. My mind was clear now and functioning well.

I scrambled up the dike that led back to Witte with a mounting sense that I was close to my answer. The solution was clear. There was constant talk in the paper about armed rebellion in the colonies. The Dutch East Indies, so recently liberated from Japan, were now presuming to claim independence from Holland as well. Daily we were reminded that these colonies were Dutch soil—had been for 350 years. Why were our armies not reclaiming them for the Crown?

Why indeed? That night I announced to the household that I knew already what I was going to do.

“What's that, Andy?” said Maartje.

“Join the army.”

Mother's instinct was to draw in her breath. “Oh, Andrew!” She had seen too much of armies. “Must we always think of killing?”

But my father and brothers were of a different mind. The very next week I borrowed Papa's bicycle and pedaled to the recruiting office in Amsterdam. By nightfall I was home again, much diminished in my own sight. The army took seventeen-year-olds only in

the calendar year in which they turned eighteen. I wouldn't be eighteen until May of 1946!

In January I was back, and this time I was accepted. Before long I was strutting through Witte in my new uniform, oblivious to the fact that the pants were too small, the jacket too big, the whole effect quite top-heavy. But I was going off to take back our colonies for the Queen, and perhaps get a few of those dirty revolutionaries who everyone said were Communists and bastards. The two words automatically went together.

The only people who did not respond with applause were the Whetstras. I walked, top-heavy, past their house.

"Hello there, Andy."

"Good morning, Mr. Whetstra."

"How are your mother and father?"

Was it possible he did not see the uniform? I turned so that the sun glinted from my shiny brass belt buckle. At last I blurted, "I've joined up, you know. I'm going to the East Indies."

Mr. Whetstra leaned back as if to see me better. "Yes, I see. So you're off for adventure. I will pray for you, Andrew. I will pray that the adventure you find will satisfy."

I stared at him, puzzled. Whatever did he mean, adventure that would satisfy? Any kind of adventure, I thought as I looked out over the flat fields stretching away from Witte in every direction, any adventure would satisfy me more than the long sleep of this village.

SO I LEFT HOME. I left home emotionally as well as physically. I worked hard during basic training and felt for the first time in my life that I was doing something I wanted to do.

Oh, how I liked being treated as an adult. Part of my training took place in the town of Gorkum. Each Sunday I would go to church—not because I was interested in the service but because afterward I could count on being invited to dinner. I always enjoyed telling my hosts that I had been picked for special commando training in Indonesia.

"Within a few weeks," I would say, dramatically pushing my chair back and taking a long draw from my after-Sunday-dinner cigar, "I shall be in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy." And then, strik-

ing a somewhat distant look, I would ask if my hosts would consider writing me while I was overseas. They always agreed, and before I left Holland I had seventy names on my correspondence list.

One of them was a girl. I met her in the usual way, after church—a Reformed service that particular Sunday. She was the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. About my age I guessed, extremely slender, with hair so black it had a tinge of blue in it. But what impressed me most was her skin. I had read about skin as white as snow; this was the first time I had seen it. After a pleasant snooze during the sermon, I went invitation-fishing. Sure enough, I timed my exit just right. Snow White was at the door. She introduced herself.

“I’m Thile,” she said.

“I’m Andrew.”

“My mother wonders if you would like to have dinner with us.”

“Very much indeed,” I said, and moments later I left the church with the princess on my arm.

Thile’s father was a fishmonger. His home was over his shop, down by the waterfront in Gorkum, and throughout our dinner the pleasant smells of the dockside mingled with the odors of boiled cabbage and ham. Afterward we sat in the family drawing room.

“Cigar, Andrew?” said Thile’s father.

“Thank you, sir.” I chose one carefully and rolled it in my fingers as I had seen the men in Witte do. Frankly, I didn’t like the taste of cigars, but the association with manhood was so strong that I could have smoked rope and enjoyed it. Throughout the coffee-and-cigars, Thile sat with her back to the window, the strong mid-day sun making her hair more blue than ever. She said hardly a word, but already I knew that this young girl was going to be one of my correspondents and, perhaps, a lot more too.

November 22, 1946: my last day at home. I had already said goodbye to Thile and to the other families in Gorkum. Now it was time to take leave of my own family.

If only I had known it was the last time I would see Mama. I would have been far less of the dashing soldier-going-off-to-war. But I didn’t know, and I took Mama’s embrace as my due. I thought I looked rather well. At last I had a uniform that fit, I was in excellent physical shape, my hair was cut close army-style.

Just as I was ready to leave, Mama reached under her apron and pulled out a little book. I knew right away what it would be: her Bible.

“Andrew, will you take this with you?”

Of course I said, “Yes.”

“Will you read it, Andrew?”

Can you ever say no to your mother? You can do no—but you can’t say no. I put the Bible in my dufflebag, as far down as it would go, and forgot it.

OUR TRANSPORT SHIP, THE SIBAJAK, landed in Indonesia just before Christmas, 1946. My heart raced with excitement at the heavy tropical smells, the sight of naked porters moving up and down the gangplanks, the sounds of the hawkers on the dock trying to get our attention. I shouldered my dufflebag and struggled down the gangplank into the fierce sun of the dockside. I did not guess that within a few weeks I would be killing children and unarmed adults just like the people who crowded around me now.

A few of the hawkers were selling monkeys. Each was held by a little chain, and many had been trained to do tricks. I was fascinated by these little creatures with their serious, ancient faces and stooped to look at one of them more closely.

“Don’t touch him.”

I straightened up to find myself facing one of my officers.

“They bite, soldier.” The officer was smiling, but he was serious. “Half of them have rabies, you know.”

The officer moved on, and I withdrew my hand. The little boy who was holding the monkey chased after the officer shrieking at him for ruining the sale. I moved back into the line of debarking soldiers, but right then I knew I had to have a monkey of my own.

Those of us who qualified were separated from the rest of the troops and sent to a nearby island for training as commandos. I liked running the tough obstacle courses: scaling walls, swinging across creeks on vines, crawling into culverts, wriggling under machine-gun fire. Even more I liked the hand combat training, where we worked with bayonets, knives, and bare hands. “Hi-hii! Ho!” It was lunge and parry, thrust with fingers stiff, come at the enemy with drawn knife. For some reason the thought never penetrated that I was training to kill human beings.

Part of the education of a commando was the development of self-confidence. But here I needed no schooling. From childhood I had had a completely unfounded confidence in my ability to do anything I set out to do.

Like drive a Bren carrier, for instance. These were heavy armored vehicles mounted on caterpillar treads, and handling them was difficult even for someone who could drive an automobile—which I could not. But each day as we went out on maneuvers I watched the driver of the carrier on which I rode, until it seemed to me that I had the hang of it.

Unexpectedly, one day I had a chance to find out. Coming out of company headquarters, I ran into an officer.

“Can you drive a Bren carrier, soldier?”

A quick salute and an even quicker, “Yes, sir.”

“Well, that one there has to go to the garage. Let’s go.”

In front of us at the curb was the carrier. Three hundred yards away was the garage. Seven other carriers were parked there, nose to tail, waiting to be serviced. I hopped snappily into the driver’s seat while the officer climbed in beside me. I looked at the dashboard. There in front of me was a key, and I remembered that the driver always turned that first of all. Sure enough the engine coughed once and then caught. Now which of those pedals was the clutch? I pressed one of them and it went to the floor, and I knew I had been lucky twice in a row. I put the carrier into gear, let go of the clutch pedal, and with a great kangaroo leap we launched into space.

The officer looked at me quickly but said nothing: no Bren carrier ever starts smoothly. But as I raced full throttle down the company street, I noticed that he was holding on with both hands and bracing his feet. We covered the three hundred yards with only one near-accident—a sergeant who discovered on the spot how great were his powers of flight—and then we came to the line of carriers.

And I knew that I was in trouble.

I didn’t know where the brake was.

Arms flailing and feet flying, I tried every button and lever I could find. Among the things I pushed was the accelerator, and with one last surge of power we plowed into the row of Bren carriers parked at the curb. All seven of them bucked forward, each slamming

against the other, until we came to rest, hissing and smoking, our engine at last dead.

I looked at the officer. He stared straight ahead of him, his eyes large, sweat pouring down the sides of his face. He got out of the car, crossed himself, and walked away without once turning to look at me. The sergeant ran up to me and pulled me out of the driver's seat.

"What on earth got into you, soldier?"

"He asked me if I knew how to drive it, sergeant. He didn't ask if I knew how to stop!"

It was probably fortunate for me that we were leaving the next morning for our first combat mission. We were going, rumor said, to relieve a company of commandos that had lost three out of every four of its men.

At dawn we were flown to the front.

And instantly I knew that I had been wrong about this adventure. It wasn't the danger—I liked that—it was the killing. Suddenly targets were no longer pieces of paper stuck up on an earth background, they were fathers and brothers like my own. Often our targets weren't even in uniform.

What was I doing? How had I gotten here? I was more disgusted with myself than I had ever imagined possible.

And then one day the incident occurred that has haunted me all my life. We were marching through a village that was still partially inhabited. This made us bold, for we did not think the Communists would mine a village in which people were still living. Anti-personnel mines were the thing we feared most in the world. They kept us in a state of perpetual fear, lest these jumping, emasculating instruments should explode and leave us groveling and crippled for life. We had been in combat daily for more than three weeks, and the nerves of everyone in our unit were on edge, when about halfway through this peaceful-looking village we stepped into a nest of mines. The company went berserk. Without orders, without reasoning, we simply started shooting. We shot everything in sight. When we came to ourselves, there was not a living thing in the village. We skirted the mined area and walked gingerly through the desolation we had created. At the edge of the village I saw the sight that was to send me nearly mad. A young Indonesian mother

lay on the ground in a pool of her own blood, a baby boy at her breast. Both had been killed by the same bullet.

I think I wanted to kill myself after that. I know that in the next two years I became famous throughout the Dutch troops in Indonesia for my crazy bravado on the battlefield. I bought a bright yellow straw hat and wore it into combat with me. It was a dare and an invitation. "Here I am!" it said. "Shoot me!" Gradually I gathered around me a group of boys who were reacting as I did, and together we invented a motto that we posted on the camp bulletin board: "Get smart—lose your mind."

Everything we did, those two years, whether on the battlefield or back at the rest camp, was in extremes. When we fought, we fought as madmen. When we drank, we drank until our reason left us. Together, we would weave from bar to bar, hurling our empty gin bottles through the display windows of the local stores.

When I woke up from these orgies, I would wonder why I was doing these things, but the question never got an answer. It occurred to me once that perhaps the chaplain might be able to help. They told me I could find him at the officers' bar, and when I did, he was as tipsy and garrulous as anyone there. He stepped outside to see me, but when I told why I'd come, he laughed and told me I'd get over it. "But if you want, come to services before you fight next time," the chaplain said. "That way you can kill men in a state of grace." He thought the joke was very funny. He went back inside to repeat it to the others.

So I turned to my pen pals. I had kept up with all of the people I had promised to write, and now I ventured to share my confusion with a few of them. In essence they all wrote back the same thing: "You're fighting for your country, Andrew. So the rest doesn't count."

One person alone said more than this. Thile. Thile wrote to me about guilt. That part of her letters spoke straight to my own wretchedness. But then she went on to talk about forgiveness. And there she lost me. My sense of guilt was wrapped around me like a chain, and nothing I did—drinking, fighting, writing letters or reading them—nothing seemed to ease its stranglehold upon me.

And then one day when I was on leave in Jakarta, walking through the bazaar, I spotted a little gibbon tied to a tall pole. He was sitting on top of the pole eating some fruit, and as I went by he

jumped onto my shoulder and handed me a section of orange. I laughed, and that was all it took for the excellent Indonesian salesman to come running.

“Sir, the monkey likes you!”

I laughed again. The gibbon blinked twice very deliberately and then showed me his teeth in what could have been a grin.

“How much?”

And that is how I came to acquire a monkey. I took him back to the barracks with me. At first the other boys were fascinated.

“Does he bite?”

“Only crooks,” I said.

It was a senseless remark, meaning nothing. But no sooner had I said it than the monkey jumped out of my arms, swung along the rafters, and landed—of all the places in the room he could have chosen—on the head of a heavysset guy who had been winning more at poker than averages allowed. He crabbed sideways, flailing his arms, trying to knock the monkey off his head. The whole barracks was laughing.

“Get him off me!” Jan Zwart shouted. “Get him off!”

I reached out my hand, and the monkey ran to me.

Jan smoothed his hair and tucked in his shirt, but his eyes were murderous. “I’ll kill him,” he said quietly.

So on the same day I gained one friend and lost another. I hadn’t had the monkey many weeks before I noticed that his stomach seemed to be hurting him. One day while carrying him I felt what seemed like a welt around his waist. I put him down on the bed and told him to lie still. Carefully I pulled back the hair until I saw what it was. Evidently when the gibbon had been a baby, someone had tied him with a piece of wire and never taken it off. As the monkey grew, the wire became embedded in his flesh. It must have caused him terrible pain.

That evening I began the operation. I took my razor and shaved off the monkey’s hair in a three-inch-wide swathe around his middle. The uncovered welt was red and angry-looking. While the other boys in the barracks looked on, I cut ever so gently into this tender flesh until I exposed the wire. The gibbon lay with the most amazing patience. Even when I hurt him, he looked at me with eyes that seemed to say, “I understand,” until at long last I was able

to pull the wire away. Instantly he jumped up, did a little cartwheel, danced around my shoulder, and pulled my hair, to the delight of all the boys in the barracks—except Jan.

After that, my gibbon and I were inseparable. I think I identified with him as strongly as he with me. I think I saw in the wire that had bound him a kind of parallel to the chain of guilt still so tight around myself—and in his release the thing I too longed for. Whenever I was not on duty in the daytime, I would take him with me on long runs into the forest. He loped along behind me until he grew tired. Then with a sprint he would dash forward, jump up, and hang on to my shorts, where he would cling until finally I picked him up and put him on my shoulder. Together, we would run for ten, fifteen miles until I would fling myself down on the ground to sleep. Almost always there were monkeys in the trees overhead. My little gibbon would race into the treetops to swing and chatter with the others. The first time this happened, I thought I had lost him. But the minute I stood up to start back, there was a shriek in the branches overhead, a rustling of leaves, and with a thud the gibbon was back on my shoulder.

One day when, laughing and tired, I bore him back into camp, I found a letter waiting for me from my brother Ben. He went on and on about a funeral. It was only slowly that I realized it was Mama's.

Apparently a telegram had been sent—but it had never come. I knew that I was going to cry. I gave the monkey some water and while he was drinking, slipped away from camp. I didn't want even the gibbon with me. I ran and ran until my side throbbed in pain, knowing suddenly how very alone I must always be without her.

And it was that week that Jan Zwart took his revenge on the monkey. One evening I came in from guard duty to be met with the news, "Andy, the little monkey's dead."

"Dead?" I looked up dully. "What happened?"

"One of the boys picked him up by his tail and kept slamming him against the wall."

"Was it Zwart?"

The guy wouldn't answer.

"Where's the monkey now?"

"He's outside. In the bushes."

I found him draped over a branch. The worst of it was, he wasn't quite dead. I picked him up and brought him back to the barracks.

His jaw was broken. A great hole gaped in his throat. When I tried to give him water, it ran right out the hole. Jan Zwart watched me warily, prepared for a fight. But I didn't fight. Too many blows in a row had left me stupefied.

Over the next ten days I nursed that monkey day and night. I sewed its throat closed and fed it sugar water. I rubbed its little muscles. I stroked its fur. I kept it warm and talked to it constantly. It was a creature I had released from bondage, and I wasn't going to let it go without a struggle.

Slowly, very slowly, my gibbon began to eat, and then to crawl about on the bed, and at last to sit up and chatter at me crossly if I was slow with the hourly feedings. At the end of two months he was running with me again in the forest.

But he never recovered his confidence in people. That barracks was a place of terror for him. The only time he would stop trembling when people were close was when all four legs and his tail were wrapped around my arm and his head was hidden in my shirt front.

When news came of a major new drive against the enemy, I asked if someone who could drive would borrow a jeep and take me and my gibbon into the jungle. "I want to let him go and then drive away fast." I said, "Will anyone take me?"

"I'll go."

I turned around. It was Jan Zwart. I held his eye for a long time, but he did not blink.

"All right."

As we drove into the jungle I explained to the monkey why I could no longer keep him. At last we stopped. As I put the little gibbon on the ground his wise little eyes stared into mine with what looked like comprehension. He did not try to jump back into the jeep. As we pulled away he sat there on the ground staring after us until we were out of sight.

The next morning, February 12, 1949, our unit moved out at dawn.

It was a good thing I let the monkey go when I did, for I never got back to camp.

I TRIED TO PRETEND THE SAME BRAVADO on this mission that I had felt on earlier ones. I wore my yellow straw hat as I had before.

I shouted as loud, I cursed, I moved forward with my company day after day, but even my defiance seemed to have deserted me.

And then one morning a bullet smashed through my ankle, and I was out of the war.

It happened so suddenly and—at first—so painlessly that I did not know what had happened. We had walked into an ambush. The enemy was on three sides of us, and many times our strength. Why I was shot in the ankle and not in my straw hat I don't know, but as I was running I suddenly fell. I knew I had not stumbled. But I could not get up. And then I saw that my right combat boot had two holes in it. Blood was coming out of both of them.

"I'm hit," I called, not excited. It was simply a fact, and I stated it as such.

A buddy rolled me into a ditch out of sight. At last medics came with a stretcher. They put me on it and began moving me out, crouching low in the ditch. I still had on my yellow hat and refused to take it off even when it drew fire. A bullet once went through the crown. I just didn't care.

Hours later, still wearing my yellow straw hat, I was stretched out on an operating table in the evacuation hospital. It took two and a half hours to sew up the foot. I heard the doctors discussing whether or not to amputate. The nurse asked me to take the hat off, but I refused.

"Don't you know what that is?" the doctor asked the nurse. "That's the unit's symbol. These are the boys who got smart and lost their minds."

But I hadn't. That was the final irony, the final failure. I hadn't even managed to get my brains blown out. Just a foot. Somehow in all my furious self-destructiveness I had never considered this possibility. I had always seen myself going out in a blaze of contempt for the whole human farce. But to live—and crippled!—that was the meanest fate of all. My great adventure had failed. Worse, I was twenty years old, and I had discovered that there was no real adventure anywhere in the world.

3

THE PEBBLE IN THE SHELL

I lay on the hospital bed, my right leg so encased in plaster that I could scarcely move.

At first I had visitors from my unit. But the others were getting themselves killed or wounded too. And after all, life was moving on. The doctors told me I would never walk without a cane. It was better not to think about these things; bit by bit my buddies stopped coming.

But not before they had accomplished two things that were to alter events for me.

The first was to mail a letter I had never intended mailing. It was to Thile. I had picked up an odd habit: whenever I came back from a late night on the town or a battle that left me feeling especially dirty, I would write to Thile. I would put down on the paper all the filthy, disgusting things I had seen and done, things I could never really share with anyone; then I would burn it.

Just before I went into my last battle, I had started such a letter to Thile and had left it unfinished in my barracks bag. Well, after I was hit, a helpful buddy went through my bag for personal items before turning it in. And being a resourceful kind of fellow, he looked up Thile's name in my address book and mailed it. You could see he thought he'd done something extra nice.

"Man!" he teased me when he visited me in the hospital. "I've never seen such a list of names! What do you do, write to every family in Holland that has a pretty girl? It took me half an hour to find the last name that went with Thile. You better be careful, man—this could start another war."

Horror must have shown in my face, because he suddenly jumped out of his chair.

"Gee, Andy, I didn't realize it still hurt so bad. And here I am making lousy jokes. I'll come back when you feel better."

For days I tried to remember what I had written in that wretched letter. As near as I could recall it began:

Dearest Thile,

I'm so lonely tonight. I wish you were here. I wish I could look right into your eyes as I say all these things and know that you still liked me or at least didn't condemn me.

You wrote me once that I should pray. Well, I haven't. Instead I curse. I know words I never even heard in Holland. I tell filthy jokes. The worse I feel the harder I can get the guys laughing. I'm not the person you think I am. This war used to bother me. But it doesn't any more. When I see dead people I shrug. People we have killed, not just soldiers, but ordinary working men, and women, and children.

I have no desire for God. I don't want to pray. Instead of going to church I go to the pub and drink until I don't give a hoot. . . .

There was more. Much more and much worse. I lay in agony in that hospital ward, trying to remember just what in my drunken fog I *had* written. Well, there was one friend I could say goodbye to. The trouble was, Thile wasn't just "one friend." She was the best friend I'd ever had—and I had wanted her to be so very much more.

I thrashed about on the narrow bed, what part of me could move, trying to shut out the picture of Thile reading that letter.

And as I flung out my arm, my hand fell on the book.

That was the second thing the boys had done for me. They had found my mother's little Bible in the bottom of the dufflebag. It was Jan Zwart who brought it to me, leaving it rather shyly on the bedside table just before he left.

"This book was in your things," he said. "I didn't know if you wanted it."

I said thanks, but I didn't pick it up. I doubt if I ever would have, except for the nuns. The hospital to which I had been assigned was run by Franciscan sisters. I soon fell in love with every one of them. From dawn until midnight they were busy in the wards, cleaning bedpans, swabbing wounds, writing letters for us, laughing, singing. I never once heard them complain.

One day I asked the nun who came to bathe me how it was that she and the other sisters were always so cheerful.

"Why, Andrew, you ought to know the answer to that—a good Dutch boy like you. It's the love of Christ." When she said it, her eyes sparkled, and I knew without question that for her this was the whole answer: she could have talked all afternoon and said no more.

"But you're teasing me, aren't you?" she said, tapping the well-worn little Bible where it still lay on the bedside table. "You've got the answer right here."

So now when my restless hand struck against it, I picked it up. In the two and a half years since my mother had given it to me, I had never once opened it. But I thought about the sisters, their joy, their tranquility: "You've got the answer right there. . . ." I propped the little book on my chest, and with a desultory finger I moved the pages backward until I got to Genesis 1:1.

I read the story of creation and of the entrance of sin into the world. It did not seem nearly as farfetched to me now as it had when our schoolteacher read aloud a chapter each afternoon, while outside canals waited to be jumped. I read on, skipping whole portions, flipping through to get to the story again. At last, many days later, I came to the New Testament. Lying there encased in autograph-covered plaster, I read straight through the Gospels, catching dimly their terrible significance. Could all this really be true?

While I was in the middle of the Gospel According to St. John, a letter was delivered. The handwriting on the envelope was familiar. Thile! With trembling hands I tore it open.

“Dearest Andy,” I read—Dearest! The word I had written so many times to her, but never in a letter intended to be mailed—“Dearest Andy, I have here a letter from a boy who thinks his heart has turned hard. But his heart is breaking and he has shown a little of that heartbreak to me and I am proud that he has.” Then followed—when for sheer relief I could read again—of all things a study outline of the Bible! This was the only place, Thile wrote, where human heartbreak could be understood in terms of God’s love.

They were wonderful weeks that followed, weeks of reading the Bible together, on opposite sides of the earth. I filled page after page with questions, and Thile went to her pastor and her library and the depths of her own heart to find the answers.

But as the months passed in the hospital, as my cast came off bit by bit, and I saw the ugly shrunken leg and remembered the joys of running that would never be mine again, I found myself holding on to a hard core of resentment, which was just the opposite of the joy Thile and my Franciscan nuns were talking about.

As soon as I was ambulatory, I started leaving the hospital every evening after dinner to hobble painfully to the nearest pub and drink myself into oblivion. The nuns never spoke about it. At least not directly. But on the day before I was to be shipped home my favorite nun, Sister Patrice, pulled a chair up to my bed.

“Andy, I have a story to tell you. Do you know how natives catch monkeys out in the forest?”

My face lit up at the thought of a monkey story. “No. Tell me.”

“Well, you see, the natives know that a monkey will never let go of something he wants even if it means losing his freedom. So here’s what they do. They take a coconut and make a hole in one end just big enough for a monkey’s paw to slip through. Then they drop a pebble into the hole and wait in the bushes with a net.

“Sooner or later a curious old fellow will come along. He’ll pick up that coconut shell and rattle it. He’ll peer inside. And then at last he’ll slip his paw into the hole and feel around until he gets hold of that pebble. But when he tries to bring it out, he finds that he

cannot get the paw through the hole without letting go. And, Andy, that monkey will never let go of what he thinks is a prize. It's the easiest thing in the world to catch a fellow who acts like that."

Sister Patrice got up and put the chair back by the table. She paused for a moment and looked me straight in the eye.

"Are you holding on to something, Andrew? Something that's keeping you from your freedom?"

And then she was gone.

I knew perfectly well what she meant. I also knew her sermon wasn't for me. The next day was going to be a great one on two counts: it was my twenty-first birthday, and it was the day the hospital ship sailed for home. To celebrate, I called together all survivors who could still walk or limp of the company I had come to Indonesia with three years earlier. There were eight of us. We had a grand time. We got roaring, shouting, belligerently drunk.