

friend who described him as “very mild-mannered, kind.” Since Fisher was not advancing any theory about the crime, his conversations with the witnesses for the defense lacked direction and at times helped the prosecutor’s argument as much as his own. When Jean Miles, weeping, took the stand, Fisher helped her paint an image of domestic normalcy:

FISHER: Your house was kind of a getaway for him, wasn’t it?

MILES: Yes.

FISHER: It would be you, and Jesse, and Dakotah, and he could kind of play video games, watch movies?

MILES: Yes.

FISHER: And you guys gave him attention?

MILES: Yes.

FISHER: O.K. He had fun over at your house?

MILES: Yes. I hope so.

Cotter concluded the trial by describing Dakotah as a young man incapable of reciprocating his family’s love. He argued that the crime exemplified premeditation, since Dakotah “considered the pros and cons of killing” for more than two hours. “It’s almost like he was building up the courage to do it,” Cotter said, before acting out Dakotah’s interior monologue: “Are you going to do it? Do it. Do it! Shoot him.” Cotter described Dakotah’s reaction to the shooting as “just bizarre”: there was “not a tear, not a sob,” no “ounce of emotion.” He dwelled on Dakotah’s remark that the “tension goes away” after murdering someone. “That’s when it starts, that’s when the conscience kicks in,” Cotter said. “He’s got the emotional curve all wrong.”

The expectation that defendants will display remorse either shortly after their crimes or never is generally accepted as common sense. In a *Columbia Law Review* study of cases of juveniles charged with violent crimes, the Emory law professor Martha Grace Duncan found that youths who failed to express their contrition promptly and appropriately, as adults would, were often penalized for showing “less grief than the system demands.” In many cases, she writes, the juveniles appeared to be in shock or in a kind of dissociative state and failed to appreciate the permanence of what they had done. “Less under the sway of the reality principle,” they were more prone than adults to engage in forms of

LOT’S WIFE

Sometime soon after the embers cooled,
after dust clouds settled, after the last strings
of smoke, hoisted by desert breezes, cleared the air,

they must have come, people of those three cities
remaining, to pick among the charred bones,
the rubble of what was once temple and house,

stable and brothel; to kick at stones; to tug
at handles of buckets, blades of shovels and spades.
Later, raising ash plumes in the scorched plain,

cloths at their mouths and noses, eyes burning,
neither fearful nor repentant but full of wonder,
full of the scavenger’s overabundant hope,

they would have found her—even as now
some men encounter the woman of their dreams
(beauty of the movie screen, princess they capture

with a camera’s flash, girl whose finger brushes theirs

denial. But prosecutors and judges interpreted their strange reactions—falling asleep after the crime, giggling, rapping—as signs of irreparable depravity. Duncan found that courts looked for remorse in “psychologically naïve ways, without regard for defense mechanisms, developmental stages, or the ambiguity that inheres in human behavior.”

One of Dakotah’s closest friends, Christina Wardlaw, who sat through the trial, told me that she had to suppress the urge to laugh as she listened to Dakotah’s recorded conversations with the police. “He still saw himself as the same old Dakotah, jabbering and singing and making jokes,” she said. “He had no idea what he’d become.”

Dakotah’s reaction, with its apparent remorselessness, less than three hours after shooting his grandfather, was discussed by three witnesses for the prosecution. It also figured in the jurors’ deliberations. They asked to view Dakotah’s videotaped conversation with the detective again, and an hour after watching the tape, and just three hours after beginning deliberations, they announced that Dakotah was guilty of first-degree homicide.

One juror told me that several people on the jury were troubled by Dako-

tah’s youth, but they’d been instructed that if the evidence indicated that the offense was premeditated and deliberate the crime was first-degree murder. Age had no place in that calculus. As is required under Michigan law, the jury was not informed that the conviction carried the automatic penalty of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

Before the sentencing hearing, Lanny Fisher filed a brief asserting that the punishment violated the Eighth Amendment, which prohibits sentences that are cruel and unusual, based on the “evolving standards of decency in our maturing society.” Life imprisonment for juveniles is forbidden by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a treaty ratified by every country in the world except the United States and Somalia. In his brief, Fisher relied heavily on two recent Supreme Court cases, which, he maintained, suggest that the U.S. is increasingly recognizing the “distinct emotional, psychological and neurological status of youth.”

In a 2005 case, *Roper v. Simmons*, the United States became the last Western country to abolish the death penalty for juveniles. The decision drew on a

when she takes their card at the market register)—
found her, that is, not as the person she was

but as whom they needed her to be, and, man or woman,
each of them would have wanted a piece of her.
Standing in that wasted landscape,

she must have seemed a statue erected there
as a tribute to human frailty, white, crystallized,
her head turned back as if in longing to be the girl

she had been in the city she had known.
And they must have stood there, as we do,
a bit awestruck, taking her in for a time,

and then, with chisel and knife, spike and buckle,
chipped at her violently and stuffed their leathern
pouches full of her common salt, salt with which

to season for a while their meat, their daily bread.

—Gary J. Whitehead

growing body of scientific research that reaffirmed what, a hundred years earlier, passed for common sense: “the personality traits of juveniles are more transitory, less fixed.” Anthony Kennedy, in his opinion, pointed out that the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* explicitly prohibits psychiatrists from giving people under eighteen a diagnosis of antisocial disorder (a euphemism for sociopathy), since many signs of the disorder—egocentricity, failure to accept responsibility, impulsiveness, proneness to boredom—are natural aspects of adolescence. Kennedy noted that “adolescents are overrepresented statistically in virtually every category of reckless behavior.”

The Court extended the reasoning it had used three years earlier when it outlawed capital punishment for defendants with I.Q.s below seventy. But the four dissenting Justices in *Roper* rejected the idea that the same claim of diminished culpability could be made for all juveniles, since the Court’s analysis had been based on aggregate differences between youths and adults, which may have little bearing on the sophistication of individual defendants, particularly those at the “margins between adolescence and adulthood.” Antonin Scalia

criticized the American Psychological Association, which submitted a brief in favor of abolition, for taking a conflicting stance on teen maturity in an earlier case regarding the rights of juveniles to get abortions. The large body of research on adolescent cognition, Scalia wrote, had allowed the Court to “look over the heads of the crowd and pick out its friends,” finding empirical support for previously held opinions.

Five years later, in *Graham v. Florida*, the Court again pointed to “developments in psychology and brain science [that] continue to show fundamental differences between juvenile and adult minds,” and, for the first time in a quarter century, invalidated a sentence other than capital punishment. Now the Court ruled that for juveniles—but only those whose crimes did not result in death—a sentence that offers “no chance for reconciliation with society, no hope” is cruel and unusual. Life-without-parole sentences have tripled since the early nineties, both because the punishment offers an alternative to death and because of crime policies that emphasize retribution and incapacitation rather than rehabilitation. The ruling did not guarantee young prisoners eventual release, only the possibility of it. In the decision, Jus-

tice Kennedy alluded to studies, outlined in a brief submitted by the American Medical Association, showing that the prefrontal cortex, which is associated with behavioral control, does not fully develop until people reach their twenties. Kennedy noted that in many states inmates who are ineligible for parole are denied access to educational programs, leading to the “perverse consequence in which the lack of maturity that led to an offender’s crime is reinforced by the prison term.”

Judge Schofield gave Cotter a week to submit a written response to Fisher’s constitutional challenge and scheduled his own ruling and sentencing for the following week. At the hearing, on October 25th, Schofield gave a rhapsodic speech about how the legislative branch of government makes the law, and how the judicial branch has “nothing to do with that. And that’s the way it should be.” He called the case a “textbook example of our separation of powers” and denied Fisher’s motion. He noted that the punishment wasn’t unusual; thirty-nine states allow fourteen-year-olds to be sentenced to life without parole. No appellate or trial court has held that *Graham* applies to those convicted of homicide. Currently, there are some twenty-five hundred American inmates who were given life sentences for killing someone before their eighteenth birthday; for more than half of them, it was their first crime.

During the sentencing, Dakotah, who had just turned fifteen, periodically grasped at his chest and bent over, as if struggling to take in air. He wore a green prison jumpsuit, he had a new military buzz cut, and he showed early signs of a weak beard. At the end of the hearing, he was given an opportunity to speak before the court for the first time. He stood up and said that his heart was pounding so hard that he thought he was going to die, and he was trying not to pee in his pants. “If I don’t regret this every day, then I truly am less than human,” he said. “Then I do deserve to die in prison.”

He began crying and apologized to his aunt and his cousins, who were sitting on the prosecutor’s side of the courtroom and had publicly expressed their wish that he never reënter society. “No

matter how much anyone hates me—it doesn't make a difference—I will still love you all because you're my family," Dakotah said. "I never finished that statement at the courthouse or at the station. The tension, it goes away, but it comes back tenfold. You deal with it on a scale that can never be measured."

Nine days after his sentencing, Dakotah was transferred to Thumb Correctional Facility, a medium-security prison on the eastern edge of the state, two hundred miles from his home and sixty miles from Detroit. The forty-acre prison complex, which is a half mile from Interstate 69, is surrounded by three sets of twelve-foot fences, edged with coils of razor-ribbon

wire. Although the law mandates that incarcerated juveniles have no contact with adult prisoners, the same protections do not apply to youths who have been prosecuted as adults. The prison has six squat beige brick units, two of which house four hundred and thirty inmates who are under twenty-one years old. They cross paths with the Old Heads, as they are called, during visits to the library, church, and the segregation unit, where prisoners of all ages are punished with solitary confinement.

The prison rarely permits media visits, and, last January, the warden denied my request, citing Dakotah's age and "health-related" concerns. Journalists are subject to the same admission requirements as the general public, so I waited

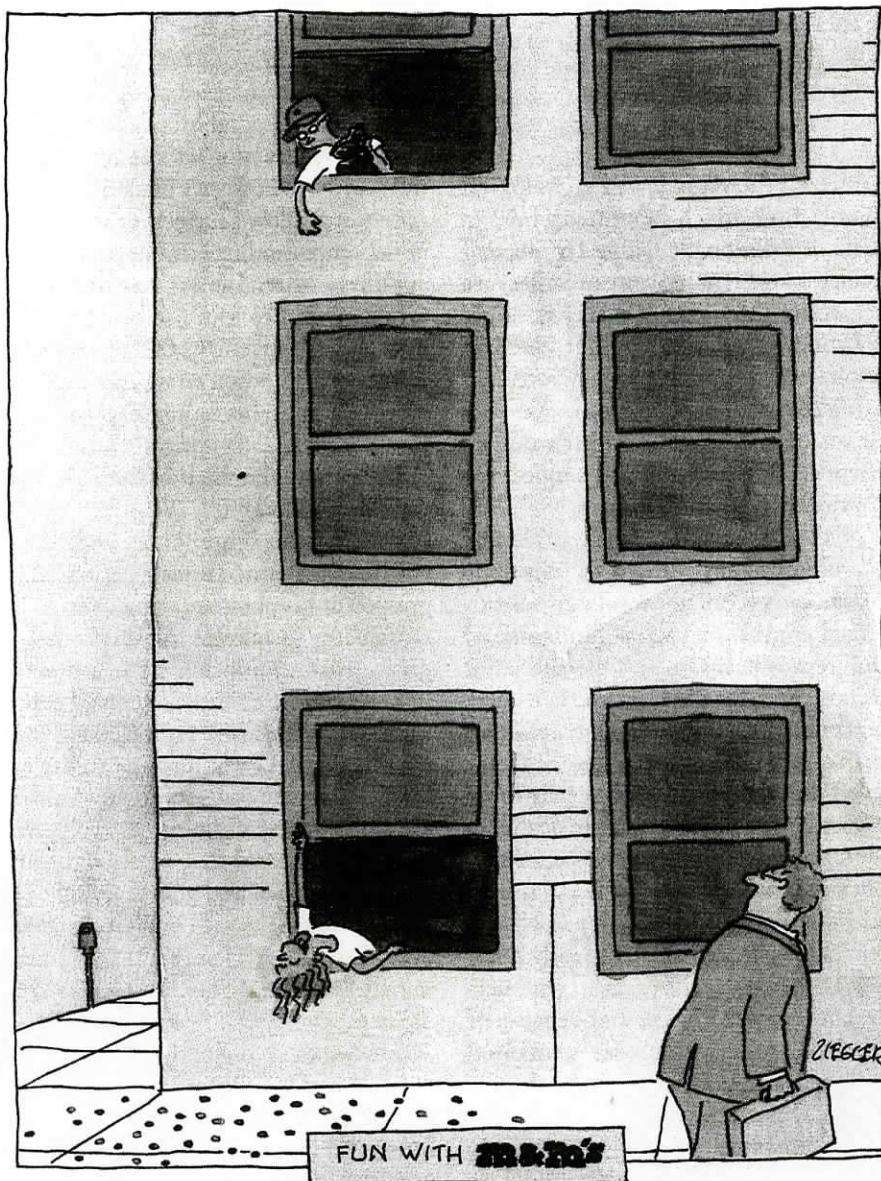
six months, until Dakotah was eligible to update his list of ten visitors who are not immediate family, and visited him for the first time last June, eight months after he had arrived at the prison.

The prison's visiting room has an atmosphere of casual boredom, like the waiting room of a doctor's office. About fifty upholstered metal chairs are arrayed around coffee tables, and inmates and their visitors pass time by playing Uno or checkers, drifting to the vending machines and back, or holding each other subtly enough to escape the guards' scrutiny. Two kisses are permitted, one at the beginning of the visit and one at the end.

I got a Coke for Dakotah, who had been assigned a seat near the guard's podium, and he quietly thanked me, then took a dramatic swig. "If I drink Coke like I'm drinking beer, it's because I've had a few beers before," he said nervously. He admitted that he didn't consider himself cool in other respects. "I was the smiley wannabe emo kid," he said. The only physical activity he excelled at was dodgeball. He had also taken karate, when he was nine, and was grateful to his dad for enrolling him in the class, because "it could definitely be helpful, if I have to protect myself."

At the juvenile center, Dakotah had developed a close relationship with a pastor and been born again. For several months, his mind had been on the afterlife. Since he'd been in prison, though, the spiritual world seemed less relevant. "No two ways about it, I ain't worth shit religiously," he said tentatively, as if testing the sound of the phrase. When I asked why, he explained that he talked like a sailor and was getting to be racist. Black inmates who didn't even know him would tell him to "shut your white ass up," and refer to him as "white bitch," "snowflake," and "cracker," a term he didn't fully understand until he checked out a book on the Civil War from the prison library.

At the prison's health-care center, Dakotah had received a diagnosis of bipolar disorder, and he now took a heavy daily dose of an antidepressant and a sedative. The drugs had removed "this great weight, this nervous energy pouring off me," but they had also made him less creative. He rarely wrote stories



anymore, and even letters to friends felt like an exertion. Though the medications helped, he wasn't convinced that the diagnosis was right; he still wished "someone could pinpoint what's wrong with me." He said that every time he hears a loud noise, like a door slam, "my mind goes right back to the incident, and all I hear is white noise."

Initially, other inmates wanted to know what he was in for (he kept his answer brief: "I shot someone"), but no one asked about his background anymore. Conversations rarely went much deeper than "What's for chow?" He scored well on the G.E.D. exam after taking the prison's prep class, but it was just a review of things he learned freshman year or picked up from the books he used to read secretly when classes were boring. "All I've learned in prison is some better ways to work out," he told me. He earned \$1.14 a day mowing the grounds at the prison, and he figured that he would become a professional landscaper. He spoke casually of things he planned to do when he got out of prison, only occasionally catching himself to add "if I get out." He cheerily informed me that the prison has a policy whereby "guards will take you cuffed and shackled to your own funeral," before becoming flustered and correcting himself, explaining that he might get to attend the service when his grandmother dies.

Dakotah dreamed of becoming a country or rock singer, though he considered the goal cheesy. His first demo would be called "Generation Millennials." He spent most of his time listening to his MP3 player, purchased from the prison commissary, and singing along in his eight-by-eleven-foot cell. Depending on how much money his dad put into his account, he could buy about a dozen new songs a month, and he tried to memorize the lyrics to each one. The other day, his crew yard boss had referred to him as "the kid who sings," which he liked, since he'd become accustomed to responding to "white boy."

Dakotah quizzed me on the songs I knew, and each time I failed to recognize a hit he laughed and sang it for me in a whispery, high-pitched voice. As soon as he finished one song, he tried to find another, searching for anything I might know. "The only thing I really need is my music," he said, tapping his

foot. "If I've got music, I'm straight—I can do my time. You won't hear a peep out of me."

Three months after the trial, Dakotah's case was assigned to the state appellate defender's office, which represents indigent clients who can't afford private counsel. His lawyer, the office's deputy director, has contested his sentence on the ground that Dakotah received ineffective counsel, in part because Lanny Fisher never brought in an expert to explain why Dakotah failed to show "stereotypical signs of adult-like remorse." A new medical evaluation characterized Dakotah as a "traumatized youth without access to his emotions in the moment." An evidentiary hearing will be held in February to determine whether Dakotah deserves a new trial.

Dakotah's sentence may also be affected by two cases that will be argued before the Supreme Court next term. Both cases, which will be heard in tandem, challenge the constitutionality of life-without-parole sentences for juveniles fourteen and younger. The two defendants maintain that early adolescence is a distinct developmental period during which susceptibility to influence reaches its peak. "Relative to the cognition of adults and even older adolescents, young teenage judgment is handicapped in nearly every conceivable way," one petition reads.

But pegging legal protections to age markers also invites the escalating possibility of further dividing populations. It is well documented, for instance, that girls mature faster than boys, both physically and psychologically. (At a teenager's recent murder trial, a University of Pennsylvania neuropsychologist testified that "biology would say" that boys should be held accountable for their crimes at a later age than girls.) Terry Maroney, a Vanderbilt law professor, said that legal arguments based on developmental research, which have become more prevalent since *Roper v. Simmons*, could be used to challenge children's autonomy rights and create an "unduly complicated system with different rules for each potential subgroup." Deborah LaBelle, a lawyer and the author of a report on Michigan inmates sentenced to life for crimes they committed before the age of eighteen, said that she doesn't want to redraw a

boundary that, for more than a century, has reflected the fact that "society has a different kind of responsibility to youth."

In *Roper*, the dissenting Justices argued that judgments about a defendant's maturity and culpability should be left to juries. But, in the new cases before the Supreme Court, both fourteen-year-olds were tried in states with mandatory sentencing for murder, so jurors couldn't take their age into account. One of the petitioners was physically abused by his alcoholic father, had attempted suicide six times, and was drunk and high on the night of the crime. His lawyer has argued that his mandatory penalty is cruel and unusual and violates the Fourteenth Amendment, which protects defendants' rights to due process. In death-penalty cases, trial procedure requires that juries consider mitigating factors, such as youth, mental health, and prior record, but there are no parallel safeguards in place for the penultimate punishment.

In Michigan, several judges have described their discomfort with sentencing an adolescent to die in prison, but the state's automatic-sentencing laws leave them no choice. In July, a federal district court ruled that the American Civil Liberties Union can proceed with a lawsuit challenging the state's mandatory-sentencing scheme for juveniles. Michigan has the second-highest number of juveniles sentenced to life without parole, and in 2008 the state's House of Representatives voted to abolish the practice, but the bill never passed in the state Senate; the issue is politically unpopular.

Prosecutors, who are elected officials, are also subject to political pressures, yet they have unfettered discretion to set the terms of a juvenile's charge. LaBelle told me, "I can't think of anywhere else in the world where the state can change the legal status of an individual—'Yes, I know you are a child, but now I will make you an adult'—so rapidly and in a factual vacuum." She continued, "We are telling these kids there is no such thing as redemption. They can never make amends."

For many juveniles, it is several years before they grasp the gravity of their crime and the permanence of the penalty. Joshua Miller, a twenty-nine-year-old inmate at the Wilkinson County

Correctional Facility, in Mississippi, told me that it wasn't until he reached his mid-twenties that the "without parole" part of my sentence finally dawned on me." After killing his girlfriend when he was fourteen—she rejected him, and he wanted to stage a "Romeo and Juliet" kind of thing—Miller was placed in an adult prison, where older inmates "treated me like the weak coward that I was," he said.

During his first few years of imprisonment, Miller tried to stay abreast of new albums, movies, and fashions, but eventually he realized there was no point in "keeping tabs on a structure I could never be part of." He stopped reading fiction, because it was too painful to "journey into the free world." He said that he has never had sex. He considers his girlfriend, who was thirteen when he murdered her, the love of his life. Although he looks back longingly on his childhood, he doesn't like to hear stories about what became of his peers. "I can't ruin a memory, or I'll lose another attachment to that life," he said. "I refuse to believe that my friends aren't still children."

When I visited the Eliason family in June, Steve, Lisa, and their nine-year-old daughter had moved into Jean Miles's house, in order to save money. They had got a new couch and rearranged the living room, but the rest of the downstairs looked the same as it had in the police photographs. On top of the television was a framed photograph of Dakotah and his family standing in front of a pastoral autumn scene painted on a cinder-block wall in the prison's visiting room. Steve and Jean both told me with pride that Dakotah was learning to be a model inmate. He had called home, upset, the night before because the toilet in his cell had overflowed, and, when the guards wouldn't respond to his calls for help, he stayed composed and mopped up the sewage with his own clothes. "I tell him that if we go through the appeals process and nothing changes, then he can get as wild and crazy as he wants," Steve said. He has noticed Dakotah's language becoming foul, which "eats me up—he was a soft boy."

Steve and I had spoken on the phone several times before, and, in each conversation, he offered new theories about his stepfather's death and the ways it could

have been prevented. At the house, he reenacted the crime as his mother sat in a rocking chair beside us. With his thumb and index finger extended like an imaginary handgun, he stood where he assumed Dakotah had been when he pulled the trigger. "If he had just missed by an inch, the bullet would have hit the glass cabinet over there and woken my father, who would have whupped Dakotah's ass," he said. "Then we would have gotten him some help."

Jean cried quietly throughout the demonstration, and added that Dakotah was a "loving grandson up until that moment." "I would bring him home tonight," she said. "I know the person he is." She often thought about what would have happened if she had forced her husband to hide his gun—it was kept by the door in case of intruders—or had sat down with Dakotah for dinner that night. All he ate was three cupcakes. "But I had all kinds of stuff for him in the freezer," she said under her breath.

The family talked about Dakotah's diagnosis of bipolar disorder, though it won't be relevant for the appeal—the legal bar for insanity is higher than simply having a psychiatric diagnosis. Since Dakotah's arrest, Steve had discovered a history of bipolar disorder in his family, and he, too, received a diagnosis of the illness. He often repackages lessons from his own therapy sessions for his son, who calls home every day. The family talks to him on a speakerphone until the prison phone service cuts them off, after fifteen minutes. When Dakotah complains of feeling homesick, Steve jokes with him, "Grow your beard a little thicker, and I'll shave my hair like you. You'll sneak out, and I'll take your place."

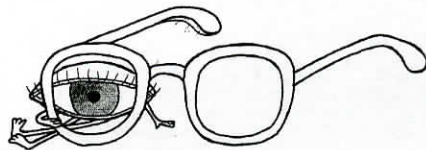
By September, Dakotah had spent nearly three months in solitary confinement. In April, 2011, after six months in prison, he got his first ticket for a rule violation, Threatening Behavior, which resulted in the standard punishment: thirty days in segregation. Dakotah had told a boy in his unit that he'd kill him if he kept prying into his case. The boy had

been joking around, saying, "Who'd you kill? Who'd you kill?" Two months later, Dakotah received another ticket, for Sexual Misconduct, after a female guard accused him of exposing his penis through the vertical window on his steel door. According to Dakotah, he was sleeping at the time. He told the guard that it must have been his cellmate, but she said the skin she saw looked light, and his cellmate was black. Dakotah confronted his cellmate, a fifteen-year-old convicted of sexual assault, "but he just laughs about it," he said. "He giggles about all sorts of childish shit."

Two weeks after his punishment ended, he and his cellmate got into a fistfight, and, at the end of August, both boys were transferred to the segregation unit. His cinder-block cell had one barred window, a bed, a stainless-steel desk and stool that were attached to the floor, a toilet, a sink, and a mirror. All his meals were delivered to him through a metal flap on his door, starting with breakfast, at 4 A.M. The only time he could leave his cell was to shower, three times a week; he was handcuffed on the way there and locked into the shower stall.

When I visited Dakotah in September, it was the first time in nearly three weeks that he'd had an extended conversation with another person. We sat in a narrow cinder-block room, divided in half by shatterproof glass, and spoke to each other using rotary telephones whose dial pads had been removed. Dakotah had been animated in our previous conversations, but now he spoke in a dull, listless tone and sat slouched in his chair, his head resting against the wall of the cubicle. His eyes were dilated, and his lips were so chapped they looked bruised.

He told me that he was disgusted with himself for ruining his chance to see his family, who, for more than a month, had planned to visit on the second Sunday in September. It was the second time they'd had to cancel their plans at the last minute because he'd been placed in seclusion. (After a week without calls or letters from Dakotah, Steve had called the prison, and a phone operator told him that Dakotah was in the segregation unit, where visiting hours are restricted to Friday mornings.) Dakotah spent his first few nights in the segregation cell lying underneath his steel-framed bed,



on the concrete floor, wearing nothing but shorts. "Oh, man, I was going off the deep end, like, living below the water," he said, jiggling the phone cord. "The little flame lighting my candle of sanity just blew out."

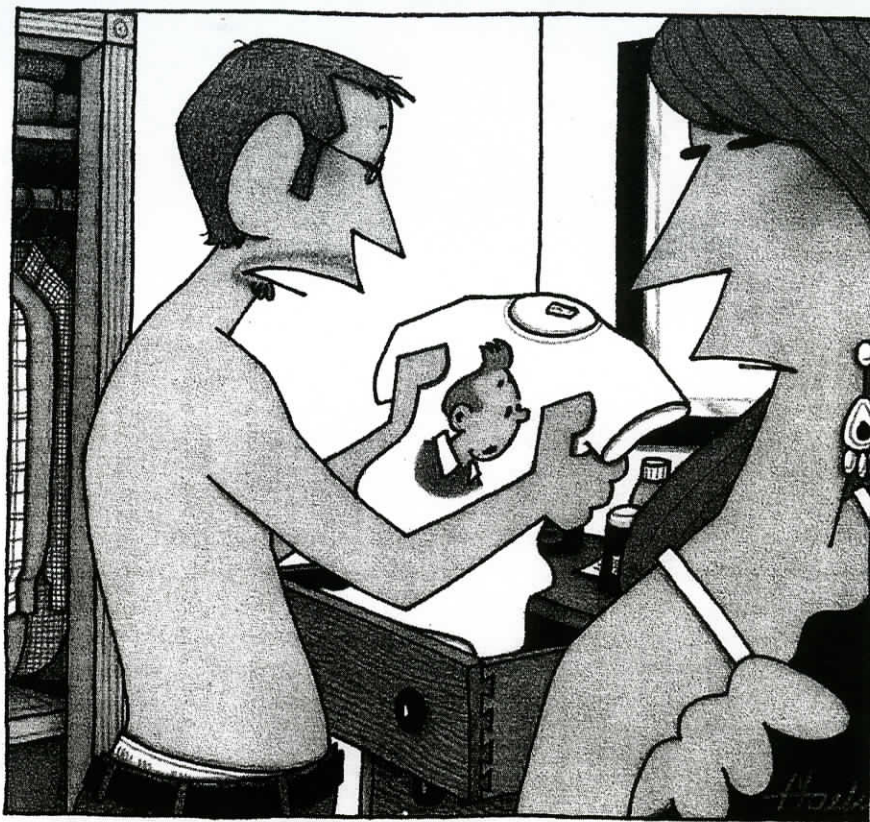
The effects of the sedative he'd been prescribed seemed to have worn off, and he struggled to sleep through the night. He woke up in cold sweats, with such vivid, violent dreams that he examined his body to see if he'd somehow been injured. "I don't understand sleep anymore," he told me. He had developed a theory, adapted from "The Matrix," which he had watched countless times, that maybe life is an illusion, a kind of thought experiment, and dreams are the true reality.

Dakotah began talking to himself in his cell, little comments and reminders at first, and then, as the days passed, full conversations. "I go into this other mode," he said, blowing air out of his mouth. "I can have all these conversations crisscrossing the room; there's a version of me on the bed, at the desk, at the sink."

At the end of my previous visits, Dakotah had chattered rapidly, nearly free-associating, occasionally singing, as if he would lose his visitor as soon as he paused. I had found myself coming to visiting hours later, to avoid prolonging the drama of separating. He would pick lint or stray hairs off my shirt or touch a scab on my hand, assuring me that it would fall off soon—any excuse for physical contact. But this time, our first visit with glass between us, he was the one to end the conversation. "I'm worn out," he told me. "My mind is kind of dead."

His sixteenth birthday was the next week, and I wished him happy birthday. "Yeah, I'm alive," he said, rolling his eyes. "Whoopdefuckingwho."

The day before Dakotah's birthday, September 23rd, Steve drove four hours to the prison to surprise him. Dakotah had recently been transferred to the Behavioral Modification Unit, where he had contact with other prisoners, but most of his privileges, including use of the phone, were still suspended. In the partitioned cubicle, Steve and Dakotah pressed their knuckles against the glass, as if they were touching. It had been three months since they'd seen each other. "You look



"It's no fun wearing my Tintin shirt now that the masses know who he is."

pasty, son," Steve said tenderly. Dakotah, smiling broadly, smoothed the collar of his prison jumpsuit and confessed, "I don't feel like I look so good."

Steve updated Dakotah on developments in the lives of neighbors, relatives, and their pets, and then spoke at length about the mood-stabilizing medication he'd been taking. He said that he no longer acted like a tyrant at home, high-strung and aggressive. "That's one of our traits—not knowing how to express our emotions," he told Dakotah. The more Steve talked about their matching diagnoses, the more he seemed to convince himself that he was complicit in Dakotah's crime. He couldn't forgive himself for yelling at his children, which he now saw as a form of abuse. Dakotah, quiet and deferential, deflected his father's comments with reassuring jokes. (At an earlier visit, he described his dad as his role model, except for his domineering manner: "He was Sgt. Pepper, and I was the Lonely Heart Band.")

Steve wore an oversized tank top, which revealed a tattoo on his right shoulder in memory of his stepfather:

"J.E.M., 1940-2010." Dakotah had wept when he first saw the tattoo, more than a year earlier, and now he intended to get one, too. He also wanted the name of his dead dog tattooed on his biceps, his dead cat on his forearm, and his great-grandmother's initials on his chest. At his father's request, he planned to wait until he got to the adult side of the prison, since the Old Heads were more likely to clean their needles.

Both father and son vaguely hoped that other problems, too, would be resolved on the adult side of prison: the units might be less chaotic and noisy, the inmates calmer and more responsible. Steve had reconciled himself to the possibility that Dakotah would eventually get affiliated—with the Aryan Brotherhood, he guessed—because he would need that protection. At the end of the visit, Steve reassured Dakotah that he would find mentors when he moved to the adult population. "Not someone who will take advantage of you but a man who was locked away from his own kids," Steve said. "I want a father in there watching over you." ♦