

THE ONLY WAY TO FIND THE  
TRUTH IS TO GO THROUGH HELL

# GREEN RIVER RISING



'The best prison novel ever'  
JAMES ELLROY

TIM WILLOCKS

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## About the Book

### **Welcome to Green River...**

After three years' hard time, minding no-one's business but his own, Ray Klein wins his parole and chances his hand at a romance with prison psychiatrist Juliette Devlin. That same day, tribal war erupts and the prison - and its infirmary - falls into the hands of its inmates.

Klein must choose either to claim his freedom and leave the ones he cares for to die, or risk everything and fight...

### **Hell begins now...**

## About the Author

Tim Willocks is a novelist, screenwriter and producer. He was born in Cheshire in 1957 and has lived in London, Barcelona, Los Angeles, New York, Paris, County Kerry, and Rome. After qualifying as a doctor from University College Hospital Medical School, he went on to specialize in psychiatry and addiction. Translated into twenty languages, his novels include *The Religion* - the first novel to feature Mattias Tannhousaer - *Bad City Blues*, and *Green River Rising*. He has worked with major Hollywood directors, dined at the White House and holds a black belt in Shotokan karate. His new book, *The Twelve Children of Paris*, also featuring Tannhousaer, is set during the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572.

Also by Tim Willocks

*Bad City Blues*  
*Bloodstained Kings*  
*The Religion*  
*The Twelve Children of Paris*

# Green River Rising

Tim Willocks

VINTAGE BOOKS  
London

*Dedicated to*

*JOSEPH ROY WILLOCKS*

*Who took me to the pictures, and taught me how to show  
a manly bearing.*



'I have been studying how I  
may compare this prison  
where I live unto the world.'

*Richard II*  
William Shakespeare

## THE WORD

'Imagine darkness, if you will, and in that darkness bars of steel encrusted with the rust and filth of ages. The bars are set in blocks of granite rock as ancient as the hills in which time forged them, and stacked above and mortared fast are yet another hundred feet and more, of granite, block on block.

'Between these bars and through this subterranean wall flows an effluvium, the sewage foamed with scum of twenty-five hundred desperate men, and of countless thousands more before them.

'Breathe this infernal air. Taste it. For it is the smell and taste of punishment, raw and pure, and this dissolving slag contains the paradox of a tortured and incomparable race. Here that race must find their home, their final blind communion with insatiable and uninhibited waste, the waste that is the destiny of all. This sewer in the bowels of a monstrous gaol, this sewer in the sewer of the world, is where necessity ends and possibility begins: in the glory and the pain of utter loss.

'This is The Green River.

'And this is the tale of its rising.'

PROLOGUE

THE VALLEY

A MILLION MAN-YEARS of confinement had burnished the surface of the granite flags to a greasy smoothness ingrained deeply with filth and despair. As Warden John Campbell Hobbes crunched along the central walkway of B block he could feel in his bones the imprint of generations of shuffling feet. In his throat he could taste the corruption of stale sweat and infected phlegm, the commingled vapours of nicotine and hashish. Here was the impacted stink of human waste and pain, concentrated, hyper-distilled and stored for decades beneath the high glass roof which rose in a great vault above the triple-stacked tiers of the teeming cell block. This was where men were sent to kneel and where those who didn't want to learned the way.

Somewhere on the planet there were worse places in which to spend time - much worse - but none of them were located in these United States. This was the best that civilisation could do: a civilisation which Hobbes had watched crumble before his eyes and which he now despised with all the contempt his prodigious intellect could muster. The steel cleats on his wingtips struck a relentless beat against the flagstones as he walked and somehow the sound put him in mind of his duty. That duty, that *policy*, was to discipline and punish and Hobbes had pursued it as diligently as any man could. Yet today he would turn his back on it. Today he would pursue that policy by other means.

Today John Campbell Hobbes would shatter the jewel of discipline with the hammer and chisel of war.

Three paces behind Hobbes strode a phalanx of six guards in full riot gear: helmets and visors, Kevlar body armour, nightsticks, perspex shields and Mace. The public address system - eight loudspeakers mounted above the rear gate sallyport - played a military tattoo of drums and pipes to which Hobbes and his men swung along in time. The drums filled Hobbes's limbs with a power without measure and

drowned the murmurs of the convicts herded out onto the overhanging gantries. They hated him, blindly and without understanding, and though in the past it had tormented him today he welcomed their hate.

Stone. Drums. Punishment. Power.

Discipline was all.

Hobbes was all.

By other means.

There was a pause in the raging momentum of his thoughts. Hobbes checked himself, checked the writhing coils of his mind for any trace of error, hubris or doubt. He found none. It was so. A universe could only be reshaped by the unleashing of cataclysmic and unpredictable forces. The great physicist had been wrong: God did indeed play with dice. And in the grim and shabby universe that was Green River State Penitentiary John Campbell Hobbes was God himself.

The Penitentiary had been designed by an English architect named Cornelius Clunes in an age when it had still been possible to combine philosophy, art and engineering in a single fabulous endeavour. Commissioned in 1876 by the governor of Texas, Clunes had set out to create a prison in which every brick was imbued with the notion of a power both visible and unverifiable. No dark dungeon was this. No squat, brutal box. Green River was a hymn to the disciplinary properties of light.

From a cylindrical core capped by a great glass dome four cell-blocks and two work blocks radiated away at sixty degree intervals like spokes from the hub of a giant wheel. Beneath the dome was a central watchtower from which a spectator could enjoy a clear view down the central walkway of all four cellblocks. The block roofs were mounted on smooth granite walls that overhung the top tier of cells by twenty feet. The kingposts, tie beams and rafters of the roof were constructed of wrought iron and covered with extravagant sheets of thick green glass. Through the glass

streamed the all-seeing light of God: a permanent surveillance that induced in the cowering inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility, and ensured the automatic functioning of power. Looking outside from the window of his cell the convict could see the encircling walls with their resident riflemen; from the bars of his door he saw the central observation tower with its cameras and guards. At night his cell was illuminated by a dim green bulb and the walls and walkways by spot-lights. A man entering Green River said goodbye to darkness for the duration of his stay. Darkness permitted at least the illusion of privacy and invisibility, places where a man might try to reconstruct some sense of his own individual existence. Light was discipline, darkness was freedom. Because the inmate was constantly visible he could never be sure whether he was being spied upon or not and thus became his own warder, perpetually watching himself on his jailer's behalf. Green River was an architecture of power built upon the paranoid fantasies of the guilty.

Here in cellblock B was the Valley of the Long Distance Runners. Such, at least, was the name given to them by their leader, Reuben Wilson. All the inmates on B were black. There was no official segregation policy but in an environment saturated with danger and fear men naturally drew together in tribal groups and in the interests of an uneasy peace Hobbes and his guards allowed it. C block was Black and Latino; A block was mixed Latino and white; D was exclusively white. An antagonistic juxtaposition of hostile forces waiting to be unleashed. War being mankind's natural state, peace was only ever a prelude and a preparation. As Hobbes walked down the valley past a seething crowd of sullen, sweating faces the only quality he was able to identify in their eyes was a virulent nihilism born of prolonged and mindless suffering.

At the far end of the block - and within easy distance of the sallyport to the yard - stood a microphone on a raised

dais. As he approached the dais Hobbes felt rivulets of sweat running down his neck into his shirt, and from his brow into his eyes. He resisted the urge to wipe his face. Cornelius Clunes had invented his masterpiece in the damp and gloom of Victorian London. An unforeseen effect of his iron and glass extravaganza, when realised in the subtropical climate of East Texas, was to turn the prison into a giant greenhouse which captured the rays of the sun and deposited their energy in the sweltering bodies of the imprisoned. In the old days the conditions were so appalling that the prison population was regularly decimated by outbreaks of cholera, typhoid and yellow fever. During these episodes the prison had been turned over to its inmates and food dropped in from the walls until the contagion burned itself out. Because the prisoners took it upon themselves to do what the authorities had dared not - and slaughtered wholesale those showing signs of infection - an outbreak of disease in those days had produced a spasm of violence so extreme as to be beyond even Hobbes's imagination.

After the Second World War the prison had been closed with the opening of a hygienic modern penitentiary north of Houston, but in the Sixties a soaring crime rate, air-conditioning and the singular vision of John Campbell Hobbes had brought Green River back to life. Green River, he felt, was *his*. His universe. A superb instrument, the panoptic machine, established on the edge of society and through which the deviant but still human elements of that society would be disciplined, punished and divested of their capacity for antisocial acts before being returned to civil life. An endeavour, no one could deny, of unquestionable nobility. But over the past twenty years Hobbes had seen his instrument turn - slowly at first, then uncontrollably - into a foul zoo that mocked his original intention. His presentations to the State Bureau of Corrections had been ridiculed by some, admired (if secretly) by others, and rejected by all as politically unworkable. Very well. The time had come at last

to show them the consequences of their blindness. Hobbes reached the dais and climbed up behind the microphone.

The sound of pipes and drums stopped abruptly.

The block was never silent. Never. But for a moment, in the sudden aftermath of the music, the great stacks of cramped cells seemed almost quiet.

Hobbes drew in a deep breath, swelling his chest and squaring his shoulders. Below the dais, in a shallow V formation, stood his guards. Beyond them towered the steep cage-lined walls, the cages giving way to granite blocks, the blocks in their turn to iron and glass, the iron and glass to the glare of the sun. The convicts had been roused from their cells and stood smoking and scratching their private parts as they leaned over the safety rails running along the catwalks. Few of them wore the regulation issue denims without some form of additional decoration. Many were naked to the waist. Pitiably gestures of defiance. Defiant or not Hobbes had their attention now, if only because his impromptu 'State Of The Union' addresses represented a welcome novelty in the unbroken tedium of their lives. As he stood there before them, broad and craggy, bald, black-suited, face of bitter stone, the almost-quiet evolved into a growing rumble from the crowd. At first it was just belly and throat sounds, preverbal growls of raw anger, as if the five hundred men were a single organism. Then out of that formless rage came shouts. In the overheated air, thick with the smell of perspiring bodies, the words seemed to tumble towards Hobbes in slow motion.

'Hey, Warden! Yo' mama like to take it in the ass!'

The voice came from the third tier and was followed by a gust of laughter. With slow movements Hobbes took a white handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his brow in silence.

'She tol' me that's the way you all like to stick it to her but your meat just way too small.'



More laughter. From the second level came a shout of '*Warden Teeny Meat!*' Hobbes still did not speak. He folded his handkerchief and let the noise build further. The cavernous space around him filled with waving arms and shaking fists, gaping pink mouths, jaundiced eyes smeared with broken blood vessels, yellow teeth parted in bigotry. When Hobbes could no longer make out any individual sounds in the storm of abuse he leaned forward over the mike.

'I pity you all.'

Hobbes spoke softly, letting the amplifiers give volume to his words. The noise from the cells subsided. Despite their rage they wanted to hear him. Hobbes lingered and looked up at the tiers, stopping here and there to pick out an individual face. He nodded to himself as if in sorrow and spoke again.

'Lower than animals.'

'*Fuck you!*'

'*Yes!*' Hobbes snapped his head towards the shout. 'Confined to your cages without knowing why! Pathetic scapegoats for a world you lack the basic intelligence to understand!'

Hobbes felt his voice rising in pitch. He brought it down again.

'You may imagine that you are here to be punished: for your miserable acts of depravity and violence; for the bestial rapes and killings that you boast of in your filthy holes. Wrong.'

Hobbes dropped his voice a tone.

'Quite wrong.'

He made them wait and they waited.

'Your lives are far too worthless to justify the existence of a machine of this ingenuity. Alternatively, you may think you are here as a deterrence - to yourselves and others. Wrong again. No one cares that you choose to slaughter, rape and

poison each other in your stinking ghettos. Personally I applaud such behaviour.'

So far his speech had been received in relative silence. Now a murmur of anger rippled along the catwalks. Hobbes gave them a grim smile.

'I know that there are innocent men amongst you.' He said this without sarcasm. 'Oh yes. Truly innocent. Victims of a knowing and outrageous injustice.'

Another murmur, this time louder. Hobbes injected more feeling into his voice.

'And I accept that in the wider scheme of things you are all victims of that same knowing and outrageous injustice. That, my friends, is why you are here.'

As the truth of his words sank into minds dulled by deprivation the growling grew louder still and Hobbes raised his voice to a shout.

'Your true function, if you would know it, is to provide a caste of sub-human scum whom society can despise and fear and hate. Listen to me. *Listen!*'

Hobbes glanced up to the second tier and amongst the yelling faces picked out Reuben Wilson, a lean, pale black in his thirties who watched him with a quiet stare. Hobbes held Wilson's gaze and waited. Wilson made a gesture with his hand. As if by magic the cons in Wilson's vicinity fell silent, a silence which spread in seconds to encompass the whole block. Hobbes was impressed but not surprised. He nodded to Wilson and continued, speaking slowly so that they would understand what he was saying.

'You exist - purely and simply - to provide a filth drain, a septic tank into which the rest of us can excrete our own malice and cruelty, our lust for vengeance, our dark unspoken fantasies of violence and greed. Your pain is essential to the smooth functioning of civilisation. But do not flatter yourselves. Your individual crimes - no matter how shocking - have no meaning whatsoever. All that is required is that you be here, innocent or guilty, good and bad alike.'

You are a pot to be shat in - that and nothing more. Understand that. And know that I understand it too. And as you lie weeping in your cells I want you to reflect on this: that just by being here you are doing excellent service - a good job - for the society you so despise.'

There followed a long pause as they struggled to take in the full meaning of what had been said. Hobbes watched, gripped by the mass personality of the crowd. Somehow they would all get it at once. The crowd murmured and sighed. A live current leapt back and forth between the tiers.

Suddenly, in a single impulse, five hundred men exploded with rage. A torrent of obscenity, of bellowing throats and stomping feet and shaking fists, swept like gale-driven waves through the cellblock and broke against the pillar of rock that was John Campbell Hobbes. Below him the line of guards shifted nervously, shuffling closer together and fingering their Mace. A single faltering step would precipitate violence. Yet as a surge of adrenaline charged through his central nervous system and verified as nothing else could the certainty of his bold design, Hobbes knew no fear. He bellowed into the microphone.

'Now return to your cells.'

The order was ignored, as Hobbes knew it would be. From the line of guards Captain Bill Cletus turned and looked up at him. His florid features were composed and steady. Hobbes nodded and Cletus bent his head and spoke into a radio clipped to his lapel. The steel door of the sallyport behind Hobbes rumbled open and a second squad of sixteen guards charged into the block. Round their necks hung gas masks. Four of them carried tear gas launchers which they trained on the bristling tiers. The rest held riot guns at port arms. When the guards were in place Hobbes spoke again, his limbs humming.

'Return to your cells. Further disobedience will invite needless punishment.'

From the second tier a dark object flew down towards Hobbes. Though he saw it coming he made no attempt to avoid it. The object struck him on the shoulder, clung on for a second, then dropped to the dais at his feet. The rage of the inmates subsided into curiosity. Hobbes glanced up to the second level then turned to Bill Cletus.

‘Wilson,’ said Hobbes.

Cletus and four of his men clattered up the steel staircase towards the second floor walkway. At the top of the stairs an obese convict – a double rapist named Dixon – deliberately half-blocked their way. Cletus hosed him down with Mace. As Dixon staggered back into the wall, blinded and wheezing, Cletus stepped past him onto the walkway. The two guards following Cletus fell on Dixon like woodcutters, slashing him to his knees with their nightsticks. When he was bleeding and broken to their satisfaction they jacked his arms up behind his back, hauled him to his feet and bundled him violently, face down, into a toilet at the back of a vacant cell.

Wilson, light on his feet as a dancer, held his fists cocked in front of him. From the dais Hobbes saw the expression on his face as Cletus and his men closed in. Wilson was an ex-number one contender for the middleweight championship of the world and the young bloods from the ghettos who had never achieved more than the successful robbery of a convenience store worshipped him. In truth Hobbes had the highest respect for Wilson. What’s more Wilson had spent eight years inside for a crime he hadn’t committed. As the guards stalked him along the catwalk Wilson glanced down through the rails of the walkway and saw Hobbes watching him. Again they held each other’s eyes and in that moment Wilson calculated the consequences for the prisoners of his resisting. He dropped his guard and stood up straight in front of Cletus.

‘Wasn’t me, Captain,’ said Wilson.

Cletus rammed the tip of his stick into Wilson's belly then lashed him across the side of the head with the butt end. Wilson rolled with the blows, spinning into the safety rail as the guards seized him from behind. With as much force as possible they cuffed his arms behind his back and manhandled him down the stairs. Hobbes noted that no one intervened on Wilson's behalf.

The block was quiet except for the sound of Wilson and the guards clattering down the steel stair and of Dixon coughing and whimpering in his cell. Hobbes surveyed the inmates. A pall of helplessness and shame had fallen over them. The guards dragged Wilson in front of the dais and let go his arms. Wilson swayed for a moment as if he might fall, then steadied himself. He stared at Hobbes without blinking.

Hobbes turned away to examine, for the first time, the object that struck him on the shoulder. It was a human turd, now broken into two pieces. Hobbes bent down and picked up the larger piece between his finger and thumb. He paused, still bent, and looked briefly into Wilson's eyes. The boxer understood: but could do nothing. Hobbes stood up. He raised the turd high above his head, displaying it to the prisoners. A murmur ran amongst them. When he was sure they knew what he was holding he stepped up to the microphone.

*'This is what you are.'*

All attention was on him. Deliberately, and with the appearance of relish, Hobbes took the turd into the palm of his hand and squashed it in his fist.

A subdued exhalation of disgust, a 'Jesus' muttered under five hundred breaths, rose up towards the glass vault of the roof. Hobbes turned away from the tiers and looked down at Wilson. Wilson licked blood from his lips and swallowed.

'You any idea what you're doin'?' said Wilson.

Hobbes held his dark eyes for a full ten seconds. Wilson was too intelligent to be left on the block. He could not be allowed to thwart Hobbes's design. It was unjust but

necessary: Wilson would have to go to segregation. Hobbes nodded to Cletus.

‘Take him to the hole.’

The guards yanked Wilson away and shuffled him out through the rear door into the yard. His fellow inmates watched him go in silence. Hobbes returned to the microphone.

‘You will now return to your cells. All work, yard and visiting privileges are suspended indefinitely. In other words: total lockdown.’

In the vacuum left by Wilson’s abduction they took this with relative silence.

‘And while you have twenty-four empty hours a day in which to occupy your minds, think on this:’

Hobbes raised his soiled hand, palm open towards them.

‘I can wash this clean in thirty seconds. But you will be niggers for the rest of your lives.’

Hobbes turned on his heel, stepped down from the rear of the dais and walked out into the yard.

Out in the open air he realised that his heart was racing and his breathing was rapid. The address had gone better than he dared hope. He pulled out the handkerchief and wiped his hand. As he did so he saw Bill Cletus staring at him. On a gut level Cletus understood the workings of the prison better than anyone except Hobbes. But he did not have Hobbes’s mind. Nor did he have his will. Hobbes glanced up at the sky. The glare of the sun was intense. He looked back at Cletus.

‘From tomorrow,’ said Hobbes, ‘I want the air-conditioning system of B block turned off.’

Cletus blinked. ‘And the lockdown?’

‘Indefinite, as I said.’

‘There’ll be blood,’ said Cletus.

Cletus almost doubled his salary with the contraband he smuggled in for Neville Agry, the Lifer crew chief of D block.

Hobbes knew this. He considered reminding the captain but decided that at this point it wasn't necessary.

Hobbes said, 'Whatever the consequences of my orders, Captain, your only duty is to obey them.'

Cletus took a step backwards and saluted.

'Yes, sir,' he said.

Hobbes nodded, then turned and walked away across the yard. For the first time in longer than he could remember his conscience was at ease with itself. He was doing what needed to be done. Someone, at last, was doing what needed to be done. It would be ugly. But it was necessary. The temperature was set to rise and the defining hour would follow. Hobbes folded the handkerchief into his pocket and started back across the yard towards his tower.

PART I

THE RISING



# ONE

AN HOUR BEFORE the 0700 first lock and count Dr Ray Klein opened his eyes and thought about the seagulls wheeling high above the outside walls. Or rather he imagined the gulls. As likely as not there were none. If Klein himself had been a gull he would've damn sure given this squalid grey shithole a wide berth. There had to be better garbage elsewhere. And if, by chance, the biggest flock of carrion in the history of East Texas was out there - as big and loud and hungry as you please, and wheeling for all they were worth - then Ray Klein would never have heard them above the constant murmur of five-hundred-and-sixty-some convicts as they tossed and grunted and snored in their narrow bunks.

Klein blinked and reminded himself that he was an asshole.

Freewheeling birds were a stupid image for a convict to hold in his mind for they brought not a shred of comfort. Yet Klein thought about them just the same, partly because he was an obdurate son of a bitch, and partly because he had not yet conquered his lifelong compulsion to do exactly those things that kept comfort beyond his reach. In this respect he had much in common with his fellow inmates. But unlike them Ray Klein, on this day, had another reason for letting the birds fly about the imaginary dawn landscape of his mind: after three years hard time there was a chance - a *chance* - that the bastards who ran this goddamn place were finally going to let him go free. Klein exterminated the birds inside his head and swung his legs over the side of the bunk.

As he stood up the stone flags were cool and dense against the soles of his feet. He squeezed the flags with his toes, then bent forward in the dim green aura of the night light and placed both palms flat on the floor, squeezing the stale blood out of his hamstrings and spine. He didn't really want to stand up in the semi-darkness and stretch his body. He hated it. He wanted to spend another hour in oblivion, roaming the dreamy interior of his skull where the space contained therein was as vast as the universe itself and considerably less painful. Yet he spent another ten minutes in a variety of painful contortions. He had long ago taken into his heart the words of William James:

' . . . be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points, do every day something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it, so that when the hour of dire need draws nigh, it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test . . .'

So Ray Klein finished his stretching and knelt down, sitting back on his heels with his palms resting on his thighs. Even after all these years this part still made him feel kind of cool. Cool wasn't a quality he readily associated with his own personality and so on these rare occasions he allowed himself to feel it. He closed his eyes and inhaled sharply through his nostrils.

This was as quiet as it ever got in cellblock D and it was Klein's Jamesian habit, every day, to get up earlier than he needed to and pretend that the hour was his own. He began with the *mokso* - the focused breathing to clear his mind - then went on to practise karate until the bell roused the rest of the block to the sullen and paranoid level of consciousness that, in Green River, passed for human existence.

Klein's second tier cell was eight feet by six. He made all the karate moves - the kicks, turns, blocks and punches - in slow motion, his muscles densely bunched with maximum tension. This made great demands on his strength, balance

and control, attributes with which he was not naturally over-endowed, and after three years he was able to complete his routine in near silence, without panting for air, without breaking any toes and without falling over. Today he practised the kata *Gojushiho sho*.

This daily ritual helped to drain off the anger that the prison pumped into his blood. It neutralised the poison and kept him strong, kept him calm, kept him bound apart from all the rest; kept cold and hard the steelwork and ice he had constructed around his soul.

Since his plunge from grace this architecture had proved a necessary blessing. In the River a soul was a dangerous handicap, a personal torture chamber only to be visited by masochists and fools. Klein had been both in his time but now he knew better. Strangely enough the discipline and self-denial had come to him more easily than it had to most inmates, for his profession had prepared him for it. He had spent much of his adult life steeling himself. As an intern and as a resident and as a chief resident, he had steeled himself. He had hardened his heart against himself; against the endless hours on duty, against the intolerable and yet endurable lack of sleep; against alternating fourteen and twenty-four hour days, year upon year; against the pressure and the fear of making a mistake and killing or disabling a patient; against the horror of mutilated bodies and the naked grief of the bereaved; against the endless stream of examinations; against failure; against the unique dread of telling a man he was going to die or a mother that her child was already dead; against the pain he inflicted on himself and the pain he inflicted on others. Needles, scalpels, amputations, toxic drugs. Through all this and more – and this he shared with his colleagues for he was nothing special – Klein had steeled himself. So that by the time his life collapsed around him and he was sent up to the River he had only needed to add a little ice to the steel and then he'd been ready.

On the street Klein had been an orthopaedic surgeon.

Now he was a convicted rapist serving his time.

Today he might be set free.

And if he was set free he would have to steel himself again: to a future as featureless and implacable as the granite wall of his cell.

Klein turned in the narrow space and inflicted an elbow-strike-to-the-face/throat-lock/head-butt combination on an imaginary enemy standing just inside the steel bars of his door. The imaginary enemy's face collapsed and his body went limp as Klein strangled him. You're the shotokan warrior, he told himself, you hope for nothing, you need no one, you are free. He smiled and wiped sweat from his eyes.

Klein had been a student of karate since his college days and nothing else had sustained him more dependably through the years of his medical training. At first, when he'd carried on his habitual morning routine in the River, Klein had felt kind of an idiot posturing this way and that in his cell. The inmates of neighbouring cells, in trying to explain the soft grunting noises he made, had accused him of jerking off, of threading a blunt instrument up his own anus, of unlubricated self-catheterisation and other lone perversions both dangerous and obscure. At the time telling them he was practising karate had seemed even more shameful than jerking off - and in addition much more likely to get him his face cut off - and he had stopped. But he'd argued to himself that if he was going to survive in here he had to keep just a little something for himself, and somehow - whether it made him an idiot or not - karate was it. So Klein had resumed his morning practice and before the mocking voices of his neighbours had become intolerable Myron Pinkley had stolen Klein's dessert - lime flavoured jello - in the mess hall.

Ultimately, the brain damage Pinkley sustained proved irreversible and he was born again and joined the Jesus Army. The only tears shed over this incident fell from the

eyes of Pinkley's mother, who wept for joy at her son's spiritual redemption. And Klein's neighbours had stopped asking what went on in his cell at each day's dawning, because they all understood thereafter that it wasn't any business of theirs.

The hammering of the bell and the bellowing of sour-faced guards marked the end of Klein's routine. Soaked in sweat, he wiped his face on a dirty shirt and stood at the front of his cell. There were six lock and counts every day and the first began when the lights came up and the cellblock lumbered awake with a cacophony of coughs and hawked phlegm, of muttered obscenities and loud complaints about the stench of farting cell mates. Then came the mounting redneck blare of radios and cassette decks, and the shouts of the guards, ritually made and ritually ignored, to turn the goddamn music down. Finally came the count itself, the sullen litany echoing back and forth across the tiers as each man, six times a day, proclaimed his identity as a state-given number.

A Cuban screw named Sandoval appeared beyond the bars of Ray Klein's door.

'Eighty-eight-four-one-nine, Klein,' said Klein.

Sandoval nodded without speaking, checked his list, moved on.

Klein's feet slapped the sweat-spattered stone as he walked to the back of his cell. He pulled back the hanging blanket that covered the toilet and took a piss. The cell had been built for one man and since he had accumulated enough wealth to afford it Klein had lived there alone. Most of the single cells held two men and the doubles four. Everything had to be paid for and living space was expensive. The private medical practice Klein had established in the prison had made him wealthy enough to afford it. There were rich and poor in here just as there were in any society and like anywhere else the ability to buy special medical treatment was seized upon as a badge of

social power. Klein washed himself down at the sink and dried himself on a large bath towel, another luxury item. By the time he'd finished he was again drenched in sweat, such was the humidity in the cellblock and the heat of his engorged muscles. He delayed dragging on his denims until his sweat had evaporated some into the stagnant air. He stood naked before his shaving mirror, the drone of his electric razor blending with that of hundreds of others. Blades were forbidden. On the lower edge of the mirror was a strip of grubby white adhesive tape. Written on the tape in black ink, where he could see them every morning and remind himself, were the words:

NOT MY FUCKING BUSINESS

This aphorism was the top and bottom of the moral, political and philosophical system whose mastery was necessary to survival in Green River State Penitentiary. Its importance had been impressed on Klein early on by Frogman Coley, the trustee superintendent of the prison infirmary. Klein had asked Coley how it was that one of the patients recovering on the ward had come to have both his testicles severed and inserted into his own rectum. And Coley had gripped Klein's shirt-front and told him:

'You don' ever wanna know, whitefish. You don' ever wanna find out 'bout nothin' goes down in here. You do, you don' stick your pecker in. Anywhere. Look, say one day you passin' the shower room, you hear a guy bein' cut, or he gettin' his ass raped. Maybe he's your friend. Your best friend. Maybe you like to be in there yo'self, gettin' some. Or maybe like this po' sucker here they takin' his balls off with a blunt razor and you can hear him screamin' through the washrag they stuck down his throat. Walk on by, brother, cause there always a reason for it you don' know about. An' even if they ain't no reason at all, it's not your fucken bidness.'