What had started as a manageable little affaire with the handsome and careless English captain had changed into something perilously like love, and love, for her, had the destructive force of a phenomenon of nature, like lightening, or a summer storm, something to shelter from lest life and all that made it tolerable be left a blasted smoking ruin.

John Banville, The Untouchable
I used to think that love was blind,
That you were strong and I was kind.
Now I don’t believe that anymore.

Ray Charles

1970

They chose the land because it glowed. They called the 200 acres of arid high desert in Colorado The Rock Farm and built their dome, a laboratory for the future-- sixty feet across and thirty feet high-- into bedrock on a wide tilting South-facing meadow dotted with chamisa, gamma grass and quaking Aspen.

Long tall Maggie had never actually had occasion to hold either a saw or a hammer before her arrival in Colorado. She had grown up in a huge Spanish revival house in a neighborhood in Los Angeles where no one who actually slept there used tools of any kind although her father did his own gardening and could use a typewriter. Her mother was a splendid cook – a talent she demonstrated only on Thursday and Sunday nights.

Unlike their grander neighbors in Beverly Hills, Maggie’s parents were affluent semi-bohemians who owned a large house with crooked peeling shutters and a roof that leaked. They drove ten-year-old cars and believed in socialized medicine. Their neighbors tended to be movie people or rich doctors or distant relatives of Imelda Marcos, who had security systems and intensely landscaped front yards. Maggie’s father, Brendan—a black-listed screenwriter--eschewed such extravagant curbside floral displays insisting that the shabby starkness of the front of their house combined with their elderly vehicles was both a demonstration of tasteful restraint and a kick ass security system. “We’re the poor rich,” he would say proudly. “No one would bother to rob us. “ Brendan worked at
home in an office blue with the smoke from his Lucky Strikes, where he was writing a novel about a botanist trying to develop a frost resistant peach tree. Manya, Maggie’s mother, worked in advertising, a business she scorned, but one that kept them all afloat. Maggie had piano lessons and tutors and Capezio ballet flats. They could have lamb chops any time they wanted.

Maggie’s parents were the sort of folks who had done more than flirt with communism in the thirties. All that remained of this long-dead romance was a mistrust of the government and a posse of old Lefties who filled the big house on Sunday nights to eat her mother’s exotic stews, smoke French cigarettes, drink wine and argue loudly about Saul Bellow and modernism and the failures of the Democratic party. They drove odd little foreign cars, loved anything with sub-titles, wore actual berets and Greek fishermen’s jerseys. By day most of them inhabited the material world, working for what Maggie and her friends called The Establishment. Even the painters toiled by day as animators, at Disney sans berets, she assumed. Maggie’s favorite was a handsome choreographer named Jacque, who looked like an apache dancer and worked for a popular TV variety show. She had never seen him without a little yellow silk scarf tied jauntily around his neck. There were women with severe bangs and large ethnic necklaces who went on hiking tours of Scotland or cruises sponsored by The Nation. One of them — who wrote for a TV soap opera was the daughter of the only socialist to ever serve in Congress. She had a big shabby mansion too and Maggie – too young to know what it meant -- had once met Eleanor Roosevelt there.

So Maggie’s parents had easily taken it in stride when their only child had decided to tune in and turn on. They had understood the radical politics, the patched jeans, the intensely opininated long-haired boyfriends, and even the pot smoking. They had applauded her move to New York City and had even helped her out financially when she had decided to quit her assistant fashion editor’s job at Vogue -- a job Manya had finagled for her through someone at Conde Nast -- to work for practically nothing for an underground newspaper called Ragtime.

Maggie’s decision to drop out and more or less disappear into the wilderness however, had not been met with such equanimity. Sorely disappointed by Maggie’s decision to turn her back on the privilege they had bought for her at no little cost to themselves, they wrote weekly letters to P.O. Box 303 in Farasita, Colorado, where Maggie now received her mail, containing small infusions of cash and somewhat larger expressions of regret for the life that could have been hers: a career in the arts, good politics to be sure but nothing that would cause her to trot around in the forest wearing rags and bite the hands that had so richly fed her. What her parents had hoped for her was a younger version of their own lives – an apartment with white walls and black wooden floors furnished with their tasteful cast-offs, interesting Turkish carpets, posters by Sister Mary Corita and Ben Shahn, and for ballast, a husband with tenure. What about ambition, they asked?

Maggie did not share their regrets. Living in the certainty that this place 8,000 feet up on a mountain in Colorado was the absolute center of the universe, she had, in March of 1970, voluntarily bared her freckled torso to the pale spring sun and, wearing only shorts
and Red Wing boots, used an entire crate of dynamite to blow up 109 holes for the uprights the dome’s floor. This activity caused her to lose about 40% of her hearing but she really didn’t miss it.

Living in the dome was like being inside a gigantic wooden gemstone. In the mornings they huddled together on their thrift store couches, sipped chicory-infused coffee from chubby mugs with their names printed on them and gazed across the broad valley to watch the sun turn the snow mustachios of Fu Manchu mountain pink and mauve. From this vantage point they apprehended too the great chasm that separated the straight world from the one they had made: the square neat suburban homes of their childhoods receded as their magical hemispheric house reshaped their lives. In overalls and tattered flannels they prepared for days of goat milking and fence mending and felt sorry for the fathers they had left behind who had to be grown up all the time and wear suits to write jingles or briefs, screenplays or lab reports.

They had abandoned a life of drudgery in the name of commerce for one of drudgery in the name of autonomy. It wasn’t work but it wasn’t play either. All of them had managed to hold on to the part of adolescence that tells one that life might not be a vale of tears. They had renounced the grey world for the purple, the color of velvet bell-bottoms, the color of Julian’s paisley jacket, Maggie’s goose down sleeping bag, Owsley’s acid.

Before The Farm, there had been a time between 1966 and 1970 when anything might and did happen. For a blink of the historical eye miracle seemed to pile on miracle as Maggie and legions of others, abandoned their families and formed new ones. Clans of familiars, in their Sgt. Pepper suits, they would slip-slide into an entirely fluid future, inventing their lives as they went along. They could insist on participatory democracy and exorcise the Gods of war.

But by the end of 1969 much of the wind had been gone out of their sails. Many of them had been soundly drubbed by their ongoing war against the state during which they had occupied university buildings, shut down draft boards, and put glue in the keyholes of Merrill Lynch. In their families of origin the adults had always listened to them, but their government continued to bomb small Asian nations in spite of their insistence that this should stop. They were also staggered by the escalation of their government’s reprisals against them. Even Dr. Benjamin Spock, who some people blamed for the permissiveness of their upbringings, had been indicted by the justice department for conspiracy. It was getting scary.

It had gotten way scary for Maggie and her pals who were living in New York City in a collective they called the Lower Manhattan Aristocrats because in one long night of high hilarity they had named themselves after a dirty joke. Maggie, Eben, Julian --Maggie’s best friend since she was old enough to have friends -- their next door neighbor, Beautiful Walter (that was his name and that was no lie) and a pair of wacky Hungarian siblings, Ilona and Tamas had all felt defeated when their dreams for the end of the war and the beginning of an entirely new world were not immediately realized. They’d hunkered down in their warren of lofts making dreary forays out to work or attend actions, shutting
down the occasional draft board or rather listlessly heckling the president when he or one of his henchmen showed up at the Waldorf or the Hilton. What they had in common at the end of 1969 was a enduring though chastened belief in the possibility of a world altered to their specifications.

Eben, Maggie’s boyfriend, had only escaped being drafted by showing up at the White Hall Street draft board wearing a paper dress and dangling earrings, insisting that he was a communist and urinating between two filing cabinets just as his name was called for his physical. Every one of their number had been arrested at least once, and several had fled to Canada, to avoid being sent to Vietnam. Of course they were outraged but they were also terrified.

Richard Nixon was in the White House, in part because in 1968 they had written in their own candidates, refusing to vote for Hubert Humphrey because he was “complicitous with evil”. Maggie had voted for Eldridge Cleaver and Eben for Shitass Magoo. Very funny. Things were turning dark. Woodstock and the Tet Offensive had happened and Valerie Solanis had shot Andy Warhol, of all people, with a .32 automatic. Poor people had built a Resurrection City in Washington D.C., Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and Robert Kennedy were dead and The Kerner Commission had determined something Maggie and her new family already knew: America was moving toward two societies, one white and one black, separate but unequal. Neal Cassidy was dead. Jack Kerouac halfway to a wet brain and about to die himself had jumped back across the great divide to the old world and was sleeping on his mother’s couch in Lowell, Massachusetts. The war escalates. Their hearts fell to the ground.

Then Eben’s old roommate from Reed, who now called himself Brother Moon, breezed into town with a slide show of Free Falls – the community he and a bunch of San Francisco artists started in southern Colorado where they lived in domes and zomes built out of old car doors. After Brother Moon split they sat up until dawn talking about their future, listening to Let It Bleed and deciding that the bravest thing to do was to cut their losses and head out into the territories, abandoning the war in the streets and even the streets themselves.

They were not without their doubts. Sometimes when they were all sitting up on the roof wrapped in blankets and smoking hashish Eben would express his misgivings about their back-to-the-land enterprise which he regarded with some guilt as a “white comfort trip” - - summer camp, with fugitives and socialist philosophy thrown into the mix. Maggie and Julian, who had gone to a camp where Pete Seeger visited every summer and led the campers in rousing songs with verses like:“ You can get good milk from a brown cow\ The color of the skin doesn’t matter anyhow,” didn’t really see this as a bad thing.

Now here they were only a year later looking out through the broad glinting arc of the dome’s new Thermapane windows and imagining that they were actually witnessing the death of the old world. Their parents –fairly enlightened tiny mummies of an extinct civilization -- lived in the place they now called Amerika, a dimly-lit realm where doughy men in late middle age told lies, oppressed black people, sent kids just like them
halfway across the globe to kill tiny Asian peasants in black pajamas, all in the name of national security. Sometimes they called Amerika collect.

Of course John Wayne, Milton Berle, Bob Hope, Norman Rockwell, Scooby Doo, TV dinners, and the Super Bowl were consigned to the boneyard of the lost world. But so too were even the reasonably satisfying products of their parents’ lives: Frank Sinatra, Klee, Sigmund Freud, gin, Walter Cronkite, Mozart, the World Series, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Chagall, Gaulois, French cinema, English sports cars, and The New Yorker all had dissolved into the mists of the attenuating world.

All the good faith was on their side now. They trusted on sight the people who actually made it to “the land”. Burnouts from the ravaged Haight, heartbroken bass players from extinct bands, guys with weird hair and desolate eyes who were hiding from the Feds, all were welcomed. There were no credit checks, no questionnaires. Credibility was in the eyes, the elaborate handshake, the pure fact of having arrived at this destination. Things were meant to be.

Bucky Fuller notwithstanding, the 20th century had simply not panned out as a way to move forward. The 19th seemed a better bet and so they stood on their chunk of terra infirma alongside people in chaps, like Hopalong Cassidy, Annie Oakley, Wyatt Earp; emblematic outsiders like Walt Whitman, William Blake, Rimbaud, Sherlock Holmes, Baudelaire, Thomas De Quincy; Indian icons like Geronimo, Sitting Bull; Oh, and Abe Lincoln (the parts where he taught himself to read by firelight and freed the slaves). They were headed back to the future.

When they had ingested the right chemicals they said things like “everything that’s here is here,” and knowing that this was the key to all understanding they wrote it down on scraps of paper so they wouldn’t forget but then they did. They liked to call themselves a tribe and built a dome because square houses were “the enemy of change”. In fact, all structure was the enemy of change. They grew their own, called one another “man” and used the word “ball” as a sexual verb. They “did” drugs or “dropped” them. No one had a bathing suit.

In the dome one night after a dinner of flautas and green chile, Julian – he of the insane ‘fro and handsome mustache -- told everyone he was gay. It was a shock to all, even Maggie his best friend. That’s how long ago this was. Ilona, who had once been a runway model in Paris, now wore ragged black pajamas that supposedly had belonged to a Viet Minh and spent most of her time tending to the goats and various cheesecloth bags that dripped whey into waiting pots. Tamas, who said he had invented the skateboard when he was in grammar school, had transformed himself into an architectural engineer, sitting up all night muttering in a Dracula accent over the dome blueprints. Maggie, who had meant to be a choreographer (she had once taken a master class from Martha Graham, who had admired her great height and told her she “loomed”) could now rebuild a VW engine, a task for which she wore a grease suit with nothing under it in the hope that Beautiful Walter might unzip it.
Eben had been Maggie’s old man but now that was over. In 1966, when they had first met at a party on St Mark’s place for the San Francisco Mime Troupe, they had both been stoned on acid and DMT and had spent the evening sitting cross-legged on the floor, foreheads almost touching, explaining “Desolation Row” to one another. Eben insisting that Dylan’s “Dr. Filth,” who kept his world “inside a leather cup,” was LBJ, Maggie arguing just as vehemently for a more ambiguous interpretation. At the time Eben had mistaken her lanky physique -- her startling height, (she was almost 6’ 1”) her broad freckly face, her bold shock of curly red hair -- for signs of rude good health. Big mistake. Heat, walnuts, wind, fear, air-conditioning, motorcycles, vigorous exercise, chocolate, crying, dust, Roquefort cheese, humidity, naps, altitudes, and foreign travel, all gave her a headache. She had basically ruined their visit to Yucatan by getting a migraine at Uxmal and vomiting splashily on the steps of the ancient pyramid under the cruel Yucatecan sun.

Eben’s dream of a revolutionary future shared with his very own bandoleered queen had, in time, given way to his more or less perpetual disenchantment. Her failure to be what he had expected wore Maggie out. She worried. Not about her fitness for the revolution, but about her fitness for adult life.Whatever spark of desire she had once felt for Eben had been doused by his disappointment in her person and she often lay sleepless beside him, feeling ancient and unerotic and wondering why. Because Eben certainly had his charms. He was what she and Julian called a “wolf-boy,” with gorgeous jutting cheekbones and a tight sinewy body. His eyes were the blue of beach glass and he was assembled out of marvelous textures: coarse golden hair, creamy skin, beautiful bones, the kind of arms that God made to stick out of the sleeves of T-shirts. For a girl whose amorous life had been jump-started by James Dean in Rebel Without A Cause, Eben had seemed like a dream come true. He was a cute radical. And he was smart. He read Frantz Fanon and wrote songs about drifters named Broken Willie and Black Pete and drew strange little maps of make-believe lands that he called Eben-O-Grams. But she had chafed under the yoke of his countercultural despotism. He bristled at her personal vanity and threw away all the remnants of her time at Vogue --her sable blusher brush, her wiglet, and her Twiggy false eyelashes – insisting that there was no room in their future for counterrevolutionary trash. Sometimes she felt like he was just going to Che her to death.

Poised as they were to become the founding mothers and fathers of a completely new society, having, as they liked to say, withdrawn entirely from complicity with the corporate materialist machine they had been meant to fuel, they waited for the old world to evanesce, the new world to be born. They learned to bake bread and brew beer. They grew tomatoes and dug a root cellar and filled it with the jam and catsup and chutney they had made from what they grew. They, who had been bred to become the managers of the old society – the professors and film makers and lawyers and art critics -- now bred goats and made cheese and yogurt. They chopped wood and had babies in their own beds and rolled cigarettes out of Bugler tobacco and then used the empty cans as chamber pots that sat beside their beds in the giant dome where they slept in their tie-dyed long underwear. They read the big sky to the North for signs of approaching weather and celebrated the summer and winter solstice by sitting up all night in a tipi praying to Heavenly Father Chief Peyote, asking him for long growing seasons, short labors, four-
wheel drive vehicles and rain. At first light sometimes Heavenly Father Chief Peyote himself would enter the tipi accompanied by The Winds and they would swirl about briefly above their heads. Really. That actually happened. A splendid time to be young. Only three years later, the main thing Maggie wanted was meat and lots of it. The night before she had an almost feverish tape-loop dream featuring a standing rib roast with Yorkshire pudding, the birthday dinner her mother always made for her. They were out of food stamps for the rest of the month and both she and Ilona were pregnant. For Thanksgiving Tamas had made a soy turkey which was supposed to be satisfying because he had fashioned the gross tofu slop into the shape of said roasted bird. Which didn’t help at all because as Maggie said, (although not to Tamas who was notably thin-skinned) you can’t taste shape.

Walter was their designated hunter, having grown up shooting squirrels, possums and basically anything that moved in rural Kentucky. But Walter had broken his wrist riding a crazy little green-broke pony he had borrowed from their neighbors, the Vargas boys. So Maggie had to carry the gun – an antique 30-30 Winchester -- and she was supposed to make the kill. Maggie had never actually killed anything, unless you counted the pigeons who died in an apparent paroxysm of diarrhea after she and her third grade pals had experimentally administered Ex-Lax to them. She could still picture their little shit-stained bodies sprawled stiffly around the school playground. But that had been an unfortunate accident.

In the spirit of being a frontier woman seeking food for her tribe Maggie followed Walter’s instructions, held her breath, aimed and squeezed off a shot, succeeding only in wounding the big buck who then took off into the dense woods. They pursued him for hours, wandering panting and uncertain over unfamiliar ground. Daylight was fading just as they finally picked up his trail again, marked now by larger and larger blood sign, the earth etched with long furrows seeded with gore, the unmistakable evidence of a leg being dragged. Finally his jagged trail led them into a small red dirt clearing where he lay, his leg now attached to his shuddering body by a single thick sinew.

She stood about five yards from the wreckage she had made. Walter ordered her to shoot. One of the buck’s great liquid eyes appeared to be gazing directly at her. She took aim and shot him, this time in the heart. His body convulsed momentarily and he grew still.

She helped Walter to decapitate him and hang him from a tree to drain his blood. Witnessing her handiwork, Maggie, who had as a child been taken to the Museum of Modern Art by her parents and taught to weep in front of The Guernica, the better to despise the horror of human violence, admitted to her innermost self for perhaps the first time that she was in way over her head.

By the early winter of 1973 Maggie knew, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that her peak as a countercultural heroine was behind her. One morning, right after Thanksgiving and right before her 26th birthday – always a low point of the year for her – she woke up in a tipi, lying inside a slightly damp purple sleeping bag that had seen better days and smelled ever so slightly of Valerian Root or dirty feet. Small feathers peeked out of dozens of holes in the bag’s faintly slimy surface, which lay on a bare foam mattress, which, in turn, rested on the tipi’s red dirt floor. Beside her was Walter’s empty dark green bag and his pillow, streaked faintly with pink mud and a thirty inch strand of his lovely hair.
Maggie, as miserable as she had ever been, tried to stretch and smile because she had read in one of Ilona’s meditation books that these actions might bring her a degree of peace. But it was hard to smile because her teeth were coated with red dirt and her lips were dry and cracked. Besides, because of her great height, the confines of the sleeping bag, the too short bed and the incline of the tipi’s canvas walls, stretching was not a real option. She idly wiggled her toes amidst the grit at the bottom of the bag and gazed up to observe the snow that fell onto the few remaining Aspen leaves and drifted through the tipi’s smoke flaps dampening the remains of last night’s fire. Maggie huddled into the smelly warmth of her bag and surveyed her surroundings. On the surface of the night stand made out of a dented metal camp trunk covered with an old Pendleton blanket lay a small splinter of mirror, a blackened Aladdin lamp, a tin of Tiger Balm, her dog-eared copy of the I Ching, a string of turquoise beads, an Ursula K. Le Guin novel and Walter’s .45 Colt automatic. Beside the ashes of last nights fire lay her weathered steel-toed boots. She had been so proud of them when she got them at the surplus store in Pueblo. Was that just two years ago? Now the laces were frayed, the leather cracked and darkened with deer blood.

She shivered, sat up, and wrapped herself in the paisley gypsy shawl she had bought from an exotic street vendor on the Lower East Side 2,000 miles and what seemed like 2,000 years ago. She slid her long skinny feet into Walter’s fur-lined moccasins and knelt on the dirt floor to reanimate the fire with some cedar kindling Walter had piled beside the bed for that purpose.

Once she had a small fire going she sat down on the yellowing foam mattress again and began to coax her red ‘fro into two lumpy braids. It had been, what, two weeks since she had been able to wash it – that night at the Washeteria in San Luis when Walter shot all those holes in the STOP sign? How lame was that? But since the water line had frozen on the land there had been no baths, no laundry, no nothing. They had to melt snow to do the dishes.

Her hair, to its credit, smelled largely of cedar, which was fine. A lot better than the smell of skunk that now permeated the world’s largest dome ever built by amateurs, ever since some guy in a yellow saffron robe had come up the road last week in a dying VW bug, introduced himself as Crazy Aces, (which should have been the tipoff), and moved his stuff in -- an alto sax, a feather bed, and a thirty-ought-six. On only his second night in the dome, Crazy A, as he liked to be called, took it upon himself to shoot a skunk that had crawled into a frying pan in the kitchen. This ill-considered bit of personal initiative had forced all 12 denizens of the dome into sheds, lean-tos and tipis. Ilona, whose severe morning sickness had been amplified to a near-fatal level by the skunk smell and who liked to read up on things, had learned from Organic Gardening that tomatoes would kill skunk smell. So all of the catsup and tomato sauce they had put up so diligently in the summer was hauled out of the root cellar and commandeered to vanquish the stench.

Maggie examined herself in the shard of cracked mirror. When they were first falling in love Walter had told her that she looked like a cross between Katherine Hepburn and Howdy Doody. That was a pretty spot-on observation coming from Walter who was not ordinarily given to commentary. She knew she was pretty in a big freckly buck-toothed way but almost three years 8,000 feet up in the Rockies had taken their toll. Her once bright hair had ballooned into a dull and shapeless beach ball of frizz, her skin was reddened and parched, little tags of dead skin dangled from her lips, and there was dirt
under her nails that seemed to be permanent. In the mirror she studied the fossils of last night’s tears, which formed pale rivulets on her dusty cheeks.
It was one of Walter’s lists that had made her cry, reminding her that Beautiful Walter would soon be gone.
She had found it in the kindling box. She took some comfort in the fact that he had thought of it as something to be burned. But it wasn’t the first of his wish lists she had found and she was starting to think it might be the last.
GET:
Bucking bronco belt buckle like Tito Vargas
Nocoma boots (Western Horseman $75)
New down vest (green)

WANT:
Cherried out ’54 Chevy P/U with metal flake paint/gun rack
Nikon
.25 Beretta automatic (asshole Rock Farmers would say it’s a gun for killing people. I don’t want to kill any people for God’s sake!)

GO TO:
Mexico
Vancouver
Peru (Cocaine)
MOROCCO (find out how to make hashish)
LA/NY do city scene. Photo studio (take pix of something besides goddamn dome, dogs, kids, Rock Farmers at work and play. Jesus!)

Although he often told Maggie that she was the love of his life, his sampling was small. He was only 21 after all and now had other plans for his future, many other plans. He dreamed of being a real cowboy with new Levis and tooled leather boots, not part of a clan of “homesteading rich kids,” an unfair phrase he had whispered angrily into her ear last week when they were still sharing the dome with nine other adults and three babies.
He wanted to rope dogies, buy reloading equipment and drive a truck with a crew seat and pointless headlights on its roof. He wanted to see the world and sell and ingest exotic drugs. As long as she was attached to this land and the idea of what they were doing on it, his future would not include her. His ambition had strayed and ideas, however lofty, had never been his thing.
At the criticism meeting the week before -- thanks a lot Chairman Mao – she had been censured for “adventurism” because of the deer hunting folly -- the meat they had brought home was so infused with flight hormones that it was inedible. Then Ilona and Tamas got on Walter for not adequately renouncing his materialism -- a failure clearly demonstrated by his use of community funds to buy a Stetson hat and a subscription to Guns and Ammo. In spite of her obsession with beautiful Walter even Maggie had thought the judgment not unreasonable. Plus he looked like a peckerhead in the hat. It made him seem small-brained and goofy like those boys named Ty and Cody who rode in rodeos, something else that Walter was planning on doing. Maggie had never known what a dogie actually was.
There was no denying the direction his cowboy boots were pointed. Away from the harsh realities of the Rock Farm, which had been described by the New York Times in 1971, when the dream was in its prime, as an “intentional community.”

“Whose intention?” Walter had asked without irony. Because as much as he might love her and the idea of their unborn child, he hated the rules and the rigors of the life they had built. He loathed his dish day, the dry creek bed, and the smelly forced intimacy of the two-seater outhouse with its bucketful of lime and its ancient copies of Rolling Stone and The Militant, the communal closet, which meant the earlier one got up the better chance one had of wearing matching sock, the injunction against individualism, and the burden of changing the diapers of other people’s kids with names like Waneema, Juniper, and Little Rose Hips.

She watched his increasing restlessness with a heavy heart. Even in the spring when things at the Rock Farm were at their most idyllic, he had spent his time hiding out in their tipi, lying on the bed staring pensively through the smoke flaps at the perfect blue sky dreaming of handguns and Babylon, making his lists, not even trying to conceal his itchy feet.

One night in August they dragged their sleeping bags out to the meadow in front of their tipi to watch the shooting stars. She pressed her lips to the tattoo of an Aztec sun God on his upper arm and studied his face.

“We could leave,” he said. “We could have the baby somewhere amazing like Rio or Patagonia or maybe Vermont,” he added lamely in an attempt to suggest a less unrealistic locale.

“Come with me. We can be running partners.” He said this with tragic brio as if by calling her his running partner he could elevate their shared future into something edgy and grand.

But even then Maggie had still felt like a star player in the great countercultural project, in it for the long haul. True, the practical demands of trying to survive on an inhospitable mountainside had over time made the whole endeavor a lot more Amish than Dionysian. The dream, the ties of old love and friendship, the idea of the Rock Farm, however diminished in scale by the pressure of the real, still held her in its grip. But that grip was loosening. She was living in a tipi in the dead of winter with red dirt on her teeth, a light snow continuing to fall on her split ends, two months pregnant by a man whose gorgeousness was offset by the fact that his chief aspirations were to become a cowboy and/or gain a more intimate knowledge of hashish production. She was not sure their love would survive in the thicker air of the world off the mountain.

With blood on her hands and her boots, Maggie -- wet, cold, poor, protein deprived, disheveled, and bereft -- felt the skeletal remains of their conjoined fantasy about a chosen family, a post-revolutionary future, slowly succumbing to the black ooze of reality. How the mighty have fallen, she thought, and wondered, really wondered, if all of this had really been such a good idea after all.

She ached for the ecstatic fugue state that had marked the start of their great experiment. She missed the stream of visitors: reporters from Life and Time, hitch hikers, gurus, Peyote Indians, dissertation writers, film crews, truth seekers, and political fugitives, who had for a time flocked through their front gate, marked by a hand painted sign:

THE ROCK FARMERS
THE SOUTHWEST’S MOST ELEGANT COMMUNE
WE DELIVER

Had their initial exhilaration been a chimera— their fifteen minutes of fame? She once imagined herself as the deerskin-pants-wearing star of a big budget musical in color only to find herself in this admirable, well-made documentary about a fading countercultural outpost in the Rocky Mountains. How long would it be before she crept away from the dead dream with her tied-dyed tail between her spindly legs? How long before she would unlatch the Rock Farm gate for the last time, in tears, because still fresh in her memory was the way it had begun, when they had been bopping about Manhattan, saving up for canteens and sleeping bags with an egalitarian future laid out before them, plenty of hash, a stash of maps, a big dream and a name for everything.