

Fifty Years

of

WAR, POLITICS, BOXING,
CARNALITY and
OTHER MATTERS

from the fiction and non-fiction
of

NORMAN MAILER

1948 — 1998

Norman Mailer
April 1993

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An introduction will be
written by Sept. 15.

(two pages of it are
presented here)

~~Part of the~~

This will be part of the
Introduction

PREFACE

While that passage happened to be written two years after the Democratic Convention of 1960, it could as fairly have been put on paper two years before. So it should be evident I began these forays into the nature of the political convention with prejudices for how the materials of such history were gathered. I also possessed the large advantage that I had weeks to ponder over what I had seen and nearly enough days in which to do the writing. I also had a literary heritage to remind me that the world is not supposed to be reassembled by panels of prefabricated words. Rather, I was a novelist. It was expected of me to see the world with my own eyes and own words. See it by the warp or stance of my character. Which if it could collect into some kind of integrity might be called a style. I was enlisted then on my side of an undeclared war between those modes of perception called journalism, and fiction. When it came to accuracy, I was on the side of fiction. I thought fiction could bring us closer to the truth than journalism, which is not to say one should make up facts when writing a story about real people. I would endeavor to get my facts as scrupulously as a reporter. (At least!) The difference would be found elsewhere. Journalism assumes the truth of an event can be found by the use of principles which go back to Descartes. (A political reporter has a fixed view of the world: you may plot it on axes which run right to left on the horizontal and down from honesty to corruption on the vertical.) ~~But~~ The real premise of journalism is that the best instrument for measuring history is a faceless, even a mindless, recorder. Whereas the writer of fiction is closer to that moving world of Einstein. There the velocity of the observer is as crucial to the measurement as any object observed. For fiction probably makes the secret assumption that we learn the truth through a comparison of the lies, since we are obliged to receive the majority of our experience at second hand through parents, friends, mates, lovers, enemies, and the journalists who report it to us. So our best chance of improving those private charts of our own most complicated lives, our unadmitted maps of reality, our very comprehension, if you will, of the way existence works — seems to profit most if we can have some little idea, at least, of the warp of the observer who passes on the experience. Fiction, as I use the word, is then that reality which does not cohere to anonymous axes of fact but is breathed in through the swarm of our male and female movements about one another, a novelistic assumption, for don't we perceive the truth of a novel as its events pass through the personality of the writer? We tend to know, in our unconscious at least, by the time we have finished a story where we think the

Start

PREFACE

author is most to be trusted, and where in secret we suspect he is more ignorant than ourselves. That is the flavor of fiction. We observe the observer. Maybe that is why there is less dead air in fiction and usually more light. It is because we have the advantage of seeing around a corner, and that is aesthetically analogous to a photograph of a range of hills when the sunset offers its back-lighting to the contours. Be certain the journalistic flashbulb is better for recording the carnage of an auto crash. But little else.

~~Very well. These convention pieces written by most novelists' measure in a great hurry, yet by a journalist's schedule in real leisure, are pieces which range themselves on the side of fiction, a remark, to repeat, that ought not to encourage a reader to assume my facts are the fiction — no, many good and great novelists take pains with the details of their facts which would put the average of journalists (with their slovenly habits) to shame, no, my facts were as good as I could get, but my prose lived in the relative world of fiction where I, the author, was a presence in this gathering-up of what I had seen of some history being made. I was proud of that, proud of the method I used, and would do it again — what, indeed, are these four small histories worth if the reader cannot now interpret them with his own fine notion of my strengths and comic lacks as an observer; what, we could inquire, would be here worth rereading if it had not been done with the confidence of the novelist?~~

in the early Seventies
 Speaking at the MacDowell Colony a while ago, I found myself saying: "There is no reason to believe the novelist is not better equipped to deal with the possibilities of a mysterious and difficult situation than anyone else, since he or she is always trying to discover what the nature of reality might be. It's as if the novelist is out there, sprung early, with something most people never contemplate — which is 'How and what is the nature of this little reality before me.' The novelist is the first to ask, 'Do I love my wife? Does she love me? What is the nature of love? Do we love our child? How do we love? Would we die for our child? Or do we let the child die for us?' The novelist has to deal with these questions because living with them is the only way to improve his or her brain. Without improving that brain, without refining the edge of one's perception, it's almost impossible to continue to work as a writer. Because if there is one fell rule in art it is that repetition kills the soul. So the novelist is out there early with a particular necessity that may become the necessity of us all. It is to deal with life as something God did not give us as eternal and immutable but

rather as something half-worked because it was our human destiny to enlarge what we were given, to forge (I might have said, to *clarify*) a world which was always before us in a manner different from the way we had seen it the day before." *End*

It is likely that in trying to write about political conventions my undeclared emotion may have been similar to the speech just quoted. Certainly I must have had the confidence I could do it. For in the years from 1960 to 1972 there was some easy marriage between my literary desire and my ability to perceive a fair amount of what was happening in those clouds of moral ambiguity where politics itself existed. So it may be right to put these four pieces together now into a book. They may even justify my confidence that the world (not the techniques but the *world*) of fiction can be brought to the facts of journalism.

Of course, we are now in the years which follow Watergate. So we are obliged to recognize that much of what we look on as our history is, in fact, not much related to the facts. At least, those facts we supposed were facts. Who can now read what I wrote about the Democratic and Republican conventions of 1972 without searching for everything I did not see? How much we did not know at the time of all the secret history being made.*

delete

Of course I wrote these pieces at a time when one could try to believe in history as the product of forces more or less open to the vision of skilled observers. One could still believe in the mood generated by a clash of forces — the Kennedys versus Stevenson in 1960, the Goldwater Republicans against the emergence of a revolutionary youth in '64, the open view America was given of the wounds of the Democratic Party in '68, even the play of idealisms, fresh, hysterical, and inept against the brilliantly covert manipulations of Nixon's own convention in '72 — they were the stuff of the novelist. Observing such forces offered direct literary confidence and a method of writing, a mode of perceiving. If the observations were probably not as accurate as one thought at the time — how many of the fights in the streets of Chicago came flowering for instance out of the departments of the dirtiest tricks? — still, it was a stimulating way to work.

* How, for instance, is it possible not to consider the possibility that secret files of the FBI open to the White House had all the details of Eagleton's medical history? Since no other Democrat could do more for the Republicans as a candidate than the Senator from Missouri, it is fair to wonder if anyone in the room with McGovern on the panicky afternoon when Eagleton was selected may actually have been working undercover for the Republicans. Not all political agents are obligatorily as clumsy as Segretti.

BOXING I.

Callaghan vs. Hemingway

Referee: F. Scott Fitzgerald

1929 Start

FROM CANNIBALS and CHRISTMAS
PP 157-159

PRELUDE

Part Two: Lions 157

which might have been a classic. Instead, he alienated his friends over a run of 255 pages, and so reminds one of a remark Fitzgerald once made to Callaghan. Talking about *The Great Gatsby*, he said the book had done reasonably well but was hardly a best seller. "It was too short a book," Fitzgerald said. "Remember this, Morley. Never write a book under sixty thousand words."

That's it. Callaghan has remembered, and has proceeded to stretch it out. As literature, it's a mistake. Financially, Fitzgerald's advice might still prove wise. The novel now has a book instead of a story; the value of a movie sale has increased. The story about Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Callaghan done by John Huston, produced by Sam Spiegel, could make a very good movie. For the first time one has the confidence that an eye for an eye has been able to cut a bonafide trail through the charm, the mystery, and the cautious perversity of Hemingway's personality. One gets a good intimation of what was very bad in the man, and the portrait is reinforced by the fact that Callaghan was not out to damage the reputation—on the contrary, he is nearly obsessed by the presence of a taint in a man he considers great.

In turn, Fitzgerald is also admired. In fact he is even loved as a friend, loved perhaps more than Hemingway. Yet Callaghan fixes his character for our attention. Like many an American writer to come after him, Fitzgerald was one of those men who do not give up early on the search to be more manhood for themselves. His method was to admire men who were strong. In this sense he was a salesman. When the beloved object did not smile back, Fitzgerald, like Willy Loman, looked into the mirror and said, "We are offered Fitzgerald at just such a moment."

Talking to Callaghan one day, Fitzgerald referred to Hemingway's ability as a boxer, and remarked that while Hemingway was probably not good enough to be heavyweight champion of the world, he was undoubtedly as good as Young Stribling, the light-heavyweight champion. "Look, Scott," said Callaghan, "Ernest is an amateur. I'm an amateur. All this talk is ridiculous." Unconvinced, Fitzgerald asked to come along to the gym at the American Club and watch Hemingway and Callaghan box. But Callaghan has let the reader in earlier on one small point. Hemingway, four inches taller and forty pounds heavier than Callaghan, "may have thought about boxing, dreamed about it, consorted with old fighters and hung around gyms," but Callaghan "had done more actual boxing with men who could box a little and weren't just taking exercise or fooling around."

So on an historic afternoon in June in Paris in 1929, Hemingway and Callaghan boxed a few rounds with Fitzgerald serving as timekeeper.

~~150 Cannibals and Christians~~

The second round went on for a long time. Both men began to get tired, Hemingway got careless. Callaghan caught him a good punch and dropped Hemingway on his back. At the next instant Fitzgerald cried out, "Oh, my God! I let the round go four minutes."

"All right, Scott," Ernest said. "If you want to see me getting the shit knocked out of me, just say so. Only don't say you made a mistake."

According to Callaghan's estimate, Scott never recovered from that moment. ~~One~~ believes it. For months later, a cruel and wildly inaccurate story about this episode appeared in the *Herald Tribune* book section. It was followed by a cable sent collect ^{to Callaghan} by Fitzgerald at Hemingway's insistence. "HAVE SEEN STORY IN HERALD TRIBUNE. ERNEST AND I AWAIT YOUR CORRECTION. SCOTT FITZGERALD."

Since Callaghan had already written such a letter to the paper, none of the three men could ever forgive each other.

The story ~~As the vignettes, the memoirs, and the biographies of Hemingway proliferate, Callaghan's summer in Paris may take on an importance beyond its literary merit, for it offers a fine clue to the logic of Hemingway's mind, and tempts one to make the prediction that there will be no definitive biography of Hemingway until the nature of his personal torture is better comprehended. It is possible Hemingway lived every day of his life in the style of the suicide. What a great dread is that. It is the dread ~~which~~ ^{that} sits in the silences of his short declarative sentences. At any instant, by any failure in magic, by a mean defeat, or by a moment of cowardice, Hemingway could be thrust back again into the agonizing demands of his courage. For the life of his talent must have depended on living in a psychic terrain where one must either be brave beyond one's limit, or sicken closer into a bad illness, or, indeed, by the ultimate logic of the suicide, must advance the hour in which one would make another reconnaissance into one's death.~~

That may be why Hemingway turned in such fury on Fitzgerald. To be knocked down by a smaller man could only imprison him further into the dread he was forever trying to avoid. Each time his physical vanity suffered a defeat, he would be forced to embark on a new existential gamble with his life. So he would naturally think of Fitzgerald's little error as an act of treachery, for the result of that extra minute in the second round could only be a new bout of anxiety which would drive his instinct into ever more dangerous situations. Most men find their profoundest passion in looking for a way to escape their private and secret torture. It is not likely that Hemingway was a brave man who sought danger for the sake of the sensations it provided him. What is more likely the truth of his long odyssey is that he struggled with his

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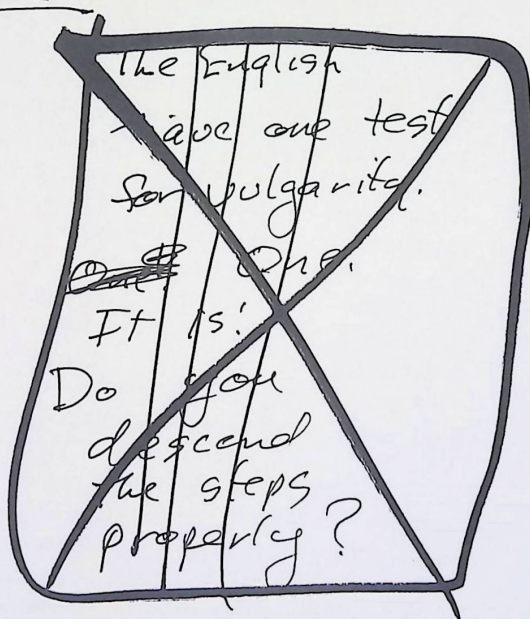
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cowardice and against a secret lust to suicide all of his life, that his inner landscape was a nightmare, and he spent his nights wrestling with the gods. It may even be that the final judgment on his work may come to the notion that what he failed to do was tragic, but what he accomplished was heroic, for it is possible he carried a weight of anxiety within him from day to day which would have suffocated any man smaller than himself. There are two kinds of brave men: those who are brave by the grace of nature, and those who are brave by an act of will. It is the merit of Callaghan's long anecdote that the second condition is suggested to be Hemingway's own.

~~ZAKUSKI~~



The Cold War - I

Our Man at Harvard

PIECES and MENTIONS
PP 1-5

Our Man at Harvard

Let me tell you about the Somerset Maugham party that we gave at *The Advocate* in the spring of 1942. The magazine was housed then in a dark gray flat-roofed three-story building across the street from the stern of *The Lampoon* (and indeed we were much aware of being in their wake — *Lampoon* editors usually went to *Time*; ours to oblivion). In those days *The Advocate* building was as ugly from the exterior as it is now. A few small and dingy stores occupied the ground floor; some mysterious never-seen tenants were on the second; and *The Advocate* offices took up the third. They were beautiful to me. One climbed a dull, carpeted staircase as dusty as a back road in Guerrero, used one's *Advocate* key to go through the door at the top, and opened the suite, an entire floor-through of five rooms, five mystical chambers full of broken-down furniture and the incomparable odor that rises from old beer stains in the carpet and syrup-crusts empty Coke bottles in the corners. It is a better odor than you would think, sweet and alcoholic and faintly debauched — it spoke of little magazines and future lands of literature, and the offices were almost always empty in late afternoon, when the sunlight turned the dust into a cosmos of angels dancing on a pin. ~~Maybe I loved the Advocate offices more than anyone who was taken in my competition — I spent the spring of sophomore year at Harvard drinking Cokes by a table at the window that faced on The Lampoon, and I read old issues of the magazine. Once I was an authority on the early published work in The Advocate of T. S. Eliot, [E. V. Rieu] Van Wyck~~

Brooks, ~~John Reed~~, Conrad Aiken, E. E. Cummings and Malcolm Cowley — it must have been the nearest I ever came to extracting genealogical marrow from old print. Occasionally, ~~Marvin Barrett~~, ^{our} ~~the~~ president, or ~~Bowden Broadwater~~, Pegasus, would come through the office, give a start at seeing me at the same chair and table where he had glimpsed me on the last visit and go off to do his work.

The following academic year, '41-'42, Bruce Barton, Jr., was elected President and John Crockett became Pegasus. We had troubles instantly. ~~Pete was the son of Bruce Barton, Sr., an advertising magnate as well known in the period of the Nicholas Murray Butler, and for that matter one could find him in the top must have been the last of the advertising magnates. (Pete was believed passionately in a strenuous Jesus with muscles.)~~

for deletion
His son, in compensation, was a gentleman. Pete Barton was the nicest guy a lot of us met at Harvard, and with his blond hair, good if somewhat pinched features and fundamental decency, ^{he could} have passed for Billy Budd if (1) he had not gone to Deerfield, ^{Deerfield} which left him a little more patrician than yeoman in manner, ^{and if 2)} ~~he had had more beef~~. But he was gentle, he was quietly literary, and his father had millions. Since *The Advocate* was in its usual cauldron of debt, no other man would have been so appropriate to serve as president. Barton might even have had a benign, well-financed and agreeable administration if not for the new Pegasus, John Crockett, a man ~~and a Clegg and equally~~ riven in his soul by detestation of our Billy Budd.

stet deletion
Being innocent of Crockett's propensities for literary evil, we were a happy group coming into the office. The magazine would be ours. We would print what we wished. Our first issue, therefore, consisted of each of us putting in his own story. Crockett then took our gems to a printer in Vermont. This was, I think, in November. By February we still did not have a magazine. Crockett kept assuring us the printer would soon deliver. None of us ever called him. Crockett had promised us that the inexpensive rate he had managed to extract from the Linotype mills of the Vermont woods would be ruined forever if we broke any of our voices on the printer's ear. Therefore, we waited. Nervously, impatiently, suspiciously, we waited for the issue with our stories.

Instead, Crockett came back with the seventy-fifth anniversary edition of *The Advocate*, a little work of love Crockett had gotten together by himself over the last year — ~~in truth, a prodigious work of~~

~~Reagan research~~ — collecting poems, pieces and comment from the fine ranks of Wallace Stevens, Horace Gregory, Djuna Barnes, Marianne Moore, Robert Hillyer, Frederic Prokosch, Mark Schorer, John Malcolm Brinnin, Richard Eberhart, Bowden Broadwater, William Carlos Williams, plus a poem by John Crockett, "The Sulky Races at Cherry Park." ~~It was a mammoth virtuoso literary cruise, CIA affair back in March of '42, as in~~ None of us on *The Advocate* had had the first clue as to what Crockett was cooking. As for the issue with our stories — Crockett promised to get to that next. The expression on his young but sour face told us what he thought of our stories. Crockett, incidentally, while not as well-featured as John Dean had a great resemblance to him — I remember his tortoiseshell glasses, high forehead and thin pale hair.

Pete Barton had been agitated for weeks at the long wait on our first issue. Painfully aware of his father's weight in the world, he was invariably overscrupulous never to push his own. He had suspended himself into a state of forbearance worthy of a Zen warrior considering the immense agitation the late appearance of the magazine had caused. When the anniversary issue appeared (to rich critical reception in the Boston papers, worse luck!) Barton finally demonstrated his father's blood. He called an emergency meeting where he calumniated himself for his derelictions of attention, took the full blame for the financial disaster of the issue (it had cost something like three times as much as more modest issues; our debt on the consequence had doubled overnight) and — Billy Budd to the last, absent even to intimations of a further notion to evil — stated that he would not ask for Crockett's resignation if he could expect his cooperation on future projects.

Crockett replied with a nod of his head and a profound turning of our collective head. Having heard, he said, that Somerset Maugham would be in the Boston area during April, he had sent an invitation to Maugham to come to a party that *The Advocate* would be happy to throw in his honor, and Maugham had accepted. Maugham had accepted.

This piece of news ran around the ring of Cambridge like a particle in a cyclotron. Nothing in four years at Harvard, not Dunkirk, Pearl Harbor or the blitz, not even beating Yale and Princeton in the same season for the first time in years, could have lit Harvard up more. Not to be invited to that party was equal to signifying that one had mismanaged one's life.

The literary grandees of the faculty sent their early acceptance:

~~E. O. Matthiessen, Theodore Spencer, and Robert Lillier in the~~
 was; the officers of *The Lampoon* sucked around; housemasters' wives asked how things were going at *The Advocate*. On the night of the party, four hundred souls in four hundred bodies as large as Patrick Moynihan's and as delicate as Joan Didion's came to the small rooms on the third floor and packed themselves in so completely that you ended by bringing your drink to your lips around the wrist of the strange forearm in front of your face. The noise of cocktail gabble anticipated the oncoming shapings of time — one would not hear the sound again until the first jet planes fired up their engines at an airport. Drinks were passed overhead. If you did not reach at the right time, another hand plucked the drink. It did not matter. More was on its way. Glasses bounced like corks over white choppy Harvard hands. From time to time, word would pass like wind through grass that Maugham had just entered the building, Maugham was having trouble getting up the stairs, Maugham was through the door. Maugham was in the other room. We formed phalanxes to move into the other room; we did not budge. A phalanx cannot budge a volume that is impacted. The lovely smile of resignation was on the lips of faculty wives: It is the establishment smile that says, "Life is like that — the nearest pleasures are not to be tasted." After a half hour of such smiling into the face of a stranger as one brought one's arm around her neck to get at one's drink, the wind came through the grass again. Maugham, we heard, was at the door. Maugham was slowly going down the stair. Somerset Maugham was gone.

Hands passed drinks above the impacted mass. Eyes flashed in that hard gemlike smile of pride retained when opportunity is lost. In another half hour, there was a lessening of pressure on one's chest, and bodies began to separate. After a while, one could walk from room to room. What was the point? Maugham was gone.

It was only on the next day, after the claims of liars had been checked against the quiet evidence of reliable witnesses who had found themselves analogously empretzeled in every room and on the stairs, that the news came back. By every sound measure of verification, Somerset Maugham had never been in *The Advocate* building that night. Crockett, now confronted, confessed. Out of his unflappable funds of phlegm, he allowed that he had known for weeks Somerset Maugham was not coming — the great author had been kind enough to send a telegram in answer to the invitation. "Certainly not," it said.

It was too late to ask Crockett to resign. Due to the war and an accelerated graduation, our term as *Advocate* officers was up; the new president and Pegasus were in. Because of the party, we left with a debt that had just doubled again. *The Advocate* has never been solvent since.

A postscript: Pete Barton became a Navy officer and commanded a ship, came home, worked as quietly for *Time* as if he had been a *Lampoon* man, and died before he was forty. The only time I saw John Crockett again was about ten years ago in New York on a reunion at the Harvard Club. He was now in the State Department and had been stationed for years in Yugoslavia. He told delicious stories about idiotic conversations with Madame Tito at banquets in Zagreb. He looked to be as wicked as ever. Our cause was being well served in Yugoslavia. ~~It occurs to me that the magazine the street newsboy says what a talent it might have. The Advocate~~

~~Crockett Post in paper, Pete Barton~~

1977

~~ZAKESKI~~

~~[Large section of text is heavily redacted with thick black horizontal bars and a large black ink blot in the center. Some faint words like "departing" and "very" are visible.]~~

CL 1944

The Gun

START

Toglio thought of a story he had read once, *The Man With the Country*. Red was like the man in that, he decided. "I think some things aren't fit for kidding," he said severely.

"You want to know something?"
Toglio knew a crack was coming, but against his judgment he asked, "What?"

"The only thing wrong with this Army is it never lost a war." Toglio was shocked. "You think you ought to lose this one?" Red found himself carried away. "What have I got against the goddam Japs? You think I care if they keep this fuckin' jungle? What's it to me if Cummings gets another star?"

"General Cummings, he's a good man," Martinez said. "There ain't a good officer in the world," Red stated. "They're just a bunch of aristocrats, they think. General Cummings is no better than I am. His shit don't smell like ice cream either."

Their voices were beginning to carry above a whisper, and Croft said, "Let's keep it down." The conversation was boring him. ~~It was always the same, who never got anywhere that did the writing.~~

Goldstein was still quivering. His sense of shame was so intense that a few tears welled in his eyes. Red's interruption forced him, for Gallagher was had pitched Goldstein so taut that he needed something desperately now. He was certain, however, that he could start up with the case if it opened his mouth, and so he remained sitting to calm himself.

A soldier came walking toward them. "Are you guys recon?" he asked.

"Yeah," Croft said.

"Okay, you want to follow me?"

They picked up their packs and began walking through the darkness. It was difficult to see the man ahead. After they had gone a few hundred feet, the soldier who was leading them halted and said, "Wait here."

Red swore. "Next time, let's do it by the numbers," he said. Cannon company fired again, and the noise sounded very loud. Wilson dropped his pack and muttered, "Some poor sonsofbitches are gonna catch hell in 'bout half a minute." He sighed and sat down on the wet

The Second World War-I

The Gun and the Attack Across the River

ground. "You'd think they had somepin better to do than have a whole squad of men walkin' around all night. Ah can't make up m' mind if Ah'm hot or cold." There was a wet heavy mist over the ground, and alternately they shivered in their wet clothing and sweated in the airless night. Some Japanese artillery was landing about a mile away, and they listened to it quietly.

A platoon of men filed by, their rifles clanking against their helmets and pack buckles. A flare went up a short distance away, and in its light the men looked like black cutouts moving past a spotlight. Their rifles were slung at odd angles, and their packs gave them a humped misshapen appearance. The sound of their walking was confused and intricate; like the truck convoy, it resembled the whisper of surf. Then the flare died, and the column of men passed. When they were some distance away, the only sound that still remained was the soft metallic jingle of their rifles. A skirmish had started at some distance and Jap rifles were firing. Red turned to Wyman and said, "Listen to them. Tick-boom, tick-boom. You can't miss it." A few American rifles answered, their fire sounding more powerful, like a leather belt slapped on a table. Wyman shifted uneasily. "How far away do you figure the Japs are?" he asked Croft.

"Damned if I know. You'll see 'em soon enough, boy."

"Hell he will," Red said. "We're going to be sitting around all night."

Croft spat. "You wouldn't mind that, would you, Valsen?"

"Not me. I'm no hero," Red said.

Some soldiers walked past in the darkness, and a few trucks pulled into the bivouac. Wyman lay down on the ground. He was a little chagrined that he would spend his first night in combat trying to fall asleep. The water soaked through his shirt, which was already wet, and he sat up again, shivering. The air was very sultry. He wished he could light a cigarette.

They waited another half hour before receiving the order to move. Croft stood up and followed their guide while the rest trailed behind. The guide led them into a patch of brush where a platoon of men was grouped around six antitank guns. They were 37s, small guns about six feet long with very slender barrels. One man could

pull one gun without too much difficulty over level hard ground.

"We're going along with antitank up to First Battalion," Croft said. "We got to pull two of them guns."

Croft told them to gather around him. "I don't know how muddy the damn trail is going to be," he began, "but it ain't too hard to guess. We're going to be in the middle of the column, so I'm going to cut us into three groups of three men each, and they'll be one group restin' all the time. I'll take Wilson and Gallagher, and Martinez can take Valsen and Ridges, and Toglio, you got what's left — Goldstein and Wyman. We're scrapin' the barrel," he added dryly.

He went up to talk to an officer for a few seconds. When he came back, he said, "We'll let Toglio's group have the first rest." He got behind one of the guns and gave it a tug. "The sonofabitch is going to be heavy." Wilson and Gallagher started pulling it with him, and the other platoon, which had already divided into a few men on each gun, began to move out. They tugged the guns across the bivouac area, and passed through a gap in the barbed wire where there was a machine gun emplacement. "Have a good time, men," the man at the machine gun said.

"Blow it out," Gallagher answered. The gun was beginning to drag on his arms already.

There were about fifty men in the column, and they moved very slowly down a narrow trail through the jungle. After they had moved a hundred feet, they were no longer able to see the men in front of them. The branches of the trees on either side of the trail joined overhead, and they felt as though they were groping through an endless tunnel. Their feet sank into the deep mud and, after a few yards, their boots were covered with great slabs of muck. The men on the gun would lunge forward for a few feet and then halt, lunge forward and halt. Every ten yards a gun would bog down and the three men assigned to it would have to tug until their strength seeped from their fingers. They would wrestle the gun out of its rut and plunge it forward for fifteen feet before their momentum was lost. Then they would pull it and lift it for another few yards until it sank into a hole once more. The entire column labored and stumbled at a miserable pace along the trail. In the darkness they kept ganging up on each

other, the men on one gun sometimes riding it up onto the muzzle of the one ahead, or falling behind so far that the file at last broke into separate wriggling columns like a worm cut into many parts and still living. The men at the rear had the worst of it. The guns and men that preceded them had churned the trail until it was almost a marsh, and there were places where two teams would have to combine on one gun and carry it above the ground until they had passed the worst of the slime.

The trail was only a few feet wide. Huge roots continually tripped the men, and their faces and hands became scratched and bleeding from the branches and thorns. In the complete darkness they had no idea of how the trail might bend, and sometimes on a down slope, when they could let the gun roll a little distance, they would land at the bottom with the field piece completely off the trail. Then they would have to fumble in the brush, covering their eyes with their arms to protect them from the vines, and a painful struggle to bring the gun back on the path would begin.

Some Japanese might easily have been waiting in ambush, but it was impossible to keep silent. The guns squeaked and lumbered, made sucking sounds as their tires sank into the mud, and the men swore helplessly, panted with deep sobbing sounds like wrestlers at the end of a long bout. Voices and commands echoed hollowly, were lost in a chorus of profanity and hoarse sobbing, the straining sweating noises of men in great labor. By the time an hour had passed, nothing existed for them but the slender cannon they had to get down the track. The sweat drenched their clothing and filled their eyes, blinding them. They grappled and blundered and swore, advanced the little guns a few feet at a time with no consciousness any longer of what they were doing.

When one team was relieved by another, they would stagger alongside the guns trying to regain their wind, falling behind sometimes to rest for a little while. Every ten minutes the column would stop to allow the stragglers to catch up. During the halts the men would sprawl in the middle of the trail not caring how the mud covered them. They felt as though they had been running for hours; they could not regain their breath, and their stomachs retched emptily.

Some of the men began to throw away their equipment; one after another the men threw their helmets aside or dropped them on the trail. The air was unbearably hot under the canopy of the jungle, and the darkness gave no relief from the heat of the day; if anything, walking the trail was like fumbling through an endless closet stuffed with velvet garments.

During one of the halts, the officer leading the file worked his way back to find Croft. "Where's Sergeant Croft?" he shouted, his words repeated by the men along the trail until it reached Croft.

"Here, sir." They stumbled toward each other through the mud.

"How're your men?" the officer asked.

"Okay."

They sat down beside the trail. "Mistake trying this," the officer gasped. "Have to get through."

Croft, with his lean ropy body, had borne the labor comparatively well, but his voice was unsteady and he had to talk with short quick spates of words. "How far?" he asked.

"Have to go one mile . . . one mile yet. More than halfway there, I think. Never should have tried it."

"They need the guns bad?"

The officer halted for a moment and tried to speak normally. "I think so . . . there's no tank weapons there . . . up on the line. We stopped a tank attack two hours ago . . . at Third Battalion. Orders came to move some thirty-sevens over to First Battalion. Guess they expect attack there."

"Better get them through," Croft said. He was contemptuous because the officer had to talk to him. The man ought to be able to do his own job.

"Have to, I guess." The officer stood up and leaned for a moment against a tree. "If you get a gun stuck, let me know. Have to cross a stream . . . up ahead. Bad place, I think."

He began to feel his way forward, and Croft turned around and worked his way back to the gun he was pulling. The column was over two hundred yards long by now. They started to move, and the labor continued. Once or twice a flare filtered a wan and delicate bluish light over them, the light almost lost in the dense foliage through which it

had to pass. In the brief moment it lasted, they were caught at their guns in classic straining motions that had the form and beauty of a frieze. Their uniforms were twice blackened, by the water and the dark slime of the trail. And for the instant the light shone on them their faces stood out, white and contorted. Even the guns had a slender articulated beauty like an insect reared back on its wire haunches. Then darkness swirled about them again, and they ground the guns forward blindly, a line of ants dragging their burden back to their hole.

They had reached that state of fatigue in which everything was hated. A man would slip in the mud and remain there, breathing hoarsely, having no will to get to his feet. That part of the column would halt, and wait numbly for the soldier to join them. If they had breath, they would swear.

"Fug the sonofabitchin' mud."

"Get up," somebody would cry.

"Fug you. Fug the goddam gun."

"Let me lay here. I'm okay, they ain't a thing wrong with me, I'm okay, let me lay."

"Fug you, *get up!*"

And they would labor forward a few more yards and halt. In the darkness, distance had no meaning, nor did time. The heat had left their bodies; they shivered and trembled in the damp night, and everything about them was sodden and pappy; they stank but no longer with animal smells; their clothing was plastered with the foul muck of the jungle mud, and a chill dank rotting smell somewhere between leaf mold and faeces filled their nostrils. They knew only that they had to keep moving, and if they thought of time it was in so many convulsions of nausea.

Wyman was wondering why he did not collapse. His breath came in long parched shudders, his pack straps galled, his feet were ablaze, and he could not have spoken, for his throat and chest and mouth seemed covered with a woolly felt. He was no longer conscious of the powerful and fetid stench that rose from his clothes. Somewhere deep inside himself was a wonder at the exhaustion his body could endure. He was normally a sluggish youth who worked no more than he was obliged to, and the sensations of labor, the muscle strains,

the panting, the taste of fatigue were things he had always tried to avoid. He had had vague dreams about being a hero, assuming this would bring him some immense reward which would ease his life and remove the problems of supporting his mother and himself. He had a girl and he wanted to dazzle her with his ribbons. But he had always imagined combat as exciting, with no misery and no physical exertion. He dreamed of himself charging across a field in the face of many machine guns; but in the dream there was no stitch in his side from running too far while bearing too much weight.

He had never thought he would be chained to an inanimate monster of metal with which he would have to grapple until his arms trembled helplessly and his body was ready to fall; certainly he had never imagined he would stumble down a path in the middle of the night with his shoes sucking and dragging in slime. He pushed at the gun, he lifted it with Goldstein and Toglio when it became mired in a hole, but the motions were automatic by now; he hardly even felt the added pain when they had to pull it out by the wheel hubs. His fingers were no longer able to close, and often he would tug helplessly until his hands slipped away with the gun still mired.

The column was proceeding even more slowly than it had at the start, and sometimes fifteen minutes would elapse before a gun could be moved a hundred yards. Every now and then a man would faint, and would be left by the side of the trail to make his way back alone when he recovered.

At last a message began to carry back along the trail, "Keep going, we're almost there," and for a few minutes it served as a stimulant so that the men labored with some hope again. But when each turning in the trail discovered only another ribbon of mud and darkness, the men began to feel a hopeless dejection. Sometimes for as much as a minute they would not move at all. It became harder and harder to pitch themselves against the guns again. Every time they stopped they felt like quitting.

There was a draw they had to cross a few hundred feet before they reached 1st Battalion, and its banks sloped very steeply down to a little stony brook, then ascended again abruptly to about fifteen feet above the bottom. This was the stream the officer had mentioned.

When the men reached it, the column stopped completely, and the stragglers caught up. Each team of soldiers waited for the men and gun in front of them to cross the stream. In the night it was an extremely difficult business at best and took a long time. The men would go sliding down the bank trying to restrain their field piece from turning over at the bottom, and then they would have to lift it over the slippery rocks of the brook before attempting to wrestle it up the other side. The banks were slimy, and there was no foothold; time and again a team would force their gun up almost to the top of the draw only to slip back again futilely.

By the time Wyman and Toglio and Goldstein had to move their gun, a half hour had passed and they were a little rested. Their wind had returned and they kept shouting instructions to each other as they nosed the gun over the edge of the bank. It began to pull away from them, and they had to resist desperately to keep it from crashing to the bottom. The exertion drained most of the strength they had recovered, and after they had carried the piece across the stream, they were as exhausted as they had been at any time during the march.

They stopped for a few moments to gather whatever force was left in them and began the struggle up the bank. Toglio was wheezing like a bull, and his commands had a hoarse urgent sound as if he were wrenching them from deep inside his body. "Okay, PUSH . . . PUSH," he growled, and the three of them strove numbly to roll the gun. It resisted them, moved sluggishly and treacherously, and the strength began to flow out of their trembling legs. "HOLD IT!" Toglio shouted "DON'T LET IT SLIP!" They braced themselves behind the gun, trying to wedge their feet into the wet clay of the bank. "PUSH AGAIN!" he shouted, and they forced it upward a few more feet. Wyman felt a band was stretching dangerously inside his body and would snap at any moment. They rested again, and then shoved the gun another few yards. Slowly, minute by minute, they came closer to the top. They were perhaps four feet from the crest when Wyman lost the last reserves of his strength. He tried to draw some few shreds of effort from his quivering limbs, but he seemed to collapse all at once, and just lay stupidly behind the gun supporting it with no more than the weight of his sagging body. The gun began to slip, and he

pulled away. Toglio and Goldstein were left at each of the hubs. When Wyman let go, they felt as though someone were pushing down against the gun. Goldstein held on until the sliding wheels pulled his fingers loose, one by one, and then he just had time to shout hoarsely, "WATCH IT!" to Toglio, before the gun went crashing down to the bottom. The three men fell after it, rolling in its wake. The gun struck some rocks at the bottom, and one of the wheels was knocked completely awry. They felt for it in the darkness like pups licking the wounds of their mother. Wyman began to blubber with exhaustion.

The accident caused a great deal of confusion. Croft's team was on the gun waiting behind them, and he began to shout, "What's holdin' you up? What's happening down there?"

"We had . . . trouble," Toglio shouted back. "Wait!" He and Goldstein succeeded in turning the gun on its side. "The wheel's shot," Toglio shouted. "We can't move the gun."

Croft swore. "Get her out of the way."

They tried, and couldn't budge it.

"We need help," Goldstein shouted.

Croft swore again, and then he and Wilson slid down the bank. After a while they were able to tumble the gun over enough times to move it down the creek bed. Without saying anything, Croft went back to his gun, and Toglio and the others climbed up the far bank and went staggering down the trail till they reached 1st Battalion's bivouac. The men who had arrived before them were lying on the ground motionless. Toglio stretched out in the mud, and Wyman and Goldstein lay down beside him. None of them spoke for ten minutes. Occasionally, a shell might burst somewhere in the jungle about them and their legs might twitch, but this was the only sign they gave of being conscious. Men were moving about constantly, and the sounds of the fighting were closer, more vicious. Voices kept coming to them out of the darkness. Someone would shout, "Where's the pack train for B Company?" and the answer would be muffled to the men lying on the ground. They hardly cared. Occasionally they would be aware of the sounds of the night; for a few instants they might concentrate on the constant thrumming that emanated from the jungle, but they always relapsed into a stupor, thinking of nothing once more.

Croft and Wilson and Gallagher brought their gun in a short while later, and Croft shouted for Toglio.

"What do you want? I'm here," Toglio said. He hated to move.

Croft came toward him in the darkness and sat down beside him. His breath was coming in long slow gasps like a runner after a race. "I'm going to see the Lieutenant . . . tell him about the gun. How the hell did it happen?"

Toglio propped himself on an elbow. He loathed the explanations that were to come, and he was confused. "I don't know," he said. "I heard Goldstein yell 'Watch out' and then it just seemed to rip out of our hands." Toglio hated to give excuses to Croft.

"Goldstein yelled, huh?" Croft asked. "Where is he?"

"Here I am, Sergeant." Goldstein's voice came out of the darkness beside them.

"Why'd you yell 'Watch out'?"

"I don't know. I felt suddenly as if I couldn't hold it any more. Something pulled it away from me."

"Who was the other man?"

Wyman roused himself. "I guess I was." His voice sounded weak.

"Did you let go?" Croft asked.

Wyman felt a trace of fear as he thought of admitting that to Croft. "No," he said. "No, I don't think so. I heard Goldstein yell, and then the gun started to come down on me. It was rolling back so I got out of the way." Already he was uncertain exactly how it had occurred, and a part of his mind was trying to convince him that he spoke the truth. With it, however, he felt a surprising flush of shame. "I guess it was my fault," he blurted out honestly, but his voice was so tired that it lacked sincerity, and Croft thought he was trying to protect Goldstein.

"Yeah," Croft said. A spasm of rage worked through him, and he turned on Goldstein and said, "Listen, Izzy."

"My name isn't Izzy," Goldstein said angrily.

"I don't give a damn what it is. The next time you pull a goddam trick like that, I'm going to put you in for a court-martial."

"But I don't think I let go," Goldstein protested weakly. By now,

he too was no longer sure. The sequence of his sensations when the gun had begun to pull out of his hands was too confused for him to feel righteous. He had thought that Wyman stopped pushing first, but when Wyman declared he was to blame, Goldstein had a moment of panic. Like Croft, he believed Wyman was protecting him. "I don't know," he said. "I don't think I did."

"You don't think," Croft cut him off. "Listen, for as long as you've been in the platoon, Goldstein, you've done nothing but have ideas about how we could do something better. But when it comes down to a little goddam work, you're always dicking off. I've had enough of that bullshit from you."

Once again Goldstein was feeling a helpless anger. A reaction he could not control, his agitation was even greater than his resentment and choked him so that he could not speak. A few tears of frustration welled in his eyes, and he turned away and lay down again. His anger was now directed toward himself and he felt a hopeless shame. Oh, I don't know, I don't know, he said.

Toglio had a mingled relief and pity. He was glad the onus of losing the gun was not his, and yet he was unhappy anyone should be blamed. The bond of common effort that the three men had known while struggling with the weapon was still with him, and he said to himself, poor Goldstein, he's a good guy; he just had hard luck.

Wyman was too exhausted to think clearly. After he declared it was his fault, he was relieved to discover he was not to be blamed after all. He was actually too depleted to think consecutively about anything, or indeed remember anything. By now, he was convinced it was Goldstein who had deserted the gun, and his main reaction was one of comfort. The image still most vivid to him was the agony he had felt in his chest and groin as they had started up the embankment, and he thought, I would have let go two seconds later if he didn't. For this reason, Wyman felt a dulled sense of affection for Goldstein.

Croft stood up. "Well, that's one gun they ain't going to rescue for a little while," he said. "I bet it stays there for the whole campaign." He was enraged enough to strike Goldstein. Without saying

anything more, Croft left them and went in search of the officer who had led the column.

The men in the platoon settled down and began to sleep. Occasionally a shell would burst in the jungle nearby, but they hardly cared. The battle had been threatening all evening like a thunderstorm which never breaks, and by now it would have taken a barrage to move them. Besides, they were too weary to dig holes.

It took Red longer to fall asleep than any of the others. For many years his kidneys had bothered him whenever he had too much exposure to dampness. They were throbbing now, and he turned several times on the wet ground, trying to decide if it would be less painful to sleep with his back against the moist earth or exposed to the night air. He lay awake for a long time thinking, his mood turning through a small gamut from weariness to sadness. He was thinking of a time when he had been caught in a small town in Nebraska with no jobs to be had, and had had to wait until he could catch a boxcar out of town. It had seemed very important to him then not to beg for something to eat, and he wondered if he still had that pride. "Oh, I've been tough in my time," he muttered to himself. "Lot of good it does me." The air was cold on his back, and he turned over. It seemed to him that all his life he had been sleeping in bare wet places, seeking for warmth. He thought of an old hobo saying, "Half a buck in your pocket and winter coming," and felt some of the gloom he had known on cold October twilights. His stomach was empty, and he got up after a while and rummaged through his pack. He found a K ration and chewed the fruit bar, washing it down with water from his canteen. His blanket was still wet from the evening storm, but he wrapped it about him and found a little warmth. Then he tried to go to sleep again, but his kidneys were aching too much. At last he sat up, fumbled in the first-aid kit on his cartridge belt, and withdrew the little paper bag of wound tablets. He swallowed half of them and drank about half the water remaining in his canteen. For a moment he thought of using them all, but then he remembered that he might be wounded and need them. It brought back his dejection, and he stared solemnly into the darkness, being able to discern after a time the bodies of the sleep-

ing men around him. Toglio was snoring, and he heard Martinez mutter softly in Spanish and then cry out, "I no kill Jap, God, I no kill him." Red sighed and lay down again. What men sleep easy? he thought.

A trace of an old anger passed through him. I don't give a damn about anything, he said to himself, and listened uneasily to a shell sighing overhead. This time it sounded like the branches of a tree murmuring in a winter wind. He remembered once striding along a highway as evening came. It had been in the eastern coal-mining towns of Pennsylvania and he had watched the miners driving home in their battered Fords, their faces still dark with the day's accumulation of soot and coal dust. It had not looked anything like the mining country in Montana he had left years before, and yet it had been the same. He had walked along brooding about home, and someone had given him a ride and treated him to a drink in a noisy bar. That night had a beauty about it now, and he remembered for a moment the sensation of leaving a strange town on a dark freight. Things like that were only glints of light in the long gray day of those years. He sighed again as if to grasp something of the knowledge he had felt for an instant. Nobody gets what he wants, he said to himself, and this deepened his mood of pleasurable sorrow. He was growing drowsy, and he burrowed his head under his forearm. A mosquito began to whine near his ear and he lay still, hoping it would go away. The ground seemed crawling with insects. The little buggers are one thing I'm used to, he thought. For some reason this made him smile.

It was beginning to rain, and Red covered his head with the blanket. His body was slowly sinking into a weary slumber in which different parts of him fell asleep at separate intervals, so that long after he had stopped thinking, a portion of his mind could feel the quivering of an exhausted limb or a cramp in one of his limbs. The shelling was becoming steady, and a half mile away from him a machine gun kept firing. Almost asleep, he watched Croft return and spread out a blanket. The rain continued. After a time, he no longer heard the artillery. But even when he was completely asleep, one last area of his mind noticed what was happening. Although he didn't remember it when he awoke, he heard a platoon of men march by, and

was conscious of some other men beginning to push the antitank guns to the other side of the bivouac. There's a Jap road leads into the bivouac, he said in his sleep. They're going to protect it now. Probably he was feverish.

He dreamed until he heard a voice shout, "Recon? Where's recon?" The dream ebbed away, and he lay there drowsily, listening to Croft spring to his feet and holler, "Here, over here!" Red knew he would have to be moving in a few minutes, and he burrowed deeper into his blankets. His body ached and he knew that when he stood up he would be stiff. "All right, men, on your feet." Croft was shouting. "Come on, get up, we got to move."

Red pulled the cover off his face. It was still raining and his hand came away wet from the top surface of the blanket. When he replaced the blanket in his pack, his pack also would become wet. "Aaaahhhhh-rr." He cleared his throat with disgust and spat once or twice. The taste in his mouth was foul. Gallagher sat up beside him and groaned. "Goddam Army, why don't they let a guy sleep? Ain't we done enough tonight?"

"We're heroes," Red said. He stood up and began to fold his blanket. It was sopping wet on one side and muddy on the other. He had slept with his rifle beside him, covered under the blanket, but it too was wet. Red wondered how long it had been since he was dry. "Fuggin jungle," he said.

"Come on, you men, snap it up," Croft said. A flare lit the wet ugly shrubs about them and flickered dully against their wet black clothing. Red saw that Gallagher's face was covered with mud, and when he felt his own face, his hands came away soiled. "Show me the way to go home," he hummed. "I'm tired and I want to go to bed."

"Yeah," Gallagher said. They made their packs together and stood up. The flare had gone out and they were blinded for a moment in the returning darkness. "Where we going?" Toglio asked.

"Up to A Company. They expect an attack there," Croft said.

"We sure are a hard-luck platoon," Wilson sighed. "At least we're done with them antitank guns. Ah swear Ah'd fight a tank with mah bare hands 'fore Ah'd rassle with one of them sonsofbitches again."

The squad formed a single file and began to move out. First Battalion's bivouac was very small and in thirty seconds they had reached the gap in the barbed wire. Martinez led them cautiously down the trail leading to A Company. His drowsiness vanished quickly, and he became alert. Actually, he could not see anything, but some sense seemed to guide him along the bends in the path so that he rarely stumbled or blundered off the trail. He was proceeding about thirty yards ahead of the other men and he was completely isolated. If some Japanese had been waiting in ambush along the path, he would have been the first to be trapped. Yet he had very little fear; Martinez's terror developed in a void; the moment he had to lead men, his courage returned. At this instant, his mind was poised over a number of sounds and thoughts. His ears were searching the jungle ahead of him for some noise which might indicate that men were waiting in the brush beside the trail; they were also listening with disgust to the stumbling and muttering of the men following behind him. His mind recorded the intermittent sounds of battle and tried to classify them; he looked at the sky whenever they passed through a partial clearing in order to find the Southern Cross and determine in which direction the trail was bending. Wherever he could, he made a mental note of some landmark they were passing and added it to the ones he had observed previously. After a time he kept repeating a jingle to himself which went, Tree over trail, muddy creek, rock on trail, bushes across. Actually there was no reason for him to do it; the trail led only from 1st Battalion to A Company. But this was a habit he had formed on his first patrols. He did it instinctively by now.

And another part of his mind had a quiet pride that he was the man upon whom the safety of the others depended. This was a sustaining force which carried him through dangers his will and body would have resisted. During the march with the antitank guns, there had been many times when he wanted to quit; unlike Croft, he had felt it no contest at all. He would have been perfectly willing to declare the task beyond his strength and give up, but there was a part of his mind that drove him to do things he feared and detested. His pride with being a sergeant was the core about which nearly all his actions and thoughts were bound. Nobody see in the darkness like Martinez,

...said to himself. He touched a branch and
...ent his knees easily and walked under it. His feet were sore and his
back and shoulders ached, but they were ills with which he no longer
concerned himself; he was leading his squad, and that was sufficient in
itself.

The rest of the squad, strung out behind, was experiencing a
variety of emotions. Wilson and Toglio were sleepy, Red was alert
and brooding — he had a sense of foreboding. Goldstein was miser-
able and bitter, and the tension of creeping down a trail in the black
early hours of the morning made him gloomy and then sad. He
thought of himself dying without friends nearby to mourn him. Wy-
man had lost his power to recuperate; he was so tired that he plodded
along in a stupor, not caring where he went or what happened to him.
Ridges was weary and patient; he did not think of what the next hours
would bring him, nor did he lose himself in contemplation of his ach-
ing limbs; he just walked and his mind drifted slowly like a torpid
stream.

And Croft; Croft was tense and eager and impatient. All night
he had been balked by the assignment of the squad to a labor detail.
The sounds of battle he had been hearing all night were goading to
him. His mind was buoyed by a recurrence of the mood he had felt
after Hennessey's death. He felt strong and tireless and capable of
anything; his muscles were as strained and jaded as any of the men's,
but his mind had excluded his body. He hungered for the fast taut
pulse he would feel in his throat after he killed a man.

On the map there was only a half mile between 1st Battalion and
A Company, but the trail doubled and curved so often that it was
actually a mile. The men in recon were clumsy now and uncertain of
their footing. Their packs sagged, their rifles kept sliding off their
shoulders. The trail was crude; originally a game wallow, it had been
partially enlarged, and in places it was still narrow. A man could not
walk without being scratched by the branches on either side. The
jungle was impenetrable at that point, and it would have taken an
hour to cut one's way a hundred feet off the path. In the night it was
impossible to see anything and the smell of the wet foliage was chok-
ing. The men had to walk in single file, drawn up close. Even at three

feet they could not see one another, and they plodded down the trail with each man grasping the shirt of the man before him. Martinez could hear them and judge his distance accordingly, but the others stumbled and collided with one another like children playing a game in the dark. They were bent over almost double, and the posture was cruel. Their bodies were outraged; they had been eating and sleeping with no rhythm at all for the last few hours. They kept loosing gas whose smell was nauseating in the foul dense air. The men at the rear had the worst of it; they gagged and swore, tried not to breathe for a few seconds, and shuddered from fatigue and revulsion. Gallagher was at the end of the file, and every few minutes he would cough and curse. "Cut out the goddam farting," he would shout, and the men in front would rouse themselves for a moment and laugh.

"Eatin' dust, hey, boy," Wilson muttered, and a few of them began to giggle.

Some of them began to fall asleep as they walked. Their eyes had been closed almost the entire march, and they drowsed for the instant their foot was in the air and awakened as it touched the ground. Wyman had been plodding along for many minutes with no sensation at all; his body had grown numb. He and Ridges drowsed continually, and every now and then for ten or fifteen yards they would be completely asleep. At last they would weave off the trail and go pitching into the bushes stupidly before regaining their balance. In the darkness such noises were terrifying. It made the men uncomfortably aware of how close they were to the fighting. A half mile away some rifles were firing.

"Goddammit," one of them would whisper, "can't you guys keep quiet?"

The march must have taken them over half an hour, but after the first few minutes they no longer thought about time. Crouching and sliding through the mud with their hands on the man in front became the only thing they really knew; the trail was a treadmill and they no longer concerned themselves with where they were going. To most of them the end of the march came as a surprise. Martinez doubled back and told them to be quiet. "They hear you coming for ten minutes," he whispered. A hush settled over the men, and they trod the last

...yards with ridiculous precautions, tensing every muscle when-
...they took a step.

There was no barbed wire, nor any clearing at A Company. The
...divided in a quadruple fork which led to different emplacements.
...soldier met them where the path broke up and led the squad along
...of the footpaths to a few pup tents pitched in the middle of some
...foliage. "I got Second Platoon," he told Croft. "I'm just about a
...hundred yards down the river. Your squad can sleep in these holes
...tonight, and set up a guard right along here. They's two machine guns
...set up for you."

"What's doing?" Croft whispered.

"I dunno. I heard they expect an attack all up and down the line
...about dawn. We had to send a platoon over to C Company early to-
...night, and we been holding down the whole outpost here with less
...than a platoon." He made a rustling sound in the darkness as he wiped
...his hand against his mouth. "C'mere, I'll show you the setup," he said,
...grasping Croft's elbow. Croft slipped his arm free; he hated to have
...anyone touch him.

They went a few feet along the path, until the sergeant from A
Company halted before a foxhole. There was a machine gun mounted
in front, its muzzle just projecting through a fringe of bushes. Croft
peered through the foliage and in the faint moonlight was able to see
a stream of water and a strip of beach bordering it on either side.
"How deep is the river?" he asked.

"Aw, it's four, five feet maybe. That water ain't going to stop
them."

"Any outposts forward of here?" Croft asked.

"Nothing. And the Japs know right where we are. Had some
patrols up." The soldier wiped his mouth again and stood up. "I'll
show you the other machine gun." They walked along a stubby path
cut through the jungle about ten feet from the river's edge. Some
crickets were chirping loudly, and the soldier trembled a little.
"Here's the other one," he said. "This is the flank." He peered through
the bushes and stepped out onto the strip of beach. "Look," he said.
Croft followed him. About fifty yards to their right, the bluffs of
Watamai Range began. Croft looked up. The cliffs rose almost verti-

cally for perhaps a thousand feet. Even in the darkness, he felt them hovering above him. He strained his eyes and thought he saw a swatch of sky where they ended but could not be certain. He had a curious thrill. "I didn't know we were that close," he said.

"Oh, yeah. It's good and it's bad. You don't have to worry about them coming around that end, but still we're the flank. If they ever hit here hard, there ain't much to hold them." The soldier drew into the bushes again and exhaled his breath slowly. "I'll tell you these two nights we been out here give me the creeps. Look at that river. When there's a lot of moonlight it just seems to shine, and you get jittery after a while looking at it."

Croft remained outside the jungle edge, looking at the stream that curved away at the right and flowed parallel to the mountains. It took a turn toward the Japanese lines just a few yards before the first walls of the bluff began, and he would be able to see everything on that side. To the left the stream ran straight for a few hundred yards like a highway at night, sunk between high grassy banks. "Where are you?" he asked.

The soldier pointed to a tree which projected a little from the jungle. "We're just on this side of it. If you got to get to us, go back to the fork and then take the trail at the far right going away from here. Yell 'Buckeye' when you come up."

"Okay," Croft said. They talked for a few more minutes, and then the other soldier hooked his cartridge belt. "Jesus, I'll tell ya, it'll drive ya crazy spending a night here. Just wilderness, that's all, and you stuck out at the end of it with nothing but a lousy machine gun." He slung his rifle and struck off down the trail. Croft looked at him for a moment and then went back to recon. The men were waiting by the three pup tents, and he showed them where the two machine guns were placed. Briefly he told them what he had learned and picked a guard. "It's three A.M. now," he told them. "There's gonna be four of us on one post and five on the other. We'll do it in two-hour shifts. Then the post that's only got four men will get the extra one for the next time around." He divided them up, taking the first shift at the flank gun himself. Wilson volunteered to take the other gun. "After Ah'm done, Ah'm gonna want to sleep right on through," Wilson

said. "Ah'm tired of gittin' up right when Ah'm havin' a good dream."

The men smiled wanly.

"An' listen," Croft added, "if any trouble starts, the men that are sleeping are to git up goddam fast and move to help us. It's only a couple of yards from our tents to Wilson's machine gun, and it ain't much further to mine. It shouldn't be takin' you all more than about three hours to reach us." Again, a couple of men smiled. "Okay, that's about it," Croft said. He left them and walked over to his machine gun.

He sat down on the edge of the hole and peered through the bushes at the river. The jungle completely surrounded him, and, now that he was no longer active, he felt very weary and a little depressed. To counteract this mood, he began to feel the various objects in the hole. There were three boxes of belt ammunition and a row of seven grenades lined up neatly at the base of the machine gun. At his feet were a box of flares and a flare gun. He picked it up and broke open the breech quietly, loaded it, and cocked it. Then he set it down beside him.

A few shells murmured overhead and began to fall. He was a little surprised at how near they landed to the other side of the river. Not more than a few hundred yards away, the noise of their explosion was extremely loud; a few pieces of shrapnel lashed the leaves on the trees above him. He broke off a stalk from a plant and put it in his mouth, chewing slowly and reflectively. He guessed that the weapons platoon of A Company had fired, and he tried to determine which trail at the fork would lead to them in case he had to pull back his men. Now he was patient and at ease; the danger of their position neutralized the anticipation for some combat he had felt earlier, and he was left cool and calm and very tired.

The mortar shells were falling perhaps fifty yards in front of the platoon at his left, and Croft spat quietly. It was too close to be merely harassing fire; someone had heard something in the jungle on the other side of the river or they would never have called for mortars so close to their own position. His hand explored the hole again and discovered a field telephone. Croft picked up the receiver, listened

quietly. It was an open line, and probably confined to the platoons of A Company. Two men were talking in voices so low that he strained to hear them.

"Walk it up another fifty and then bring it back."

"You sure there're Japs?"

"I swear I heard them talking."

Croft stared tensely across the river. The moon had come out, and the strands of beach on either side of the stream were shining with a silver glow. The jungle wall on the other side looked impenetrable.

The mortars fired again behind him with a cruel flat sound. He watched the shells land in the jungle, and then creep nearer to the river in successive volleys. A mortar answered from the Japanese side of the river, and about a quarter of a mile to the left Croft could hear several machine guns spattering at each other, the uproar deep and irregular. Croft picked up the phone and whistled into it. "Wilson," he whispered. "*Wilson!*" There was no answer and he debated whether to walk over to Wilson's hole. Silently Croft cursed him for not noticing the phone, and then berated himself for not having discovered it before he briefed the others. He looked out across the river. Fine sergeant I am, he told himself.

His ears were keyed to all the sounds of the night, and from long experience he sifted out the ones that were meaningless. If an animal rustled in its hole, he paid no attention; if some crickets chirped, his ear disregarded them. Now he picked a muffled slithering sound which he knew could be made only by men moving through a thin patch of jungle. He peered across the river, trying to determine where the foliage was least dense. At a point between his gun and Wilson's there was a grove of a few coconut trees sparse enough to allow men to assemble; as he stared into that patch of wood, he was certain he heard a man move. Croft's mouth tightened. His hand felt for the bolt of the machine gun, and he slowly brought it to bear on the coconut grove. The rustling grew louder; it seemed as if men were creeping through the brush on the other side of the river to a point opposite his gun. Croft swallowed once. Tiny charges seemed to pulse through his limbs and his head was as empty and shockingly aware as if it had

been plunged into a pail of freezing water. He wet his lips and shifted his position slightly, feeling as though he could hear the flexing of his muscles.

The Jap mortar fired again and he started. The shells were falling by the next platoon, the sound painful and jarring to him. He stared out on the moonlit river until his eyes deceived him; he began to think he could see the heads of men in the dark swirls of the current. Croft gazed down at his knees for an instant and then across the river again. He looked a little to the left or right of where he thought the Japanese might be; from long experience he had learned a man could not look directly at an object and see it in the darkness. Something seemed to move in the grove, and a new trickle of sweat formed and rolled down his back. He twisted uncomfortably. Croft was unbearably tense, but the sensation was not wholly unpleasant.

He wondered if Wilson had noticed the sounds, and then in answer to his question, there was the loud unmistakable clicking of a machine gun bolt. To Croft's keyed senses, the sound echoed up and down the river, and he was furious that Wilson should have revealed his position. The rustling in the brush became louder and Croft was convinced he could hear voices whispering on the other side of the river. He fumbled for a grenade and placed it at his feet.

Then he heard a sound which pierced his flesh. Someone called from across the river, "Yank, Yank!" Croft sat numb. The voice was thin and high-pitched, hideous in a whisper. "That's a Jap," Croft told himself. He was incapable of moving for that instant.

"Yank!" It was calling to him. "Yank. We you coming-to-get, Yank."

The night lay like a heavy stifling mat over the river. Croft tried to breathe.

"We you coming-to-get, Yank."

Croft felt as if a hand had suddenly clapped against his back, traveled up his spine over his skull to clutch at the hair on his forehead. "Coming to get you, Yank," he heard himself whisper. He had the agonizing frustration of a man in a nightmare who wants to scream and cannot utter a sound. "We you coming-to-get, Yank."

He shivered terribly for a moment, and his hands seemed con-

gealed on the machine gun. He could not bear the intense pressure in his head.

"We you coming-to-get, Yank," the voice screamed.

"COME AND GET ME YOU SONSOFBITCHES," Croft roared. He shouted with every fiber of his body as though he plunged at an oaken door.

There was no sound at all for perhaps ten seconds, nothing but the moonlight on the river and the taut rapt buzzing of the crickets. Then the voice spoke again. "Oh, we come, Yank, we come."

Croft pulled back the bolt on his machine gun, and rammed it home. His heart was still beating with frenzy "Recon . . . RECON, UP ON THE LINE," he shouted with all his strength.

A machine gun lashed at him from across the river, and he ducked in his hole. In the darkness, it spat a vindictive white light like an acetylene torch, and its sound was terrifying. Croft was holding himself together by the force of his will. He pressed the trigger of his gun and it leaped and bucked under his hand. The tracers spewed wildly into the jungle on the other side of the river.

But the noise, the vibration of his gun, calmed him. He directed it to where he had seen the Japanese gunfire and loosed a volley. The handle pounded against his fist, and he had to steady it with both hands. The hot metallic smell of the barrel eddied back to him, made what he was doing real again. He ducked in his hole waiting for the reply and winced involuntarily as the bullets whipped past.

BEE-YOWWWW! . . . BEE-YOOWWWW! Some dirt snapped at his face from the ricochets. Croft was not conscious of feeling it. He had the surface numbness a man has in a fight. He flinched at sounds, his mouth tightened and loosened, his eyes stared, but he was oblivious to his body.

Croft fired the gun again, held it for a long vicious burst, and then ducked in his hole. An awful scream singed the night, and for an instant Croft grinned weakly. Got him, he thought. He saw the metal burning through flesh, shattering the bones in its path. "AII-YOHHHH." The scream froze him again, and for an odd disconnected instant he experienced again the whole complex of sounds and smells and sights when a calf was branded. "RECON, UP . . . UP!"

he shouted furiously and fired steadily for ten seconds to cover their advance. As he paused he could hear some men crawling behind him, and he whispered, "Recon?"

"Yeah." Gallagher dropped into the hole with him. "Mother of Mary," he muttered. Croft could feel him shaking beside him.

"Stop it!" he gripped his arm tensely. "The other men up?"

"Yeah."

Croft looked across the river again. Everything was silent, and the disconnected abrupt spurts of fire were forgotten like vanished sparks from a grindstone. Now that he was no longer alone, Croft was able to plan. The fact that men were up with him, were scattered in the brush along the bank between their two machine guns, recovered his sense of command. "They're going to attack soon," he whispered hoarsely in Gallagher's ear.

Gallagher trembled again. "Ohh. No way to wake up," he tried to say, but his voice kept lapsing.

"Look," Croft whispered. "Creep along the line and tell them to hold fire until the Japs start to cross the river."

"I can't, I can't," Gallagher whispered.

Croft felt like striking him. "Go!" he whispered.

"I can't."

The Jap machine gun lashed at them from across the river. The bullets went singing into the jungle behind them, ripping at leaves. The tracers looked like red splints of lightning as they flattened into the jungle. A thousand rifles seemed to be firing at them from across the river, and the two men pressed themselves against the bottom of the hole. The sounds cracked against their eardrums. Croft's head ached. Firing the machine gun had partially deafened him. BEE-YOWWWW! A ricochet slapped some more dirt on top of them. Croft felt it pattering on his back this time. He was trying to sense the moment when he would have to raise his head and fire the gun. The firing seemed to slacken, and he lifted his eyes cautiously. BEE-YOWWWW, BEE-YOWWWW! He dropped in the hole again. The Japanese machine gun raked through the brush at them.

There was a shrill screaming sound, and the men covered their heads with their arms. BAA-ROWWMM, BAA-ROWWMM,

ROWWMM, ROWWMM. The mortars exploded all about then and something picked Gallagher up, shook him, and then released him. "O God," he cried. A clod of dirt stung his neck. BAA-ROWWMM, BAA-ROWWMM.

"Jesus, I'm hit," someone screamed, "I'm hit. Something hit me."

BAA-ROWWMM.

Gallagher rebelled against the force of the explosions. "Stop, give up," he screamed. "STOP! . . . I give up! I give up!" At that instant he no longer knew what made him cry out.

BAA-ROWWMM, BAA-ROWWMM.

"I'm hit, I'm hit," someone was screaming. The Japanese rifle were firing again. Croft lay on the floor of the hole with his hand against the ground and every muscle poised in its place.

BAA-ROWWMM. TEEEEEEEN! The shrapnel was singing as it scattered through the foliage.

Croft picked up his flare gun. The firing had not abated, but through it he heard someone shouting in Japanese. He pointed the gun in the air.

"Here they come," Croft said.

He fired the flare and shouted, "STOP 'EM!"

A shrill cry came out of the jungle across the river. It was the scream a man might utter if his foot was being crushed. "AAAAIIIIII AAAIIIIII."

The flare burst at the moment the Japanese started their charge. Croft had a split perception of the Japanese machine gun firing from a flank, and then he began to fire automatically, not looking where he fired, but holding his gun low, swinging it from side to side. He could not hear the other guns fire, but he saw their muzzle blasts like exhausts.

He had a startling frozen picture of the Japanese running toward him across the narrow river. "AAAAIIIIIIIIH," he heard again. In the light of the flare the Japanese had the stark frozen quality of men revealed by a shaft of lightning. Croft no longer saw anything clearly; he could not have said at that moment where his hands ended and the machine gun began; he was lost in a vast moil of noise out of which

individual screams and shouts etched in his mind for an instant. He could never have counted the Japanese who charged across the river; he knew only that his finger was rigid on the trigger bar. He could not have loosened it. In those few moments he felt no sense of danger. He just kept firing.

The line of men who charged across the river began to fall. In the water they were slowed considerably and the concentrated fire from recon's side raged at them like a wind across an open field. They began to stumble over the bodies ahead of them. Croft saw one soldier reach into the air behind another's body as though trying to clutch something in the sky and Croft fired at him for what seemed many seconds before the arm collapsed.

He looked to his right and saw three men trying to cross the river where it turned and ran parallel to the bluff. He swung the gun about and lashed them with it. One man fell, and the other two paused uncertainly and began to run back toward their own bank of the river. Croft had no time to follow them; some soldiers had reached the beach on his side and were charging the gun. He fired point blank at them, and they collapsed about five yards from his hole.

Croft fired and fired, switching targets with the quick reflexes of an athlete shifting for a ball. As soon as he saw men falling he would attack another group. The line of Japanese broke into little bunches of men who wavered, began to retreat.

The light of the flare went out and Croft was blinded for a moment. There was no sound again in the darkness and he fumbled for another flare, feeling an almost desperate urgency. "Where is it?" he whispered to Gallagher.

"What?"

"Shit." Croft's hand found the flare box, and he loaded the gun again. He was beginning to see in the darkness, and he hesitated. But something moved on the river and he fired the flare. As it burst, a few Japanese soldiers were caught motionless in the water. Croft pivoted his gun on them and fired. One of the soldiers remained standing for an incredible time. There was no expression on his face; he looked vacant and surprised even as the bullets struck him in the chest.

Nothing was moving now on the river. In the light of the flare,

the bodies looked as limp and unhuman as bags of grain. One soldier began to float downstream, his face in the water. On the beach near the gun, another Japanese soldier was lying on his back. A wide stain of blood was spreading out from his body, and his stomach, ripped open, gaped like the swollen entrails of a fowl. On an impulse Croft fired a burst into him, and felt a twitch of pleasure as he saw the body quiver.

A wounded man was groaning in Japanese. Every few seconds he would scream, the sound terrifying in the cruel blue light of the flare. Croft picked up a grenade. "That sonofabitch is makin' too much noise," he said. He pulled the pin and lobbed the grenade over to the opposite bank. It dropped like a beanbag on one of the bodies, and Croft pulled Gallagher down with him. The explosion was powerful and yet empty like a blast that collapses windowpanes. After a moment, the echoes ceased.

Croft tensed himself and listened to the sounds from across the river. There was the quiet furtive noise of men retreating into the jungle. "GIVE 'EM A VOLLEY!" he shouted.

All the men in recon began to fire again, and Croft raked the jungle for a minute in short bursts. He could hear Wilson's machine gun pounding steadily. "I guess we gave 'em something," Croft told Gallagher. The flare was going out, and Croft stood up. "Who was hit?" he shouted.

"Toglio."

"Bad?" Croft asked.

"I'm okay," Toglio whispered. "I got a bullet in my elbow."

"Can you wait till morning?"

There was silence for a moment, then Toglio answered weakly. "Yeah, I'll be okay."

Croft got out of his hole. "I'm coming down," he announced. "Hold your fire." He walked along the path until he reached Toglio. Red and Goldstein were kneeling beside him, and Croft spoke to them in a low voice. "Pass this on," he said. "We're all gonna stay in our holes until mornin'. I don't think they'll be back tonight, but you cain't tell. And no one is gonna fall asleep. They's only about an hour till dawn, so you ain't got nothin' to piss about."

"I wouldn't go to sleep anyway," Goldstein breathed. "What a way to wake up." It was the same thing Gallagher had said.

"Yeah, well, I just wasn't ridin' on my ass either, waitin' for them to come," Croft said. He shivered for a moment in the early morning air and realized with a pang of shame that for the first time in his life he had been really afraid. "The sonsofbitchin' Japs," he said. His legs were tired and he turned to go back to his gun. I hate the bastards, he said to himself, a terrible rage working through his weary body.

"One of these days I'm gonna really get me a Jap," he whispered aloud. The river was slowly carrying the bodies downstream.

"At least," Gallagher said, "if we got to stay here a couple of days, the fuggers won't be stinkin' up the joint."

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1944-1946

The Second World War - II*The Harbors of the Moon*

met Jack Kennedy in November, 1946. We were both war heroes, and both of us had just been elected to Congress. We went out one night on a double date and it turned out to be a fair evening for me. I seduced a girl who would have been bored by a diamond as big as the Ritz.

She was Deborah Caughlin Mangaravidi Kelly, of the Caughlins first, English-Irish bankers, financiers and priests; the Mangaravidis, a Sicilian issue from the Bourbons and the Hapsburgs; Kelly's family was just Kelly; but he had made a million two hundred times. So there was a vision of treasure, far-off blood, and fear. The night I met her we had a wild ninety minutes in the back seat of my car parked behind a trailer truck on a deserted factory street in Alexandria, Virginia. Since Kelly owned part of the third largest trucking

2 Norman Mailer

firm in the Midwest and West, I may have had a speck of genius to try for his daughter where I did. Forgive me. I thought the road to President might begin at the entrance to her Irish heart. She heard the snake rustle however in *my* heart; on the telephone next morning she told me I was evil, awful and evil, and took herself back to the convent in London where she had lived at times before. I did not know as yet that ogres stand on guard before the portal of an heiress. Now in retrospect I can say with cheer: that was the closest I came to being President. (By the time I found Deborah again—all of seven years later in Paris—she was no longer her father's delight, and we were married in a week. Like any tale which could take ten books, it is best to quit it by a parenthesis—less than ten volumes might be untrue.)

Of course Jack has gone on a bit since those days, and I have traveled up and I have voyaged down and I've gone up and down, but I remember a full moon the night we had our double date, and to be phenomenologically precise, there was also a full moon on the night I led my patrol to the top of a particular hill in Italy, and a full moon the night I met another girl, and a full moon. . . . There are times when I like to think I still have my card in the intellectual's guild, but I seem to be joining company with that horde of the mediocre and the mad who listen to popular songs and act upon coincidence. The real difference between the President and myself may be that I ended with too large an appreciation of the moon, for I looked down the abyss on the first night I killed: four men, four very separate Germans, dead under a full moon—whereas Jack, for all I know, never saw the abyss.

Of course, I did not have any illusion that my heroism was the equal of his. I got good for one night. I was a stiff, overburdened, nervous young Second Lieutenant, fresh from Harvard, graduated a year behind Prince Jack (we never met—not there). I had gone into the Army with a sweaty near-adolescent style, Harvard on the

half-shell ("Raw-Jock" Rojack was the sporting name bestowed on me in House Football) and I had been a humdrum athlete and, as a student, excessively bright: Phi Beta Kappa, *summa cum laude*, Government.

Small wonder I was thus busy working to keep some government among the hard-nosed Southerners and young Mafiosos from the Bronx who made up the double nucleus of my platoon, working so busily that death this night first appeared to me as a possibility considerably more agreeable than my status in some further disorder. I really didn't care much longer whether I stayed alive. When I steered us up the hill therefore to get pinned down in a long, bad line, one hundred feet from the summit, a modest twin dome, a double hill with a German machine gun on one knoll and a German machine gun on the other, I was so ready to die in atonement I was not even scared.

Trapped beneath a rusty sputter—the guns had not quite found me nor any of the others—the full moon giving a fine stain to the salient of our mood (which was fear and funk and a sniff of the grave), I could nonetheless feel danger withdraw from me like an angel, withdraw like a retreating wave over a quiet sea, sinking quietly into the sand, and I stood and then I ran, I ran up the hill into the aisle of safety I felt opening for me which is part of what captured that large decoration later, because the route I took was under the separate fire of each of those guns and the two together could stitch you to a pulp. Their fire was jagged, however, it was startled, and as I ran, I threw my carbine away, out ten yards to the front of me, crossed my arms to pull a grenade from each shirt pocket, pulled the rings with my teeth, which I had hardly been able to do in practice (much too hard on the teeth), released the spoon handles, the fuse now lit, and spitting, and shot my arms out like the wings of the letter Y. The grenades sailed away in separate flights and I had time to stop, turn around, and dive back for my carbine which I had overrun.

Years later I read *Zen in the Art of Archery* and understood the book. Because I did not throw the grenades on that night on the hill under the moon, *it* threw them, and *it* did a near-perfect job. The grenades went off somewhere between five and ten yards over each machine gun, *blast, blast*, like a boxer's tattoo, one-two, and I was exploded in the butt from a piece of my own shrapnel, whacked with a delicious pain clean as a mistress' sharp teeth going "Yummy" in your rump, and then the barrel of my carbine swung around like a long fine antenna and pointed itself at the machine-gun hole on my right where a great bloody sweet German face, a healthy spoiled overspoiled young beauty of a face, mother-love all over its making, possessor of that overcurved mouth which only great fat sweet young faggots can have when their rectum is tuned and entertained from adolescence on, came crying, sliding, smiling up over the edge of the hole, "Hello death!" blood and mud like the herald of sodomy upon his chest, and I pulled the trigger as if I were squeezing the softest breast of the softest pigeon which ever flew, still a woman's breast takes me now and then to the pigeon on that trigger, and the shot cracked like a birth twig across my palm, *whop!* and the round went in at the base of his nose and spread and I saw his face sucked in backward upon the gouge of the bullet, he looked suddenly like an old man, toothless, sly, reminiscent of lechery. Then he whimpered "*Mutter,*" one yelp from the first memory of the womb, and down he went into his own blood just in time, timed like the interval in a shooting gallery, for the next was up, his hole-mate, a hard avenging specter with a pistol in his hand and one arm off, blown off, rectitude like a stringer of saliva across the straight edge of his lip, the straightest lip I ever saw, German-Protestant rectitude. *Whap!* went my carbine and the hole was in his heart and he folded back the long arm with the pistol, back across his chest to cover his new hole and went down straight and with a clown's deep gloom as if he were sliding down a long thin pipe, and then I turned, feeling

something tear in my wound, nice in its pain, a good blood at liberty, and I took on the other two coming out of the other hole, one short stocky ape-like wretch with his back all askew, as if he'd had a false stuffed hump which shrapnel had disgorged beyond his shoulder blade: I fired at him and he went down and I never knew where it hit nor quite saw his face; then the last stood up straight with a bayonet in his hand and invited me to advance. He was bleeding below his belt. Neat and clean was his shirt, level the line of his helmet, and nothing but blood and carnage below the belt. I started to rise. I wanted to charge as if that were our contract, and held, for I could not face his eyes, they now contained all of it, the two grenades, the blood on my thigh, the fat faggot, the ghost with the pistol, the hunchback, the blood, those bloody screams that never sounded, it was all in his eyes, he had eyes I was to see once later on an autopsy table in a small town in Missouri, eyes belonging to a redneck farmer from a deep road in the Ozarks, eyes of blue, so perfectly blue and mad they go all the way in deep into celestial vaults of sky, eyes which go back all the way to God is the way I think I heard it said once in the South, and I faltered before that stare, clear as ice in the moonlight, and hung on one knee, not knowing if I could push my wound, and suddenly it was all gone, the clean presence of *it*, the grace, *it* had deserted me in the instant I hesitated, and now I had no stomach to go, I could charge his bayonet no more. So I fired. And missed. And fired again. And missed. Then he threw his bayonet at me. It did not reach. He was too weak. It struck a stone instead and made a quivering whanging sound like the yowl of a tomcat on the jump. Then it stopped between us. The light was going out in his eye. It started to collect, to coagulate into the thick jelly which forms on the pupil of a just-dead dog, and he died then, and fell over. Like a noble tree with rotten roots. And the platoon was up around me, shooting a storm into those two holes, and they were cheering, buzzing, kissing my mouth (one of the Italians for certain), pounding my back.

6 *Norman Mailer*

"Get off him, he's wounded," shouted somebody, the Sergeant, and I felt like a halfback who has caught a fifty-yard pass and run another forty-eight for the longest touchdown in the history of the school, except that the final excellence of it was smuggled away since the ball squiggled out of my arms as I ran it out past the end zone. I had scored, but no football in my belly at the end, just six points. And those blue eyes kept staring into the new flesh of my memory until I went over with a thud, a wave from the wound carrying me back, forcing my head to the ground with some desire of its own. "Medics," I heard a man yell.

I was carried out later on a stretcher, an X-ray showed a minor crack and small split in the girdle of the pelvis. I was evacuated to a base hospital, then sent to New York where I was given a Distinguished Service Cross, not anything less, and was used for the last year to bring good public relations for the Army. Which I did, showing the trace of a distinguished limp. A hero in mid-'44, a hero for all of '45, surviving even V-J Day, I had my pick of opportunities and used them. I went around for a time speaking with Mrs. Roosevelt at one honorable drive after another, and she liked me. She encouraged me to think of politics. Those became the years when the gears worked together, the contacts and the insights, the style and the manufacture of oneself. It all turned together very well, I was a curiosity after all, a most special product; I was the one intellectual in America's history with a DSC and I spoke in public with a modest warrior's charm.

About the time the Party machine in New York County was sorting through its culls and giving me odd off-hand invitations to lunch with the Cardinal and the Bishop ("One question, son," asked the first Eminence, "do you believe in God?" "Yes, your Eminence") Mrs. Roosevelt was introducing me to Protestant gentry and Jewish gentry and, yes, it all began to fit and fit so well I came out, by the end, a candidate for Congress, and was then

ected. Congressman Stephen Richards Rojack, Democrat from New York.

Now, I could go into more detail about the precise sequence of steps which left me a young Congressman in 1946 at the age of twenty-six—the moves were not automatic after all, but that would merely describe the adventures of the part which I as a young actor was playing. There are any number of movie stars who capture the love of women they have never seen; the poor husbands of those women are in competition with a man they cannot meet. But I think of those particular few movie stars who are not only profiles for a great lover, but homosexual and private in their life. They must live with insanity on every breath. And something which could correspond to this was true for me. Where many another young athlete or hero might have had a vast and continuing recreation with sex, I was lost in a private kaleidoscope of death. I could not forget the fourth soldier. His eyes had come to see what was waiting on the other side, and they told me then that death was a creation more dangerous than life. I could have had a career in politics if only I had been able to think that death was zero, death was everyone's emptiness. But I knew it was not. I remained an actor. My personality was built upon a void. Thus I quit my place in politics almost as quickly as I gained it, for by '48 I chose to bolt the Democratic Party and run for office on the Progressive ticket. Henry Wallace, Glen Taylor, and me. I had reasons for the choice, some honorable, some spurious, but one motive now seems clear—I wanted to depart from politics before I was separated from myself forever by the distance between my public appearance which had become vital on television, indeed nearly robust, and my secret frightened romance with the phases of the moon. About the month you decide not to make a speech because it is the week of the full lunar face you also know if still you are sane that politics is not for you and you are not for politics.

~~Now, that was a long time ago. Since then I had, as I say,~~

1944 *The Death of Mary Gallagher*

The Second World War - III

The Death of Mary Gallagher

1944

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The Death of Mary Gallagher

The Naked and the Dead
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the death, I was talking to Brown about it." He looked at the tied bundle of envelopes, sighed, and stamped on them, "Addressed Killed in Action." He was about to put the letters in one of the bags at his feet, when he noticed the return address. He skimmed through the envelopes and discovered it was the same on all of them. "Hey, look at this," he said to the assistant.

The return address on the letters was "Mom and Dad, 12 Riverdale Avenue, Tacuchet, Indiana." The assistant read it to himself, and thought for a moment of a rosy-cheeked man and woman with graying hair, the Mom and Pop of a thousand billboard ads for soft drinks and mouthwashes and toothpastes. "Gee, isn't that sad," he said.

"Yeah, it sure is."

~~"Well, you think, the accident was."~~

After the midday meal, Gallagher was sitting in his tent when Croft called him. "What is it?" Gallagher asked.

"The chaplain wants to see you," Croft said.

"What about?"

"I don't know," Croft shrugged. ~~"Why don't you go see him?"~~

"We'll be gone when you get back, so you'll have perimeter guard for the afternoon."

Gallagher walked through the bivouac and stopped at the chaplain's tent. His heart was beating quickly, and he was trying to suppress the hope he was feeling. Before they had landed on Anopopei, he had asked the chaplain if he needed another assistant, and the chaplain had promised to consider him. To Gallagher it meant getting out of combat, and he had allowed himself to dream about the possibility several times.

"Good afternoon, Father Leary," he said. "I heard you wanted to see me." His voice was polite and uncomfortable, and he was perspiring from the effort of having to watch his profanity.

"Sit down, Gallagher." Father Leary was a tall slim middle-aged man with light hair, and a caressing voice.

"What is it, Father?"

"Go ahead and smoke, son." Father Leary lit a cigarette for him.

"You get much mail from home, Gallagher?"

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"My wife writes to me every day, almost, Father. She's gonna be having a baby any day now."

"Yes." Father Leary was silent; he fingered his lip, and then sat down abruptly. He put his hand on Gallagher's knee. "Son, I have some pretty bad news for you."

Gallagher felt a chill. "What is it, Father?"

"You know, son, there're a lot of things which are difficult to understand. You just have to believe that it's right, and that there's a good reason for it, that God understands and sees and does what is best, even if we don't understand right away."

Gallagher was ill at ease and then abruptly frantic. All kinds of wild thoughts passed through his mind. He blurted out, "My wife didn't leave me, did she?" He felt shame as soon as he had spoken.

"No, son, but there has been a death."

"My mother?"

Father Leary shook his head. "Not your parents."

Gallagher thought his child had died in birth. He felt a quick passage of relief. That ain't so bad, went through his mind. For an instant he wondered again dumbly if Father Leary had called him in to give him the job as chaplain's assistant.

"No, son, I'm afraid it was your wife."

The words passed through Gallagher numbly. He sat there without any response, without thinking of anything at all. An insect buzzed in through the folded flaps of the tent, and he watched it. "Wha-a-at?" he asked.

"Your wife died in childbirth, Gallagher." Father Leary looked away. "They were able to save your child, though."

"Mary wasn't very big," Gallagher said. The word "dead" formed for him, and because it now had only one meaning to him, he saw Mary quivering and twitching like the Japanese soldier who had been killed in the draw. He began to shiver uncontrollably. "Dead," he said. The word had no sense. He sat there very numb; his thoughts had retreated into some deep secure closet of his mind and the words of the chaplain fell abstractly on the anesthetized surface of his brain. For a few seconds he felt as if he were hearing a story about someone else in which he was not very interested. Oddly, the only thing he told

himself was that he had to look alert to impress the chaplain. "Ohhhhhh," he said at last.

"The information they gave me was very slight, but I'll give you the details when I hear them, son. It's terribly hard to be so far away from home, and be unable to see your beloved ones for a last time."

"Yeah, it's hard, Father," Gallagher said automatically. Like the rising of the dawn, Gallagher was slowly becoming able to distinguish the objects about him, and understand the news he had heard. His mind was telling him something bad had happened, and he thought, I hope Mary don't worry over the news. He realized suddenly that Mary would not be worrying, and before the contradiction, he retreated; he gazed dully at the wood of the chair upon which the chaplain was sitting. He felt as if he were in a church, and mechanically he looked at his hands and tried to assume a serious expression.

"Life goes on. It's not without meaning that your child was saved. If you wish, I'll inquire for you as to who will take care of her. Perhaps we can arrange a furlough for you."

Gallagher's spirits rose. He would be seeing his wife. But Mary was dead; this time his mind did not retreat quite so far. He sat there thinking of how pleasant the sunlight had been that morning as he climbed on the truck, and dumbly he understood that he wanted to go back to that moment.

"Son, you've got to have courage."

"Yes, Father." Gallagher stood up. He could not feel the soles of his feet, and when he rubbed his mouth it felt swollen and alien under his fingers. He had a moment of panic, and he thought of the snake in the cave. I bet a fuggin Yid was the doctor, he said to himself, and then forgot the thought. It left him with a pleasant glow of righteousness, however. "Well, thanks, Father," he said.

"Go to your tent, son, and lie down," Father Leary said.

"Okay, Father." Gallagher walked through the bivouac area. It was almost deserted now that the men were out on detail, and this gave him a secure feeling of isolation. He came to his tent, dropped in the hole, and stretched out on his blanket. He was feeling nothing except an extreme weariness. His head ached and he wondered idly if he should take an atabrine tablet from his jungle aid kit. Maybe I got

malaria, he said to himself. He remembered the expression on Mary's face in the first days of their marriage when she would set a plate down before him with food upon it. Her wrists were very slim and he could see again the golden hairs on her forearm.

"I bet a fuggin Yid was the doctor," he said aloud. The sound startled him, and he rolled over on his back. He was becoming angry as he thought about it, and once or twice he muttered, "The Yid killed her." It relieved the tension he was feeling. He felt a joyful self-pity, and he let it flow through him for several minutes. His shirt was wet, and every few seconds he would grind his teeth because the tension on his jaws pleased him.

He felt suddenly clammy, and with a rush he began really to understand that his wife was dead. He felt an awful pain and longing which mounted in his chest until he began to weep. The sounds became noticeable to him after a minute or two, and he stopped, a little terrified, for they seemed remote from him. It was as if he had a coating of insulation about all his feelings, and the insulation could be shed for only a moment or two, before his pain drew it about him again.

He began to think of the dead soldiers in the draw, only his mind pictured Mary consecutively in each of the postures their bodies had assumed. He began to shiver again, and an intense feeling of horror and nausea and fear spread through him. He clenched the blanket in his hand and muttered without realizing what he said, "I ain't gone to confession for too long." He became acutely conscious of the odor of his clothing. I stink, I need a bath, he thought. The idea began to bother him, and he thought of going down to the stream and stripping his clothing. He got out of the tent and felt too weak to walk the hundred yards, so he stopped outside Red's tent and filled a helmet from a jerrican of water. When he set the helmet on the ground it tipped and the water slopped over his feet. He took off his shirt, filled the helmet again, and poured the water over his neck. It felt cold and jarring, and he shuddered. Without thinking, he put on his shirt again, and stumbled back to his tent, where he lay without thinking anything for half an hour. The heat of the sun was oppressive on the rubber fabric of the poncho, and he became drowsy, and slept at last. In his slumber, his body would twitch from time to time.

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~~What's in it for a guy?~~

~~Work tomorrow.~~

~~(He would defend the lady in the lavender dress with his sword.)~~

~~He fell asleep in the chair and in the morning he had a cold.~~

48

#

~~Red~~

GALLAGHER'S numbness continued. In the days that followed the news of Mary's death he worked furiously on the road, shoveling without pause in the drainage ditches, and chopping down tree after tree whenever they had to lay a corduroy. He would rarely halt in the breaks they were given every hour, and at night he would eat his supper alone and curl into his blankets, sleeping exhaustedly with his knees near his chin. Wilson would hear him shuddering in the middle of the night, and would throw his blanket over him, clucking to himself at the misery Gallagher was undergoing. Gallagher showed no sign of his grief except that he became even leaner and his eyes and eyelids were swollen as if he had been on a long drinking bout or had played poker for forty-eight hours at a stretch.

The men tried to feel sorry for him, but the event had given a variation to the monotonous sweep of their days on the road. For a short time they sustained a quiet compassion when he was near and spoke in soft voices, uncomfortable in his presence. They ended by feeling merely uncomfortable and were resentful when he sat by them, for it inhibited their speech and made them acutely uneasy. Red felt a little shame and brooded over it one night on guard, deciding there was nothing he could do about it. It's tough, but I can't change it. He looked off into the night and shrugged. To hell with it, it's Gallagher's bloody nose, not mine.

The mail began to come in almost daily, and a frightening thing happened. Gallagher continued to receive letters from his wife. The first one came a few days after Father Leary had told him about her death; it had been mailed almost a month before. Wilson collected the

letters for the platoon that night from the orderly room, and he debated whether to give it to Gallagher. "It's gonna make him feel mighty funny," he said to Croft.

Croft shrugged. "You can't tell. He may want it." Croft was curious to see what happened.

Wilson's voice was casual when he gave it to Gallagher. "Some mail for ya, boy." He felt embarrassed and looked away.

Gallagher's face whitened as he gazed at the letter. "That ain't for me," he muttered. "Some mistake."

"It's your letter, boy." Wilson put an arm on his shoulder, and Gallagher shook it off. "You want me to throw it away?" Wilson asked.

Gallagher looked at the date on the envelope. He shivered a little. "No, give it to me," he blurted. He walked away a few yards and ripped it open. The words were indistinguishable to him, and he could not read it. He began to tremble. Holy Mary, Joseph and Jesus, he said to himself. His eyes were able to focus on a few lines, and their meaning seeped into his mind. "I been worrying about you, Roy, you're allways so angrie about everthing, and I pray for your safety every night. I love you so much when I think of the baby, only sometimes I can't beleive that its going to come so soon. Only three weeks now, the doctor said." Gallagher folded the letter, and walked around blindly. The purple lump on his jawbone twitched dully. "Oh, Christ Saviour," he said aloud. He began to tremble again.

Gallagher could not accept Mary's death. At night, on guard, he would catch himself thinking of his return, and he would imagine what it would be like with Mary to greet him. A dull despair would settle on him, and he would say automatically, She's dead, she's dead, but he did not believe it completely. He had numbed himself.

Now, as the letters from Mary kept coming every few days, he began to believe that she was alive. If someone had asked him about his wife, he would have said, She died, but nevertheless he was thinking about her the way he always had. When she would say that the child was due in ten days, he would count off the time and pick the date that fell ten days after he read the letter. If she told him that she had visited her mother the preceding day, he would think, That was

the time yesterday we were eating chow. For months he had known of her life only through her letters and the habit was too deep for him to break now. He began to feel happy; he looked forward to letters as he always had done, and he would think about them at night before he fell asleep.

After a few days, however, he came to a terrifying realization. The date for her confinement was approaching closer and closer, and finally there would come a last letter and she would be dead. There would be nothing more of her. He would never hear from her again. Gallagher varied between panic and disbelief; there were times when he believed completely and simply that she was alive — the interview with the chaplain was part of a dream. But sometimes, when several days went by without a letter, she became remote, and he realized that he would never see her again. Most of the time, however, the letters moved him superstitiously; he began to think that she had not died but that she was going to, unless he could find some way to prevent it. The chaplain had asked him several times if he wanted a furlough, but he was incapable of considering that; it would have made him admit the thing he did not want to believe.

In contrast to the first frenzy with which he had worked, he began to wander away from the details, and go for long walks by himself along the road. He was warned several times that some Japanese might be waiting in ambush but he was unable to worry about that. Once he walked all the way back to the bivouac area, a distance of seven miles. The men thought he was going mad; occasionally they would discuss him at night, and Croft would say, "That boy's goin' to flip his lid." They felt helpless; they had no idea of what they could say to him. Red suggested they didn't give him any more letters, but the other men were afraid to meddle. They felt the awe and absorption they would have known at watching any process which was inevitable. Gallagher no longer embarrassed them; they would study him morbidly as they might stare at a sick man who they knew had not much time to live.

The mail clerk was told about it and he went to see the chaplain, who spoke to Gallagher. But when Father Leary suggested that it might be best if he didn't receive any more of the letters, Gallagher

pleaded with him, and muttered, "She's gonna die if you take the letters away." The chaplain did not understand his words, but he recognized the intensity of Gallagher's feeling. He was disturbed, and he debated with himself whether to recommend that Gallagher be sent to a hospital, but he had a horror of mental wards and a prejudice against them. Secretly he made out an application for a furlough for Gallagher, but it was refused by Base Headquarters, who notified him that the Red Cross had investigated and the child was being cared for by Mary's parents. He ended by watching Gallagher too.

And Gallagher wandered around, absorbed in things he did not talk about, and the men would see him smile occasionally at some secret knowledge he held. His eyes had become redder, and his eyelids looked raw and angry. He began to have nightmares, and Wilson was awakened one night by Gallagher moaning, "Please, God, you can't let her die, I'll be a good guy, I swear I'll be a good guy." Wilson shuddered, and clapped his hand over Gallagher's mouth. "You're havin' a nightmare, boy," he whispered.

"Okay." Gallagher was silent, and Wilson decided to say something about it to Croft the next day, but in the morning Gallagher was solemn and quiet and he worked very hard on the road. Wilson kept his mouth shut.

A day or two later the platoon was sent down to the beach on an unloading detail. Gallagher had received the final letter from his wife the preceding night and he had been trying to rouse enough courage to read it. He was moody and abstracted; he paid no attention to the conversation of the men in the truck, and soon after they came to the beach he wandered off by himself. They had been unloading crates of rations from a landing craft, and the dead weight of the box on his shoulder had irritated him dully. He dropped the load he was carrying, muttered, "Fug it," and began to walk away.

Croft shouted after him, "Where you going?"

"I don't know, I'll be back." He spoke without looking over his shoulder, and then as if to forestall any more questions, he began to jog through the sand. After he had gone a hundred yards, he felt suddenly tired, and he slowed to a walk. At a turn on the beach, he looked

disinterestedly at the men. There were several landing craft riding against the shore with their motors running, and two columns of men were filing between the supply dump and the boats. A haze was spreading over the sea almost obscuring the few freighters riding at anchor offshore. He walked around the bend, and saw a few squad tents just off the beach. The flaps were rolled and he could see several men lying on cots and talking to each other. Dully, he read the sign, "5279 Quartermaster Trucking Company." He sighed and continued to walk. Goddam quartermaster's got all the breaks, he told himself, but without any real bitterness.

He passed by the strip of beach where Hennessey had been killed. It roused a mood of pity, and he halted to sift a handful of sand through his fingers. "Young kid, didn't even know what the fuggin score was," he thought. He remembered abruptly that when they had picked Hennessey up to move him farther away from the water, his helmet had fallen off. It had landed with a dull grating sound, and it spun once with a gritty noise in the sand. Guy's dead, and that's all he gets. He began to tremble as he remembered the letter in his shirt pocket. He had taken one look at the date, and he had known it would be the last one he would ever get. Maybe she wrote another one, he thought, and kicked some sand. He sat down, looked about him with the suspicious attitude of an animal about to eat in its lair, and then ripped open the flap. The sound tore at his nerves; he was beginning to feel the finality of each of his motions now. Abruptly, he realized the irony of pitying Hennessey. "I got my own fuggin troubles," he muttered. The sheets of paper felt pitifully flimsy in his hands.

He reread the last paragraph when he had finished. "Roy, honey, this'll be the last letter I'll write for a couple of days, the pain started just a little while ago, and Jamie went down to get Dr Newcome. I'm awful scared cawse he said I'm going to have a hard time, but dont worrie cawse everything will be alright, I know it. I wish you could be with me, you got to take awful good care of youeself cawse I would be afraide to be alone. I love you so much, honey."

He folded the letter and put it back in his pocket. He felt a dull ache, his forehead was burning. For several minutes he did not think of anything at all, and then he spat bitterly. Aaah, the fuggin women,

that's all they know, love, I love you, honey, just want to hold a man down. He trembled again; he was remembering the frustrations and annoyances of his marriage for the first time in many months. All a woman wants is to get a man and then she goes to pot, to hell with it all. He was thinking of how wan Mary looked in the morning, and how the left side of her jaw would swell in sleep. Incidents, unpleasant fragments of their life churned turgidly in his brain like a pot of thick stew coming to a boil. She used to wear a tight hair net in the house, and always of course her habit of sitting around in a slip which had a frayed edge. Worst of all was something he had never quite admitted to himself; the walls of the bathroom were thin and he could hear the sounds she made. She had faded in the three years they had been married. She didn't take the right care of herself, he thought bitterly. At this moment he hated the memory of her, hated the suffering she had caused him in the past few weeks. Always that love-dove stuff, and they don't give a fug how they look. He spat again. Don't even have any . . . any manners. He meant "modesty." Gallagher thought of Mary's mother, who was fat and very dowdy and he felt an inarticulate rage at a variety of things — at the very fact that she was so immense, at the lack of money that had made him live in a tiny drab apartment, at all the breaks he had never got, because his wife in dying had caused him so much pain. Never get a goddam thing. He thought of Hennessey and his mouth tightened. Get your head blown off . . . for what, for what? He lit a cigarette, and tossed the match away, looking at where it fell in the sand. Goddam Yids, fight a war for them. He thought of Goldstein. Bunch of fug-ups, lose a goddam gun, won't even take a drink when it's free. He lurched to his feet, and began to walk again. A dull pain and hatred beat through his head.

On the beach giant kelp had washed ashore, and he walked down to the water's edge and looked at it. It was dark brown and very long, perhaps fifty feet, and its dark rubbery skin glistened like snakes, and gave him a jolt of horror. He was remembering the bodies in the cave. "What drunken bastards we were," he said. He was remorseful, or more correctly he generated remorse in himself because he felt he had done something bad. The kelp frightened him — he walked away.

After a few hundred yards, he sat down on the top of a dune which looked out to sea. A storm was coming up, and he felt suddenly cold; a great cloud perhaps thirty miles long, shaped like a flat fish and very dark, had covered most of the sky. A wind had sprung up and was lashing the sand in horizontal sheets along the beach. Gallagher sat there and waited for the rain that did not come. He was feeling pleasurably moody, he was enjoying the barrenness and brooding of the scene, the remote froth of the waves against the shore. Without quite realizing it, he began to draw a woman in the sand. She had great breasts and a narrow waist and very wide full hips. He looked at it soberly, and remembered that Mary was very ashamed of her tiny breasts. She had once said, "I wish they were big."

"Why?"

"I know you like them better that way."

He had lied. "Naw, they're just right the way they are."

An eddy of tenderness wound through him. She had been very small, and he thought of how she had seemed like a little girl to him at times, and how he had been amused at her seriousness. He laughed softly, and then abruptly, with no defenses raised, he realized that she was utterly dead and he would never see her any more. The knowledge flowed through him without resistance, like a torrent of water when a floodgate is lowered. He heard himself sob, and then was no longer conscious of the choking sounds of his anguish. He felt only a vast grief which mellowed him, dissolved the cysts of his bitterness and resentment and fear, and left him spent and weeping on the sand. The softer gentler memories of Mary were coming back to him; he recalled the sweltering liquid rhythms of their bodies against each other in heat and love, he felt dumbly the meaning of her smile when she handed him his lunch box as he went to work in the morning; he recalled the sad clinging tenderness they had felt for each other on the last night of his last furlough before he went overseas. They had gone on a moonlight excursion in Boston Harbor and he remembered with a pang how they had sat silently in the stern of the ship, holding each other's hands, and watching with a tender absorbed silence the turbulence of the wake. She was a good girl, he said to himself. He was thinking without quite phrasing it that no other person had ever un-

derstood him so fully, and he felt a secret relief as he realized that she had understood him and still loved him. This opened again the wound of all his loss, and he lay weeping bitterly for many minutes, unconscious of where he was, feeling nothing but the complete sorrow in his body. He would think of the last letter every now and then, and this would send him off into a new spasm of grief. He must have cried for almost an hour.

At last he was spent, and he felt clean and gentle. For the first time he remembered that he had a child, and he wondered what it looked like and what its sex might be. It gave him a delicate joy for an instant, and he thought, If it's a boy, I'm gonna train him early. He'll be a pro baseball player, that's where the money is. His thoughts eddied away, and his mind became rested and empty. He looked moodily at the dense jungle behind him, and wondered how far he would have to walk back. The wind was still sweeping along the beach, and his emotions became vague and shifted about like vapors. He was sad again and thought of cold and lonely things like wind on a winter beach.

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It was a shame such a misfortune had to come to Gallagher, Roth thought. The men had taken an hour break from the unloading detail to eat their K rations, and Roth had gone for a stroll along the beach. He was thinking now of the way Gallagher had looked when he came back from his walk. His eyes had been very red, and Roth decided he had been crying. Still, he takes it well, Roth sighed to himself. He's an ignorant fellow, no education, he probably doesn't have so many feelings. Roth shook his head and continued to trudge through the sand. Absorbed in thought, his chin rested almost on his chest and it emphasized the misshapen humped appearance of his back.

The great rain cloud that had spread over them that morning had blown away and the sun was very hot on his green fatigue cap. He stopped, and mopped his forehead. This tropical weather is uncertain, he told himself, very unhealthy, it's miasmal. His legs and arms ached from the labor of carrying the boxes from the boat to the dump, and he sighed. I'm too old for this kind of thing. It's all right for someone like Wilson or Ridges or even Goldstein, but it's not for me. A wry

1930-1946

Oswald's Tale

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The Second World War IV

~~11~~

Volchuk

When Valya was three years old, she fell on a hot stove and burned her face and was ill for a whole year, all that year from three to four. Her mother died soon after, and her father was left with seven children.

When they buried her mother, Valya's father said, "Now, look at her and remember her." He put them all around the coffin and told them again, "Try to remember your mother." There they were, all seven children, dressed in black. Valya's dress had an ornament like a small cross. She remembers that, and how all her brothers and sisters cried. Their mother had died giving birth to her eighth baby.

She passed away at a hospital fifty kilometers from where they lived, and when her mother felt she was at her last, she asked somebody to call Guri, her husband, and tell him that she wished to say a few words. So, she lay in bed waiting, her eyes on the door, and when she saw that door open, she was so weak she could only say, "Guri, please take care of our children," and then she died. She couldn't live a moment longer. Of course, she still comes back to Valya in her dreams.

While Valya was only the fifth child in this family, she was the second sister, so when her oldest sister left home a couple of years later, Valya had to take care of the house. It was a good family all the same, and they were kindhearted, and approximately everybody was equal. When Valya was seven, she could already bake bread in a stove where you had to use a flat wooden spade to insert your loaf of dough, and everybody was happy when she made her bread because it was tasty.

Her father was a switchman and worked on the Smolenskaya section of the Soviet rail system at a town called Pridneprovsk.

Since his children had no older woman to help them now, Guri married again. And his children were not upset by this new wife but loved her, for she was a nice person, and they even called her Mama. She was very kind to them, even if she was not healthy and had been married twice already; but her only child, from her second marriage, had died and now this was a third marriage, and Guri and this new wife did not have children together.

It is possible the stepmother married Valya's father so she wouldn't have to stay on a collective farm but could live with a man who did not need a wife to work outside. Sometimes Valya wondered why he did marry her, because she was sick a lot, even hospitalized; but though she did not help so much as hoped, these children needed her to feel like a family, and so they waited each time for her to return from her sickness. She did care for Guri's children. Sometimes when Valya's father went to Smolensk or to Vitebsk and returned with something special to eat, he would say to his new wife, "You see, there are so many children and they are so young, so I can only bring back this small thing for you," and the wife said yes, but when he left, she usually divided it all, and never kept it for herself. She lived with them for years before she died and they all grew up with her, and Valya's father lived on beyond that, and did not pass away until he was eighty-seven years old. Even when life was not easy, they always had their father.

Valya was very shy. Always upset about her cheek. One side of her face remained scarred from that burn when she was three. The medical cures in those days had been wrong. They used to put on some type of bandage that would dry out, so when they took it away from her skin, it left a mark. Besides, this treatment was painful, very painful. Valya remembers crying through the whole year. She even heard some people say, "Maybe it would be better if she died, because if a girl has a face like this, she does not have happiness." It made her a quiet person, she feels, who kept everything unhappy inside. She never was emotional. She went through things and never screamed at anybody, just felt unhappy inside.

Children, however, were never cruel to her in school. Valya had four brothers, so it was not easy for children to insult her. Her brothers and sisters were all healthy, and so they had a special feeling for Valya. They pitied her because she'd been sick for that entire year and they saw her suffering. Her father even said, "You

know, when you were a child I spent more time with you than with all my others. I was always keeping you in my hands for that whole year, you cried so much." Valya grew up believing that this scar on her cheek had taken away her beauty as a woman. She had a nice body, she had nice teeth, but because of her cheek she did not consider herself attractive. And yet there were always men around her. It was strange. She didn't know why she attracted men, but she did. Even when she was already married and was traveling from Arkhangelsk to Minsk to join her husband, at a time when it was difficult to buy train tickets and she was standing in line for hours to get one, there was a captain standing behind her and they talked for three or four hours while in line. This captain said, "I don't know if you're married or not, but if you can marry me, then we'll register, and you'll be my wife." And she thought, "He says this even though I have such a problem with my cheek!" And she was maybe twenty-three or twenty-four years old. He was very serious. But she said, "I'm going to my husband; I'm married."

Perhaps, she would say, it was because people knew she could make a good home. All this time she was growing up, her interest was housekeeping. She made everything clean; she kept Guri's house spotless. It was a cottage with two rooms, one for his seven children and one for Guri and his wife. There was no kitchen, but in her father's room there was a stove and she cooked meals there. On holidays, like New Year's, they put their decorated tree in the other room, where seven kids slept on three beds.

By every railway station was a small house, usually in a field near the railroad tracks, and its first floor was an office, but the top floor was given to whichever station man lived there with his family. So now, whenever she passes a small railroad station, she feels sad. Her childhood had not been easy, but somehow she likes to remember it and enjoy it, and so this sadness is equal to a recollection of nice moments in life. She enjoys such sadness.

In high school she studied German as a second language, but students were always told that fascism was a totalitarian regime and they were in a democracy of socialism, and, of course, she never saw a German until they arrived in a large group soon after the war began, in June of 1941. She remembers that the fields were ripening and Germans were already in Smolensk. They came so quickly. Everywhere, Russian troops were retreating, leaving behind many tanks, retreating. Germans kept coming. They were masters of this place. First there were planes, and then Germans

showed up themselves, but first there were airplanes high and low, bombarding them. Bridges, their railway station, burned villages. These planes came for a week, then tanks. They occupied everything. The Germans brought their laws, and didn't allow anyone to leave home and walk even a few kilometers without some special pass.

They would kill you. Germans were hanging people on trees. Valya saw that: young partisans on trees. She can see it to this day: There was an alley, and down this alley were young people hanging. Sometimes, on one tree, two people. Everyone in their village went down to look. They were all in horror, but they went to look, back then when she was sixteen and the Germans had overrun all this country she knew.

Her father had been working at the railway station, and the Germans passed through and kept him working. And he did. He had to earn a living. But they were very cruel in other places, and burned many villages. So, all the Russians who were working for the Germans in these villages were worried. They might be punished later. Certainly her father worried. He didn't say anything; but everyone worried about her father being punished, and they talked about it among themselves, and later they would wonder whether Stalin would do something in time to come. Her family always felt marked. Yet, she was never a collaborator, never. She'd always lived honestly in her life. Besides, those Germans beat her father.

Valya still remembers. Their family had a cow but no fodder. And when trains would pass, hay was sometimes left on the station platform, swept out from boxcars. Her father would gather such remains. And one time, some Germans coming by on a train decided he looked Jewish because he had black hair and a black beard and black eyes and was wearing a hat. There were three Germans and they pounded his face and he lost some teeth. Something was always wrong with his teeth after that.

When he managed to get back home that night, he cursed in a way Valya could not repeat. He said the strongest swear words, *Iob ikh mat*. Very strong. She could not say it aloud. It meant doing something sexual to your mother. All of Guri's life, he remembered that beating. He had to stay home for two weeks. Later, he was afraid, but he went out again to pick up hay on the station platform because their cows needed it, and he always worried about being beaten again, but then, they were all afraid.

Later, the Germans took her father and her brothers and two of her uncles away. While they didn't burn the railroad station, they smashed every window. And these Germans raped a lot of women, but not her stepmother, because she was not seductive enough, and none of her sisters or herself, because they were children. Then they tried to burn her house, but they lit it quickly and moved on, and Valya had some water she had been using for washing, so she poured enough on to stop their fire. Neighbors screamed at her and said if any Germans saw it, they'd burn other houses. It was very difficult. They were all standing in their yard, and these Germans had killed their dog, and all the villages around their station were burned.

Her father and her brothers had to stay a year and a half in the German prison camp, right until the end of war. It was fortunate that she could even see them. She and her younger sister and her stepmother would walk. It was thirty-five kilometers away, and they were allowed sometimes to bring food. Because there was a lot of snow, the family had killed their pigs and hid them. That way, her stepmother could boil meat and take it to her brothers and her father. In fact, they sacrificed their own food, though their men, in turn, insisted on giving back a portion. All the same, on their return, they would have to beg on the country roads. They were always hungry all this while that she was fifteen and sixteen, no shoes, no dresses. Once she heard her father talking to her stepmother, and he said, "My daughters are growing up without anything to put on. Take my suit; maybe you can alter it into a dress."

And once, in fact, when Valya was fifteen and her sister fourteen, they were dressed in such old clothes that some Germans called them *matki*, which is a rude word, like "old bags."

One day in June of 1944, with no warning, many Germans came and took every person her age and put them on a train, loaded them into a boxcar, closed it, and transported them away. All the girls were crying. It happened around noon, and they were rounded up and brought to the railway station. They told them not even to bother changing clothes, just took them along in whatever they were wearing, and she learned later that her father couldn't find her when he came back from camp, and fell to his knees and wept, but there she was, in a boxcar, jammed in with so many other girls, and no toilet. They had to pull up a plank and make a hole in their floor.

It was a long train, and they had been picked up from a place where they had been working with shovels; they had to climb up into the boxcar without even the kind of plank that cows go up.

"They just pushed us in there and closed the door. These Germans didn't scream at anybody, didn't beat us, but they were very strict. People were in there already from other places; they kept collecting people at each station. Later, after more stops, it was jammed." She would never forget what she saw on this train to Germany. "No painter could make that picture. On all faces, only fear, as if life had ended, horror had followed. It was dark inside. And then we had to make that hole in the floor of the train." She doesn't remember what tool they used; maybe there was already a little hole and they widened it with their fingers.

Valya never saw even one town and doesn't remember anything about Poland except that she was told, yes, you are crossing Poland. And then they came to a transit camp, where they were told to line up and take off their clothes, and their teeth were checked as if they were horses, and every other part of their bodies, and they were given injections, all in a line naked, both men and women. It was very uncomfortable; they didn't know what was going to happen next; they were all standing there nude without really knowing what was to come. She didn't feel ashamed, because everyone else was also without clothes, but it was uncomfortable. To this day Valya thinks the injections given them on that day kept her from getting pregnant later.

Then they were given back their clothes, and this time they were on that train for a week, with just a little food, a spoonful of soup, and room to sit down on the floor, which was better than when this train first went from Byelorussia to Poland. But everyone still had a bad expression, as if they were going to be executed. Even now Valya can't stop crying when she remembers.

Eventually they arrived at Frankfurt am Main and stayed in a camp with wooden houses and heard that Germans burned a lot of people in giant stoves, but all these girls she was with were young and were going to be put to work, not killed, although anyone was in trouble who looked a little like a Jew.

In camp, their beds were made of wood, no blankets, no pillows, and by preference they slept outside in warm weather. A little later, they were given wooden shoes with hide inside and jackets that bore a special signature, OST, so everyone would know they had come from the east.

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Every morning at seven they would walk downhill from camp to take a train to Frankfurt am Main, where they would work all day, and not return until late at night. She was in this camp for nine months. Valya never saw anyone get shot, although a few young girls died of disease, malnutrition. But there came a day, in April 1945, when a train didn't come to pick them up for their job and they were forced to go to work on foot. Now they could see that American planes had come over the night before in a bombing raid, and Valya saw a railroad track standing straight up in the air. She was afraid to return to camp for fear of another air raid, so she stayed alone in Frankfurt while a friend started back, but not too many minutes had gone by when she thought, "What am I going to do here alone?" and so she ran to catch her friend. At camp, people said they were going to be evacuated, and everyone was afraid. Would they be put into stoves and burned?

People started to escape and, with others, Valya went down a hill so steep they had to slide down parts of it. They also had to cross a valley beyond this hill, and a small forest, and a couple of houses, and a German, who came along with their group, showed them how to hide in a storage bin below ground, and there they stayed for ten days with no light, until the war was over.

Valya heard that it had all been craziness up above while she was below earth. When she came out ten days later she didn't even know that the war had ended, but this German had saved her group, since their camp had been destroyed in a battle between Germans and Americans. It was then that she saw Americans for the first time in her life. There were a lot of Negroes. She remembers that they looked nice; they looked happy and alive, and so well built. They were proud they had liberated people. It was the first time she had seen smiles in a year. Valya thinks that even when she dies, she'll remember this day and how it was when she came out into the light and it was as if her life had started again.

Valya remembers one American soldier who came up to her, offered his canteen, and gave her a big piece of chocolate. It was the first time in Valya's life that she tasted chocolate, and there was wine in his canteen. So there she was, never drank alcohol before either, and suddenly she didn't feel well. There, full of happiness, she still had to throw up.

The American officers said, "If you don't want to return to Russia, you can stay here; we'll try to help you with jobs." But Valya felt she couldn't stay on the American side. She loved her father and

missed him a lot. So those of her friends who also wanted to go home were sent to a transit camp—Russian Reevaluation Camp—and there they were mixed in with thousands of people in Frankfurt an der Oder in this Russian camp where they waited. By now it was June again, and she worked in nearby fields, separating good grass from bad for cows, then milked cows, then was put to work in a small butter factory and was promoted and even put in charge because she worked so well. Here in the butter factory she met a man she loved very much, but he was only there for two months. He was tall and very shy, a modest person, a very good person, and you could hardly say they were dating, but they would meet each night after work and kiss. He never even touched her breasts. He proposed to her and said, "When we are back in Russia, we'll marry." And she had a dream that she was kissing him and kissing him and couldn't stop, but when she told this dream to her girlfriends, they said, "Listen, it means you will never see him again." It turned out to be true, because the Russian Army needed him, and she didn't even have a chance to say goodbye. She cried then. She loved him so much, because she had never seen such tenderness in her life. He had been close to her for two months and never asked her once what happened to her face. He treated her as if something very special were true of her, whereas when she met the man not long after who would actually become her husband, he asked her on their second meeting why her cheek was the way it was.

She married this second man, but she always felt more comfortable with the first one. She never saw him again, even though they wrote letters back and forth. Even when she was married to her husband she wrote letters, but then she stopped. For in spite of her face, this second man had married her, so she felt grateful. She was afraid to lose him. Therefore, she stopped writing.

Later, the first man wrote to her that he was married to a school-teacher and that they went to theatre a lot and to cinema, and added, "I knew you only for two months, but my heart belongs to you." And even though she didn't have anything sexual with him, she loved that man very much and believes that if he's alive now, he still loves her.

After he was gone, she kept working at this small place they called a butter factory, and a soldier who was assigned to a hospital nearby would come to her dairy to take food to the man who would become her future husband. Valva finally asked: "For whom

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do you take all this?" He said, "There is one lieutenant who is sick and I give it to him." She said, "Okay, give him my best regards and tell him we want him to be healthy." She said it just to be nice to someone who was ill. But when the soldier came back, he said, "This lieutenant, he sends you best regards too," and it turned out later that her husband-to-be had been told: "You know, there's one girl who works there, she's so kind and nice, she even gave food to me." Soon enough that lieutenant was put in charge of the whole butter factory, and he turned out to be tall and as strict as a German. Then one evening every other dairy girl decided to go to the movies, but Valya—she doesn't remember why—stayed home. Perhaps she was depressed. She saw somebody walk by in a leather jacket—even now she has this leather jacket—and he looked at her and said, "Why didn't you go out?" Then he recognized her and said, "Okay, let's introduce ourselves to each other," and as people of his rank usually did, he invited her to his office, and she went there and they talked. He said, "Let me hear your story." She told him everything. Then a friend of his came by who could play the piano, so this officer said to her, "Do you dance?" and since there was nobody around, he invited her, and then he said, "Thank you for your regards." It was then Valya understood that this was the sick man to whom she had sent all that food.

He was married. That is, he had been married in 1939, but his wife sent him only one letter in four years and then she divorced him in order to marry a pilot. This tall man told his story, and then said he had never had any children with that wife. He showed her a picture. His former wife was very attractive.

This officer was fifteen years older than Valya, and very severe, but he was nice when he danced. It was just that by the second evening, he asked her about her face, and she was offended and cried all night once she was alone. Only later did she tell him she was upset about it, upset because he certainly didn't know her, but already he was kissing her and asking her questions.

He was very intelligent, very cultured. After they were married, she discovered he actually had great tact and it was not possible not to love him, but it was a different type of love than she had had before. First love is first love. This man that she would marry was tall, slender and handsome, and not only elegant and intelligent on their first evening but remained so all their life. He always behaved in a calm, neat manner, very elegant. At the end of their life together, just a few years ago, when he was very sick and had a

high temperature, he was so neat that when an ambulance came for him, he said, "Valya, do you think I can go without a tie?" She did not know whether to laugh or to weep.

They stayed together through most of that following year in Germany, nine months. They met in August of 1945 and were married in May of 1946, and Ilya—that was his name, Ilya Prusakov—courted her in a proper way. He protected her and treated her with great tenderness. She never thought they would marry. He treated her very nicely as a person, and she liked him, but he was often sick. He had gotten some kind of disease during his campaigns. Once in this period he was taken to a hospital and she couldn't even find the place—it was that difficult for her to visit; but when he came back, he said, "You know, you did so much for me when I was in trouble that I'll always take care of you. I'd marry you if you'd agree, but I know you're so young—I can't propose marriage to you because there's such a big difference in our ages. Maybe later on you'll find someone else and I'll be jealous. So I'd like to propose to you and to marry you, but it's up to you to decide."

Of course, he had a very serious inflammation in one of his bones, and after that he had another illness where he ran a high fever and had to go to another hospital, but he sent out word. He asked Valya to bring him chicken broth. It was not possible to buy a chicken, so Valya found a Polish woman who spoke German and took her to another town to find one, and Valya brought it back and made some soup. Then Ilya asked her to bring tea, and he wanted it to be of a certain temperature because he felt more comfortable with warm liquid, so she ran with it to him because she was afraid his tea would turn cold. Then there were other things she did: She repaired his clothes, and was happy to do it. She wanted to do it. He said that even if she didn't want to marry him, he would always take care of her. He said, "I'll always help you; I'll train you and teach you to be a typist. I'd always like you to be near me." But, in fact, she agreed to marry him. She had expected he would propose.

It also turned out that this fine officer, Ilya, had suffered several serious war wounds. Not only had his leg been badly injured by machine gun bullets, but he had been near some explosion that had left him with a condition called *khontuzheniy*. It meant he'd been close to some explosion, and his brain had suffered a shock. Concussion.

Meanwhile, the butter factory was closed, and because Ilya wished to keep Valya near him, he arranged to give her a job, and she cooked for Russian soldiers and officers.

She was so full of energy and so sweet and happy and so much on the move that Ilya began to call her *volchuk*, which is a toy like a top, brightly painted and always moving, very funny, very gay, very energetic, always moving. She, in turn, called him Ilichka. When they decided to register their relationship and be married, he went to Potsdam. She didn't even have a nice dress, but he bought her a beautiful one, with embroidery, and she remembers that they went by train from Berlin, and Valya was very happy because now she knew she was going to be married, since he had told his relatives.

Back in Russia, they moved in with his people in Arkhangelsk. That was more difficult. Arkhangelsk was all the way north of Finland. Now they were no longer just two, but part of a large family, way up in the far north. Ilya did not change when they got there; never in his life did he offend her or insult her personally, and she soon loved him so much that when he would come home from work, she would look at him with such admiration that his mother would say, "Don't show that much happiness. Don't look at him so much that evil comes." Yes, it was dangerous to let the devil know how happy you were.

All the same, thirteen years of living with the Prusakov family were to follow. ~~Of course, that was not a surprise. Before they registered their marriage, Ilya had said to Valya, "I want to tell you that I'll never leave my mother." So Valya was prepared to share her life with his family instead of her own, and she knew that his mother had a very large influence on him. Ilya's first wife had been a woman he brought back from a holiday in a health resort, and his mother, Tatiana, had not been happy about it. In his mother's opinion, when a man goes to the Crimea on vacation, meets a woman and marries her, it's a bad idea, and very uncultured. You don't know this person; you have seen her for a few weeks, then you marry; such a woman is tricky—she trapped him into marriage. Ilya's mother said it was not a serious decision. Just passion, not marriage, and his mother had been right. It didn't last through a bad war.~~

When Ilya came back with Valya, however, Tatiana accepted her. So did all of Ilya's sisters, more or less. Everybody, however, was surprised. Ilya was such an attractive and educated man and he

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The Cold War - II

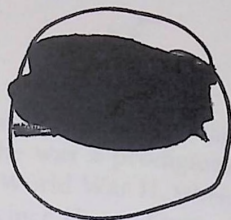
~~The~~ Lunch at 21.

After the war the primary school was a Hubbard, Bradford
and Shirley Hubbard moved to Plymouth where
after the war the Hubbard and Bradford of the club are to be found
in Cambridge, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island,
and Vermont. To my knowledge, however, I am the first Maine
resident to make public admission that the family name is not quite
as impressive as our state of lawyers, bankers, doctors and
politicians, our Cold War era, several generations and my
grandfather, George Russell Hubbard, President of St.
Mark's. He remains a legend to this day. At the age of ninety
he still managed on warm summer evenings to get into his
single shirt and new one-hundred-dollar suit and that Hill Day.
Of course, one stroke entered and with he would have gone into
cold Maine waters, a near fatal misadventure, but he died in bed.
His father, Benjamin Russell Hubbard, known to his friends as
Caddy, Carl "Caddy" Hubbard the New York Ghost hunter, whom
he resembled, was equally exceptional, but in different ways than
my wife, Kenneth, used him as a source of private references for
her work. The Dead Carl H. was a wonderful man and not a distant
ghost, powerful man who showed in cold water with the things.

1948

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Harlot's Ghost
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~~Harlot's Ghost~~

1 | Let me offer the primary fact. I am a Hubbard. Bradford and Fidelity Hubbard arrived in Plymouth seven years after the *Mayflower* and branches of the clan are to be found today in Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. To my knowledge, however, I am the first Hubbard to make public admission that the family name is not quite as impressive as our share of lawyers and bankers, doctors and legislators, one Civil War general, several professors, and my grandfather, Smallidge Kimble Hubbard, Headmaster of St. Matthew's. He remains a legend to this day. At the age of ninety, he still managed on warm summer mornings to get into his single shell and row one hundred strokes out into Blue Hill Bay. Of course, one stroke missed and over he would have gone into cold Maine waters, a near-fatal proposition, but he died in bed. My father, Boardman Kimble Hubbard, known to his friends as Cal (for Carl "Cal" Hubbell the New York Giants pitcher, whom he revered), was equally exceptional, but so divided a man that my wife, Kittredge, used him as a source of private reference for her work *The Dual Soul*. He was a swashbuckler and yet a deacon; a bold, powerful man who showered in cold water with the same

morning certainty that others used to feel while eating eggs and bacon. He went to church each Sunday; he was a prodigious philanderer. During the time shortly after World War II, when J. Edgar Hoover was doing his best to convince Harry Truman that the proposed CIA was not necessary and the FBI could take over all such jobs, my father went on a save-our-outfit mission. He seduced a few key secretaries in the State Department, thereby picking up a flood of in-office secrets which he then passed to Allen Dulles, who promptly sent such product on to the White House with a cover story to protect the secretaries. It certainly helped to convince the White House that we might need a separate Intelligence body. Allen Dulles was fond of Cal Hubbard after that, and said to me once, "Your father won't admit it, but that month with the secretaries was the best time of his life."

I loved my father outrageously and thereby had a frightened childhood, worried, strained, and cold within. I wished to be the salt of his salt but my stuff was damp. Much of the time I came near to hating him because he was disappointed in me and I did not hear from him often.

My mother was a different matter. I am the product of a marriage between two people so quintessentially incompatible that they might as well have come from separate planets. Indeed, my parents were soon separated and I spent my boyhood trying to keep two disjointed personalities together.

My mother was small-boned, attractive, and blond, and she lived, but for summer at Southampton, in that social nucleus of New York which is bounded by Fifth Avenue on the west, Park Avenue to the east, the Eighties to the north, and the Sixties to the south. She was a Jewish Princess but the emphasis can be put on the second word. She could not have told you the difference between the Torah and the Talmud. She brought me up to be ignorant of every Jewish subject but one: the names of prominent New York banking houses with Semitic roots. I think my mother thought of Salomon Brothers and Lehman Brothers as ports of call in some future storm.

It was sufficient that my mother's great-great-grandfather was a remarkable man named Chaim Silberzweig (who had his name streamlined by immigration officials to Hyman Silverstein). He came over as an immigrant in 1840 and rose from a

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street peddler to the clear-cut status of a department-store owner. His sons became merchant princes and his grandsons were among the first Jews tolerated in Newport. (The name by now was Silverfield.) If each generation of my mother's family was more spendthrift than the one before, it was never at a catastrophic rate: My mother was worth about as much in real money as the first Silverstein had left for his immediate heirs—and she possessed about a quarter of his Jewish blood. The Silverfield men married golden gentile women.

That is my mother's family. Although I saw more of her when young than of my father, it was my paternal grandfather with his single shell that I deemed to be true kin. My mother's side I tried to ignore. A man on death row once said: "We owe nothing to our parents—we just pass through them." I felt that way about my mother. From an early age I did not take her seriously. She could be charming and full of interesting follies; she was certainly a lot better than average at giving merry dinner parties. She was also, unfortunately, the owner of a terrible reputation. The Social Register dropped her a few years after Jessica Silverfield Hubbard became an ex-Hubbard, but it took another ten years before her best friends stopped seeing her. The reason, I suspect, was not her succession of affairs so much as her propensity to lie. She was a psychopathic liar, and finally her memory became her only lasting friend. It always told her what she wished to remember about the present and the past. In consequence, you never could know what anyone was up to if you listened to her. I make this point because my mother equipped me, I believe, for counterespionage, a field where we do, after all, attempt to implant errors in our opponent's knowledge.

At any rate, I can hardly pretend that I ended as any good fraction of a Jew. My only kinship with "that herring baron," as my mother referred to great-great-grandfather Chaim Silberzweig, is that anti-Semitic slurs made me tense. I might as well have grown up in a ghetto for the size of the fury aroused in me. For I would then feel Jewish. Of course, my idea of feeling Jewish was to be reminded of the strain on people's faces in the rush hour on the New York subway as they stood prey to harsh and screeching sounds.

I had, however, a privileged boyhood. I went to the Buckley

School and was a Knickerbocker Gray until asked to withdraw, a reflection of my serious incompetence at close-order drill. While marching, I would generate headaches of such intensity that I would fail to hear commands.

Of course, the bad reputation of my mother may have been another factor, and I take confirmation for this suspicion by the manner in which my father had me reinstated. As a cold-shower warrior he was not inclined to ask for favors for his progeny. This time, however, he called on people one saves for emergencies. The Hubbards had well-placed friends in New York, and my father took me to meet a few alumni of the Grays. "It's unfair. They're blaming the boy for *her*," was part of what I overheard, and it must have done the work. I was reinstated, and managed to soldier my way thereafter with fewer headaches, although I never knew one relaxed breath as a cadet.

I suppose people who were happy when young may recall their childhood well. I remember little. Summary disposes of the years and I collect memories by subjects. I can always answer such absurd essay questions as "What was the most important day you spent with a parent?" I would reply: "When my father took me to Twenty-One for lunch on my fifteenth birthday."

Twenty-One was the perfect place to take me. While my father did not know "one superior hell of a lot"—his phrase—about boys, he knew enough to be standing at the bar waiting for me.

I cannot swear in all confidence that the downstairs dining room has not been altered since 1948, but I might bet on the possibility. I think the same model toys are still suspended from the low dark ceiling, same steamships, 1915 Spad biplanes, railroad locomotives, and trolley cars. The little coupe with its rumble seat and spare tire in the white slipcover is still above the bar. Above the bottle cabinet hang the same hunting horns, cutlasses, elephant tusks, and one pair of boxing gloves small enough to fit an infant. My father told me that Jack Dempsey gave those gloves to the owner of Twenty-One, Jack Kriendler, and while I would hope the story is true, my father did not mind polishing legends of his own devising. I think he had concluded that good feeling was always in danger of being wiped out; ergo, he gilded the stories he told. He had, by the way, a degree of

resemblance to Ernest Hemingway—he was at least equally vivid in presence—and he cultivated the same large dark mustache. He also had Hemingway's build. Sporting relatively spindly legs for a man of strength, he often said, "I might have made first team All-American fullback if not for my pins." He also had a great barrel of a chest which bore a distinct likeness to the antique bronze cash register on the bar at Twenty-One. My father's heart beat with pride.

Of course, the pride was for himself. If I state that my father was vain and self-centered, I do not wish to demean him. While he carried the complacent look of a successful college athlete, his fundamental relation to others was a reflection of his concealed but endless negotiations with himself: The two halves of his soul were far apart. The deacon and the swashbuckler had miles to walk each night before they slept; I think his strength was that he had managed to find some inner cooperation between these disparate halves. When the headmaster's son, impacted with Cromwellian rectitude, was able to hook up with a venture that the conquistador could also applaud, well, the energy poured forth. My father, while not uncommonly reflective, did say once: "When your best and worst motive agree on the same action, watch the juices flow."

On this day in December 1948, my father was dressed in what I would come to call his "battle tweeds." That once had been a suit of light brown Scotch tweed (light in hue, but as heavy and hard to the touch as a horse-blanket). He bought his suits from Jones, Chalk and Dawson on Savile Row, and they knew how to outfit a horseman. I had seen this same suit on him for ten years. By now, patched with leather at elbows and cuffs, and become more malleable, it could still stand on its legs when taken off. It fit him, however, with a comfortable surround of dignity to suggest that these two materials—his manly flesh and that iron cloth—had lived together long enough to share a few virtues. In fact, he no longer owned a business suit and so had nothing more formal to wear until you got to his black velvet dinner jacket. Needless to say, on such nightly occasions, he was a lady's vision. "Oh, Cal," they would say of him, "Cal's *divine*. If only he didn't drink so much."

I think my father would have broken relations with any

friend who dared to suggest Alcoholics Anonymous was waiting for him, and he could have been right. His contention was that he drank no more than Winston Churchill and held it as well. He never got drunk. That is to say, his speech never slurred and he never staggered, but he did move through moods powerful enough to alter the electromagnetic fields through which he passed. It is a way of remarking that he had charisma. He had no more than to say "Bartender" in a quiet tone, and the man, if his back were turned, and had never heard my father's voice before, would nonetheless spring around as if starting a new page in his bar accounts. My father's emotional temperature seemed to rise and fall as he drank; his eyes, by the shift of the hour, could blaze with heat, or install you in a morgue; his voice would vibrate into your feet. Doubtless I exaggerate, but he was my father, and I saw him so seldom.

On this day, as I came in, he and his battle tweeds were sheeted in anger. For practical purposes, I was not unlike one of those little wives who are married to huge sea captains: I could feel his thoughts. He had been busy on some serious job before lunch, and had nearly cracked its difficulty; now he was putting down his first martini with all the discontent of interrupted concentration. I could imagine how he said to some assistant, "Damn, I've got to see my son for lunch."

To make matters worse, I was late. Five minutes late. When it came to promptitude, he was always on the mark, a headmaster's son. Now, waiting for me, he had had time to finish the first drink and review in his mind an unpromising list of topics about which we might converse. The sad truth is that he invariably gave off gloom on those rare occasions when we were alone with each other. He did not know what to talk to me about, and I, on my side, filled with my mother's adjurations, injunctions, and bitch-fury that I was going to see a man who was able to live in whole comfort apart from her, was jammed up. "Get him to talk about your education," she'd say before I was out the door. "He's got to pay for it, or I'll take him to law. Tell him that." Yes, I would be in great haste to tell him. "Watch out for his charm. It's as real as a snake," and, as I was going out the door, "Tell him I said hello—no, don't you tell him that."

I gave a nod with one quick bob of my head and got onto

the barstool next to him. Naturally, I scrunched my larger testicle by too abruptly lowering my butt to the seat. Then I sat there through the small wave of discomfort this brought on and tried to study the signs above the bar.

YO, HO, HO, AND A BOTTLE OF RUM, said one old wooden placard.

21 WEST ZWEI UND FÜNFZIGSTE STRASSE, said a painted street sign.

"Oh," I said, "is that German, Dad?"

"Fifty-second Street," he told me.

We were silent.

"How do you like St. Matthew's?" he said.

"Okay."

"Better than Buckley?"

"It's tougher."

"You're not going to flunk out?"

"No, I get B's."

"Well, try to get A's. Hubbards are expected to get A's at St. Matt's."

We were silent.

I began to look at another sign hanging over the bar. It obviously enjoyed its misspelling. CLOSE SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS, it said.

"I've had one superior hell of a lot of work lately," he said.

"I guess," I said.

We were silent.

His gloom was like the throttled sentiments of a German shepherd on a leash. I think I was something of a skinny version of him, but I believe he always saw every bit of resemblance I had to my mother during the first five minutes of every one of our meetings, and I even came to understand over the years that she might have done him a real damage. There was probably never a human he wished to kill more with his bare hands than this ex-wife; of course, he had had to forgo such pleasure. Blocked imperatives brought my father that much nearer to stroke.

Now he said, "How's your leg?"

"Oh, it's recovered. It's been all right for years."

"I bet it's still stiff."

"No, it's all right."

He shook his head. "I think you had your trouble with the Grays because of that leg."

"Dad, I was just no good at close-order drill." Silence. "But I got better." The silence made me feel as if I were trying to push a boat off the shore and it was too heavy for me.

"Dad," I said, "I don't know if I can get A's at St. Matthew's. They think I'm dyslexic."

He nodded slowly as if not unprepared for such news. "How bad is it?" he asked.

"I can read all right, but I never know when I'm going to reverse numbers."

"I had that trouble." He nodded. "Back on Wall Street before the war, I used to live in fear that one bright morning my touch of dyslexia would make the all-time mistake in the firm. Somehow, it never did." He winked. "You need a good secretary to take care of those things." He clapped me on the back. "One more lemonade?"

"No."

"I'll have another martini," he said to the bartender. Then he turned back to me. I still remember the bartender's choice of a keen or sour look. (Keen when serving gentlemen; sour for the tourists.) "Look," my father said, "dyslexia is an asset as well as a loss. A lot of good people tend to have dyslexia."

"They do?" Over the past term a few boys at school had taken to calling me Retardo.

"No question." He put his eyes on me. "About ten years ago in Kenya we were going for leopards. Sure enough, we found one, and it charged. I've hit elephants coming at me, and lions and water buffalo. You hold your ground, look for a vulnerable area in the crosshairs, then squeeze off your shot. If you can steer between the collywobbles, it's as easy as telling it to you now. Don't panic and you have yourself a lion. Or an elephant. It's not even a feat. Just a measure of inner discipline. But a leopard is different. I couldn't believe what I saw. All the while it was charging it kept leaping left to right and back again, but so fast I thought I was watching a movie with pieces missing. You just couldn't get your crosshairs on any part of that leopard. So I took him from the hip. At twenty yards. First shot. Even our

guide was impressed. He was one of those Scotsmen who sneer at all and anything American, but he called me a born hunter. Later I figured it out for myself: I was a good shot because of my dyslexia. You see, if you show me 1-2-3-4, I tend to read it as 1-4-2-3 or 1-3-4-2. I suppose I see like an animal. I don't read like some slave—yessir, boss, I'm following you, yessir, 1-2-3-4—no, I look at what's near me and what's in the distance and only then do I shift to the middle ground. In and out, back and forth. That's a hunter's way of looking. If you have a touch of dyslexia, that could mean you're a born hunter."

He gave my midriff a short chop with his elbow. It proffered enough weight to suggest what a real blow would do.

"How's your leg?" he asked again.

"Good," I said.

"Have you tried one-legged knee raises?"

The last time we had been to lunch, eighteen months ago, he had prescribed such an exercise.

"I've tried it."

"How many can you do?"

"One or two." I was lying.

"If you're really working at it, you would show more progress."

"Yessir."

I could feel his wrath commencing. It began slowly, like the first stirring of water in a kettle. This time, however, I could also sense the effort to pull back his annoyance, and that puzzled me. I could not recollect when he had treated me to such courtesy before.

"I was thinking this morning," he said, "of your ski accident. You were good that day."

"I'm glad I was," I said.

We were silent again, but this time it was a pause we could inhabit. He liked to recall my accident. I believe it was the only occasion on which he ever formed a good opinion of me.

When I was seven, I had been picked up at school one Friday in January by my mother's chauffeur and driven to Grand Central Station. On this day, my father and I were going to board the weekend special to Pittsfield, Mass., where we would ski at a place called Bousquet's. How the great echoes of Grand

Central matched the reverberation of my heart! I had never been skiing and therefore believed I would be destroyed next day flying off a ski jump.

Naturally, I was taken over no such towering jump. I was put instead on a pair of rented wooden slats, and after a set of near-fiascoes on the long rope-tow up, attempted to follow my father down. My father had a serviceable stem turn which was all you needed to claim a few yodeling privileges in the Northeast back in 1940. (People who could do a parallel christie were as rare then as tightrope artists.) I, of course, as a beginner, had no stem turn, only the impromptu move of falling to either side when my snow plow got going too fast. Some spills were easy, some were knockouts. I began to seek the fall before I needed to. Soon, my father was shouting at me. In those days, whether riding, swimming, sailing, or on this day, skiing, he lost his temper just so quickly as first returns made it evident that I was without natural ability. Natural ability was closer to God. It meant you were wellborn. Bantu blacks in Africa, I came to learn in CIA, believed that a chieftain should enrich himself and have beautiful wives. That was the best way to know God was well disposed toward you. My father shared this view. Natural ability was bestowed on the deserving. Lack of natural ability spoke of something smelly at the roots. The clumsy, the stupid, and the slack were fodder for the devil. It is not always a fashionable view today, but I have pondered it all my life. I can wake up in the middle of the night thinking, What if my father was right?

Soon he grew tired of waiting for me to get up.

"Just do your best to follow," he said, and was off, stopping long enough to call back, "Turn when I turn."

I lost him at once. We were going along a lateral trail that went up and down through the woods. Going uphill, I did not know how to herringbone. I kept getting farther behind. When I came to the top of one rise and saw that the next descent was a full-fledged plunge followed by an abrupt rise, and my father was nowhere in sight, I decided to go straight down in the hope such a schuss would carry me a good way up. Then he would not have to wait too long while I climbed. Down I went, my skis in a wobbly parallel, and almost at once was moving twice as fast as I had ever traveled before. When I lost my nerve and tried to switch to a snowplow, my skis crossed, dug into the soft snow,

and I wrenched over in a somersault. There was no release to the bindings in those days. Your feet stayed in the skis. I broke my right tibia.

One did not know that at first. One only knew more pain than ever felt before. Somewhere in the distance my father was bellowing, "Where are you?" It was late in the afternoon and his voice echoed through the hills. No other skiers were coming by. It started to snow and I felt as if I were in the last reel of a movie about Alaska; soon the snow would cover all trace of me. My father's roars were, in this silence, comforting.

He came climbing back, angry as only a man with a powerful, sun-wrinkled neck can be angry. "Will you rise to your feet, you quitter," he cried out. "Stand up and ski."

I was more afraid of him than the five oceans of pain. I tried to get up. Something, however, was wrong. At a certain point, my will was taken away from me completely. My leg felt amputated.

"I can't, sir," I said, and fell back.

Then he recognized there might be more than character at issue here. He took off his ski jacket, wrapped me in it, and went down the mountain to the Red Cross hut.

Later, in the winter twilight, after the ski patrol had put on a temporary splint and worked me down to the base in a sled, I was put in the back of a small truck, given a modest dose of morphine, and carried over some frozen roads to the hospital in Pittsfield. It was one hell of a ride. By now, well into the spirit of the morphine, the pain still rasped like a rough-toothed saw into my broken bone each time we hit an evil bump (which was every fifty yards). The drug enabled me, however, to play a kind of game. Since the shock from every bump shivered through my teeth, the game became the art of not making a sound. I lay there on the floor of the truck with a wadded ski jacket under my head and another beneath my leg, and must have looked like an epileptic: My father kept wiping froth from my mouth.

I made, however, no sound. After a time, the magnitude of my personal venture began to speak to him for he took my hand and concentrated upon it. I could feel him trying to draw the pain from my body into his, and this concern ennobled me. I felt they could tear my leg off and I might still make no outcry.

He spoke: "Your father, Cal Hubbard, is a fathead." That

may be the only occasion in his life when he used the word in reference to himself. In our family, fathead was about the worst expression you could use for another person.

"No, sir," I said. I was afraid to speak for fear that the groans would begin, yet I also knew the next speech was one of the most important I would ever make. For a few moments I twisted through falls of nausea—I must have been near to fainting—but the road became level for a little while, and I succeeded in finding my voice. "No, sir," I said, "my father, Cal Hubbard, is not a fathead."

It was the only time I ever saw tears in his eyes.

"Well, you silly goat," he said, "you're not the worst kid, are you?"

If we had crashed at that moment I could have died in a happy state. But I came back to New York in a cast two days later—my mother sent chauffeur and limousine up for me—and a second hell began. The part of me that was ready to go through a meat grinder for my father could hardly have been the poor seven-year-old boy who sat home in New York in his Fifth Avenue apartment with a compound fracture surrounded by a plaster cast that itched like the gates of sin. The second fellow seethed with complaints.

I could not move. I had to be carried. I went into panic at the thought of using crutches. I was certain I would fall and break the leg again. The cast began to stink. In the second week the doctor had to cut the plaster off, clean my infection, and encase me again. I mention all this because it also cut off my father's love affair with me nearly as soon as it had begun. When he came over to visit—after an understanding with my mother that she would not be there—he would be obliged to read the notes she left—"You broke his leg, now teach him to move."

Allowing for his small patience, he finally succeeded in getting me up on crutches, and the leg eventually mended, just a bit crooked, but it took too long. We were back in the land of paternal disillusion. Besides, he had more to think about than me. He was happily remarried to a tall, Junoesque woman absolutely his own size, and she had given him twin boys. They were three years old when I was seven, and you could bounce them on the floor. Their nicknames—I make no joke—were Rough

and Tough. Rough Hubbard and Tough Hubbard. Actually, they were Roque Baird Hubbard and Toby Bolland Hubbard, my father's second wife being Mary Bolland Baird, but rough and tough they promised to be, and my father adored them.

Occasionally I would visit the new wife. (They had been married four years but I still thought of her as *the new wife*.) It was just a trip of a few blocks up the winter splendor of Fifth Avenue, that is to say, an education in the elegance of gray. The apartment houses were lilac-gray, and Central Park showed field-gray meadows in winter and mole-gray trees.

Since finding myself on crutches, I no longer ventured from my apartment house. In one of the later weeks of convalescence, however, I had a good day, and my limb did not ache in its cast. By afternoon, I was restless and ready for adventure. I not only went down to the lobby and talked to the doorman but, on impulse, set out to circumnavigate the block. It was then the idea came to me to visit my stepmother. She was not only large but hearty, and succeeded at times in making me think she liked me; she would certainly tell my father that I had visited, and he would be pleased I was mastering the crutches. So I decided to attempt those five blocks uptown from 73rd to 78th Street and immediately went through a small palsy the first time I put my crutches out from the curb down six inches to the gutter. This small step accomplished, however, I began to swing along, and by the time I reached their apartment house, I was most talkative with the elevator man and pleased with how much pluck I was showing for a seven-year-old.

At their door a new maid answered. She was Scandinavian and hardly spoke English, but I gathered that the nurse was out with the twins and "the Madame" was in her room. After some confusion the new girl let me in and I sat on a couch, bored by the wan afternoon sun as it reflected on the pale silk colors of the living room.

It never occurred to me that my father was home. Later, much later, I would gather that this was about the time he had given up his broker's slot in Merrill Lynch to volunteer for the Royal Canadian Air Force. To celebrate, he was taking the afternoon off. I, however, thought Mary Bolland Baird Hubbard was alone and reading, and might be as bored as I was. So I hopped

across the living room and down the hall to their bedroom, making little sound on the pile carpet, and then, without taking the time to listen—all I knew was that I did not wish to return home without having spoken to someone, but would certainly lose my nerve if I waited at the door—I turned the knob, and, to keep my balance, took two big hops forward on my crutches. The sight that received me was my father's naked back, then hers. They were both pretty big. They were rolling around on the floor, their bodies plastered end to end, their mouths on each other's—if I say *things*, it's for want of remembering the word I had then. Somehow I had an idea what they were doing. Importuning sounds came out of them, full of gusto, that unforgettable cry which lands somewhere between whooping and whimpering.

I was paralyzed for the time it took to take it all in; then I tried to escape. They were so deep in their burrow they did not even see me, not for the first instant, the second, nor even the third as I backed my way to the door. Right then, they looked up. I was nailed to the door frame. They stared at me, and I stared at them, and I realized they did not know for how long I had been studying them. For heavens, how long? "Get out of here, you dodo," my father roared, and the worst of it was that I fled so quickly on the crutches that they thumped like ghost-bumpers on the carpet while I vaulted down the hall. I think it was this sound, the thump-thump of a cripple, that must have stayed in her ears. Mary was a nice woman, but she was much too proper to be photographed by anyone's memory in such a position, let alone a slightly creepy stepson. None of us ever spoke of it again; none of us forgot it. I remember that in the time it took to reach my mother's apartment, I generated a two-ton headache, and it was the first of a chronic run of migraines. This pressure had been paying irregular visits from that day. Right now, here at lunch, I could feel it on the edge of my temples, ready to strike.

Now, I cannot say that these headaches were responsible for the ongoing fantasy of my childhood, but it is true that I began to spend many an afternoon after school alone in my room making drawings of an underground city. It was, as I look back on it, a squalid place. Beneath the ground in a set of excavations,

I penciled in clubhouses, tunnels, game rooms, all connected by secret passages. There was an automat, a gym, and a pool. I giggled at how the pool would be full of urine, and installed torture rooms whose guards had Oriental faces. (I could draw slant eyes.) It was a warren of monstrous and cloacal turns, but it brought peace to my young mind.

"How are your headaches?" asked my father at the bar at Twenty-One.

"No worse," I said.

"But they don't get better?"

"They don't, I guess."

"I'd like to reach in and pull out what's bothering you," he said. It was not a sentimental remark so much as a surgeon's impulse.

I shifted the subject to Rough and Tough. They were now Knickerbocker Grays, and doing well, he told me. I was tall for my age, almost as tall as my father, but they gave every promise of outstripping me. As he spoke, I knew there was some other matter on his mind.

It was his inclination to pass me tidbits about his work. This presented curious debits to his duty. In his occupation, you were supposed to encapsulate your working life apart from your family. On the other hand, he had formed his reflexes for security, such as they were, working for the OSS in Europe during World War II. Nobody he knew then had been all that cautious. Today's secret was next week's headline, and it was not uncommon to give a hint of what one was up to when trying to charm a lady. Next day, after all, an airplane was going to parachute you into a strange place. If the lady were made aware of this, well, she might feel less absolutely loyal to her husband (also away at war).

Besides, he wanted to fill me in. If he was not an attentive parent, he was at least a romantic father. Moreover, he was a team man. He was in the Company and his sons ought to be prepared as well: While Rough and Tough were a foregone conclusion, he could hardly swear on me.

"I'm all riled up today," said my father. "One of our agents in Syria got shot on a stupid business."

"Was he a friend of yours?" I asked.

"Neither here nor there," he replied.

"I'm sorry."

"No, I'm just so goddamn mad. This fellow was asked to obtain us a piece of paper that wasn't really needed."

"Oh."

"I'll tell you, darn it all. You keep this to yourself."

"Yes, Dad."

"One of those playboys at State decided to be ambitious. He's doing his Ph.D. thesis on Syria over at Georgetown. So he wanted to present a couple of hard-to-get details that nobody else has. He put through a request to us. Officially. From State. Could we furnish the poop? Well, we're green. You could grow vegetables with what they scrape off our ignorance. We try to oblige. So we put a first-rate Syrian agent on it, and there you are—lost a crack operator because he was asked to reach for the jam at the wrong time."

"What'll happen to the fellow in the State Department?"

"Nothing much. Maybe we'll slow down a promotion for that idiot by talking to a guy or two at State, but it's horrifying, isn't it? Our man loses his life because somebody needs a footnote for his Ph.D. thesis."

"I thought you looked upset."

"No," he said quickly, "it's not that." Then he hoisted his martini, stepped off the stool, raised his hand as if calling a cab, and the captain was there to bring us to our table which was, I already knew, in his favored location against the rear wall. There my father placed me with my back to the room. At the table to my left were two men with white hair and red faces who looked like they might have gout, and on the right was a blond woman with a small black hat supporting a long black feather. She was wearing pearls on a black dress and had long white gloves. Sitting across from her was a man in a pencil-thick pinstripe. I mention these details to show a facet of my father: He was able, in the course of sitting down, to nod to the two gentlemen with gout as if, socially speaking, there was no reason why not to speak to one another, and freeze the man in the pencil-stripe suit for the width of his stripes while indicating to the blond lady in black that she was blue ribbon for blond ladies in black. My father had a gleam in his eye at such times that made me think

of the Casbah. I always supposed a Levantine would come up to you in the Casbah and give a flash of what he had in his hand. There!—a diamond peeked out. That made me recollect Cal Hubbard rolling with Mary Baird on the carpeted floor, which in turn caused me to look down quickly at my plate.

"Herrick, I haven't seen a superior hell of a lot of you lately, have I?" he asked, unfolding his napkin, and sizing up the room. I wasn't too happy being placed with my back to everyone, but then he gave a wink as if to suggest that he had his reasons. It was incumbent on his occupation, as he once explained, that he be able to *eye* a joint. I think he may have picked up the phrase from Dashiell Hammett, with whom he used to drink before word went around that Hammett was a Communist. Then, since he considered Hammett smarter than himself, he gave up the acquaintance. A loss. According to my father, he and Dashiell Hammett could each put down three double Scotches in an hour.

"Well, there's a reason I haven't seen a lot of you, Rick." He was the only one to call me Rick, rather than Harry, for Herrick. "I have been traveling an unconscionable amount." This was said for the blond woman as much as for me. "They don't know yet whether I'll be one of the linchpins in Europe or the Far East."

Now the man in the pencil-stripe suit began his counter-offensive. He must have put a curve on what he said, for the woman gave a low intimate laugh. In response, my father leaned toward me across the table and whispered, "They've given OPC the *covert* operations."

"What's covert?" I whispered back.

"The real stuff. None of that counterespionage where you drink out of my teacup and I drink out of yours. This is war. Without declaring it." He raised his voice sufficiently for the woman to hear the last two phrases, then dropped back to a murmur as if the best way to divide her attention was to insinuate himself in and out of her hearing.

"Our charter calls for economic warfare," he said in a highly shaped whisper, "plus underground resistance groups." Loudly: "You saw what we did in the Italian elections."

"Yessir."

He enjoyed the *yessir*. I had broadcast it for the blond lady. "If not for our little operation, the Communists would have taken over Italy," he now stated. "They give the credit to the Marshall Plan but that's wrong. We won in Italy in spite of the money that was thrown around."

"We did?"

"Count on it. You have to take into account the Italian ego. They're an odd people. Half sharp, half meatball."

By the way in which the man in the pencil-stripe reacted, I suspected he was Italian. If my father sensed that, he gave no sign. "You see, the Romans themselves are civilized. Minds quick as stilettos. But the Italian peasant remains as backward as a Filipino. In consequence, you mustn't try to motivate their self-interest too crudely. Self-esteem means more to them than filling their bellies. They're always poor, so they can live with hunger, but they don't want to lose their honor. Those Italians really wanted to stand up to us. They would have derived more pleasure spitting in our face than sucking up to us with their phony gratitude. Nothing personal. The Italians are like that. If Communism ever takes over in Italy, those Red wops will drive the Soviets just as crazy as they're driving us."

I was feeling the wrath of the Italian man next to me. "Dad, if that's what you think," I blurted out, scurrying to save the peace, "why not let the Italians choose their path? They're an ancient and civilized people."

My father had to ponder this. Allen Dulles may have said that the happiest week of Cal Hubbard's life was spent seducing secretaries, but I expect no period could have been equal to the year he spent with the partisans. If Italy had gone Communist in 1948, my father would probably have gone right over to form an anti-Communist underground. In recesses of his brain so secret he could not even reach them in his dreams, I believe he would have enjoyed a Communist takeover of America. What an American underground he could have helped to set up then! The thought of dynamite Americans waging an underground war up and down our countryside against an oppressive enemy would have been a tonic to keep him young forever.

So my father may have been on the edge of saying "You bet," but he didn't. Instead, he answered dutifully, "Of course,

we can't afford to let the Russians in. Who knows? Those guineas might get along with the Russians."

We had an interruption here. The man next to us suddenly called out for his check, and my father immediately stopped our conversation in order to look appreciatively at the blond lady.

"Weren't we introduced at Forest Hills this fall?" he said to her.

"Nah, I don't think so," she answered in a muffled voice.

"Please tell me your name," said my father, "and I'm certain I'll recollect where it was."

"Think of nowhere," said the man in the striped suit.

"Are you trying to give directions?" asked my father.

"I heard of people," said the man, "who lose their nose by poking it around the corner."

"Al!" said the blond lady.

Having stood up abruptly, Al was now putting money on the table to cover his tab. He dropped each new bill like a dealer snapping cards, signally upset that one of the players had called for another deck. "I've heard of people," repeated Al, and now he looked sideways at my father, "who stepped off the curb and broke a leg."

Into my father's eyes came that diamond of the Casbah. He, too, stood up. They each took a long look at the other. "Buster," said my father in a happy, husky voice, "don't get tough!"

It was his happiness that did the job. Al thought of replying, then thought better. His jaw did not work. He folded his napkin as if folding his tent, looked for the opportunity to throw a sneak punch, did not find what he was looking for, and gave his arm to the blond lady. They left. My father grinned. If he couldn't have her, he had at least broken a couple of eggs.

Now my father began to talk a good deal. Any victory over a stranger was kin to triumph over rival hordes. Al was out there with the Russians. "There are six million soldiers in the Red Army," said my father, "and only a million of us. That's counting NATO. The Russians could take all of Europe in two months. It's been true for the last three years."

"Then why haven't they?" I asked. "Dad, I read that twenty million Russians were killed in the war. Why would they want to start one now?"

He finished his drink. "Damned if I know." As the waiter sprang for the refill, my father leaned forward: "I'll tell you why. Communism is an itch. What does that mean, to have an itch? Your body is out of whack. Little things take on large proportions. That's Communism. A century ago, everybody had their place. If you were a poor man, God judged you as such, a poor man. He had compassion. A rich man had to pass more severe standards. As a result, there was peace between the classes. But materialism came down on us. Materialism propagated the idea that the world is nothing but a machine. If that's true, then it's every man's right to improve his piece of the machine. That's the logic of atheism. So, now everybody's ears are being pounded to bits, and nothing tastes right anymore. Everybody is too tense, and God is an abstraction. You can't enjoy your own land so you begin to covet the next guy's country."

He took a long, thoughtful swallow from his drink. My father could always bring a cliché to life. Many have been described as taking long thoughtful swallows of their drinks, but my father drank like an Irishman. He took it for granted that real and true spirits were entering with the fire of the liquor. He inhaled the animation around him and could breathe back his own excitement. Emotion must never be wasted. "Rick, keep clear on one matter. There's a huge war brewing. These Communists are insatiable. We treated them as friends during the war and they'll never get over that. When you're older, you may have the bad luck to get into an affair with an ugly woman who happens to enjoy what you offer but has never been on daily terms with a man. She's too ugly. Fellow, you're going to have trouble on your hands. Before long, she's insatiable. You've given the taste of the forbidden to her. That's the Russians. They got ahold of Eastern Europe; now they want it all."

He did not halt long at this place. "No," he said, "it's not a good analogy. It's really worse than that. We're in an ultimate struggle with the Russians, and that means we have to use everything. Not only the kitchen sink, but the vermin that come with the sink."

My father was interrupted at this moment by the two white-haired gentlemen seated on his right. They were getting up to leave and one said, "I couldn't help hearing what you were

explaining to your son, and I wish to say, couldn't agree more. Those Russians want to crack our shell and get all the good meat. Don't let them."

"No, sir," said my father, "not one knuckle will they get," and he stood up on that remark. The rich compact that comes from a common marrow guarded us all. Honor, adventure, and sufficient income was in the air of Twenty-One. Even I could prosper there.

When we sat down again, my father said, "Keep this most strictly to yourself. I'm going to trust you with a weighty secret. Hitler used to say, 'Bolshevism is poison.' That idea is not to be rejected out of hand just because Adolf said it. Hitler was so awful that he ruined the attack on Bolshevism for all of us. But the fundamental idea is right. Bolshevism *is* poison. We've even come to the point"—and here he dropped his voice to the lowest whisper of the lunch—"where we've got to employ a few of those old Nazis to fight the Reds."

"Oh, no," I said.

"Oh, yes," he said. "There's hardly a choice. The OSO is not all that competent. We were supposed to put agents in place all over the Iron Curtain countries and couldn't even seed it with birdfeed. Every time we built a network, we discovered the Russians were running it. The great Russian bear can move his armies anywhere behind the Iron Curtain, and we don't have an effective alert system. If, two years ago, the Soviets had wanted to march across Europe, they could have. We would have gotten out of bed in the morning to hear their tanks in the streets. No reliable intelligence. That's fearful. How would you like to live blindfolded?"

"No good, I guess."

"It came down to this: We had to use a Nazi general. I call him General Microfilm. I can't reveal his name. He was top intelligence man for the Germans on the Russian front. He would weed out the most promising of the Russians captured by the Germans and manage to infiltrate them back behind Russian lines. For a while, they honeycombed the Red Army, even worked a few of their boys into the Kremlin. Just before the war ended, this general, prior to destroying his files, buried fifty steel boxes somewhere in Bavaria. They were the microfilm

copies of his files. A voluminous product. We needed it. Now he's dealing with us. He has built up new networks all through East Germany, and there isn't much those East German Communists don't tell his West German agents about what the Reds are planning to do next in Eastern Europe. This general may be an ex-Nazi, but, like it or not, he's invaluable. That's what my business is about. You work with the next-to-worst in order to defeat the worst. Could you do that?"

"Maybe."

"You might be too liberal, Herrick. Liberals refuse to look at the whole animal. Just give us the tasty parts, they say. I think God has need of a few soldiers."

"Well, I believe I could be a good one."

"I hope so. When you broke your leg, you were a great soldier."

"Do you think so?" This moment alone made the lunch superlative for me. So I wanted him to say it again.

"Not in question. A great soldier." He paused. He played with his drink. His free hand made a rocking motion on the table from thumb to little finger. "Rick," he announced, "you're going to have to pull up your gut again."

It was like coming in for a landing. My focus moved closer to my father's with every instant.

"Is it medical?" I asked. Then answered myself. "It's the tests I took."

"Let me give you the positive stuff first." He nodded. "It's operable. There's an 80-percent likelihood it's benign. So when they take it out, they've got it all."

"A benign tumor?"

"As I say, they are 80-percent certain. That's conservative. I believe it's 95-percent certain."

"Why do you think that?"

"You may have bad headaches but the powers that be aren't ready to lift you from the board. It makes no sense."

"Maybe the whole thing makes no sense," I said.

"Don't you ever believe that. I'd rather you took a dump right here in public, right in the middle of my favorite restaurant, than that you descend into that kind of sophomoric nihilism. No, look at it this way. Assume the Devil made a mistake and put all his eggs in one basket concerning you"—again my

father was whispering as if any loud statement of Satan's name could summon him to your side—"and we're going to remove him all at once. Excise him. Rick, your headaches will be gone."

"That's good," I said. I was ready to cry. Not because of the operation. I had not realized an operation was this near, but it had been part, certainly, of my inner horizon. I had been taking tests for three months. No, I was ready to cry because now I knew why my father had taken me to lunch and favored me with professional secrets.

"I convinced your mother," he said. "She's a very difficult woman under any and all circumstances, but I got her to recognize that one of the best neurosurgeons in the country is available for this. I can tell you in confidence he also works for *us*. We've talked him into putting his toe in the water for some studies we're doing on brainwashing techniques. We need to keep up with the Russians."

"I guess he'll learn a little more about brainwashing with me."

My father gave a half-smudged smile for the joke. "He'll give you every chance to become the man you want to be."

"Yes," I said. I had an awful feeling I could not explain. There was no doubt in my mind that the tumor was the worst part of me. Everything rotten must be concentrated there. I had always supposed, however, that sooner or later it would go away by itself.

"What if we don't have surgery? I can keep living with my headaches," I said.

"There's a chance it is malignant."

"You mean when they open my head, they could discover cancer?"

"There's one chance in five."

"You said 95 percent. Isn't that one chance in twenty?"

"All right. One in twenty."

"Dad, that's twenty to one in our favor. Nineteen to one, actually."

"I'm looking at other kinds of odds. If you're debilitated with headaches during all the formative years to come, you'll end up half a man." I could hear the rest. "Shape up" were the words he was inclined to speak.

"What do the doctors think?" I asked at last.

I had given up the game by asking this question. "They say you must have the operation."

Years later, a surgeon would tell me that the operation would have been elective, not mandatory. My father had lied. His logic was simple. He would not manipulate me or any other family member who was arguing a point out of his own feelings; if third parties, however, were consulted, then the debate had become a recourse to authority. Since I asked what the doctors said, my father was ready to substitute himself as final authority.

Now he got out his wallet to pay the check. Unlike Al, my father did not snap his money down. He laid it like a poultice on the plate.

"When this is over," he told me, "I'm going to introduce you to a dear friend of mine whom I've asked to be your godfather. It's not customary to have a brand-new godfather at the age of fifteen, but the one we gave you at birth was a friend of your mother's and he's dropped out of sight. The guy I'm bringing in is wholly superior. You'll like him. He's named Hugh Montague, and he's one of us. Hugh Tremont Montague. He did wonderful stuff for OSS while on liaison with the Brits. During the war he worked with J. C. Masterman—I can tell you that name. An Oxford don. One of their spymasters. Hugh will fill you in on all of that. The English are such aces in this kind of work. In 1940, they captured a few of the first German agents sent over to England and succeeded in turning them. As a result, most of the German spies who followed were picked up on arrival. For the rest of the war, the Abwehr was fed the niftiest disinformation by their own agents in England. And, oh, how the Brits got to love their German agents. Just as loyal to them as to their favorite foxhounds, yes, they were." Here my father began laughing heartily. "You have to," he added, "get Hugh to tell you about the code names the English gave their little Germans. Perfect names for peachy dogs. CELERY," said my father, "SNOW, GARBO, CARROT, COBWEB, MULLET, LIPSTICK, NEPTUNE, PEPPERMINT, SCRUFFY, ROVER, PUPPET, BASKET, BISCUIT, BRUTUS. Is that, or is that not, the English?"

For years, I would fall asleep surrounded by men and

women holding brass nameplates in capitals: BRUTUS, COBWEB, TREASURE, RAINBOW. As I grew ready in the last of this lunch at Twenty-One to lose a part, forever, of the soft meats of my brain, so were old spies with the code names of hunting dogs filing one by one into the cavity waiting for them.

1991

In adolescence, I had only to say "God," and I would think of my groin. God was lust to me. God was like the image of the Devil offered to us at St. Matthew's. Chapel was daily and devoted to Christ, but once a week on average we might hear of the temptings of a somewhat legendary master-ghost named Satan. Chapel kept God and Satan well separated, but I, unlike other Matties, kept mixing them up. I had my reasons: I was introduced to carnal relations during my first year in the school by an assistant chaplain of St. Matthew's who *glommed*—I choose the word to convey the sensation of that rubbery, indefatigable seal—my fourteen-year-old penis in his tight, unhappy lips.

We were in Washington, D.C., on a school trip. Maybe that is one more reason I dislike our subtle, oppressive capital, that broad, well-paved swamp. Boredom and bad memory are at the root of many an oppression, I would suppose, and that night I was sharing a double bed with the assistant chaplain in an inexpensive hotel not far from H Street, NW, and was unable to sleep and feeling full of apprehension just about the time that the chaplain came out of a millrace of stentorian snoring, murmured his wife's name several times, "Bettina, Bettina," and proceeded to embrace my hips and strip my bewildered young privates of their primeval dew. I remember lying there with a complete sense of the sixteen other members of my class who

1949

A Portrait

Dorothy Parker

~~REDACTED~~

~~REDACTED~~

1949

~~REDACTED~~

from the fact that ~~REDACTED~~

33

Of a small and almost insignif-

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and bawdifications
PP 33-34

of the express

standing on the studio floor in Newark waiting for the arrival of Capote and himself. She had earlier been picked up in Manhattan, as they had been later, by a dark Cadillac limousine, furnished by the studio, to carry them to New Jersey for a few hours, and the expression in her eyes suggested that that was outrage enough in itself — to be found in Newark!

Dorothy Parker was not to shine on this night. It was to be her first appearance on TV (and probably her last) and never may video camera have been less disposed toward a talented writer. She was not in person, a home museum, nor by the

any wit, a bold woman. Anyone who had read Dorothy Parker, and was expecting therefore a lady of immaculate wit and elegant savagery of tongue, would feel on the consequence when meeting her, a discernible shock. She was tiny, and she tended to be plump. She had bags under her eyes (from the fatigues of three good decades of drinking) and these bags touched the heart in a way few middle-aged women and only a very few middle-aged men with wondrously lugubrious bags can so touch us. (Perhaps it is by way of the sorrows they have bottomed out on while drinking.) Dorothy Parker looked like a bird at the mercy of every beast with teeth, a flurry of feathers up in a tree with wonderful bags under her eyes. And in the middle of her sad little face, sad as the ghost of tenderness itself, was her nose, the tip of which was always overpowdered. She would dust it once with a swipe to one nostril, and again with a swipe to the other, the overlay thereby suggesting the white painted button of a clown who is more lugubrious than his bulbous red-tipped colleagues.

She also wore a series of black shawls and garments to give her the appearance of a British witch. The garments looked to have come from an attic. Since Norman met her first in Los Angeles, ~~seven or eight years before the evening they went on in Newark~~ he could not imagine at the time where she found her clothes. Los Angeles was a city whose homes were conspicuously without attics.

She also had a manner that was gentle, full of praise, and treacherous as a scorpion. The day he was introduced, an agent who would later be powerful enough to deal with the memoirs of presidents and kings was in Dorothy Parker's room at the Chateau Marmont, and she gave the agent nothing but compliments, sweet compliments in a tender threadbare little voice that spoke of his energy, (boundless!) his good-will (Christly) and his genius (large enough to sell

~~REDACTED~~

~~REDACTED~~

~~REDACTED~~

~~REDACTED~~

one of her poor scripts; he, he alone, could do it!) and the agent having left in all the happiness of being given these compliments by a great American writer — he was still a young agent, pushy, and prematurely bald — she said, so soon as the door was closed, “Aggrrhh” — a clearing of the throat in pure facsimile to that first blast of the interior when vomiting — and added, “What an awful man. What a dreadful dreadful man!”

After that meeting, Mailer always did his best to be the last to leave Dottie Parker’s sitting room at the Chateau Marmont. Once, confessing to Lillian Hellman his concern at how Dorothy Parker might describe him in his absence, Miss Hellman laughed with the happiness she always felt in being generous, instructive, and superior to the innocence of her friends, and said, “Norman, everyone knows that Dottie will talk about you after you leave the room. It will amount to no more than the compliments she’s just given you. Everybody who cares about Dottie knows that’s the price to pay.” And she laughed gaily.

Still, Norman wanted Dottie Parker’s real affection. He wanted the lovely things she said to him on one side of the door to be repeated on the other. Since they got along very well, and he was always proud to invite her to his rented house, and pleased to be invited back to her poor suite at the Marmont (she had no money in those years — all the splendid short stories and no money!) he even entertained the illusion that she might offer a dispensation.

He would never find out, however, because of her dog. She had a Boxer, not a year old, named Bruce, who had been badly mistreated by his first owners, and now whimpered at harsh looks. Dottie did her best to give the dog more courage — she raised him like the child she had never had, ready to take Bruce up each rung of the mile-high ladder that climbs from abysmal cowardice to transcendental courage; she would tell her friends of each new advance Bruce and she had made. One would learn that Bruce had gotten up his nerve sufficiently one day to take a walk around the block with her.

These methods seemed intolerably slow to Norman. He kept telling her that she ought to bring Bruce over to meet his dog. Since Dorothy Parker had by now made friends with Karl, she was tempted. Timid people were invariably proud of such a friendship for Karl was a black German Shepherd, huge and ferocious to strangers. Since his first allegiance was to the house, his master became whoever lived in the house (and incidentally fed him). Nor-

man, renting the place, was therefore the master and thus became the only man in Laurel Canyon who could drive up to the house, get out of his car, and not be attacked. No one else dared. Our best-selling young author used to run out to the driveway when guests came; otherwise visitors were obliged to cower inside their vehicle while the dog would lunge at the windows. Once Norman got out, however, and barked, "Karl!" the Shepherd immediately subsided. He could now recognize that these intruders would be acceptable to the house. After they were admitted to the living room, Karl would even go over, sit down on the floor, and make a point of shaking hands with them. Delighted that the dog had become well-disposed, the new arrival would make much of this. Karl would extend his paw for a second greeting. His tongue would loll and he would pant a little. After the third handshake, Karl would get a hard-on. "Karl!" his master would say, and the hard-on would go away. Under such circumstances, it became easy to think of him as an overrated danger.

So when Dorothy Parker finally decided that she might bring Bruce to the house, Mailer thought it was a terrific idea. He would take care of bringing them together peacefully, he promised. Good to his word, he put Karl away in the bedroom before Dorothy Parker arrived with Bruce. The Boxer, however, did not want to quit the car. He could hear the other beast.

"It'll be all right," said Mailer cheerfully, "once Bruce is inside. Karl is really lonesome."

Coaxed within the house, however, Bruce urinated on the carpet. It was not difficult to forgive him. In the bedroom, Karl was making that sound a cat will make when a dog is near, and she is ready to fight for her life. It is a more awesome sound when it comes from a large hound.

"Don't you think this is a mistake?" said Dottie Parker. "I can put Bruce in the car and go home now."

That would be a loss for Bruce, he answered. "Why don't I put Karl on a leash, and bring them together slowly? It'll be so good for Bruce if he and Karl can make friends."

This liberal and romantic expectation prevailed. Karl was brought out of the bedroom. The dog came quietly on his tether, and looked at Bruce without a sound. He sniffed the other's nose. A pause. Bruce peed. Karl's head went off in a roar as loud as a howitzer. His mouth opened into shark's teeth and flayed the air with strings of saliva; at this point his master was sufficiently outraged to

yank him back by the neck, and manhandle him to the bedroom. In the space this took, Dottie Parker was out the door, and in her car. Before she could drive away, Norman came running out to find Bruce collapsed in the rear seat. The dog's limbs were vibrating. It was that quiver which will not cease until the nerve dies.

"I said it wouldn't work," said Dottie Parker face to face. She imparted this in a tone of whole reproach as if to tell him that the worst damage a friend can wreak is to convince you to be brave when you know you are right to be cautious, and then proceed to prove that indeed you were right. It throws you back even further upon yourself when that is no place to be.

As she drove off, he knew that he had wanted to bring Karl from the bedroom because he wished to show how well he could control the dog. Besides he had been curious on the outcome. He noticed that he did not feel very sorry. Only chagrined. But then the wicked are famous for offering small remorse.

1983

Channel 6

He was not to see Dottie Parker again until this evening they would meet on *Open End* eight years later, and when he arrived at the studio in Newark, and saw her waiting, older, more fragile, close to desperately nervous and certainly not cordial, his feelings were only in a small way hurt that she was not happy to see him again, and showed an obvious preference for Truman Capote. He was, by his own measure, not the same writer she had known before. He had met her, after all, in the season after *The Naked and the Dead* when he went out to Hollywood, and much had been made of him. Now, after this early success, he had gone through a number of years in which people spoke of him as a failure. Since he had written two novels, *Barbary Shore* and *The Deer Park*, which he thought had received unfair reviews, he had a view of himself that was at odds with others, and he did not like to be snubbed by people who had been friendly to him ten years ago. All the same, it gave justification to his anger. So her unfriendliness left him in a well-balanced position. If it came to it, he would not have to be too friendly on the show.

David Susskind also gave small welcome. "We met a long time ago," Susskind said.

~~EB, IRL, SURE, RAINBOW. As I grew early in the of
his lunch at Twenty-One to be a part forever of the soft
beats of my brain, so were old spies with the code names of~~

1950-51

The Cold War III

The Face of the Rock

2 | In adolescence, I had only to say "God," and I would think of my groin. God was lust to me. God was like the image of the Devil offered to us at St. Matthew's. Chapel was daily and devoted to Christ, but once a week on average we might hear of the temptings of a somewhat legendary master-ghost named Satan. Chapel kept God and Satan well separated, but I, unlike other Matties, kept mixing them up. I had my reasons: I was introduced to carnal relations during my first year in the school by an assistant chaplain of St. Matthew's who *glommed*—I choose the word to convey the sensation of that rubbery, indefatigable seal—my fourteen-year-old penis in his tight, unhappy lips.

We were in Washington, D.C., on a school trip. Maybe that is one more reason I dislike our subtle, oppressive capital, that broad, well-paved swamp. Boredom and bad memory are at the root of many an oppression, I would suppose, and that night I was sharing a double bed with the assistant chaplain in an inexpensive hotel not far from H Street, NW, and was unable to sleep and feeling full of apprehension just about the time that the chaplain came out of a millrace of stentorian snoring, murmured his wife's name several times, "Bettina, Bettina," and proceeded to embrace my hips and strip my bewildered young privates of their primeval dew. I remember lying there with a complete sense of the sixteen other members of my class who

were also on the trip and in the hotel. I visualized them, two by two, and four by four, in all the other six bedrooms where they had been placed. On this annual trip to Washington the assistant chaplain was our guide, and since I had not succeeded in my first year at the school in being associated in anyone's mind with anyone else, and was marked as a loner, the assistant chaplain, a sympathetic fellow, had assigned me to his room.

In the other cubicles, who knew what might be going on? At St. Matthew's, they used to call it "kidding around." Since my memory was seared with images of the two-backed beast of my father and stepmother (it was a two-backed beast long before I ever encountered the phrase in *Othello*), I stayed far apart from such gang play. All of us knew, however, that there were goings-on all up and down the dorm. Boys would stand side by side and stroke themselves into erections to see who was longer. It was the age of innocence. Being wider was not even a concept to us, for it would have suggested penetration. The nearest any of the boys came to that was by mounting a sweet, fat little creature named Arnold; we called him St. Matthew's Arnold. Even at the age of fourteen, literary wit was not discouraged among us, and St. Matthew's Arnold (~~in no way to be confused with Reed Arnold Rosen~~) used to drop his pants and lie on a bed, buttocks exposed. Six or eight of us would watch while two or three of the more athletic of our skulk would take turns slapping their brand-new instruments onto the crack between St. Matthew's Arnold's cheeks. "Ugh, you're disgusting," they'd say, and he'd whine back, "Aaah, shut up. *You're* doing it too."

It was never homosexual. It was "kidding around." Once done, it was not uncommon for the budding jock to leap off the body, wipe himself, and say, "Why can't you be a girl? You look just like a girl." Which was true—Arnold's cheeks were cousins to the moon—and Arnold, having his own male dignity to defend, would reply, "Aaaah, shut up." He was smaller than the boys who did it to him, so they barely cuffed him for being rude.

I would, as I say, merely watch. I was not up for studies in comparative phallitude. I was electrified by them, but even at fourteen I had already acquired some of our Hubbard insulation. I didn't show a spark.

My own relation to these sports and circuses was revealed

to me, however, by the sweet-edged shudder which the chaplain's mean little lips pulled from me. When it was over, and I had been given an adolescent's peek into the firmament, he swallowed all the nourishment offered the parching of his mouth and began to sob in shame. Deep sobs. He was not a weak man physically, and his strength, like my father's, was in his upper body. So his sobs were strong.

I felt injected with ten tons of novocaine. Except, that is not true either. Two rivers were flowing in me, although to opposite directions. I felt relief I had never known before in my limbs, yet my heart, liver, head, and lungs were in a boil. This was even worse than seeing Mary Bolland Baird and my father in their roll-around. I knew myself to be the compliant apprentice of a monster.

After his sobbing, the man began to weep. I knew he was worried about his wife and children. "Don't worry," I said, "I'll never tell." He hugged me. Gently, I disengaged myself. I did it gently out of no noble funds of generosity, rather in the fear he would turn angry and grow rough. I think my secret instinct knew he wished me to have, in turn, a thirst I would slake on him. If I had none (and I did not), well, went his unspoken imperative: Generate some! You damn well better generate some.

How the poor man must have been hung between his lust for one good, reciprocal suck on his charged-up end and the horror of knowing that he was inching out along the precipice of his career. When I remained still and did not move at all, his sobbing finally ceased and he lay still as well. I did my best to picture him officiating at a High Mass in school chapel, white silk surplice over white linen cassock, his ritual gestures a talisman I could employ against him. It may have been a real magic. After an interval of silence, equal in weight to the darkness of our hotel room, he gave a sigh, slipped out of bed, and spent the rest of the night on the floor.

That was the extent of my homosexual experience, but what a bend it put into the shape of my psyche. I stayed away from sex as though it were a disease. I had bog-and-marsh dreams where I was Arnold and the chaplain released streams of the foulest suppurations over me. In turn, I would awaken to feel

infected. My sheets were wet, sprayed with nothing less than the pus, I was certain, of my unholy infections. The headaches grew worse. When the boys got ready to kid around, I took off for the library. I believe I finally accepted my father's desire to have an operation on my head because I could not overcome the part of me that was certain there was awful matter in the brain to be cut out.

Conceivably, something may have altered. When I went back to St. Matthew's in the fall of 1949, after my summer of convalescence, the school seemed at last a reasonable place. Our soccer teams (it was the first prep school I knew to take soccer seriously), our football scrimmages at every class level, our Greek, Latin, daily chapel, and prayers before meals, our ice-cold showers from October to May (lukewarm in June and September), our button-down shirts and school ties for all occasions but sports (starched, white collar and shirt on Sundays) had now become an agreeable order of the day. My dyslexia seemed to wane after the operation. (As a result, my case was written about in neurosurgical papers.) I felt more like others, and stronger for average tasks. I had a B-plus average.

Left to myself, I think I might have ended like most of my classmates. From Yale, where many a good Mattie went in those days, I would have continued on to Wall Street or the Bar. I probably would have made an acceptable, even a good, estate lawyer, my experience with the chaplain keeping me alert to the pits of horrible possibility in the most proper affairs, and like many another not quite notable prep school product, I might even have improved with the years. The odds are favorable if you can hold your liquor.

Hugh Tremont Montague intervened. My father, who always kept his promises, if late by many a season, finally arranged for the meeting a year and a half after our lunch at Twenty-One. My operation had come and gone, as well as my convalescence. I was now a senior, and a responsible figure to my younger cousins and brothers in the summer frolics at Doane, curious frolics—the eight-hundred-yard swimming race around the island, four hundred with the current, four hundred back in the channel against it, and the all-day hike that commenced at The Precipices south of Bar Harbor at eight in the morning, went

over Cadillac Mountain to Jordan Pond at noon, then up to Sargent Mountain and down all the way to Somesville; next, Acadia Mountain descending to Man of War Creek. We ended at the dock in Manset by eight in the evening. There a lobster boat came to meet us for the trip by water around the Western Way, up to Blue Hill Bay and Doane. A platoon of Marines would have complained of a twenty-mile march over hills like that, but we were rewarded by explorations in the lobster boat over the next few days to islands scattered around the bay, islands so small their names were in dispute, and their topography eccentric—great grass meadows on one, guano-encrusted sea ledges on another, forests with unearthly trees warped by long-lost winds. We would feast on lobsters boiled over driftwood fires and clams baked in the coals—even the charred hot dogs tasted as good as wild game caught with bow and arrow. To this day, Kittredge and I are visited in summer by cousins who have shared these Hubbard gymkhanas. No great tennis players ever came out of such a regimen, but our family life was our social life.

When Hugh Tremont Montague came up one weekend with my father in a light chartered plane from Boston, it was, therefore, an event of the first measure. We had a much spoken-of visitor. I might have heard of my anointed godfather for the first time during lunch at Twenty-One, but his name seemed present everywhere thereafter at school. A new file in my personal history had been opened. He was, as I now discovered, one of the myths of St. Matthew's. All through my first year at school, teachers must have spoken of him, but the name never entered my ear. Once my father inscribed his importance on my attention, however, accounts of him popped up everywhere. One spoke of him now as if he had been headmaster. By actual record, he was coach of the soccer team and founder of the Mountaineering Club. A graduate of St. Matthew's, '32, and of Harvard, '36, he taught at the school until he joined the OSS. Instructor in English and in Divine Studies, he installed his own dicta in our dogma and lore. At St. Matthew's I had heard of the Egyptian goddess Maat before I ever heard of Hugh Montague. Maat had the body of a woman and a large feather for her neck and head. As the Egyptian Goddess of Truth, she embodied a

curious holy principle: In the depths of one's soul, the difference between a truth and a falsehood weighed no more than a feather. St. Matthew's tended to equate this weight to the presence of Christ, and Montague was the determined author of that addition. St. Matthew's had always taken Divine Studies seriously, but after Montague's influence on us, we felt we had a greater contribution to make than any other school of our ilk in New Hampshire or Massachusetts, or, if one is to lower the bars, Connecticut. We were closer to God than the others and Mr. Montague had given the clue: Christ was Love, but Love lived only in the Truth. Why?—because one's ability to recognize the presence of Grace (which I always saw as a leavening in the region of the chest) could be injured by a lie.

Harlot left other precepts at St. Matthew's. God the Father—awesome, monumental Jehovah—was the principle of Justice. Mr. Montague added that Jehovah was also the embodiment of Courage. Just as Love was Truth and there could be no compassion without honesty, so was Justice equal to Courage. There was no justice for the coward. There was only the purgatory of his daily life. Did a student feel despair? Look to the root. A cowardly act had been committed, or a lie told. Somewhere in the school pamphlets sent out to increase St. Matthew's endowment, there are a few lines quoted from an address Hugh Montague gave on a special occasion to a senior class in chapel. "The first purpose of this school," he said, "is not to develop your potentialities—although some of you do indeed bear the unruly gift of quick mentality—but to send out into American society young men keen to maintain their honesty and sense of purpose. It is this school's intention that you grow into good, brave young men."

I will say it for Mr. Montague and St. Matthew's. Our theology was more complex than that. There was the special temptation of evil for the good and brave. The Devil, Montague warned, employed his finest wits to trap the noblest soldiers and scholars. Vanity, complacency, and indolence were a curse, since bravery was an ascending slope and one could not rest on it. One must succeed in rising to every challenge except the ones that would destroy us needlessly. Prudence was the one amelioration God allowed to the imperative of Courage; Love, on fortunate occasions, could offer support to Truth.

Competition on the playing field became, therefore, an avatar of Courage and Prudence, Love and Truth. On the playing field, one could find the unique proportions of your own heart. Later, properly prepared, out in the world, one might be able to deal with the Devil. Although it was never stated so at St. Matthew's, we all knew that women—as opposed to mothers, sisters, cousins, and ladies—had to be one more word for the world.

Since Mr. Montague had been gone for six years before I entered, I had no notion of the dialectical niceties of his mind. Only the precepts came down to us in strong doses imparted by instructors who lived with the conclusions. So hypocrisy also abounded at St. Matthew's. We were all smaller than our precepts. Indeed, the assistant chaplain who minted my adolescent glans was a disciple of Hugh Tremont Montague, even a rock climber, although I heard he was not a good one.

Rock climbing, after all, was the objective correlative of Virtue, which is to say, the meeting of Truth and Courage. I was soon to find out. That night in the summer of 1949 when Hugh Montague came to the Keep for the first time, he was thirty-five and I was seventeen, and much as I expected, he looked half a British officer with his erect posture and mustache and half an Anglican clergyman by way of his wire-rimmed eyeglasses and high forehead. Let me say that he could have been taken for a man of forty-five, but continued to look no older for the next twenty years, right up to his dreadful fall.

On shaking hands, I knew immediately why Christ was Truth not Love for Mr. Montague. He had a grip to remind you of the hard rubber pads that are put on vise-jaws to keep them from injuring any object in their grasp. Heaven help me, went my thought, this man is a real prick.

Accurate was my instinct! Decades later, over the seasons of my marriage to Kittredge, I learned the innermost secrets of Harlot's young manhood even as he had confessed them one by one to her; what other gift could measure his profound love for Kittredge? He had indeed been a prick, and of the worst sort. His personal devil had been a great desire to ream young pits. There was hardly a good-looking boy in his instruction whom he had not wanted to bugger. According to Kittredge, he never had: at least, not if he was telling the truth—which was always

the question—but he avowed that until he met her, this impulse was the ongoing daily torment of his years at Harvard, then later at St. Matthew's where he ground his teeth in sleep. Indeed, he had not entered the ministry for fear that he would, one good day, dive deep into his impulses and betray his church. The sexual energies, in consequence, were in-held. As he took my hand on introduction and stared into my eyes, he was a force and I was a receptacle: He was clean as steel and I was a punk.

I remember how my father, forty pounds heavier than Hugh Tremont Montague, circled nonetheless around our introduction like an anxious relative, a facet of Cal Hubbard's personality I had never seen before. I not only realized how much this meeting had to mean to my father, but even why it had taken so long to arrange—Cal Hubbard's expectations would suffer a dull return if it did not work.

I describe our meeting as if there were no one else in the house. In fact, something like seventeen of us, Mary Bolland Baird, Rough, Tough, cousins, fathers and mothers of cousins, aunts, uncles, numerous Hubbards were there. It was our last summer in that period at the Keep. My father was in the process of selling the place to Rodman Knowles Gardiner, Kittredge's father, and we were all taking a long farewell to our summer house. There might have been five people present when we were introduced, or ten, or we could have been alone. All I remember is that my father circled Mr. Montague and me, and my father was soon gone. I have some recollection that we then went down to the den to have a talk. That comes to me with clarity.

"You're out of the dyslexia, your father says."

"I think so."

"Good. What are your subjects at St. Matthew's?"

I named them.

"Your favorite?"

"English," I said.

"What's the best novel you've read this year?"

"*Portrait of a Lady*. We had it assigned, but I liked it a lot."

He nodded sourly. "Henry James is a quince pie as large as the Mojave Desert. It's a pity. Put Hemingway's heart in him and James would have been a writer to equal Stendhal or Tolstoy."

"Yessir," I said. I was such a liar. I had gotten an A for my

paper on *Portrait of a Lady*, but I had merely parroted a few critical appreciations. *The Young Lions* was what I had enjoyed most last year. Noah Ackerman, the Jew, had appealed to me.

"Let's go out tomorrow," he said. "Your father wants me to take you on a climb. I hear there's dependable rock suitable for beginners over at a place called Otter Cliffs. We'll pick a route that's feasible."

"Yessir." I was hoping that what he called Otter Cliffs was some other Otter Cliffs than the one I knew. That was black rock and dropped a straight eighty feet down to the sea. Sometimes on the rise of the tide, there was a heavy roll of surf in Frenchman's Bay, and I had heard the growl of black waters on black rock at Otter Cliffs. Indeed, the fall was so steep I could never look over the edge.

"Guess I haven't done any rock climbing," I said, and regretted the remark on the instant.

"You'll know a little more tomorrow than you know right now."

"Yessir."

"Your father asked me to be your godfather."

I nodded. My quick fear at the thought of tomorrow had already commandeered the lower register of my voice. If I said "yessir" one more time it would come out like ship's pipes.

"I have to tell you," he said, "I was inclined to refuse." He fixed me front and center with his stare. "One must have a close personal interest to be a godfather."

"That's true, I suppose." I croaked it forth.

"I don't like close personal interest."

I nodded.

"On the other hand, I have regard for your father. No one will ever know how good his war record was until the secrets can be told."

"Yessir." But I beamed. Absolutely unexpected to myself, I experienced such happiness at this confirmation of my father's qualities that I knew the value, on the spot, of family pride and could have been filled from head to toe with well-nourished blood.

"Some day," he said drily, "you must try to equal him."

"Never," I said. "But I intend to try."

"Harry," he said, giving me back my name for the first time, "you're fortunate to be carrying that kind of burden. I don't tell people often, but since you and I are obviously embarked on a special venture, at least personally speaking, I choose to inform you that a father one admires extravagantly may be less of an impost than growing up without one. Mine was killed in Colorado in a shooting accident."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"I was eleven when it occurred. I must say I didn't have to grow up altogether without him. He was always a presence in my life."

It took a few more years before I was to learn from Kitredge that David Montague, Harlot's father, had been shot by Harlot's mother, Imogene, as David entered the master bedroom one night. It was never clear whether he had lost his keys and was climbing through the window or walking through the door. There was too much blood on the floor. Either he had traveled on his belly, mortally wounded, from the window to the door, as was her claim, or had been dragged by Hugh's mother from the door to the window, then back to the door, to support the story that his unexpected entrance by the window caused her to believe he was an intruder. I understand Ty Cobb's father was shot under similar circumstances and there are some who believe it accounts for the tigerish rapacity of Ty Cobb on the base paths. If that is the formula for generating ungodly determination, I see no reason why it could not apply to Harlot.

Next day, true to his promise, he drove me out to Otter Cliffs. In anticipation, I spent a sleepless night. First I hoped it would rain, then that it would not. I was certain Mr. Montague would say the essence of rock climbing was to accept the given. If the rock was slippery, we would still have a go. So I began to pray it would not rain.

It was misty at 6:30 in the morning, but I knew the weather on Mount Desert well enough to see that the sky would be clear by eight. To avoid a family breakfast, we had fried eggs and coffee at a hash-house (no granola for outdoorsmen then!) and I ate my food in all somber duty, the yolk and biscuits going down like sulphur and brimstone, after which we took the Park Drive along the eastern shore of Mount Desert. As we drove I

named for him places long familiar to me, the Beehive, Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, Gorham Mountain, a guide leading the way to his own terminal hour. Or so I was convinced. Rock climbing was familiar to me, if only in sleep. I always knew when a dream had become a nightmare, for there was I clinging to a wall.

We parked. We walked along a wooded trail for a hundred yards, and suddenly had, all to ourselves, the precipice of a cliff. Our view was open to the boom and hiss of the Atlantic pounding on rocks below. I took a quick glimpse down. It proved no easier than standing on the edge of a roof seven stories high that had no railing. My impulse was to ask Mr. Montague if this was, for certain, the right place.

He was scouting, his boots six inches from the lip. He strode along, frowning and clucking, weighing one ascent against another while I sat beside his pile of climbing gear, nerveless, and for all I knew, limbless. The stone on which I perched was pale pink and friendly, but the straight rock-fall below was dark gray, and black at the bottom. Years later, in the Department Store in Saigon, I was to have an outrageous attack of anxiety one night while staring at a Vietnamese prostitute's outspread legs. Her open vagina looked as sinister to me as an exotic orchid. Only then did I realize that the contrast of her pink petals and near-black overleaves had brought me back to the fearful minutes I waited for Harlot to take the measure of where to commence my instruction.

Finally he settled on the right place. "This will do," he told me, and unstrapped his gear, took out two coiled nylon ropes from the tote bag, and tugged on a few trees near the edge. "We'll rappel down," he said. "It's easy. Beginners like it. I, however, confess to you—it terrifies me."

Somehow, that was reassuring. "Why?" I managed to ask.

"You're dependent on things external to yourself," he answered, as if that were the only reply. "There's no sure means of knowing when a little tree like this gives way."

He was taking precautions. I will not try to describe all that he did, but I could see that he anchored one end of the rappel rope not only to the tree, but to an adjacent rock through the agency of a long sling of webbing. These various ties converged

through an oval chromium ring smaller than my palm, which I knew was called a carabiner.

"Are you going to use pitons?" I asked, trying to give a warrant of knowledgeability.

"Oh, no need," he said. "Not for this."

Old as he was, we were acting as if both of us were seventeen. Which made it worse—he was vastly superior.

"All right, you wait here," he said when done, "and I'll go down, look it over, and come back. Then you'll do it."

I found it hard to believe that he was going to make a voyage up and down that cliff as casually as taking reconnaissance of a few floors on an elevator, but indeed, he gave one mighty yank on the anchor of his rappelling rope, and satisfied with such security, stood on the edge of the cliff, back to the sea, the rope wound once around his waist, and stated, "You'll find this the hardest part of the rappel. Just slack off some rope and consign your butt to the void. Then, sit back on the rope." Which he did by placing the sole of his shoes on the lip and leaning backward, until his extended legs were in a horizontal line with the ground. "Now," he said, "just walk down, step by step. Keep your legs stiff, your feet against the rock, and give yourself slack when you need it."

He made a few moves slowly, simulating the step-by-step technique a beginner should employ, the performance going on for five or six steps of descent. After which, bored with the sluggishness of this method, he gave a little whoop, shoved off with his feet from the rock, and slackened ten feet of rope in a rush. When he bounced, toes first, back into the wall, he was a good piece further down already, and with three or four more such springs out from the wall, there he was below, standing on a ledge of flat, black, wet stone.

He slipped the rope from around his waist, called to me to pull it up. Then he climbed right after. It seemed to take him no longer than he would have spent on five or six flights of stairs.

"Nice rock," he said. "You'll have a good time."

I did not say a word. I thought of every excuse I could make. I had had no sleep. My operation left me dizzy at unexpected times. I would like to approach this more slowly: Could we warm up on a trail that did not require ropes? Below, tolling loudly on the rocks, the surf reverberated among my fears.

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I said nothing. My own destruction was by now superior to whimpering out of this situation. Since I could find no excuse to survive, I stood as passively as a martyr before faggots and flames, but I was only a numb body suffering the rope to be fastened about me. Later there would be much sophistication of apparatus, but on this occasion, he merely knotted one end of a mountain cord around my waist and dropped the rest of the coil on the ground beside him. He took another rope, doubled it, and slipped it through the carabiner attached to the tree, after which he passed it through two carabiners linked onto my harness at the waist, these carabiners to serve as brake, he explained, during the rappel. Then he ran this double rope under my thigh, passed it diagonally across my chest, and around my back to the other arm. So holding each end of its snakelike embrace of me, one hand guiding the slack, the other out for balance, I prepared to go off the lip.

To put one's heels on a ledge and lean backward into space, holding only to a rope, is equal to the wail one hears in childhood on falling out of bed. One discovers the voice is one's own. My first few steps, feet pressed flat against the vertical rock, were as clumsy as if my legs were concrete posts.

It was only after I descended five or six steps that I began to comprehend that the act of rappelling could actually be accomplished; indeed, it was a good deal easier than learning to use crutches.

How intimate was the surface of the rock, however! Each pock before me was an eye-socket; each large crack, a door ajar. Faces of intricate benignity and malevolence looked back at me from the lines and knobs of the rock. I felt as if I were lowering myself around the flank of Leviathan. Yet such was my relief at being able to perform these acts that before I reached the bottom, I actually gave a few thrusts out with my legs and tried running off slack through the double carabiners at my waist, these tentative efforts not dissimilar, I am certain, to the first stir of the lower throat that a six-week-old dog will make in preparation for barking.

I reached the ledge. The surf was steaming just below, and the wet, black stone under my sneakers felt as oily as a garage floor. I released the double rappel rope from the double carabiner and only then realized I had been attached all the while by

my harness itself to the coil of cord Mr. Montague had held. If all had gone wrong, and I had lost balance on the rappel, Mr. Montague would have been there to support me by the second connection. Now my initial fear felt absurd to me. I was commencing to learn that fear was a ladder whose rungs are surmounted one by one, and at the summit—as Mr. Montague would probably say—lay Judgment itself.

He now plummeted down in three long swoops to stand beside me on the wet ledge. "This climb will test you," he said. "However, it's not unreasonable. Just a matter of learning a new vocabulary."

"What do you mean?" I murmured. I now had had my first good look at the ascent, and fear returned.

He gave the smallest smile—the first he had been ready to offer since his arrival. "You'll find I picked a climb with a few buckets."

Unattached to any rope, he started up. "Try to recall my route when you're here," he called down from fifteen feet above, "but don't fret if you lose it. Part of the fun is to come on your own finds." Whereupon he mounted the face in one continuous series of easy moves and was at the top before I became aware again that the rope attached to my waist was still very much in place, and its other end was tied to some tree above the lip and out of sight. Mr. Montague appeared on the edge, some eighty agonizing feet above, sitting on the brink in all comfort, his feet dangling over, my rope—the rope, that is, with which he would belay me—wound casually, and only once, around his waist.

"Won't I pull you with me if I fall?" I asked. My voice emerged in a reasonably clear little croak, but the effort was analogous to putting the shot.

"I'm anchored to the tree." He beamed down on me. "Get started. I'll send you clues by carrier pigeon." I was beginning to understand what animated him. The air of funk in others can taste, I suppose, like caviar.

How to speak of the beauty that rises from one's fear of the rock? I was shriven. I understood the logic of God: The seed of compassion is to be found in the harsh husk of the demand.

As I started up the wall, I could not believe how vertical was the ascent. I thought there might be some slant in my favor, but

no. Vertical. True, the rock was cracked and scarred and nubbled and pitted, a raw acne of surface that you could certainly get a grip on. Feeling a friendly knob of a hold at the top of my reach, and seeing a small slot for my foot, I stepped in, reached up, and pulled myself one foot off the bottom ledge. I knew something of the emotions of the first great day at Kitty Hawk then. Yes, this was as good as the virgin jump from the balcony deck into Blue Hill Bay. To fortify me, Mr. Montague pulled slightly on my harness. "If you need a little help," he yelled down, "call: 'Tension,' " on which, by demonstration, he pulled harder so that I felt somewhat less than my own full weight and more inclined to climb. I found another grip and foothold just above, took the move, took another, and another, glanced down. I was eight feet above the ledge. Splendid! I found another knob and just above my knee was one of the buckets of which he spoke, a hole about as large as a pool-table pocket in which I could rest my foot. There I halted, catching my breath. The rock felt alive. It had odors, grooves filled with dirt, overhanging elbows, armpits; it had pubic corners. I do not wish to exaggerate, but I was not prepared for the intimacy of the activity. It was as if I were climbing up the body of a giant put together of the bones and flesh and pieces and parts of a thousand humans.

Now, soon enough, I entered a more difficult portion of the ascent. About halfway up, I came to a place where I did not know how to continue. There were no good grips to reach with my hands, and not a quarter inch of rock-wrinkle to support the next push with my foot. In deadlock, straddled, I encountered the agonizing indecision of the rock climber. All the while that one's limbs are burning from expenditures of anxiety, one does not know whether to try to continue up or look to descend a few feet in order to veer onto another route. Frozen on the rock, my voice scorched in my throat, the open depths below were falling away into the unrecoverable past. I stared like a pawnbroker at the dubious possibilities presented by each ripple in the rock. I think half of all I ever learned about rock climbing came from these first five minutes on Otter Cliffs; I was given a quick introduction to the great social world of vertical stone. There the smallest bit of irregularity can prove an immensely useful friend, a treacherous if conceivably employable associate, a closed

door, or an outright enemy. I had by now managed to maneuver myself into a coffin's corner just beneath an overhang.

There I rested, sobbing for breath, altogether bewildered what to do next. The more I squeezed myself into this perch, which accommodated only a part of my body, the more I had to consume the strength of my arms in unhappy holds. I heard Montague call out, "Don't build your nest there. It's no place to breed."

"I don't know what to do," I said.

"Back down a few feet. Work to your right."

Here I discovered the curious nature of one's own virtue. That is so inaccessible to us on normal occasions that we are doomed to become more intimate with our vices. Even as I took my first step in retreat, eyeing already the potentialities he had suggested on the right, I saw what might be a quicker way around the overhang if I tried a route to the left. It was riskier. To the right, I had his word at least, whereas to the left I could see one good move and then another, but there appeared to be a straddle ten feet above—a smooth rock face with two vertical cracks five feet apart—perhaps a grip or two, I could not tell. What appears to be a hold from below can prove only the shadow of a bulge; what promises an edge for one's foot comes out to no more than a striation in the stone.

I took the option to the left. It was mine. It had not been given to me and so could become my virtue. Such was the state of my logic. Panting for breath as unashamedly as a woman in labor (which image I account for by my adolescent, film-sophisticated understanding of how a woman acts in labor), I could feel my religious education advancing by leaps. Virtue was grace. The impossible could be traversed by the intuitions of one's heart. Scaling off to the left, I had to make moves I would not have attempted before. Desperate to prove my choice, I had to include one fancy scrabble from one welt of rock up to another, neither step of which could have held me for more than a second, but I did it all in one continuous move as if I were Montague, and in reward found myself able to stand and rest on the small ledge above the overhang.

Montague called down, "Three cheers, boy. You're past the crux."

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It came on me. I had gotten through the worst. I continued on to the top in a state of elation that was potentially as dangerous as an all-out funk. "Perfect," he said when I joined him. "Now we'll try you on tougher stuff," and began packing the gear for the drive to the next step.

3 | One's fears on the rock soon gain proportion. If one does not take the lead like Montague, but is belayed from above by a good climber, it soon becomes clear that you can afford on occasion to fall. Unaware my first time up of such relative security, I made every move as if a mistake might be my death. It took a second ascent that afternoon on a vertical column in The Precipices to make me aware that I was living in comparative safety. For when one move I made did not work and I slipped from a fractional foothold, I plunged but a couple of feet, suffering no more than a scrape to my knee. The rope was belaying me from above.

I made progress after that. Mr. Montague had accepted my father's invitation to take his two-week summer vacation at Doane. So for two weeks I went out every day with him. (And often in the rain.) Once, he took along two of my cousins, but I took no pleasure in their fears. I felt—rare emotion—like a veteran.

Mr. Montague and I preferred to be alone. Each day he took me over a different kind of hazard. I was introduced to finger jams and pressure holds. I learned how to *smear* smooth rock with the heel of my hand. Lie-back holds and crack-backs were shown to me, foot jams and chimneys. He took me up squeeze chimneys and over slabs, gave me problems in mantling and hand traverses. Forgive me, but I mention these techniques to

keep track of the different rock faces on which we spent our days. There were nights when the proper placement of pitons and bongs clanged in my head as I went to sleep, and I heard the hiss of the rope as Mr. Montague, on the lead, tugged it through the carabiner above me.

I had fallen in love with the illimitable skill of the rock climber. Clumsy, using my arms more than my legs, and my will as a substitute for wisdom, I scratched my way up many a face, growing filthy with the effluvia of the stone. For those two weeks of summer, I did not have a finger, an elbow, or a knee that was not raw, and my thighs and shins acquired a hundred bruises, but I was happy. I expect I was more happy than not for the first time in my life, and thereby, at the age of seventeen, grasped a truth some choose never to go near: Happiness is experienced most directly in the intervals between terror. As each climb he led me to was, in general, more difficult than the one before, so did I rarely have a day in which I was not washed in sweat. I spent time with fear as intimately as a body down with flu knows fever. I learned the implacable law of fear. It has to be conquered or it collects, then invades one's dreams. There were days when I could not complete a climb and had to go down. In rock climbing, it is harder, however, to descend than to climb—one's feet have to search for the holds, and they see less well than the fingers. So I slipped often, and dangled on the rope, and sweated, and knew myself doubly abject, and could not sleep that night for confronting my terror: I would have to return next day and do it properly. A compelling transaction. One is raising at such times all the ships that sank in childhood from loss of courage, yes, hoisting them up from the sea bottom of oneself. I felt as if all the childhood fears that weighed me down had begun their ascent to the surface—I was being delivered from the graveyard of expired hope. But what a chancy operation! Each time I failed to complete a climb, the fear I was hoping to cure was not consumed but turned corrupt.

Yet each time I succeeded, I received my dependable reward. For an hour, or for a night, I was happy. On the best day I had in those two weeks, which was next to the last day, Montague brought me back to Otter Cliffs and told me to take the lead. Notwithstanding all I had learned, going up first on the

same ascent where I had begun proved several times more difficult. Taking the lead, I had to hammer in my pitons as I went, my arm in such a catalepsy of controlled panic that it would cramp after every few raps of the hammer. Now the prospect of a fall was serious again. On the lead, I tried to put a piton in every five feet, knowing each prospective fall could double the length since one might plummet from five feet above the last piton to five feet below. And that ten feet would double again should the lower piton pull out. Facing such a prospect, easy climbs became difficult.

Once I did fall. It was for ten feet, no more. My piton held, but I bounced on the end of the rope, then took a mean swing into the rock. Scraped, bruised, and feeling as shattered as a cat who has been plunged into a pail of ice water, I held my breath against the long temptation to whimper, took a full minute to call back the wide-flying streamers of my will, and, hard to believe that I was exacting this on myself, took on the climb again and searched for a way through the crux. It happened to be the same overhang as on the first day, but now I was dragging a rope behind me rather than being encouraged from above. Two weeks of newly acquired knowledge made the difference. I worked my way to the lip without another fall.

Those two weeks did more for me than any operation on my skull. I had new standing in the family. My cousins gave way to my opinions in passing squabbles, and my father took me out for a night of drinking in the modest bars of Bar Harbor. Toward the end of the evening, I was feeling as relaxed as a piece of spaghetti cooked in wine, and my male parent, giving, as usual, no more sign of drink than his massive emanations of good or bad will, said—he was obviously in a splendid spirit—"Hugh Montague has a good opinion of you. That's the accolade, Harry. He doesn't have three words to say for any ten people."

"Well, I'm glad," I said. I felt so corny I was ready to cry. Instead, I laid in a good swallow of bourbon. The flush it inspired told me for the first time how rich my father's insides must feel.

"Hugh's going to take you for a lobster dinner tomorrow," he told me. "Hugh says you're worth a good-bye party all to yourself."