

If I had thought that this new job was a piece of cake I was in for a rude awakening the second week. The abnormally ending programs fell like ducks on a pond, blasted right out of the air with the deafening din of a thousand tiny metal pellets, leaving tattered and scarred bodies soaking up the water below. It started Tuesday and never relented. Hank was huffing and puffing and fuming but Jim stayed relatively calm. Dick complained in what was becoming his usual detachment and Claude was quiet, deferential but willing to do anything asked of him. I was silently amused.

Wednesday the initial labor program fell out of the virtual sky and less than two hours later the labor pseudo-programmer was sitting in the open room, gazing from the stack of JCL cards to the memory dump of the failed program and back again. An hour or so on the phone and he typed up the new cards, handed the converted JCL to Hank and off flew the duck, shotgun blasts silenced for the week. Most of the other injured programs were fixed by Hank and Jim... - *page 379*

This year I would turn twenty-five. I never expected to live to twenty-five. I always expected to be dead long before that age. Frankly, I *should* have been dead at nineteen, dead from drinking all afternoon and evening and stupidly *driving* my mother's relatively new Manta home from an entire day of debauchery. Cold elements and uncommon medical intervention made that bid unsuccessful., - *page 383*

I listened to the radio while I tooted around in the van that afternoon. I had just fired up the van from yet another stop and the radio announced, "...they discovered the man had shot and killed his wife, then turned the shotgun on himself..." I thought nothing of it, other than to note that this was Kansas after all. It seemed like everyone had a shotgun. - *page 384*