## a novel by Thurston Scott cure it with honey Harper novel of suspense

## CURE IT WITH HONEY

by Thurston Scott

Rogaway was a psychologist at San Quentin prison. On his way home from work one rainy night, he was stopped by Manny Chavez, a Pachuco kid, with the Pachuco brand on his hand, the tattooed cross and the rays between the thumb and forefinger.

Rogaway had got Manny's brother Juan a parole, and now Manny wanted news of Juan, wanted it enough so that he was willing to go to a "brain screw" for information. Rogaway found out about Juan, and brought the news to Manny, to Manny and Marie, the girl with the beautiful Mexican face, who

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was very young under the thin layer of hardness that you often find on girls from the wrong side of the tracks, with the wrong color skin, or the wrong religious beliefs, or the wrong kind of income.

Because the news that Rogaway brought was black and bitter, Rogaway got into trouble, trouble that not even a man who has spent his time helping convicts behind prison walls would expect to run into.

Cure It with Honey is a forceful novel about convicts and ex-convicts and about the Pachucos, those young Mexican-Americans who, forming their own gangs, living by their own credo, have fought their passionate, reckless, unhappy way through the world around them.

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

A Pachuco is a Mexican-American youth who belongs to one of the neighborhood gangs that spring up in the slums of big cities throughout California and Texas. Sometimes he graduates from the gang to the underworld, and thence to San Quentin, or another western prison. He speaks a kind of Spanish jargon that incorporates English slang phrases; a "gabacho" is a white man, a "guisa" is a pretty Mexican girl, "ay te watcho" means, "I'll be seeing you." At San Quentin the Pachuco picks up further additions to his language; a "jocker" is a facultative homosexual, a "punk" is a youth used for sexual purposes, "hype" means fraud, a "ding" is an insane prisoner, to "come on great" means to display imaginative verbosity, a "screw" is a prison guard, "wigged" and "flipped" mean, "under the effect of marijuana," and a "roach" is a marijuana cigarette butt. The Pachuco's language and his costume may change somewhat from year to year, but his problem still remains virtually unsolved.

whenever you walk on the streets of a city, if you look around, you'll meet somebody. It doesn't matter much at first whether you know him or not. You can't walk back the way you came. It was raining that night. He was standing in a doorway, the way Pachucos stand in doorways in the rain.

He said, "Rogaway."

I stopped. He turned his head so the streetlight could touch his face.

He said, "You're a brain screw."

It wasn't a question.

He said, "I'm Manny Chavez. Juan Chavez is my brother.

You knew him at San Quentin. You got him parole."

I stepped in under the doorway to get out of the rain. Fog moved on the street like a ghost. The kid was a Pachuco and he had his left hand curled around a cigarette, and when he took a drag I could see the tattooed cross and the rays between his thumb and forefinger—the Pachuco brand. The four rays shooting out from the cross told me he had done

four stretches in prison or reform school, four timeless deaths inside the walls. It wasn't a professional tattoo. It was cut in deep with a knife and the indelible ink was blurred under the skin. Only a cop or a prison psychologist or another Pachuco would think of looking for a tattoo there.

I said, "Screw isn't the right word, but the rest holds good. They don't trust me with keys over at Quentin."

He laughed. "Juan said you were a character."

I lit a cigarette and I looked at him. He had on a black coat and black peg pants and a black silk shirt buttoned at the throat, and no tie. He had black eyes and smooth tan skin and his face was handsome under a shock of curly black hair, piled high in the front and slicked back at the sides. Pachuco, Mexican-American. And tough.

I said, "What's Juan been doing since he got out?"

"Let's go have a drink."

"What's up, kid?"

He was hard. He was tough. But he wanted something. His eyes shifted away from mine and they didn't miss anything on that street.

"I knew your brother inside. I knew him well. If he's in trouble, spill it."

"Let's go have a drink."

I looked across the doorway at him. He took a drag off the cigarette and flipped it into the gutter. "Let's go have a drink, Rogaway." He stuck his hands in his pockets and he looked at me. "Or you can cut out if you want to."

"I could stand a beer."

We crossed the street. There was a little Mexican restaurant in the middle of the block and we went inside. The place was crowded. He walked up to a table where two

Mexicans in work clothes were sitting and he didn't say anything. They saw the shadow on the checkered oilcloth and when they looked at him, he jerked his head. They picked up their bottle of wine and moved to the bar.

He said, "Beer?"

"Yeah."

He walked over to the bar and the other Mexicans got out of his way. He came back with two frosty bottles marked Cerveza and when he sat down he moved his feet under the table and I could hear the scrape of metal cleats against the floor.

He drank some beer and put the bottle down. He leaned forward and stared at me, and his eyes were like black probes. "I've been looking for Juan since I got out of Quentin a couple of weeks ago."

I said, "Look, Manny. If Juan is in a jam, just say it."

"It's possible. Nobody's seen him around."

"When did he get out of Quentin?"

He thought back for a minute. He said, "Middle of December."

"Then he's still on parole. Why don't you ask his parole officer up at the City Hall?"

"Yeah. I can see me walking under the clock, under my own power."

His teeth were very white and even and he had a strong sensitive face, too quick and mobile to be North American. Pachucos. The hard guys with the soft Mexican voices. He had four rays to his cross, but the cuts showed up deeper in the way he talked quietly and kept his eyes on the move all the time, and in the way the other Mexicans got out of his path. He leaned the chair back and put a nickel in the juke

box and punched a button. He said, "It's strange seeing a guy like you down here in West Oakland."

"I couldn't sleep. I walked down from Fortieth."

"I thought you lived at the prison."

"Hell, no. Only the warden and some of the guards live inside. I have an apartment up on Grove."

I finished the beer. Manny picked up the empties and moved through the crowd of Mexicans in work clothes along the bar, lithe as a bullfighter. He came back with two full bottles and he pushed one over to me.

I jerked my head at the juke box. "'Pachuco Boogie'?"

"Yeah."

"I've heard it before. What do the words mean?"

"Nothing. Just a lot of Mexican slang."

I grinned at him over the table. I drank some beer.

He said, "No, honest. It's nothing much. It's just about Pachucos. It says the toughest ones come from El Paso, but they don't get wised up until they pass through Losca."

"Losca?"

"Los Angeles. Hear when they say tirili? That means to get high."

"What kind of high?"

"For a Pachuco there's only one kind of high, Rogaway."
"Tea?"

"Tea. Grifa. Yesca. Marijuana. Whatever you want to call it."

"What else does the record say?"

"It wouldn't mean much to anybody who isn't a Pachuco."

I said, "Kid, about your brother. Want me to see what I can find out? I know his parole officer, Doug Jenkins. Juan has to report every month. Doug might know where he is."

Manny nodded. "He's supposed to be a good guy. How do guys like you and Jenkins get into this kind of a racket?"

"Easy. The birds with the keys need a go-between."

"Would it be a lot of trouble, finding out about Juan?"

He said it slow, he said it easy, but his eyes were worried.

I looked at my watch. "It's too late now. I can find out tomorrow after I get off at the prison. How do I get in touch with you?"

"Got a piece of paper?"

I found him one of my cards. The card said James T. Rogaway, Psychologist, Fort Leavenworth Penitentiary, in stiff black blocks on white. It was an old card. It dated back to four years before I started at San Quentin. The card must have been in my wallet ever since Leavenworth, all that time. It had taken root there. It was a dirty brown color from the leather stain. The kid scribbled down an address and handed the card back and I stuffed it into my shirt pocket.

I picked up my beer again. I said, "Luck to the warden."

He lifted his bottle. "To the warden. He's not such a bad egg. But they'd have to kill a lot of guards to clean up that place."

"Did they give you a rough time, kid?"

"They always give Pachucos a rough time."

"They like to carry keys."

He looked across the table at me. "That sounds funny, coming from you."

"I'm a brain screw, for Christ's sake. I want the guys out.

They want them in."

"It'll be a wet Tuesday before they get me in again."

He leaned back and put another nickel in the juke box and

punched another button, and while he was turned that way the door opened and a girl came in and Manny's face was suddenly white and strained and he started to get up but she was across the room first.

She didn't see anyone else but Manny. She bent over and whispered something in his ear and her face touched his. His hand on her arm looked like light bronze against alabaster, squeezing.

The girl had fire-red hair, damp from the rain, and turquoise eyes like troubled lakes. She was wearing a green-blue dress that matched the eyes, off the shoulder, and her skin was very white, clear and almost transparent. She had high tight breasts pointing outward and separated with a strip of something black. She could have been twenty-three years old.

At first I thought she was hopped up. Then I saw it wasn't dope. It was fear. It was hysteria in her eyes.

Manny stood up and kicked the chair back behind him, and I could see the flash of the metal cleat. He looked across at me. His face was set and hard and his hand stayed on the girl's arm.

"I've got to cut out, Rogaway."

"Sure, kid. I'll get in touch with you."

Nobody moved when they went out the door into the rain. Through the window I could see a chartreuse Buick convertible parked under the streetlight. Manny got behind the wheel. He had the motor wide open already while she was closing the car door.

Around some corner in the dark, tires screeched.

I finished my beer and after a while I walked back up town.

THE NEXT DAY WAS A DAMP CLEAN FRIDAY IN APRIL, ONE OF those half-cocked spring days when the sun knifes down through mist and gets swallowed up and then burns through again. I stared out across the prison grounds while the convict lying on the couch talked on, monotonously. I could see the feet of the Oakland Bay Bridge plain enough, spidering up out of unquiet water, but the suspension part was blurred in the haze.

"When I was little I wanted to be big. Funny thing, in grammar school the girls I liked were taller than me. I like tall women. I'm tall myself. I don't know..."

When a man on a couch talks, you don't hear what he says; not consciously. You hear something else, something that comes from underneath the words and tells a different story, like quicksand under a smooth beach. There's no school to teach this kind of listening. It comes early, if it comes at all. It starts with feeling out the emotional weather in the family, maybe; it develops when you go almost over the brink to look

for strange answers, and then pull yourself back by a cortical rope just before the blackness comes screaming down. But when the man on the couch stops talking and the tears start and the hands claw the face, and the convict wants to be held or to yell or to kill, then the conscious brain must rise up, get off the dime, interpret it right and interpret it fast and make no mistake or foul the line; and the words are different every time.

The convict said, "I didn't get along with my sister either. I don't know. The thing that comes to mind is, one night we were home. My sister and her husband got in an argument and my sister hauled off and slapped him one. My brother was going to stop the fight. I had a .38 in my back pocket and I pulled it out and told him to sit still or I'd shoot him. That was when I was going around burglarizing houses in East Oakland. I don't know why I had it in my pocket at home and with my family . . ."

His voice trailed off and I said, "You liked it when she hit him."

The man didn't look up and didn't show he had heard, but somewhere deep that simple statement was triggering off new associations. "It made me feel like a big shot, I guess. I remember the time I broke a cup over my father's head. Then I ran like hell."

I said very softly, "A gun isn't so big."

He looked up at the white ceiling. "I don't know why this comes to me, but it was Mother's Day years ago, the most important day of the year. I got picked up and held on suspicion but they didn't have nothing on me. I don't like small towns. There was a kid I used to know, which reminds me of what I was telling you the other day. The first year

here when I'd get next to a queen, I was embarrassed as hell and I'd get away fast. I take it for granted now."

The con had on a denim jacket with the cuffs turned back, and blue jeans and a faded blue denim shirt. The prison haircut made his ears flare, the color of dried apricots. He was just a guy, just a convict, with nothing unusual about him; not on the outside. But he kept a million memories stored in his brain. Everything that ever happened to him was registered somewhere along the dark corridors, nobody knows how. Maybe in a knotted neuron, maybe as a change in axonic resistance. The uniqueness is buried deep, and everybody has it. There's not a human alive who can't talk the way good writers write, when the keys get pressed the right way.

I let him ramble. He had said it all for today. We had closed in on the old scars and right now it would have been easy to dig up the big one, but the hour was almost gone and I let it go by.

"... is the cruelest month," the convict was telling me. He had five minutes to go. He was winding it up, scurrying away from the deep roots and back all the way to daylight. "My mother died in April. I got picked up on my first beef in April. It was last April I got picked up on Seventh Street for the hotel job I'm in for. It's April now and I go up for parole. You ain't going to recommend me, are you, Doe?"

The eyes had gone crafty, watching me. He was working on the future now. He would let me go back as far as I liked, but behind the flow of words stood the flat shut gate that can't be opened: the fact that he wasn't there of his own free will. He wanted to buy his way out with a flood of forgotten memories. The hell of it was, I couldn't recommend him, and I couldn't tell him that. I played with a pencil on

the pad of scratch paper and I looked out across the grounds, and a squad of trusties chopped at the earth with shiny hoes and the flowers showed up like blobs of color in the wet black prison soil.

Now the shift came. Now we talked friend to friend. That shift isn't in the books, but the men who wrote the books were never inside a prison. A lot of psychologists were never inside anywhere.

I said, "I'll see what I can do, Conway. What's the rush? As soon as you get out, they grab you back in again. Six times so far. That's a strain, all that moving around."

"Vacations, Doc."

"Vacations, Conway?"

"Yeah. Vacations. I work on the outside, I pull a few jobs, then I rest up for a while somewhere on the inside. Why not? What have I got to lose?"

I said, "Now you've got a new story. Quentin's like-Palm Beach, as far as you're concerned."

He sat up and he stretched. "It isn't too bad after you get a taste for it, Doc. It might be a real great place if it wasn't for the jigs and the damned Pachucos."

"Don't fight in the wrong direction, Conway."

"Pachucos," he snarled. "You'd think they were fairies, the way they move around. They drive us crazy."

"That's no reason to hate them."

Conway shrugged and he rubbed the sharp edge of his chin on the blue denim sleeve. "Hell, it's more than that, Doc. Every damned Pachuco thinks he's so much better than we are. Pachucos think they are gods. They ought to send them back where they came from. Christ, they aren't even white."

I laughed at him. "What's wrong, Conway? Did you just get wised up that Pachucos don't make willing punks? You sound like you got hot rocks for them and don't want to admit it."

He looked at me and he grinned. "Hell, Doc, you know what I am. I'm a jocker. I don't make any bones about that. But when you try to be nice to a Pachuco and you buy him a box of candy and he pulls a shiv on you, that's going too mucking far."

I laughed. I stood up and slapped him on the shoulder.

"Better luck next time, Conway."

I signed his ducat and he picked up the card and pocketed it and went over to the door. I said, "Hey, Conway. On your way out, tell Ortega to come in here."

Conway raised his pale eyebrows and went out, moving with the half-slouch of the long term convict. I watched him walk past the row of prisoners waiting to be given their yearly Rorschach checkups and on through the doors into the infirmary, looking for Ortega. I sat in the swivel chair and put my feet on the desk and I opened up the file on Manny Chavez. There wasn't anything unusual there, either. Just another record, stuck in the musty metal filing cases along with other records on the tough black-eyed guys whose parents came from over the border.

Manuel Ramon y Cajal Chavez. Pachuco.

First, the kid gets lost.

He wasn't born with a knife in his hand.

He wasn't born with the Pachuco tattoos or the scars on the inside or the pride that makes him alien and alone. He wasn't born much different from the other Mexican kids in the same neighborhood, but the interference on the way up hurt him more and hurt him deeper and kept him lost until he had enough pride and brains and guts to become a Pachuco. And then he found himself, and he wasn't alone any more. And he had a knife in his hand.

There are always a few Pachucos inside San Quentin Prison. You can't miss them. They break the rules and sew the blue denims to fit tight around the ankles and they turn the seams so the pants look creased, and they stand out from the routine line of convicts, but the big difference you see on the street gets lost. The hardness stays, but the youth comes out. It's no wonder the jockers and the guards give them a bad time.

I shut the file and put it away. In a little while Ortega came in, lithe and black-eyed and standing very straight in the white hospital uniform. Angel Ortega, ex-Pachuco. He sat on the edge of the desk and swung his legs. Ortega wasn't as tall as Manny Chavez and his skin was darker and his features showed more of the Indian blood, the wild Aztec blood they all have. He was good-looking, but not as flashily handsome as Manny Chavez. I had got him the job as hospital orderly and stuck my own neck out in the process, and Ortega knew it. The guards didn't like it, but Ortega made good. He studied nights and he wanted to go to medical school when he got out. It was a nice dream, but that day was a long way off. Murder. First degree.

"What can I do for you, Doc?"

"I'd like to know something about a guy who isn't here any more."

"I'll do what I can. You know that, Doc."

"Do you know a kid named Manny Chavez?"

"Hell, man. Same cell block six months."

"How about a quick sketch?"

Ortega picked up a letter opener and balanced it lightly on two fingers, thinking. "He's a real wise character, Doc. More connections than a switchboard. Made it from jute mill to hobby shop in three months, if you know what I mean. Chavez is an operator."

"Did he talk much, about outside?"

"Just a lot of Pachuco talk."

"Anything specific?"

He put one foot up on the desk and looked down at me, and his eyes were questioning. "I don't figure why you want to know, Doc, but if you were going fink, you would have started a long time ago."

"You don't have to tell me, Ortega. You know that."

"I know that, Doc." He crossed his arms on his knee and he looked at the trusties out the window. "Manny and I were good friends. He told me he was going to get some one guy, even if he had to do the big sleep for it."

"What kind of a guy? Pachuco?"

"A wheel. A white wheel. Maybe Manny did time for a bum reason. It happens."

"Yeah, it happens."

"Manny's not a guy who could forget easy."

"Do you know the wheel's name?"

"I'd rather not say, Doc. Unless you really want it."

"No. Never mind. Did you ever know Manny outside?"

"Hell, no. I'm from L.A., from Losca. You know that, Doc." He said it like he didn't like the sound of it. The kind of pushing around he'd taken isn't forgotten in a hurry.

I said, "Do you know Manny's brother, Juan Chavez?" Ortega was thoughtful for a couple of seconds. One hand

combed through the dark hair in the almost forgotten Pachuco gesture. "Juan, that's a different story. I don't know how it got to be different, but the kid was square. He and Manny never got along well inside. Juan preached to him. Imagine a young kid preaching to his older brother, who is a real hep character. Not that the kid was a punk, Doc. You know Pachucos never get made into punks."

"I know."

He watched the trusties outside. "That's what's funny about Manny's brother. Tough as nails. Won't eat crap from anybody and yet he keeps talking all the time about how he's going to get a job and maybe get married and all the rest. Juan talks that way and Manny goes on about cleaning up with a heavy haul and blasting to Mexico. Like day and night, those brothers. The kid wants to go clean, but Manny keeps on hating hard."

"You can't blame him."

"Jijola, who's blaming him? I'm laying the story on you, Doc. I could have gone that way easy, after what they gave me."

"I know you could, Ortega." I reached over and squeezed his shoulder. I said, "Thanks for the words. I'll see you Monday. Keep it clean while I'm gone."

"Ay te watcho, man."

"Easy."

At the door he stopped and grinned back at me. "Hey, Doc. Did you hear about Lefty?"

"Lefty the guard or Lefty the con?"

"The guard, Doc. He got awful hungry."

"How hungry? The way I heard, it was light. Bennies only."

"Jesus, Doc, you got an ear everywhere. It's a good thing your mouth doesn't move along with it. No offense, Doc. Yeah, the strips couldn't feed Lefty's hunger. It started coming in wrapped in brown paper. It was raining candy in here, man. Lefty got busted down last night. Now Lefty and the monkeys both go hungry. It's a crooked world, Doc."

He gave me the Pachuco salute with the palm up flat and

he shut the door, quietly.

I piled my loose gear together. The greenish light outside gave the grounds a sea-bottom look, with the trusties moving slow like divers and myself blocked off in an observation chamber. When I got to the main hall, the count held me up. The bells were ringing and the interconnecting doors were clanging shut and there was a lot of noise out there, like closing time in a department store. Every day is inventory for Quentin. It went easy today. They totaled the trusties in a hurry and marched them out the hospital doors to the mess hall, and I walked down to the main entrance.

Only there wasn't any guard down there. It's always a process to get out, legal or not. I rattled the big gates a few times and I looked out at the stretch of fine green bay where the leggy guard tower perched in the shallows like a crane. Red Johnson was up there, smoking Bull Durham and fingering his machine gun; I saw his binoculars peer down at me. I thumbed my nose. I marched on down to the other end and pushed the guard button in the wall, and the guard Rayburn showed up in a few minutes with the Devil's Island key ring hung on his belt.

"Hiyuh, Rayburn," I said. "You look like a brothel madam, behind all that brass."

Rayburn didn't answer. While he clacked through metal

to find the right key I said, "Hurts your grimy soul to let anybody out, doesn't it?"

Rayburn slammed up after me, noisily. "Go to hell," said Rayburn.

I walked out across the garden along the stone path. Ding-Ding the convict gardener had planted rows of nasturtiums there, and I picked a flower and stuck it in my lapel. Ding-Ding is a gentle convict. He's typical of murderers; they make the best possible inmates. Ding-Ding got mad, he killed, now he isn't mad any more. But try telling that to a jury.

I walked along the road next to the big cement cell blocks and I listened to the Negroes singing blues in there, with every so often the cell doors clanging shut on somebody, and I could see black faces watching down at me from away up high. A couple of the faces whistled. They knew me, and I waved at them. I wished they could be walking out the gates with me.

In front of the Administration Building a squad of guards were going off shift, standing around smoking, some ambling up to the arsenal with their artillery; the ones I got along with made arm signals, lazy. I got fluoroscoped at the innerouter gate. A guard named Coletti handles the fluoroscope. Coletti grinned at me and when he talked it was like rocks choking a thawed drainpipe. "Puddinhead," he said. "The only guy around Quentin with one bone too many."

I thanked him and I kept on walking. It's one-eighth of a mile from the fluoroscope to the last gate, and the bus was outside waiting. I rode to the ferry through the block-long town of Quentin where the guards keep house. The bay had whitecaps, low and rolling. I lounged up in the bow and the wind put salt in my mouth.

At the dock I caught a bus into Oakland, and I got off at Seventeenth and San Pablo and walked three blocks down to the City Hall. 3.

DOUG JENKINS HAD AN OFFICE ON THE FOURTH FLOOR OF THE City Hall, one of a line of half a dozen parole offices along the quiet marble corridor. I knew some of the men in the other offices, but not the way I knew Doug. He was my closest friend. He was unique. After ten years of working with hundreds of paroled convicts, he was still unique. Doug didn't care much about what went on inside a convict's head. To him, the graduates were just guys; so he liked them, the way he liked everybody.

He was talking to a parolee when I walked in. I went over and looked out the window and waited. The ex-con was hefty and bald and round-shouldered and he had a Panama hat perched on one knee and his fingers played with the rim of it, until Doug relaxed him. Doug's questions weren't the same kind of questions we use in the psychology department. Doug only explored the surface of a man's life: the job, the income, the possible contacts with old friends. After he filled out the forms and filed them away he shook hands with the big convict and jollied him out the door. Then he

came over and snapped the blinds shut so I couldn't see out the window.

"You look like hell, Rogaway. Have a hard day in the jute mill?"

"Yeah. The con boss ran me ragged."

"He probably figures to wear you down to punk size."

He stuck a cigarette in my mouth and lit it, cupping the match with his hand. He took another one for himself and went over and sat on the edge of his desk, yawning, with his fists pointed at opposite walls. Doug was a tall man, blond, lean-muscled in a brown tweed suit and a heavy shirt and thick-soled sport shoes. He didn't look or think like a plain-clothesman; parole officers see crime and criminals from too different an angle. Doug had light skin and clean features and he looked young, not as if he was almost forty. When he grinned at me, fine lines cut in around his eyes. He hadn't changed at all in the ten years since I first met him.

I said, "We walk around in our big offices and joke about the prison. We never got jumped in the jute mill while some wise con made the guards look the other way."

"Hell, that can happen on any street corner."

I opened the window blinds again. The buildings outside looked damp and steamy. I said, "It gets under your skin sometimes, the things that can happen to people."

He cocked his head at me, not smiling any more. "How old are you now, Jim? Thirty-two?"

"Why?"

"No reason. You used to take it easier, that's all. San Quentin must be cumulative, like sleeping pills. You get more morose as the years go by."

"I see a lot more than I saw at first."

He grinned at me again. "Cheer up, brain screw. I know a girl who wants to meet you. Ash-blonde, willowy, brainy, right out of Massachusetts. She's a friend of Ingrid's."

"What's her name?"

"Veronica Mitchell. Good talker. Reads everything. You'll like her."

"The tune is familiar," I said. "Why do all your wife's friends come from Massachusetts?"

"Family tie-ups. You know. Veronica's old man is in steel." "So, what does that buy?"

He moved his shoulders. "Don't let the money part bother you. She's a good kid."

"They're all good kids." I sat down on the window sill and looked out at the sky. "Veronica. Maybe later. I'll let you know."

"She'll do you good, Jim. No kidding." He spun the ash tray across the desk to where I could reach it and he cupped his hands around his knee again and leaned back, looking at me. "Sure, you're morose. You aren't settled. You need somebody like Veronica, for professional reasons, as well as everything else. Hell, you're a psychologist. You should know the answers."

"That's a common mistake."

Doug frowned, watching me. "Do you want some advice?" "Shoot," I said.

"Get out of Quentin. Go into private practice. Make a name for yourself. You've got what it takes."

I grinned at him.

He shrugged. "Okay. Stick it out. Be a social worker all your life. God knows the poor bastards across the bay need everything they can get."

I reached out for the drawstring and jerked it, turning the

pale sunshine on and off. "Listen, Doug, I've got a story you'll appreciate. Day before yesterday a little scrawny tow-headed kid from the Middle West came into the office, all nervous and worried and white-faced, looking for quick advice. Some big convict bought him a lot of peanut butter and crackers and candy bars, and then that day in the yard the con said, 'Come here, kid, I've got something for you, stick your hand in my pocket,' so the kid does, and guess what? Right. No pocket."

Doug shut his eyes and laughed and ruffled up his smoothclipped hair. I said, "Then the kid cried on my shoulder and wanted to know what he should do. He and his cellmate ate up all the peanut butter and the crackers and the candy bars, and the big jocker demanded either the kid or the stuff back, and so what is the poor kid going to do now?"

When Doug got finished laughing I said, "At the same time, it's a sad story. What could I tell him? What could anybody tell him?"

"I know what I'd tell him."

"The hell you do. It's not funny, when you're on the inside."

"Someday you'll crack, and move into private practice where you belong."

"I've got an idea I belong over in the psych department at San Quentin."

"Okay, hardhead. Let's give you two more years to change your mind."

I reached the ash tray and mashed out the cigarette. I said, "Incidentally, there's a kid on your list I'm trying to locate. Would you mind looking him up?"

"Sure, Jim. What's his name?"

Doug went over to the big metal filing case against the

wall and he pulled open the second drawer. I could see neat manila folders lined up inside, with red and green and blue metal markers to separate the convicts who had been out of Quentin and were now back in from the ones back-filed against a possible future, and from the ones who had made good. There weren't very many blue tabs in that file.

I said, "His name is Juan Chavez. All I want to do is find out where he is."

The file case slid shut again, easy on the greased rollers. Doug went around his desk and sat down in the swivel chair and looked at me. "I don't have to look him up, Jim. I know where he is."

"Is he in trouble?"

"Not any more, he isn't. Not again. The kid's dead."

I went over and sat down in one of the leather chairs.

I didn't feel so good.

Doug said, "He got a knife shoved into him sometime last night."

"Jesus."

"Yeah. It's a tough break."

"What's the rest of the story?"

"That's all I know. Talk to Chauncey if you want details."

"Who's Chauncey?"

"Homicide. Detective Lieutenant. He's usually on nights, but he's upstairs today. Want me to go upstairs with you?"

"I'd like to find out."

Doug said, "Okay. On your feet. Anything for the brain screw."

Chauncey had a desk in a room with four other desks, up one floor and down another quiet corridor. Behind those

desks sat white shirt sleeves and grim faces, and when we walked by, the grim faces looked up at Doug and grinned. They liked Doug. We stopped by the biggest, neatest desk, facing out from blinds slanted to let the light come in without a glare. Pencils were lined up on the right-hand corner in descending order of size and there was one small magnifying glass on the blotter, one manila folder with the papers pushed even inside of it, one desk calendar and a small shut dusted wooden file box.

Doug said, "Hey. Ed."

Chauncey looked up. Chauncey was a lean narrow-jawed man in his late forties, a little small for a cop. He had a ruddy firm-skinned face and a receding hair line and stony blue eyes, like chipped flint, and he could have passed for an insurance salesman in the gabardine suit.

Doug said, "Meet a friend of mine. Rogaway, Chauncey. Jim's a brain screw over at Q."

Chauncey went on sharpening a pencil. He had a clipped voice and he kept his eyes on the curl of the wood shavings. "What can I do for you?"

Doug said, "Sorry to bother you, Ed. Jim's interested in the kid you picked up this morning. Juan Chavez. Worked with him inside."

"What about it?"

I said, "Was he in a fight, Lieutenant?"

He looked at me for a minute. Then he turned to Doug. "Jenkins, you've been around the Hall long enough to know a murder isn't something we bat the breeze about. It's business."

I said, "The kid was a human being, too. Don't forget it, Lieutenant."

His eyes snapped back to me. "What are you, a wise guy?" Doug said, "Take it easy, Ed. I told you he was a friend of mine. Can you tell us anything about Chavez?"

Chauncey moved his eyes from me to Doug to the top drawer of the desk. He pulled out a typewritten report, and he held it so we couldn't read it. He studied it for a minute and then he put it back and closed the drawer.

"East Oakland apartment. His landlady heard a noise and went upstairs and found him. Knife in the chest. Prints unknown."

Chauncey picked up another pencil and started to sharpen it, watching the curl of the wood shavings. The pencil didn't need sharpening.

We stood there for a minute and nobody said anything. Chauncey laid the pencil and the sharpener down on the desk, and he put his hands flat and wide-spread on the edge of the blotter, and he looked up at us. He said, "Pachucos. Ought to send them back where they come from."

I leaned across the desk and looked down at him. I said, "They come from here. Just like we do."

He slapped the manila folder. "Hell, you know what I mean. They bring them up to pick the crops and after the crops get picked, what have we got? Pachucos in the hair. Like animals, with shivs."

I said, "They call America the melting pot. Remember?" "Christ, Pachucos don't melt. Some Mexicans are okay, but not those bastards."

"Okay. Maybe Pachucos fight in the wrong way, and maybe they don't know what they're fighting for, but they don't like being peons any more than we would."

He stood up and leaned across the desk at me. His voice

was flat and stony. "Why don't you go stand on a corner and pass out leaflets?"

Doug grabbed my arm before I could answer. He said, "Well, thanks, Lieutenant. Sorry to trouble you. Thanks anyway for the information."

He kept the pressure on tight and he steered me out of the office, and in the hall he shoved me over to the elevator cages and punched the down button and said, "Don't you know better than to needle Oakland cops, fathead? Besides, Chauncey's a good guy. He's one of the best."

"I wouldn't want my daughter to marry one."

"Calm down, sweetheart. Sometimes you sound like a missionary. Even to me."

"Look, Doug. A con can say anything he wants, to me. He's got real problems. But when some son of a bitch sits behind a big desk and is supposed to stand for right against wrong, and I see the disease, I want to wipe it out."

"You forget I have to work up there. Go over and beat up on the San Francisco cops if you want to."

Doug jabbed the down button again, three times in a row, hard. He didn't look at me. I said, "I'm sorry if I gave you any trouble, Doug."

"Yeah."

"No. On the level. For Christ's sake."

"You let too many things rub you the wrong way, Jim." "Somebody's got to squawk, once in a while."

The big doors slid open and Doug shoved me inside and he punched me a couple of times in the belly, backhanded and not hard. "You are such a good-natured guy, Rogaway. Just clam up. Look at the sun. Roll with the punches, for Christ's sake."

"Are you through for the day?"

"Yeah. Let's go have a drink and talk about nice things for a while."

We got out on the main floor and Doug bought cigarettes from the blind veteran at the candy counter. Blind fingers fumbled for change and the stony forehead was ridged over caved-in eye sockets, but he recognized Doug's voice and he smiled. I went over and looked at the glass trophy case, at the gold and silver loving cups won for marksmanship by police officers on the pistol range. The place was alive with the undercurrent of tense noise that washes through public buildings. A squad of uniformed cops were checking in at the traffic bureau and some of them stood and polished their stars with the special wire brushes while they waited. The two at the window kidded with a small crippled traffic clerk, and when the clerk looked up at one of the cops I heard the whine of his voice: "Jesus, Joe, you should have seen the girl I had out last night. Even a big guy like you would have gone for her, Joe . . ." I didn't wait to hear any more.

We went to a bar across the street and we climbed up on a couple of stools and ordered drinks, and we talked about nice things for a while, the way Doug wanted, and then he brought it up again.

"How come you're interested in the Chavez kid? I didn't think you messed around with ex-cons outside."

"I was walking. West Oakland is a good place to walk in, when you get sick of ten thousand stucco houses with pine trees out in front. I ran into Manny Chavez, Juan's brother, and we went into a restaurant called El Azteca and drank some beer."

He grinned at me in the bar mirror. "You should stay away from Seventh Street, no matter what you're looking for."

The bartender brought drinks and rang some change on the bar, and when he was gone I said, "Manny told me he had been out of Quentin for a couple of weeks. He couldn't find his kid brother, so he asked me to see if I could find out where Juan was from somebody at the City Hall."

"You found out, all right. Why didn't Chavez come up and ask?"

"He doesn't like that building you work in, pal. And after meeting Chauncey, I can see why."

Doug drank some Scotch and put the glass down and said, "Want to come out to the house for dinner?"

"I'd like to come, Doug, but I've got to go down and tell Manny. I hate like hell to have to tell him."

He nodded at his reflection behind the bar bottles. "Yeah. Juan was a good kid. And I know how Mexicans are when it comes to family. That's one thing they haven't lost."

"Tell me something about Juan. How was he getting along outside?"

Doug hung a cigarette on his lower lip and put a match to it. "If his record didn't say Pachuco there would have been no way to tell, from what I saw of him. His hair was cut short and he wore clothes like everybody else. He seemed like just a normal American kid who had a tough break."

"Yeah." I sipped the liquor. "Juan had a tattooed cross, but no rays."

"Signifying what?"

"To a Pachuco, each ray is like a merit badge. It means one jail term. It also means he's taken a lot of crap, but he's still a Pachuco." "So how come the kid didn't have any rays?"

"I guess he didn't know what he wanted. He was only fifteen when they pulled him in. That's young, even for a Pachuco. And he was in for five years. Plenty of things can happen to a guy in that much time, inside Quentin."

Doug nodded. "I only saw him five or six times, but from what I can figure, he was leading a hell of a clean life. He had a job in a filling station. He talked all the time about saving money and getting married."

"Look, Doug. Don't tell me any more. It's too damned sad."

He lifted his eyebrows. "Jesus, half an hour ago you were ready to tear into a cop, and now you're crying about a dead kid. How the hell do you stand it over at Quentin?"

"A dead kid. Just another dead Pachuco," I said. "These kids become Pachucos because they weren't allowed a better way to use their brains."

"Why do you always want to carry other people's burdens? Life is tough all over."

"I'm a brain screw. You're a parole officer, with a rich wife. That's the difference."

"Don't start in on that again, Jim."

"Okay. I'm sorry. Forget I said it."

"Smile. You're much prettier when you smile."

"Smile, hell. I've got to go down and tell the kid about his brother."

"They'll notify him, when they get around to it."

"Christ. What an attitude."

"Okay. If you have to tell him, you have to tell him. There's nothing I can do for you." He stood up. "I've got to go. Ingrid's having a gang over tonight. Too bad you can't come."

Doug grinned and swirled the ice cubes in his glass.

"Murder," I said.

"Yeah. I heard. I'm sorry. Hell, you know I give them every break in the world."

"I wonder if that's enough."

"What else can anybody do?"

He looked at his watch.

I said, "Give my regards to Ingrid and tell her I love her anyway, even if she is rich."

4.

IT WAS ONLY TWENTY BLOCKS FROM THE CITY HALL TO MANNY'S house. I didn't want to tell the kid about his brother. I felt like the cons feel, the night somebody gets the big sleep from the gas pipe. So I walked.

I walked down Broadway to Seventh Street and turned west and I was in a different part of town; the part of town where night comes down darker and strangers move softly, if they come there at all. It was still early, but the Cobra Club was already jumping. It didn't take a vice patrol to see what was going on in the neighborhood of the Cobra Club. Well-dressed sports stood around the high wide doorway and peddled marijuana under shaded electric lights, and everybody in sight was busy as all hell. I pushed through the bright-eyed young hustlers and on past the Blue Moon Barbecue Palace, with the enormous pit and the mountains of spareribs hissing on the spit. I kept on walking.

The evening service was just warming up through loudspeakers hung outside Christ Church. I leaned against a lamppost and listened to the Negro minister roar out the story of Barabbas and how the people of his time wanted the thief to live and the other guy to die, and how they still want it like that all up and down Seventh Street and all over the world. After a while I walked down past the big housing project by Cypress Street and crossed the Bay Bridge highway, and a few blocks farther down I came into the Mexican district, and Barabbas and the spareribs gave way to a mission-style Catholic church, and tacos and guitars and a foreign language spoken on the streets.

I turned right to Fifth and I kept walking. There was a full yellow moon rising out of the jungle of derricks and smokestacks along the estuary. The whole neighborhood looked deserted, except for chinks of yellow light that pricked here and there through drawn, frayed window shades. Some of the houses had cardboard tacked over cracked windows and there were no lawns; maybe a few weeds and wild roses sprouting in the front yards, and broken toys lying in the mud. The houses looked like a line of half-blind down and outers, bitter, waiting for a chance to pay it back. By moonlight they were sinister; in the daytime this would be just slum.

I walked up the steps to the two-story clapboard and pushed my thumb on the doorbell. It didn't ring, so I knocked instead. Nothing happened. I kept on knocking, and the door jiggled its own rhythm back at me. The hinges were just beginning to flake off rust when whoever was inside gave up and pulled the door open a few inches.

She said, "What do you want?"

She had a beautiful Mexican face, very young and vital, and raven black hair and long black eyelashes, and she

looked right at my eyes when she talked. She had that thin layer of hardness you find on girls from the wrong side of the tracks with the wrong color skin or the wrong religious beliefs or the wrong kind of income. She was wary and alert and the hardness was very thin, like a mask, and with a face like that and a body like that, she couldn't get by without it. Not on this side of the tracks.

I said, "Is Manny Chavez here?" "What do you want him for?"

Her voice had that musical lilt typical of the second generation Mexican who was taught to speak Spanish as a child, and learns hard American English much later. The softness stays there deep in the vowels, and the sibilants come out clear and frosty and the consonants are still half music.

I said, "Manny wants to see me."

"He doesn't live here." She started to close the door.

"Wait. Where is he?"

"Out of town. I have not seen him for two weeks."

She didn't look away from me. She had young tight hard breasts that pushed up underneath a man's black sweater, unbound, the pointed small nipples almost piercing the wide weave of the material. She wore a flared tweed skirt, tight at the waist and loose at the hem for quick motion.

I said, "Tell Manny a friend of his wants to see him."

"If you're the law, he hasn't done anything."

"Everything's okay. I just want to see Manny for a minute."

When I talked, her face tightened up stiff and no emotion broke through. We stood and looked at each other, like chess players sizing up the next move. Her eyes were black-black, her face was white with a dusky underflush somewhere deep. She had small even teeth, shiny as new snow, and she stood and looked me up and down and her smooth brow wrinkled to a frown. I could see her trying to figure whether she should trust me or not. It was a long process. I didn't blame her for weighing it.

I said, "Look. I'm no copper. I don't like coppers any more than you do. I'm a friend of Manny's. I've got some news for him."

"Want to leave a message? Maybe I know somebody who knows him."

I grinned down at her, and her eyes relaxed a little bit. I said, "Everything's okay. I'm not pulling any star. I'd be the last guy in the world to try and hype a Pachuco."

She watched my eyes.

"Wait here. I will go see if he's home."

She closed the door and I leaned against one of the porch posts and got out a cigarette and lit it. The girl's feet creaked on wooden steps inside and I heard muffled voices from upstairs, hers and a deeper one. I looked up and a hand pulled aside the second-story window shade, and I whipped my head around quick so as not to meet any eyes, and I stood and waited until the investigation was finished.

More feet creaked on the stairs, this time coming down. Manny opened the front door for me. He wasn't wearing a shirt. He had on a pair of loose-fitting cotton pants tied around the waist with a cord, and a pair of worn huarachos and no socks, like a revolutionary Mexican in a Rivera painting. He had soft tan skin and no hair on his body; a lithe strong body, with the muscles firm and supple. He looked natural and at ease in the pants and the bare chest. He looked like he should always dress that way; like the street

clothes were a kind of armor, battle-trappings for a Seventh Street knight.

He stepped aside to let me come in, and closed the door behind me and locked it.

I said, "You look comfortable, kid."

"Come on in. I've just been lying around. Nothing happens this early."

I followed him into what used to be a big swank living room thirty years ago, when the house was new. The furniture was shabby but I didn't notice that right away; bright serapes were thrown over the chairs and over the long couch against the far wall, and there was an imitation tile fireplace with gas logs in it, and in the niche over the fireplace was a tall painted wooden saint. On the mantel at each end stood one Mexican crucifix candlestick, in silver. Against the right wall was a soft chair and a radio-phonograph combination. The floor was polished hardwood with no rug on it, and Manny's sandals slapped the wood when he walked across the room.

There was a copy of the Mexican magazine *Hoy* on a near chair and I picked it up and put it on the floor and sat down. Manny went over to the highboy next to the couch and got out a bottle and two glasses. He pulled out the cork with his teeth and grinned at me and he poured the glasses full and handed one to me. It was good muscatel.

He said, "Mosca. You like it?"

"Tastes like it grew on the sunny side of the hill."

"It's not liquor store gas. It's right from Mexico."

I went over and looked out the windows at the yellow moonlight on the street. I walked back to the chair and picked the magazine up off the floor and flipped the pages, and I didn't look at Manny. I said, "Better drink a lot of it, kid."

He stared at me over the glass. Before I said anything else, he knew. He threw his head back and swallowed the wine, all of it, and then he stared at me again, and he filled the glass a second time and drained it. He got up and walked over to the phonograph. He turned on the switch. Then he turned it off again.

He said, "Juan?"

"He didn't feel it, kid."

"Knife or gun?"

"Knife. While he was sleeping."

Manny's face went hard and the muscles in his chest stood out in taut ridges, like carved wood, and then the spring unwound and the tears came and he had to do something to stop them. He bent down and flipped the knife out of the sheath on his leg, and he threw it from that crouching position, all in one fast wild agonized movement; and the painted saint didn't fall over, it just leaned back in the niche with the knife quivering all the way through its wooden belly.

He said, "The mother-jumping bastards."

"Yeah."

I shook out a couple of cigarettes and got up and stuck one between his lips and lit it for him. I could see the tears start to well out from under his eyelids again. He took one deep drag and he coughed. "Damned straights make the eyes water." He lifted up his arm and wiped his eyes on the back of his hand, and when he brought the hand down I could see streaks of wet on the tan skin. He wheeled around and jabbed the cigarette out in a clay ash tray without taking another drag.

He said, "When did it happen?"

"Late last night. I'm sorry as hell, kid."

"Where was he?"

"He was living out in East Oakland. His parole officer said he was going straight. No beefs anywhere."

Manny moved his lips back from his teeth, and he spat the words out. "Going straight. That's what killed him."

I walked over to the highboy and filled my glass and drank some wine. It didn't taste so good any more.

"How come you didn't know where Juan lived?"

"I'll tell you why I didn't know, Rogaway." His lips were twisted in a sardonic smile and the tears were still in his eyes. "They beat him into going straight, at Quentin. And I'm a Pachuco. He wouldn't talk to Pachucos any more. Not even to his own brother."

"He might have made it, kid. Don't forget that."

"Made what? It's all a lot of crap. They gave me the same business too. Work hard. Work your hands until they get black and gnarled from picking lettuce. Bend over in the sun. Work hard, and when the white boss says move, move quick. Eat all the crap, but don't stop there. After you swallow it then smile and tell them you like the taste of it, and, please, don't forget to say thanks."

"I know, kid."

"Yeah. You know." He came up close to me and his eyes were narrow and wet. "They say, marry your own kind and breed a lot of dumb Mexicans with the brains of burros, Mexicans they can work in their fields or use to build their roads. Yeah, you know. Horseshit. There's no way you could know."

"Keep talking, kid. It's all true."

"I'll get the guy that did it. And when I get him, he'll die slow. And if I burn for it, here or anywhere, at least I won't burn like a slave."

He walked over and picked up the saint and jerked the knife out of its belly, and then he crossed himself and put the knife back in the sheath taped to his leg.

I said, "Who would want to kill Juan?"

"Don't worry about it, Rogaway. You were a decent guy to come and tell me."

I stood up. I got a piece of paper out of my pocket and wrote my address and phone number on it and gave it to him. "Call me if anything comes up. Anything. Any time."

He put the paper on the mantel under one of the silver crucifixes. I went over and put my arm around his shoulder, and his skin was warm and smooth. "I liked your brother, Manny. I saw him often inside. I'm on your side, kid. All the way. I want you to know that."

He hit me on the chest, lightly, and I turned and went over and slipped the lock on the door and opened it. Manny put his hand on my shoulder and his lips were firm and there were no tears in his eyes now. It happens like that, here or in the big office at Quentin: Pachuco grief, one quick wild yell in the dark and then the silence, the repression.

He said, "There were a couple of times inside Quentin when I wanted to come and see you."

"You should have come, Manny."

"Maybe if Juan hadn't talked you up so much, maybe I would have come."

"I liked Juan a hell of a lot."

It was good to see him smile again, even that kind of a smile. "I don't think you ever told him to work in a lettuce

patch, Rogaway. I don't even think you'd have told me to work in a lettuce patch."

He saw the car before I did. It was a long black Cadillac parked under the streetlight and there were two men in it, in the front seat. I heard Manny suck in his breath. "Jesus Christ. Get inside."

I hesitated, to see what was going on, and he grabbed me back in.

He slid in front of me and leaned against the door to shut it and he snapped the catch on the lock. There was a switch on the wall over the round wooden table. He punched the button and the room went black. He moved in front of me to the other door and opened it.

"We've got to get out the back way."

"What's up, kid?"

"Trouble. Forget it. Let's go."

I put my hand on his arm and pulled him back. "What kind of trouble, Manny? Maybe there's another way of handling it."

"Not unless you've got a gun in your pocket. Those are the bastards who were after me last night when I cut out on you. They aren't playing."

"What's that got to do with me?"

He kept on going. Then he turned. "For Christ's sake, Rogaway, get away from that door before they put a bullet through it."

I followed him in the darkness.