

COUNTER

he kept noticing that each time he spoke
she contradicted his statement.

he decided to ignore it.
that is, he decided not to tell her about
it.

but each time he spoke
(as the days and weeks went on)
she contradicted his statement(s).

he thought, it's probably her way of
being intelligent.
she probably does it with others
too.

he decided to speak less
or not at all
if possible.

but one day
when he spoke again
she contradicted his statement.

so he decided to tell her.
he said, "do you know that each time
I speak that you
counteract with a statement that
reverses what I've said?"

"that's not true," she answered
him.

LOCKS

I moved in here and decided to get the locks changed and
I phoned the nearest locksmith and he told me
I needn't change the locks, he could make me new keys.

"all you have to do," he said, "is to take
the locks out and bring them down here.
you just take the 3 little screws out the
back and pull the locks out."

the side door wasn't difficult
I pulled the lock parts out and put them carefully into
a large cardboard box.
then
I tried the front door lock and it seemed just as simple,
only the front door handle came off and
I thought,
I wonder if he needs the handle too?
I put everything into the cardboard box and got into
the car and drove down to the locksmith.

"were you the guy who phoned?" he asked me.
I told him that I was and then he asked,
"do you have the original key?"
I gave him the key and he took that and the lock parts
and walked back into his shop.
I stood out in the alley behind the place, waiting.
the only view was the back of a Standard gas station.
I looked at it for quite a while, then
I walked over to my car and looked at my car for a while
and then
I lit a cigarette and walked back in.
the man had the keys ready.
"\$7," he said.
I asked him if he might tell me a little bit about re-
installing locks.
"sure," he said, "now this part fits here. it
doesn't matter which part you stick in here,
either end will do."
I asked him if either end would do then why did one end
have a nodule upon it while the other end was flat?
"that's a good question," he said, "now this
part, these two prongs slip in here, you hold
it together against the front of the lock and
tighten the 3 screws. also, when you do this
make sure the lock is in the locked position
to begin with."
I drove the locks back to my place and
I tried the side door first and everything seemed to
fit all right, it locked and unlocked, although
there were crevices between the lock and the wood
and it wouldn't fit flat.
then
I tried the front door
I put the handle back on first
then
I slipped the parts together.
there was some trouble bringing the screws down
against the wood and working them in but then it
was done but it wasn't right: the door latch was
locked down against the handle and it wouldn't
lift.
I phoned my girlfriend and told her that
I just couldn't install door locks.
"it's easy," she said, "I've changed dozens myself,
there's nothing to it."
I told her that it wasn't easy because even when they
told you things they left things out.
"just forget the locks," she said, "I'll fix them
when I get there."
the problem was that she wasn't coming that night.

I uncorked the wine and went to the typewriter and I turned on the radio and smoked cigars and typed. I drank the wine and smoked and typed on and on and somewhere between one and two a.m. I walked over to the bed, fell upon it and slept ... I awakened 30 minutes later, took off my clothes and got under the blankets ...

about 4:30 a.m.

I awakened and thought about the front door and I got up and went downstairs naked. I got the screwdriver and went to work and the lock parts became undone. I readied to put the lock back in, checking for the section to put the tongue of the latch into and then I found that I had lost one of the 3 screws necessary to put the lock back together again. I turned on all the lights but it was still dark in the area and I walked out on the front porch but I still couldn't find the screw so I walked to the garage and opened the glove compartment of the car and got the flashlight and came back on the porch, got on my knees and flashed it on and it burned out in ten seconds. I gathered the lock parts together and put them in one area, then I pushed the door closed and turned out the lights, there was a large hole in the center side of the door and the moonlight came through. I found three chairs and stacked them up against the door and then I went upstairs and got back into bed ...

in the morning

I phoned the locksmith and told him that I couldn't do it and wasn't there somebody he could send up? and you know, the 3 screws? I had lost one of them.

"you were the guy in the white t-shirt, weren't you?" he asked.

"yes."

"we'll have a man up there in a couple of hours."

I waited until 12 p.m. and then I phoned and I told them that I was the guy in the white t-shirt and that I had phoned earlier and that I had an important business appointment that afternoon

(it was one of the last days of the Oak Tree meet,
first post, 12:30 p.m.)
and that I could cancel it but
I'd certainly prefer not to.

"I have a man coming in at 12:15," he said,
we'll have him up there in a couple of
minutes ..."

the man arrived at 1:05 p.m. and
I told him there were supposed to be 3 screws and that
I had lost one of them.

"nice place you got here," he told me.
he picked up the lock and began fitting it together
and he said,

"no, you haven't lost a screw, here it is stuck
into a portion of the lock."

I stood there and watched him slip the lock into the
opening.

then he pulled the lock out of the door.

"you know," he said, "this is a very difficult
lock, it's expensive and more difficult to
put together."

then he jiggled the lock parts and slipped them
back into the door.

then he pulled the parts out again.

"I don't understand it," he said
looking at the doorknob.

"the doorknob's frozen so I'll have to fix
the doorknob first."

he sat down on the steps and twisted at the
knob and

I walked to a table in the other room and sat where
I could see him.

there was a newspaper there

I had already read and

I began to read it again.

5 or ten minutes went by and

I said,

"look, let's just replace everything ... new knob,
new lock and I'll pay for it."

"wait," he said, "I'll get it ..."

I read the newspaper some more,

I read through the whole front section.

then the repairman stood up:

"I'll be back, I'm going to have to
oil this thing ..."

he was gone for about twenty minutes and when he
came back the doorknob was no longer frozen and he

fit the lock parts back in and bolted them home.
then he tried it, he fit the key in and it worked.

"it works but there's still something wrong here
and I don't understand it ..."

"it's strange," I said, "I had very little trouble
putting the lock in the side door."

"you mean," he asked, "that there are two locks?"

"yes, didn't he tell you?"

"no. then that's it: let me see the other
lock."

I showed him the other lock.

"it's a little loose," I said, "but it works."

he told me, "you mixed the parts of the two locks
together. they are different locks."

then he took out both locks
matched the parts together
put the locks back in and
they worked.

"that'll be fifteen dollars," he said.

I thought that was reasonable and handed him a
twenty.

"damn it," he said, "I don't have any change.
don't you have any change?"

"no, all I have are twenties ..."

"you'll want a receipt?"

"yes, I'll take it off my income tax."

I told him to drive me down to the market and
I'd get change

and we got into his truck and drove down to the
corner market and

I went in and got two bottles of wine and change for
one of my twenties.

I came out and handed him his \$15 and told him to
forget the receipt

I usually lost them anyhow.

"I'll give you a ride back,"
he said.

so we drove back up the hill and
I missed the running board getting out
but managed to stay upright and he
drove off.

I walked up the drive with my two bottles of wine
stuck the key into the door and it opened.

I sat down, corkscrewed the bottle open and poured
a drink, then

I telephoned my girlfriend.

"it's too late for the races but I got the locks
fixed."

"I could have done it."

she said,

"I could have saved you money ..."

"I know," I said, "but you weren't here ..."

40 minutes later

I was at the racetrack and they were coming out
for the 5th race.

AMERICAN LITERATURE II

personal is best. I knew this professor,
we were drinking beer together and he
said, "I don't see how you can do it,"

he's wrong, it's all personal.
history is personal. pulling a shade up
in the morning is. drinking beer is. the
abstract is. the objective is. the waterbug
is, and the sinapism.

nothing is more personal than walking down
a stairway alone
thinking about nothing. I often like to
think about nothing for hours.

this professor, he'd taught too long
while I'd been a night watchman and a
circus hand. there was nothing I could
tell him but I did: "drink your beer,"
I told him, "and tell me about your
wife."

he could only drink his beer so
I told him about my wife.

THE VAMPIRES

I am hungover and in bed and the doorbell rings
it is eleven a.m.

"what the shit?" I ask.

she goes to the door and I hear her talking.

she enters the bedroom and tells me,

"it's a Mr. Sanderson," she says, "he says you
know him and he wants to talk to you."

"Sanderson?" I ask, "what's his first name?"