

QUOTATION

KESEY ON THE MAINTENANCE OF AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOR¹

Teddy the bartender prepares for the approach of All Hallows Eve by dusting his neon with a feather duster and removing the fried flies from his electro-kill screen with a Brillo pad. Floyd Evenwrite practices reading the preamble of International Woodsmen of the World aloud before a bathroom mirror toward the afternoon's meeting with Jonny Draeger and the grievance committee. The Real Estate Hotwire, always a shrewd cooky, greets the morning by soaping innocuous sayings on his own window, as he has done every Halloween for years; "got to be one hop out in front." He snickers, smearing soap. "When the other galoots are just coming to the starting line, got to be two steps gone." He'd adopted this procedure after finding his window maliciously decorated one Halloween night with what he decided must have been paraffin of a most unusual type—"probably something manufactured by the government *special*"—for scrub as he might, he had never been able to rid his window of the memory of that evening. Detergent wouldn't touch it; gasoline only hid it temporarily from sight; and even these many years later, when the light was right, the apparently spotless window would cast a dim but readable shadow on the floor before his desk.

With no small amount of research, he had established that the vandals who skulked this most unholy of October nights had a decided inclination towards panes unsullied and tended to bypass windows already soaped. A kind of unwritten law, he suspected: don't muck up a buddy's job. So he was determined to be one hop out in front with soap before the other galoots got to the starting line with more of that paraffin. So great was the triumph the Hotwire felt the following morn, when he came to find his windows untouched by any mark but his own, that he failed to notice that his was the only disfigured window on the whole street; owing to parties and apple-bobbings—initiated by the adults, the tamed vandals of those yestere'ens, for the purpose of keeping their offspring in out of the wet—paraffin, soap, and the whole art of window-waxing had gone completely out of vogue. Even when this was pointed out to him he refused to discontinue the precaution. "A stitch in time is worth a pound of cure"—he remembered one of Joe Ben Stamper's philosophies, scrawling wow across the glass with a flourish. "Besides, I ask you: who needs 'Zorro Go Home' two inches deep in paraffin right across their business?"

¹Kesey, Ken. *Sometimes a great notion*. New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1963, p. 275. Contributed by Gregory Galbicka, Department of Psychology, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32611.