

THE REUNION

by Joseph R. Granato

We tried not to look foolish in their eyes, not to look desperate when we asked them if it were all right for us to crash their party, to show up unannounced and ready to steal the attention that we knew our presence alone would accommodate. Finally, the tall and shrewd alumnus from our former high school granted us entry, but solely out of respect for our homecoming past, otherwise this night would have offered nothing more than a slammed door and a couple of joints playing video games at Don's, always competitive, never the best way to spend a Saturday night though. Luckily, this night was a lot more promising. Thankfully, the old piece of shit high school I attended finally did something for me other than teach me how to get shit-faced and grant me popularity for a time. Tonight, Don and I had a chance to try our hands at being in college what we were in high school...cool.

I always try not to let the smoke of all forms of habit bother me, but as I entered the typical Masonic fraternity house, stark white and magnificent with ten bedrooms and fourteen bathrooms decorated in the old-world style dark wood and luxurious eye-candy for the sons and daughters of the privileged, I suddenly became unnerved, a pulse of anxiety riddling throughout, the sheer paranoia of unknown places and people...intimidation rising steeply. Nonetheless, I tried to remember who I was, or who I was portraying myself to be. I tried to give off the persona of confidence, the outright blatant display of pride that although I feigned it well, I truly did not feel. Still, I had to try to relax; I had to try to be comfortable with the surroundings, threatening and elusive. I had always thought that this was just the sort of place of tradition that I would be at peace with, but the stuffy pompousness of privilege suddenly made me glad that I was from a middle class home. That I wasn't an heir to the heir of that other heir. That, if I were to be anything or anyone, I would have to earn it and somehow make it work.

And then for a moment, I realized how lost I had become in my thoughts and how I seemed to block out all conversation aimed at me, and found myself simply nodding as I was handed a drink from a guy in a pink shirt and a joint from another guy wearing a red letter jacket. I turned and sought out a face I could recognize, anyone. Yet, no one I saw was familiar. No one I saw was a friend, a real friend. An *old* friend. Instead, the panic again began to sink in, but I tried my best to inhale as much as possible and hope that when I opened my eyes a comforting presence would be there. I tried. When I opened them, I recognized no one. I was all alone.