up labs I had missed while trying to make sense out of the guidance department. After lab, as I walked down the hall to my locker, I heard a lot of snickers and also noticed Paul Mann, one of the school's biggest nerds, standing near my locker with a bunch of his pals. They were all talking at once. I knew they were still mad about my story on them, in which I remarked that they gave Union some of the trashy aura of the New York Bowery.

"Well, if it isn't Brenda Starr..." "Yeah, how ya doin', Brenda?" "Say, looking for a mystery man, Brenda?" "How about me?"

Paul got down on his knees. "Hey, Brenda, I'll put a patch on my eye if it'll turn you on."

"What arc you talking about?" asked, really annoyed. I took a step toward my locker. On the door was a note the size of a poster: "Dear Brenda: Never realized you wanted a little love in your life. I'm meeting you tonight. Your mystery man."

The hoors got louder. One of the girls from the paper was going by, and I pulled her over. My cheeks were getting hot. I didn't like being laughed at. "Hey, Gail, what's going on?"

"Oh, Shelby!" she said, laughing. "Didn't you see your interview? It was a fabulous idea!"

"My interview? What are you talking about?"

Gail handed me the school paper and pointed to the "Shelby Sez" column. Instead of my story on the cars in the parking lot, there was a story about me! "That famous Union High School girl reporter—who, with her little gold pencil, cuts down personalities like a machete in a sugarcane field—has revealed to your editor-in-chief that she's always dreamed of being Brenda Starr. In fact, this girl reporter, obviously still arrested in an adolescent state, has even shown evidence lately that she would be receptive to a mystery man! Any mystery man out there? Your reporter awaits you..." And so on. I felt sick. How could Larry take something I had told him privately and print it like that? And how could he distort it so much and make me look and sound like such a fool? I found my way to the girls' room. I didn't want to cry, but I couldn't help it. I flushed the toilet every time someone walked in so no one would hear me. I made myself wash my face, smile, grit my teeth, and last through a horrible day of taunts.

Late in the afternoon I passed Mark Compton. Well, I thought, I'm surely going to hear from him. He just smiled and said, "Hi, Shelby," as he passed by. That was the first time he had spoken to me since his interview.

I couldn't sleep the whole night. I had a lot of thinking to do: about interviewing people and making news at the expense of others.

Monday afternoon we had a newspaper staff meeting. I knew everyone was watching me, especially Larry and Mr. Harrington. I didn't say anything except when Larry asked if anyone had some new ideas to offer.

I raised my hand. "I've got one, Larry." I looked around the table "I'd like to do something different for the 'Shelby Sez' column. I'd like to spend some time each week actually participating in the activity of the person I'm writing about—like working with the prom committee, or practicing with the fencing club, or studying with the grinds."

There were murmurs around the table. Larry leaned over and whispered something to Mr. Harrington and then looked back at me.

"What exactly is the point, Shelby? First of all, it'd