

# The Color Spectrum Fiasco

*by* Nicholas Rombes

On the very day I was fired from Penn State, in 1971, I was also kidnapped by a short-lived underground student revolutionary group who spelled their own name wrong. They shoved me into the backdoor of a yellow rusted-out car on Atherton Street, blindfolded me. A girl or woman was laughing next to me, and I remember she smelled like lemons and I was wearing shorts and she put her bare legs across my legs and I imagined her body all through the terrible hours that followed, before I escaped.

They drove me to a farm on the side of a mountain somewhere outside of State College where all the barns and silos looked crooked. The weeds were taller than corn stalks. They took off the blindfold and led me through saw grass to a meadow with picnic tables and food and hippies. In the distance, there was a body hanging from a tree. Vultures circled overhead like leftover dinosaurs.

They sat me down at a splintered picnic table and fed me watermelon in the hot sun. A wicker basket not far off was filled with hand-made nooses. An ugly man with no shirt and a beard brought me a box and asked me to open it. Inside were many paper strips of color, like paint-color samples or color-blind test sheets. He instructed me to select one. Each was numbered. By this time a small crowd had gathered, and I smelled the lemon girl and searched for her legs.

I picked color strip number 9, I don't know why, maybe because of that Beatles song. The crowd rumbled lowly in disappointment and seized me and carried me roughly to the tree with the hanging body, its flesh draping off it like folds of wax. The sound of flies filled my head like an air force of prop planes.

They tied me to the tree and went off to drink or whatever. But they were incompetent. They were fools. I quickly freed myself and made my way down the mountain.

There were hundreds of groups like that in those days, in love with the idea of revolution rather than revolution itself, and I hated them all, and escaped from many of them, the cruel ones and the kind ones, and until that era passed I became as invisible as possible without disappearing completely.

