

# **GREEN IS THE NEW RED**

**An Insider's Account  
of a Social Movement Under Siege**

**Will Potter**



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## Blacklisted

*June 3, 2007* For a few seconds at a time, today feels like any other day, maybe even like a vacation, and Daniel McGowan forgets what he knows will happen tomorrow. The wind blows west through Oregon's Willamette National Forest, rustling the dense lower patchwork of vine maple, dogwood and red alder. The rodlike Douglas firs pay no attention to the breeze as they reach over two hundred feet to the sun, just as they have for three hundred, four hundred, five hundred years. If he breathes deeply enough, McGowan might smell tansy in the wind, or perhaps it's camphor; so many wild things have grown over each other and into each other for so long it's hard to tell which. If he breathes deeper still, he might taste the white water of Fall Creek before seeing or hearing it. He breathes in, pulls the wind and creek and forest deep into his lungs, and slowly releases them. Then McGowan remembers that at nine o'clock on Monday morning he'll be wearing his best suit, the black one with three buttons, and he'll be sitting quietly with his hands folded in his lap, staring blankly ahead, while a U.S. District Court judge sentences him to prison as a terrorist.

He steals a few more seconds and fights off thoughts of tomorrow. He tries to forget that his statement to the court needs another practice reading, that his press release needs editing, and that his dad, his sister and his wife, Jenny Synan, will be sitting on rigid

pews in the front row of the courtroom, silently crying. Right now McGowan has paused on the trail to Fall Creek, with his nose three inches away from a stegosaurus of an ant walking along a smooth moist stone. He yells to his wife, standing right behind him. “Jenny, check this out!” He is crouching, hands on his knees, mouth open and smiling, tongue poking out the left side. “My niece Lily would be so excited,” he says. “Lily loves bugs.”

This is one Daniel McGowan, Daniel the Uncle. The Daniel who knows everything Lily loves and doesn’t love, all of her favorite stories and favorite jokes and who says, in one excited breath, “Did I tell you what Lily did the other day seriously she is so goddamn adorable I can’t even tell you.” There may be a thousand more Daniels. How many depends on who you ask. Federal prosecutors say there are Djenni, Dylan Kay, Jamie Moran, Sorrel, Rabid: the aliases he used during his underground life when he destroyed genetically engineered crops and helped commit two arsons as part of the Earth Liberation Front. McGowan earned one of the names after hiking near this same creek years ago, when a friend showed him the edible, heart-shaped leaves of the sorrel herb. McGowan ate the plant by the handful. “It gave me the shits,” he says. His mouth is now full of the green foliage, and as he follows the trail he periodically reaches for more, having either forgotten the past or made a concerted effort not to remember.

At least two more Daniels walk through the forest this afternoon, Today’s Daniel and Tomorrow’s Daniel. Like the others, they curse like sailors, the sons of an Irish New York City cop from Queens. Today’s Daniel takes center stage, cracking jokes and performing for his small audience, a handful of somber friends. Most of all he tries desperately to make his wife smile. As if bracing for her husband’s terrorism sentencing were not difficult enough, Synan has had sneezing fits, watery eyes and shortness of breath since stepping off the plane yesterday. Burr-ragweed, mugwort, vetch, fireweed, smotherweed, knotweed, smartweed, barnyard grass, cock’s-spur

grass, false rye grass, quaking grass, panic grass. They may not all be here in the forest right now, but they are somewhere in the wind, finding their way to Synan's nose. Brooklyn has less-than-pristine air, full of taxicab exhaust and godknowswhatelse, but at least concrete doesn't make you sneeze. Not as much, at least. On their first date, back in New York, McGowan brought Synan a bouquet of allergy medicine. "This is nature, Jenny, na-a-a-ture," he says to her now, grinning. Synan looks too exhausted to laugh, but he persists. "Jenny! Jenny!" he shouts, pointing to the trees behind her. "Watch out for pygmies!" She rolls her red eyes.

Today's Daniel must also remember the two-man camera crew that has followed him for six months, trying to film every fundraiser, happy hour and family gathering for a documentary about his case. Their clock is ticking. Once McGowan reports to prison they will have limited opportunities to tape him, even fewer if he reports to a maximum-security facility. McGowan does not want their only footage to be of Defeated Daniel. What message would that send to the FBI? What message would that send to the movement?

McGowan wears a wireless microphone that peeks out of the top of his black T-shirt. The battery pack hooks onto his black shorts, cut well below his knees. He approaches the water. He keeps his game face on, giving the filmmakers the sound bites, monologues and close-ups they need, but never letting them too close. If the mood feels too heavy, he redirects the conversation. He pulls a six-pack of microbrewed beer from a nook made by two rocks in the creek, where friends had placed it to chill. He hoists it triumphantly. "Look, we caught some wild beer!" Sometime in the same act, different scene, McGowan pauses briefly and turns back to the camera crew. "I think we're getting some interference. Do you want me to ask the river to be quiet? Want me to unplug that shit?"

Tomorrow's Daniel is always nearby, though, and now he takes a seat on the river rock. He rails against activist groups like the Rainforest Action Network and Ruckus Society, groups he has

volunteered with for years, groups that refused to speak out against the government labeling him a terrorist. McGowan and his attorneys volunteered to write a letter to the court if only the groups would lend their name and credibility. But these national organizations didn't want to publicly support a saboteur. That's understandable, McGowan says, but can't they at least say destroying genetically engineered crops is not the same as flying planes into buildings?

McGowan's friends try to fight off tomorrow. Talk of creeks and water prompts someone to ask if McGowan has ever been to the nude beach off the McKenzie River. "I really love nudie rock," he says. "You throw yourself in and man you just go shooting down this whitewater and you pop up and it's totally amazing." Someone in the group has jumped into the water, and McGowan's friends coax him. Jump! JUMP! Someone says this may be his last opportunity to swim in fresh water for six to eight years. "Maybe you should just throw yourself in," Synan says, "and see where it takes you."

While his friends pop open another round of beers and begin to speculate about what prison life will entail, McGowan breaks away from the group and meanders along the cold creek, letting his skin feel the damp moss. He is between worlds. Having stepped out of the forest, but not yet touched the water, he walks softly, balances carefully, step by step along the edge. A few more steps and he pauses on a large riparian stone. It has been carved into a gentle parabola not by drastic action but by steady, patient pressure. McGowan sits, then folds his arms across his knees as he pulls them to his chest; he turns and stares upstream. Enough sunlight falls through holes in the old-growth forest canopy to make the creek shimmer like broken glass. He could listen to water all day, he has said before. He listens. Listens to the tone, pitch, melody and rhythm of the current. A song playing far too softly to penetrate thick walls of concrete and steel and remorse to reach McGowan, sitting alone, in a prison cell.

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He returns to the group, now in the midst of yet another conversation about prison life, prison location, prison sentences, prison behavior and prison food. McGowan's attorneys will request that he report to the Federal Correctional Institution in Fort Dix, New Jersey. It's a low-security facility—not the usual stop for a convicted terrorist, but McGowan has no violent history and thinks the Bureau of Prisons will grant his request. At Fort Dix, Synan and his family could make the hour-and-a-half trip south to visit. After McGowan's sentencing, though, paperwork and protocol could last five or six weeks before prison. His friends worry that instead of spending those weeks free, with Synan, he'll have to report to the Metropolitan Detention Center—"The Abu Ghraib of Brooklyn." Arab men rounded up after 9/11 have accused the guards of beating them, violating them during body cavity searches, parading them naked before female guards and calling them "Muslim bastards." The government later deported the detainees, but admitted they were not terrorists.

As the forest darkens, McGowan announces to the camera that he has decided on his sentencing statement. "I am sorry, Your Honor," he'll say. "I have an overacting part of the brain where bad-assness is located." He gets a few laughs, but gray dusk approaches, followed by darkness, making it harder and harder to forget tomorrow.

On the way back to Eugene, Oregon, the group stops at a gas station for snacks. A small sign that reads "Solar Power" hangs near pumps that, upon closer inspection, contain reservoirs for fuel connoisseurs: various microbrews of gasoline and bioethanol crafted to reduce emissions and, through domestic production, perhaps reduce unsavory wars for oil. The roof is a dense thatch of greens, yellows, oranges, purples and blues, an organic insulating layer of local flowers that keeps the store cooler in warm times and warmer



in cool times. The flowers sink roots into what they must think is Oregon soil, only at some point to meet a rubber water barrier, and underneath that, steel or aluminum or wood, and underneath that, a convenience store gone green.

In similar areas—not quite suburban, not quite rural—gas stations often sell hunks of deer jerky, fresh cured and sitting in a tray on the counter. Coolers along the wall contain Lone Star, the national beer of Texas, and Bud or Miller Lite. Shelves hold toilet paper, more jerky, and motor oil. Behind the counter, nudie magazines and, if you ask the clerk, probably some shotgun shells. This gas station outside of Eugene sells vegan donuts and brownies, sitting in a wicker basket on the counter. Coolers along the wall contain fresh, local, organic greens and cheeses. Shelves hold 100 percent recycled toilet paper, more vegan brownies and peppermint toothpaste not tested on animals. Behind the counter, a full-service espresso bar, and the beans are all organic, fair trade, shade-grown.

“Soy latte?”

“Please,” Synan says.

The barista eyes the group, including the two filmmakers who walk in to shoot McGowan perusing organic tortilla chips and salsa. Synan sees an opportunity and tells the woman about her husband’s case. The barista says she thinks she heard about that somewhere, and didn’t it involve torching some Hummers? Well, Synan says, some things like that have certainly happened, but not in McGowan’s case. Oh, the barista says, she really hates those jerks in their Hummers. Synan doesn’t miss a beat, urging her to visit [SupportDaniel.org](http://SupportDaniel.org) and to attend the hearing tomorrow. McGowan will need all the support he can get.

***Five years earlier*** It’s nine in the morning. My girlfriend, Kamber, sleeps on the futon, exhausted from a night shift as a sous-chef at the Chicago Diner, a local vegetarian restaurant. Her hands perch on her chest. They always ache from hours of chopping carrots, potatoes

and hunks of faux meat. I put on my shoes and say goodbye to the dogs, Mindy and Peter. Mindy is part chihuahua, part dachshund, with one ear pointed and one ear floppy. She's short and sturdy, maybe a bit chubby. Peter looks like a compressed greyhound. He has a runner's legs, sinewy and taut, which I envy. He has a way with the ladies, which I also envy. He always cries when I leave. Just as I place my hand on the doorknob, someone knocks three times.

I turn the knob without looking through the peephole. It must be the landlord. Again. He's gotten into the habit of arriving unannounced with prospective tenants. He says he likes showing our apartment, one of the freshly renovated studios in the seventy-something-year-old building in Lincoln Park, because it's so "clean" and "uncluttered" (meaning we can't afford more than the futon). I think he also likes the way Mindy rolls on her back for him. Even though I'm still groggy, I'm prepared to tear into him, in hushed breaths so not to wake Kamber, and say that if he wants to interrupt us at all hours we need a rent reduction, and not fifty dollars or some nonsense like that. Before I open the door, though, I know it's not Steve the Landlord. The dogs are barking. Mindy and Peter are snarling, and they never snarl, they never growl. I open the door anyway.

God and Darwin work together sometimes, scheming a kind of divine natural selection, predetermining certain people for certain occupations. This is not to say that a seven-foot-two man cannot rise beyond a basketball stereotype or that boys named Devendra must become hippie poet laureates wearing beaded vests and braided beards. It just seems natural. And these guys, with their manicured goatees, navy blue suits, broad shoulders, hard jawlines, wholesome haircuts and eyes looking for a fight—these guys are just naturally FBI agents. I don't even need to see the badges.

I say I'm in a hurry and have to get ready for work, and then I start to close the door, as if they're kids selling third-tier magazines for an alleged school basketball team. The good cop—or I'll call him the good cop, only because he looks less eager to kick my ass—puts

his left palm on the gray steel door. I can either come downstairs, he says, or they can visit me at work, the *Chicago Tribune*.

The dogs bark. Panic. I'm not afraid of them, but I am afraid of a spectacle in the newsroom. I say okay. I gently close the door, hoping that Kamber, a few feet away, might sleep through all of this, hoping that, if I'm quiet enough, I can tiptoe my way out of my apartment and out of my skin. I roll up my right pant leg so it won't catch in my bike chain and I pick up my road bike. What's going on, Kamber says. It's the FBI, I say matter-of-factly, just as if it had been Steve the Landlord.

We cram into the freight elevator, Good Cop, Bad Cop, my bicycle and me. I don't know what to do with my eyes. I look at Good Cop and he looks at my bike, peering over his slightly bulging midriff and down at the hubs, bending to see the crank arms and the rear derailleur. He seems like the kind of guy I cross paths with downtown who climbs out of his SUV, with pleated khakis and blue polo, and says something like, "How far do you ride?" And no matter what I reply, three miles or thirty miles, he says, "Oh, that's not bad at all." The elevator grinds to a halt, the latticework steel door creaks open, and we walk through the dark hallway to the alley. It is a gloriously sunny Chicago summer day, but the sunlight cannot overcome the condominium towers of steel and glass, cannot swim through the cracks in the walls, and so I step into an alley shrouded in gray.

In college, I had learned about government programs like COINTELPRO and the tactics the FBI had used to harass and intimidate political activists. False names, phone taps, bugs, infiltration. I had learned from books, from professors and from Law & Order episodes that if approached by the FBI, for any reason, you should never talk. Nothing good can come of it. They are not trying to be your friends, they are not trying to help you. You should simply say, "I don't have anything to say to you. You may contact my lawyer."

Both Good Cop and Bad Cop had heard that line before.

“Look, we just want to talk to you,” Good Cop says. “We want you to help us out. We can make all this go away.”

I laugh. He becomes angry. I open my mouth, even though I know I shouldn't.

Working long hours on the metro desk at the *Chicago Tribune*, covering shooting after shooting, interposed only by obituaries and more death, turned me into the reporter I had never wanted to become. For months I had felt detached, apathetic and cynical. About a month before the visit from the FBI, I wrote in my journal: “I'm tired of writing meaningless stories, I'm tired of going to sleep at night feeling like I left the world the same way I saw it in the morning.” I was haunted by one afternoon at another newspaper, the *Arlington Morning News*, when I was eighteen. At a sleepover, after his pals had tired of roughhousing, playing games and watching television, a twelve-year-old boy decided to show his buddies his father's gun. It was fired. A best friend was killed.

My editor had told me not to come back without the story. It was a poor, North Texas suburban neighborhood, predominantly Mexican immigrants, the kind of place where most folks use pay phones as their home phones. I knocked on doors, found a translator, and interviewed the boy's sobbing mother and glass-eyed friends. One of his friends, who had not even the first soft sprouts of facial hair, stopped me as I walked to my car. He said that that morning, when he stood near the police tape and watched the spectacle, a butterfly landed on his shoulder, slowly raising and lowering and raising its wings, refusing to fly away from the flashing blue-and-whites and punctuating wails. He said his friend had become that butterfly. Didn't I think so? Of course, I said. Couldn't I please put that in my story?

When I returned to the newsroom, I told my editor I had enough for an article. She told me to have fifteen column inches in an hour. After I turned and walked to my desk, I heard her yell to

the night editor. “Scratch that. Potter got something. Bump back that other piece and make room for this one. You can slug it ‘deadkid.’” Dead kid. Two words that could quickly identify the story in editorial meetings while distancing reporters and editors from any emotional attachment to the boy, any sense of responsibility to his family, and any memory beyond a solid clip on page one.

I had told myself I would never become that kind of reporter. I would not put up that wall, even if, like one copy editor I will never forget, it meant keeping a fifth of Jack Daniels in the file cabinet, even if, like another reporter I knew, it meant snorting cocaine in the bathroom stall. Even if the grief slowly burned away at my stomach lining and my heart.

After only a few months into my stint at the *Tribune*, I had already built a spectacular wall of emotional detachment. It felt as if it were made of broken bottles and concrete chunks, sharp and gray. I would never survive this beat, I thought, unless I found some way to keep a toehold on my humanity. I did not have the gumption for Jack Daniels or cocaine. Instead, a friend, whom I had met at a journalism conference, offered me the email addresses of a few local animal advocacy groups.

I had gone vegetarian in 1998 and vegan six months later. At the University of Texas, I had worked with a few activist groups to campaign against the economic sanctions on Iraq, serve free vegetarian food on campus, and organize a film and lecture series on journalism issues. I did not think it would be appropriate to take a leadership role in any organization while working at the *Tribune*. Newspapers sometimes frown upon their reporters moonlighting with advocacy groups, unless it’s something no one would publicly oppose, like promoting the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday or feeding Sally Struthers’s children. But one month prior to the FBI agents knocking on my door, I’d decided to spend an afternoon leafletting.

Kamber and I met six local activists at the A-Zone, or

Autonomous Zone, which was part independent bookstore and part rabble-rouser gathering place. It offered titles on topics including the Zapatistas, herbal medicine and bicycle repair. From there we caravanned to Lake Forest, a suburb north of Chicago and the home of a corporate executive with Marsh Inc., an insurance company for an animal testing lab called Huntingdon Life Sciences. I had learned about Huntingdon while working on a story at the *Texas Observer*. My story mentioned a group called Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty, or SHAC, that pressured corporations to sever ties with the lab after multiple undercover investigations exposed animal welfare violations.

The goal of that Sunday afternoon was simply to pass out leaflets in the neighborhood of the Marsh insurance executive. We split up in pairs and hung fliers on brass and brushed-steel doorknobs. The front of the fliers featured one of two photographs, either a monkey or a beagle puppy in a cage. On the back was a short history of the lab and its abuses, and a request that readers urge their neighbor to cease doing business with Huntingdon. The fliers made no suggestion of violence or property destruction, and they made no threats. They spelled out what went on in the lab, how Marsh was connected, and why readers should ask their neighbor to take action.

After about twenty minutes, we had not made much progress. The heavy wooden front doors sat confidently at the end of long, immaculate walkways that looked as if they'd never been trod. This was the type of neighborhood where people pulled their Mercedes or BMW straight into the garage. When we finally reached the executive's cul-de-sac, a security guard stood outside videotaping. Not to be outdone, one of the leafletters—the youngest in the group, at about sixteen—pulled out a camera of his own and began filming the security guard filming him. Later, the guard, Al Cancel, wrote a voluntary statement for the police saying that activists “were now begining [sic] to sarround [sic] me causeing [sic] me to back away so they could not get behind me. Then the one I attempted to speak

with directed the other seven in military [sic] fashion to film me. . . .” The young activist’s video footage showed the security guard on the phone telling police, “They’re not doing anything. They’re passing out leaflets. You should get over here though.”

Squad cars arrived. Police questioned us. More squad cars arrived. The police sat us on the grass, like parents who were about to discipline bickering children but must first decide who did what to whom. They confiscated the leaflets. One cop with aviator sunglasses looked at a leaflet, tilted his head down and peered at us over the gold rim of his sunglasses. The Mercedes, BMW and Lexus SUVs driving by slowed down to a crawl and rubbernecked at the young group surrounded by police. One woman with big hair, a silver sedan and a low-cut tank top lowered her window and leaned out. “Officer! Officer!” She flapped a leaflet at him. “I thought you might need this,” she said. “As evidence.”

“Thanks, ma’am. We have the situation under control.”

A few of the detainees peppered the cops with questions. Why were we being detained? What did we do wrong? If we were putting up fliers for a landscaping service, would we have been stopped? One cop said that this executive’s house had been vandalized months before. He said we might have been the ones who did it.

Everyone laughed. I sat cross-legged, picking at the ground between my legs, and I could not help but laugh, too. Why would anyone vandalize someone’s home and then return to pass out leaflets?

The cops walked over to Al the Security Guard and talked for a few minutes. When they came back, they said we were being arrested. They would not say what the charge was, and they wouldn’t tell us what we had done wrong. We were handcuffed, divided into squad cars, and taken to the police station. Most of the group was in good spirits, because we all assumed the bogus charges would just get thrown out in court. At the station, the officers took mug shots and asked if we had tattoos.

Kim Berardi, wearing a sleeveless shirt exposing a tattoo of a

sunflower, with curls of wind twisting around the stem and around her biceps, looked at the officer and, straight-faced, said no. “I draw these on every day,” Kim said. “They’re washable.” The cops and the kids all laughed. Kim looked at me. “Oh man,” she said, “Will looks totally pissed. What, are you going to lose your big shot job for leafleting?”

After the FBI agents follow me out of the apartment building and into the alley, Bad Cop starts needling. You were leafleting on a campaign where people have been breaking windows and harassing people, he says. “Just look at the people you were arrested with.” He reads names. “Kim Berardi, she has a criminal record taller than she is.”

Maybe, I think. She’s the shortest woman I know.

“We just want your help,” he says. “We need your help finding out more about these people. You could help us.”

I should just walk away, I think. There is no reason to be standing here. Nothing good can come of it. He says I have two days to decide. He gives me a scrap of paper with his phone number written on it underneath his name, Chris.

“If we don’t hear from you by the first trial date in Lake Forest,” he says, “I’ll put you on the domestic terrorist list.”

Walk away, walk away, walk . . . wait, what? My face feels expressionless, but my eyes must show fear.

“Now I have your attention, huh?”

I can’t bite my tongue. Put me on a terrorist list for leafleting? Later, in my journal, I will write as much as I can remember from what he says. “Look,” Chris says, “After 9/11 we have a lot more authority now to get things done and get down to business. We can make your life very difficult for you. You work at newspapers? I can make it so you never work at a newspaper again. And Kamber, her scholarships? Say goodbye to them. I can place one call and have all those taken away. Those scholarship committees don’t want terrorists as recipients.”



I have a Fulbright application pending, and Kamber is preparing for a PhD program in psychology.

Good Cop speaks up. “I can tell you’re a good guy,” he says. “You have a lot going for you.” He says he can tell by the way I dress, where I live. He says he knows my dad cosigned on the apartment, and the FBI knows where he works. “I know you wouldn’t have gotten the job at the *Tribune* if you didn’t have a lot of promise. You don’t want this to mess up your life, kid. We need your help.”

I want to walk away, but I am so goddamn angry now I can’t. People who write letters, who leaflet, aren’t the same people who break the law. “I thought you guys would have figured that out.” I crumple his phone number in front of him and toss it in a nearby dumpster. I straddle my bike.

As I pedal off, just before I leave the shadows and reach the sunlight, Chris says: “Have a good day at work at the Metro desk. Say hello to your editor, Susan Keaton. And tell Kamber we’ll come see her later.”

After I arrive at Tribune Tower, after I report to my editor and settle at my desk with a story assignment—more murder on the South Side—I come undone. My left hand shakes. Strangling the phone so my fingers stop twitching, hunching to look as if I’m interviewing, whispering so colleagues can’t hear, I call Kamber. I tell her to deadbolt the door while staying on the phone, to walk past any FBI agents on the way to work, and to think about telling her coworkers in case cops show up asking questions. Don’t worry, she says, the guys in the kitchen all hate *la policía*. I scan the newsroom. Do they already know? They know. Right? That Fed, the one who probably manicures his pornstar goatee every morning while listening to Rush Limbaugh, might already be flashing his badge downstairs; his pal, the one who looks like he bought some kind of shrink-wrapped FBI starter kit, with too-short slacks, bad tie, worse haircut, might show up any minute.

He doesn't. But as days go by, I keep thinking that he will. I become the undead. I should be calling sources, I should be writing. I have deadlines looming, but all I can think about is how I am on a domestic terrorist list. I'm convinced my professional life is over. Even worse, I'm convinced these FBI agents will somehow pass the word on to my parents, who will be so disappointed in me, and to my little sister, who'll stop looking up to me. These thoughts burrow somewhere deep in my brain and, no matter how irrational they sound, I begin to see them as truth.

Will the FBI agents make sure I don't receive my Fulbright grant? I want to follow up on a series I wrote for the *Arlington Morning News* about a peace program that brings teens from Northern Ireland to live with host families in the United States. I won a national award from the Society of Professional Journalists for the series, and a slew of professors, editors and teens wrote letters supporting a follow-up project. If I am denied the grant, will it be because of intense competition, or because I'm now on a blacklist? If Kamber is denied full funding for her PhD program, will it be because of budget cuts, or because of an anonymous phone call? If I am denied newspaper jobs I've applied for in Washington, D.C., will it be because of my qualifications, or because I'm now a "terrorist"? Day after day, I go to work, crank out an assignment, come home and sit quietly with the dogs. I don't talk to Kamber, and when I do I snap or scream at her.

During the car ride home from the first, preliminary court date in Lake Forest, Kamber mentions the FBI visit. One of the defendants, Mike Everson, turns to me while driving, and for a few painful moments he does not even speak. He isn't surprised that this has happened, he says, but he doesn't understand why I wouldn't have mentioned such news to the rest of the defendants. I want to explain how I've been consumed by my own fears, but I am barely able to mumble, "Sorry, I know I should have said something." He looks at me with what feels like distrust and contempt.

I am a coward. The history nerd in me cannot help but think

about all the times when the government has targeted political activists. I think about the deportation of Emma Goldman, the murder of the Haymarket martyrs, the bombing of the MOVE home, the attacks on the American Indian Movement and the relentless spying and harassment of Dr. King. I have always hoped, as we all do after reading stories like this, that if I were ever put in a similar position I would not flinch. Instead I feel ashamed, not of something I have said or something I have done—I never consider, even for a moment, becoming an informant—but ashamed that any of this has affected me. Here I sit, a twenty-two-year-old white heterosexual American male, the most privileged of the privileged, turned inside out because of a class C misdemeanor and a knock on the door. Here I sit. Afraid.

I do not know it right now, but this experience will mark the beginning of both a personal and a political journey. After the initial fear subsides, I will become obsessed with finding out *why* I would be targeted as a terrorist for doing nothing more than leafleting. It will lead me to a New Jersey courthouse where activists stand accused of animal enterprise terrorism, to Congress where I'll testify against eco-terrorism legislation, and to a green gas station outside Eugene with Daniel McGowan. I will realize that, although I cannot undo this arrest and I cannot negotiate with those FBI agents, I can choose my role in the script before me.

But today I do not know any of this. Today I only know fear.

With thoughts of Shiner Bock and skinny-dipping in Barton Springs, we decide to move back to Austin. The leafleting case is, as the other defendants suspected it would be, dismissed. Kamber and I pack up our few belongings and prepare for the journey home. I have dreaded moving day, not because of any attachment to Chicago—I've grown to loathe this town—but because I don't want to walk downstairs, through the marble lobby with its Corinthian columns

and Victorian couches, and enter Steve the Landlord's office to turn in our keys. He knows. He must know.

The building is old but secure. The FBI agents did not have to kick down any doors when they visited. They flashed badges and were escorted inside. They probably told Steve that Kamber and I were suspected terrorists, and that this was a national security matter that needed urgent attention. Perhaps they showed him my photo, film noir style. Would he even buzz me into his office? Would he ask me to slide the keys under the door, to keep me at a safe distance? Would he refuse to return my security deposit, because there was a "no terrorist" clause in the fine print of the lease?

I open his door and walk up to his desk as he speaks with a couple of prospective tenants. I try to silently slip the keys across the desk, but they jangle like jailer's keys and the sound of metal on wood echoes up into the vaulted ceiling. I turn, exhale and walk away. He calls after me when I'm almost to the doorway. Here it comes, I think.

"Hey Will," he says. I turn to face him. "Give 'em hell."