



REBECCA TAKSEL

OMEGA

California sits at the edge of an immense continent. It is the end, **omega**, Ω , the place where each evening the sun enacts the ritual of falling into the infinity of the sea. Many people, once they arrive overland in California, cannot think of making the return trip across the continent. Others do, but I believe they bring back something important with them. I was one of that second group of travelers.

I came to Los Angeles in 1965 to visit a musician I knew from my hometown. I had just graduated from college, and I had been writing to him. I thought I was in love. I wasn't sure what to expect when I got to Los Angeles. We'd made no plans and he'd made no promises, but I flung myself headlong into this adventure.

I crossed the country from Pennsylvania by train. It was a long, long ride, and I traveled coach class. I went to Chicago on the Capitol Limited and from Chicago to Los Angeles on the Super Chief, the express train of the Santa Fe line through the southern deserts.

I met Bill Halstead in the club car out of Chicago. He was a pleasant man with olive skin, very black hair, and a crisp moustache. He was probably under thirty, but to me he was an adult and I was not. I was on the cusp of the generation that would become the youth culture, and we would never feel grown up in the way we'd expected to. In a couple of years I'd call myself a revolutionary and get into blue jeans. Now I still wore babyish mod dresses, the ones you see in the black-and-white footage of early Beatles concerts.

Bill was quiet, easygoing and very polite. He befriended me, which was something more than being friendly. I wasn't aware that he wanted to protect me, but later I realized that this was his interest in me. Of sex there was none, not in his speech or manner towards me, and not in my thoughts towards him. (He was a grownup, a nice man, not dangerous, therefore not sexy. That was how my subconscious worked in those days.)